

**TRINITY BIBLE CHURCH
“FAITH, PRAYER & TRUST — Part 1”
FAITH & PRAYER
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GOOD MORNING TRINITY CHURCH! I AM SO BLESSED TO BE HERE WITH YOU THIS MORNING, THE LAST SUNDAY OF THE YEAR. AND I PRAY THAT EACH OF YOU HAD A GLORIOUS CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION AND ARE LOOKING FORWARD TO THE BLESSINGS OF THE COMING YEAR!

OUR MESSAGE, TODAY, CENTERS AROUND ON WHAT I BELIEVE ARE THE CORE FOUNDATIONS OF OUR CHRISTIAN BELIEF — FAITH, PRAYER AND TRUST. WE WILL FOCUS ON FAITH AND PRAYER THIS MORNING AND DELIBERATE TRUST AT TONIGHT’S EVENING SERVICE.

LET’S PRAY!

YOU ARE PROBABLY THINKING, HEY, FAITH AND TRUST ARE SYNONYMOUS WITH ONE ANOTHER. THEY ARE AND THEY ARE NOT — LET ME EXPLAIN. ONE CAN HAVE FAITH, BUT NOT TRUST, HOWEVER, ONE CANNOT TRULY TRUST WITHOUT FAITH. TRUST IS DEPENDENT UPON FAITH.

THE DICTIONARY DEFINES FAITH AS:

- 1. SOMETHING THAT IS BELIEVED WITH A STRONG CONVICTION; ESPECIALLY A SYSTEM OF RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND;**
- 2. A FIRM BELIEF IN SOMETHING FOR WHICH THERE IS NO PROOF.**

WHILE TRUST IS RENDERED AS:

- 1. THE ASSURED RELIANCE ON THE CHARACTER, ABILITY, STRENGTH, OR TRUTH OF SOMEONE OR SOMETHING AND,**
- 2. THE ONE IN WHICH CONFIDENCE IS PLACED.**

IT CAN BE SEEN FROM THESE DEFINITIONS THAT FAITH IS AN INTERNAL CONDITION — WHAT WE BELIEVE IN, WHILE TRUST IS EXTERNAL — WHO WE BELIEVE IN.

IT IS IMPORTANT TO REALIZE THAT FAITH AND TRUST ARE NOT EXCLUSIVE TO US AS

CHRISTIANS. EVEN THE MOST DEVOUT ATHEISTS HAVE FAITH AND TRUST, BUT THEIR FAITH AND TRUST ARE NOT BASED ON THE SAME PRINCIPLES AS OURS.

ATHEISTS HAVE FAITH IN RANDOMNESS, CHANCE AND COINCIDENCE, WHILE WE PLACE OUR FAITH IN THE DIVINE WORD OF GOD. ATHEISTS TRUST IN UNPROVABLE THEORIES AND NON-REPRODUCIBLE LABORATORY EXPERIMENTS, WHEREAS WE PLACE OUR FAITH IN A HOLY AND RIGHTEOUS GOD.

BUT UNFORTUNATELY, EVEN THOSE WHO CLAIM TO BE CHRISTIANS HAVE MIS-PLACED FAITH. THEY OFTEN MIS-USE FAITH FOR THEIR OWN SELF-SERVING PURPOSES.

I RECENTLY HEARD OF A PASTOR SPEAKING ABOUT A LETTER THAT HE RECEIVED FROM A PRISONER WHO HAD LISTENED TO ONE OF HIS MESSAGES. HE SAID THAT HE IS TRYING TO DRAW CLOSER TO GOD, USING ALL THE RESOURCES HE CAN TO HELP IN HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD. HE SAID THAT HE HAD A LOT OF MATERIAL FROM SEVERAL PREACHERS THAT HAD HELPED HIM TO GROW IN HIS WALK WITH GOD. BUT HE ALSO WROTE THAT HE WAS UNEASY ABOUT SOME OF THE THINGS HE WAS TOLD AND READ.

HE THEN TALKED ABOUT THE FACT THAT HE WAS TOLD THAT IF HE TAKES AUTHORITY OVER HIS FINANCES AND CLAIMS THE PROMISE OF WEALTH, A MULTITUDE OF MONETARY BLESSINGS WOULD COME TO HIM. IN ADDITION, HE WAS TOLD THAT HIS PHYSICAL DISABILITIES WOULD BE MIRACULOUSLY HEALED IF HE PRAYED IN THE NAME OF JESUS. BUT THE PROBLEM WAS THAT HE BECAME POORER AND SICKER, THE MORE HE CONFESSED THAT THESE WERE HIS INHERITANCES.

OBVIOUSLY, HE DID NOT REALIZE THAT THERE ARE MANY FALSE TEACHERS IN CHURCHES AND ON TV WHO TELL US THAT ALL WE HAVE TO DO IS HAVE FAITH, PRAY AND SIMPLY CLAIM THE PROMISES AND THAT WE CAN BE HEALTHY AND WE CAN BE WEALTHY, IF, AND THAT IS A BIG IF, IF WE HAVE ENOUGH FAITH.

I THINK OF A YOUNG QUADRIPLÉGIC WHO SAID THAT SHE WAS ANGRY WITH GOD BECAUSE HE PROMISED HER DIVINE HEALING BUT HE NEVER ALLOWED HER TO ATTAIN IT. YOU MAY HAVE HEARD OF HER — JONI EARECKSON TADA. AND YOU KNOW WHAT SHE HAS ACCOMPLISHED FOR THE LORD, ONCE SHE UNDERSTOOD THAT GOD CAN MIGHTILY USE US WHEREVER WE ARE IN LIFE.

WITHOUT DOUBT, WE ALL KNOW THE DISAPPOINTMENT OF UNANSWERED PRAYER, DON'T WE? WE PRAY FOR PHYSICAL HEALING, FOR THE SALVATION OF OUR LOST LOVED ONES AND MANY OTHER THINGS, BUT THEY JUST DON'T HAPPEN. YES, WE ALL HAVE, AT TIMES, WHAT HENRY BLACKABY CALLS "A CRISIS OF FAITH."

BUT HE ADDS THAT “WHEN WE HAVE A CRISIS OF FAITH, WHAT WE DO NEXT DEFINES WHAT WE TRULY BELIEVE ABOUT GOD.”

DO WE ALLOW THE CIRCUMSTANCE TO DICTATE OUR BELIEFS AND BEHAVIOR?

OR, DO WE HAVE SUFFICIENT FAITH IN OUR LORD AND GIVE THANKS TO HIM FOR “KNOWING THAT IN ALL THINGS GOD WORKS FOR THE GOOD OF THOSE WHO LOVE HIM, WHO HAVE BEEN CALLED ACCORDING TO HIS PURPOSE”, ROMANS 8:28?

THE OBVIOUS QUESTION IS THEN — HOW DO WE, AS GOD’S CHILDREN, VIEW OUR FAITH WHEN OUR PRAYERS ARE NOT ANSWERED THE WAY WE WANT THEM TO BE ANSWERED?

WOULD YOU PLEASE TAKE YOUR BIBLES AND TURN TO HEBREWS, CHAPTER ELEVEN, WHERE THE GREAT HEROES OF FAITH ARE LISTED. USING THIS CHAPTER AS THE BACKDROP, I WANT TO GIVE YOU FOUR FACTS REGARDING FAITH. AND WITH THESE FACTS, I PRAY THAT WE CAN LEAVE HERE TODAY — VICTORIOUS, EVEN IF OUR PRAYERS AREN'T ANSWERED IN THE WAY AND TIMEFRAME FOR WHICH WE WANT THEM ANSWERED.

WHILE TIME DOES NOT PERMIT READING THROUGH THE WHOLE CHAPTER, WE WILL BEGIN WITH VERSES 1-3 AND THEN TOUCH ON OTHER VERSES AS WE CONTINUE.

BE IT KNOWN THAT THESE BEGINNING VERSES REMIND US OF EXACTLY WHO IS THE AUTHOR OF OUR FAITH AND THE PURPOSE OF OUR FAITH. PLEASE READ WITH ME: “NOW FAITH IS BEING SURE OF WHAT WE HOPE FOR AND CERTAIN OF WHAT WE DO NOT SEE. THIS IS WHAT THE ANCIENTS WERE COMMENDED FOR. BY FAITH WE UNDERSTAND THAT THE UNIVERSE WAS FORMED AT GOD'S COMMAND, SO THAT WHAT IS SEEN WAS NOT MADE OUT OF WHAT WAS VISIBLE.”

THE FIRST FACT ABOUT FAITH IS SIMPLY THIS — SOMETIMES FAITH AND PRAYER CHANGES OUR CIRCUMSTANCES.

WE WON'T GO THROUGH ALL OF THE HEROES OF FAITH THAT ARE LISTED, BUT LISTEN TO THESE WHO’S CIRCUMSTANCES WERE CHANGED BECAUSE OF THEIR AMAZING FAITH.

VERSE 5: “BY FAITH ENOCH WAS TAKEN FROM THIS LIFE, SO THAT HE DID NOT EXPERIENCE DEATH; HE COULD NOT BE FOUND, BECAUSE GOD HAD TAKEN HIM AWAY. FOR BEFORE HE WAS TAKEN, HE WAS COMMENDED AS ONE WHO PLEASSED GOD.”

AND IN VERSE 7: “BY FAITH NOAH, WHEN WARNED ABOUT THINGS NOT YET SEEN, IN HOLY FEAR BUILT AN ARK TO SAVE HIS FAMILY.

BY HIS FAITH HE CONDEMNED THE WORLD AND BECAME HEIR OF THE RIGHTEOUSNESS THAT COMES BY FAITH.”

THEN VERSES 8, 11 & 12 TELLS US, THAT “BY FAITH ABRAHAM OBEYED AND WENT EVEN THOUGH HE DID NOT KNOW WHERE HE WAS GOING.” AND “BY FAITH, ABRAHAM, EVEN THOUGH HE WAS PAST AGE--AND SARAH HERSELF WAS BARREN--WAS ENABLED TO BECOME A FATHER BECAUSE HE CONSIDERED HIM FAITHFUL WHO HAD MADE THE PROMISE. AND SO FROM THIS ONE MAN, AND HE AS GOOD AS DEAD, CAME DESCENDANTS AS NUMEROUS AS THE STARS IN THE SKY AND AS COUNTLESS AS THE SAND ON THE SEASHORE.”

SURELY WE CAN SEE THAT THE COMMON THREAD OF THESE OLD TESTAMENT HERO’S WAS THEIR FAITH IN THE PROMISE OF GOD, YET TO COME. AND THAT WAS PLEASING TO GOD. IT IS CRITICAL FOR US, TODAY, TO REMEMBER VERSE 6: THAT “WITHOUT FAITH IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO PLEASE GOD, BECAUSE ANYONE WHO COMES TO HIM MUST BELIEVE THAT HE EXISTS AND THAT HE REWARDS THOSE WHO EARNESTLY SEEK HIM.”

AND THEN WE HAVE THOSE WHO DID GREAT MIRACLES IN FAITH! WE THINK OF MOSES IN VERSE 23 AND FORWARD, WHO WENT FORTH IN FAITH. AND WE FIND IN VERSE 30, THAT BY FAITH THE WALLS OF JERICHO FELL DOWN AFTER THEY HAD BEEN ENCIRCLED FOR SEVEN DAYS.

AND BY FAITH THE PROSTITUTE, REHAB, DID NOT PERISH WITH THOSE WHO WERE DISOBEDIENT BECAUSE SHE HAD GIVEN A FRIENDLY WELCOME TO THE SPIES. IN VERSE 32, IT SAYS “WHAT MORE SHALL I SAY.”

THIS CHAPTER SPEAKS OF GIDEON AND BARAK AND SAMSON, JEPHTHAH, DAVID, SAMUEL AND THE PROPHETS. ALL, WHO THROUGH FAITH, CONQUERED AND ENFORCED JUSTICE AND CLAIMED THE PROMISES, STOPPED THE MOUTHS OF LIONS, QUENCHED THE POWERFUL FIRE, ESCAPED THE EDGE OF THE SWORD, WERE MADE STRONG OUT OF WEAKNESS, BECAME MIGHTY IN WAR, PUT FOREIGN ARMIES TO FLIGHT AND WOMEN RECEIVED BACK THEIR DEAD IN RESURRECTION.

NOTICE ALL OF THE MIRACLES THAT GOD DID AS A RESULT OF FAITH! MIRACLES OF HEALING, THE DEAD WERE RAISED, MIRACLES OF DELIVERANCE AND MIRACLES THAT TELL US OF GREAT VICTORIES. WITHOUT DOUBT, ALL OF THESE EVENTS HAPPENED AS A RESULT OF FAITH. YES, FAITH DOES SOMETIMES CHANGES OUR CIRCUMSTANCES.

BUT THERE IS A SECOND STATEMENT I MUST GIVE TO YOU — A SECOND FACT ABOUT FAITH. AND THAT IS THAT SOMETIMES FAITH AND PRAYER DO NOT CHANGE OUR CIRCUMSTANCES.

AS YOU READ THIS CHAPTER, AND I PRAY THAT YOU WILL, YOU WILL SEE THAT IN VERSE 35 THERE IS A SUDDEN BREAK FROM THE SUBJECT AND TENOR OF THE FIRST 34 VERSES. IT SAYS IN VERSE 35, "THAT OTHERS WERE TORTURED, REFUSING TO ACCEPT RELIEF SO THAT THEY MIGHT RISE AGAIN TO A BETTER LIFE." OTHERS, IN VERSES 36-37, "SUFFERED MOCKING AND FLOGGING, AND EVEN IN CHAINS AND IMPRISONMENT. THEY WERE STONED AND THEY WERE SAWN IN TWO. THEY WERE KILLED WITH THE SWORD. THEY WENT ABOUT IN SHEEPSKINS AND GOATSKINS, DESTITUTE, AFFLICTED AND MISTREATED OF WHOM THE WORLD WAS NOT WORTHY, WANDERING ABOUT IN DESERTS AND MOUNTAINS AND DENS AND CAVES OF THE EARTH."

AND AS YOU CAN SEE, EVEN THOSE WITH GREAT FAITH, WERE NOT DELIVERED — THERE WERE NO MIRACLES.

WE READ PASSAGES OF SCRIPTURE THAT TALK ABOUT THE MIRACLES AND WE REMEMBER THEM. BUT WHEN IT SAYS THAT SOME WERE SAWN IN TWO, REFERRING TO THE PROPHET ISAIAH, SOMEHOW WE FORGOT ABOUT THEM. AND WHEN THE AUTHOR OF THIS BOOK SPEAKS OF THOSE WHO WERE WANDERING AROUND IN SHEEPSKINS AND IN GOATSKINS, HE IS REFERRING TO THE PERSECUTION OF THE JEWS THAT TOOK PLACE DURING THE DAYS OF ANTIOCHUS EPIPHANES WHO ENTERED INTO THE CITY OF JERUSALEM IN 187 B.C. THIS ROMAN PAGAN SACRIFICED AN UNCLEAN PIG ON THE ALTER, KILLED THE HIGH PRIEST AND HE DISMEMBERED THE HIGH PRIEST'S SONS. HE PERSECUTED AND COMMITTED GREAT EVIL AGAINST THE JEWISH BELIEVERS AND MANY FLED THE CITY TO AVOID HIS REIGN OF TERROR. AND ALL OF THIS HAPPENED TO GOD'S CHOSEN PEOPLE. INTERESTING, ISN'T IT?

YES IT IS TRUE THAT GOD CLOSED THE MOUTHS OF LIONS, AS HE DID DURING THE DAYS OF DANIEL. BUT IN ROME, WE ARE REMINDED THAT IN THE COLISEUM AND IN THE CIRCUS MAXIMUS, THAT CHRISTIANS WERE THROWN TO THE LIONS AND THERE WAS NO ANGEL THAT CAME TO DELIVER THEM. THEY DIED AT THE HANDS OF ROMAN SOLDIERS AND AT THE MOUTHS OF WILD BEASTS.

THIS MORNING, LET ME ASK YOU A QUESTION. ARE YOU OKAY WITH THE FACT THAT GOD DEALS WITH PEOPLE DIFFERENTLY? ARE YOU OKAY WITH THE FACT THAT GOD SOMETIMES DELIVERS SOME PEOPLE BY A GREAT MIRACLE, AND THEN HE DOESN'T DELIVER OTHERS?

FOR EXAMPLE IN THE 12TH CHAPTER OF THE BOOK OF ACTS, THE BIBLE SAYS THAT PETER AND JAMES WERE BOTH IN PRISON AND GOD MIRACULOUSLY DELIVERED PETER — BUT JAMES WAS PUT TO DEATH BY THE SWORD.

WE LOOK AT IT AND SAY, WHY? WAS IT BECAUSE PETER HAD MORE FAITH — WAS IT BECAUSE MORE CHRISTIANS WERE PRAYING FOR PETER THAN JAMES? NO!

GOD OFTEN MAKES ALL KINDS OF DISTINCTIONS, QUITE APART FROM PRAYER. THE REALITY IS THAT SOMETIMES PEOPLE ARE MIRACULOUSLY DELIVERED WHEN THEY ARE UNDER PERSECUTION AND SOMETIMES THEY ARE NOT! FOR WHATEVER REASON, GOD, HIMSELF, CHOOSES THOSE WHO WILL BE DELIVERED AND THOSE WHO WON'T. WE CANNOT POSSIBLY UNDERSTAND THE BASIS FOR HIS CHOICES; WE MUST SIMPLY ACCEPT THEM — BY FAITH!

THE MAGAZINE ENTITLED, "THE VOICE OF THE MARTYRS" TELLS OF A YOUNG CHRISTIAN MAN BY THE NAME OF LORENZO WHO LIVED IN AN ISLAMIC COUNTRY. HE WAS MARRIED IN AN UNDERGROUND CHRISTIAN CEREMONY, BUT WAS CAUGHT. HE WOULD NOT DENY CHRIST AND WAS SENTENCED TO DEATH. HE WAS FORCED TO DIG HIS OWN GRAVE IN FRONT OF HIS NEW WIFE AND THEN WAS STRANGLERED TO DEATH AND BURIED.

WAS IT BECAUSE HE LACKED FAITH? OH NO! HIS FAITH WAS SO GREAT THAT HE WAS WILLING TO DIE FOR WHAT HE BELIEVED.

YOU SEE, GOD'S WILL FOR HIM WAS DIFFERENT THAN FOR SOMEONE ELSE WHOM GOD CHOOSES TO DELIVER. FAITH SOMETIMES CHANGES OUR CIRCUMSTANCES, BUT FAITH SOMETIMES DOES NOT CHANGE THEM.

DOES THIS MEAN THAT WHEN THINGS DO NOT GO OUR WAY THAT WE SHOULD STOP PRAYING FOR OUR HEART'S DESIRE? ABSOLUTELY NOT! PAUL COMMANDS US TO "PRAY CONTINUALLY" FOR IT MAY NOT BE THE RIGHT TIME, ACCORDING TO HIS SCHEDULE AND NOT OURS!

BUT THERE IS A THIRD FACT ABOUT FAITH — AND THAT IS THAT WE MUST NEVER JUDGE GOD OR QUESTION OUR FAITH BY OUR CIRCUMSTANCES!

NOW, WHEN YOU STOP TO THINK ABOUT IT, HOW DID THESE MARTYRS IN THE LAST PART OF THE BOOK OF HEBREWS, CHAPTER 11, MAKE IT INTO THIS GREAT CHAPTER ON THE HEROES OF FAITH? THE ANSWER IS BECAUSE THEY KEPT ON BELIEVING NO MATTER WHAT.

THE OLD TESTAMENT TELLS THE STORY OF SHADRACH, MESHACH AND ABEDNEGO WHO REFUSED TO BOW DOWN BEFORE THE GOLDEN IDOL AND SAID; "O, KING, WE BELIEVE THAT OUR GOD IS ABLE TO DELIVER US, BUT IF HE DOESN'T, LET IT BE KNOWN UNTO YOU O' KING, THAT WE WILL NOT BOW DOWN AND WORSHIP THIS IDOL." IN OTHER WORDS, WE WILL GO ON BELIEVING IN OUR GOD, WHETHER WE HAVE THE MIRACLES OF GOD AND DELIVERANCE OR NOT. OUR CONFIDENCE IN OUR GOD WILL NOT BE SHAKEN, ONE WAY OR ANOTHER.

LISTEN, THE BIBLE ASSURES US THAT “NOTHING WILL SEPARATE US FROM THE LOVE OF CHRIST. NEITHER PERSECUTION NOR FAMINE NOR THE SWORD!” THE APOSTLE PAUL TELLS US THAT EVEN IF ALL THESE THINGS HAPPEN TO US, WE ARE MORE THAN CONQUERORS THROUGH HIM THAT LOVED US. THIS IS A PROMISE THAT WE ALL MUST HANG ON TO IN TIMES OF TROUBLE.

MARTIN LUTHER ONCE SAID; “WHEN IT APPEARS THAT OUR ENEMIES HAVE DEFEATED US AND WE DO NOT EXPERIENCE BEING SAVED BY A MIRACLE, WE MUST BELIEVE GOD’S INFALLIBLE WORD AND WHAT WE MUST DO IS TO LOOK BEYOND THIS LIFE AND KNOW THAT EVENTUALLY THE TABLES WILL BE TURNED ON OUR ENEMIES! WHY, BECAUSE JESUS IS KING OF KINGS, LORD OF LORDS, GOD OF ALL GODS AND THAT WHEN HE IS WITH US, NO ONE CAN STAND AGAINST US.” AMEN?

I'D LIKE TO GIVE YOU A STATEMENT AT THIS TIME WHICH I WANT YOU TO REMEMBER FOR THE REST OF YOUR LIFE.

“FAITH ISN'T MERELY RECEIVING FROM GOD WHAT WE WANT. FAITH IS THE ABILITY TO ACCEPT WHATEVER GOD GIVES US. FAITH IS THE ABILITY TO SAY YES AND REJOICE IF WE ARE DELIVERED. BUT IF WE AREN'T DELIVERED, WE WILL GO ON BELIEVING, WHETHER WE SEE THE MIRACLE OR NOT.”

REMEMBER THAT JESUS BOWED DOWN IN GETHSEMANE AND SAID “FATHER, IF YOU ARE WILLING, TAKE THIS CUP FROM ME; YET NOT MY WILL, BUT YOURS BE DONE.”

FAITH, SOMETIMES CHANGES OUR CIRCUMSTANCES, FAITH SOMETIMES DOES NOT CHANGE OUR CIRCUMSTANCES. WE MUST NEVER JUDGE GOD OR OUR FAITH BY CIRCUMSTANCES.

SURELY WE GIVE THANKS TO GOD WHEN OUR PRAYERS ARE ANSWERED IN THE MANNER WE ASK, BUT ARE WE ALSO GIVING THANKS TO GOD WHEN THEY ARE NOT? REMEMBER WHAT PAUL COMMANDS US IN 1 THESSALONIANS 5:16-18: “BE JOYFUL ALWAYS; PRAY CONTINUALLY; GIVE THANKS IN ALL CIRCUMSTANCES, FOR THIS IS GOD'S WILL FOR YOU IN CHRIST JESUS.

AND THEN THERE IS A FOURTH STATEMENT; I'D LIKE TO GIVE YOU ABOUT FAITH. AND THAT IS THAT FAITH ALWAYS LEADS TO ULTIMATE VICTORY.

NOTICE WHAT THE TEXT SAYS IN VERSE 39.

“IN ALL THESE, THOUGH COMMENDED THROUGH THEIR FAITH, DID NOT RECEIVE WHAT WAS PROMISED SINCE GOD HAD PROVIDED SOMETHING BETTER FOR US THAT APART FROM US, THEY SHOULD NOT BE MADE PERFECT.”

WHAT THE AUTHOR IS SAYING IS THAT ALL OF THESE PEOPLE DIED IN FAITH, NOT HAVING RECEIVED EVERYTHING THAT GOD PROMISED THEM. AND THAT'S THE WAY WE ARE TOO. WE ALSO DIE WITHOUT SEEING THE PROMISES THAT GOD GAVE US. AND JUST LIKE THESE HEROES OF THIS CHAPTER, WE DIE IN FAITH!

WHEN JESUS CHRIST DIED ON THE CROSS, HIS DEATH REDEEMED US BODY, SOUL AND SPIRIT — OUR REDEMPTION WAS COMPLETE — FOR THOSE WHO BELIEVE! BUT WE CANNOT CLAIM THE ENTIRE INHERITANCE YET. WE CAN CLAIM OUR ETERNITY, BUT NOT THE PRESENT. WE BECOME WEAK, WE BECOME SICKLY AND WE ALSO DIE.

BUT WE DIE IN FAITH KNOWING THAT THERE IS A DAY OF RESURRECTION COMING WHEN ALL THE PROMISES THAT GOD MADE OF OUR REDEMPTION ARE COMPLETED. BUT NOT IN THIS LIFE!

I BELIEVE THAT WHEN A CHRISTIAN GETS CANCER, GOD OFTEN ALLOWS THIS AFFLICTION SO THAT THE WORLD CAN NOTICE THE DIFFERENCE HOW A BELIEVER SUFFERS, VERSES AN UNBELIEVER. YOU SEE AN UNBELIEVER REALLY HAS NOTHING TO GO ON, NO HOPE BEYOND THE GRAVE. BUT BELIEVERS SUFFER DIFFERENTLY. THEY KNOW THAT THEY MAY DIE FROM THE CANCER, BUT THEY DIE IN HOPE AND THEY DIE IN FAITH AND THEY KNOW THAT THERE IS STILL AN INHERITANCE COMING. THE FACT THAT THEY ARE NOT HEALED DOES NOT SHAKE THEIR FAITH!

IN FAITH, WE AGAIN REMIND OURSELVES OF THE PROMISE OF ROMANS 8:28 IN WHICH PAUL SAYS: “AND WE KNOW THAT GOD CAUSES ALL THINGS TO WORK TOGETHER FOR GOOD TO THOSE WHO LOVE GOD, TO THOSE WHO ARE CALLED ACCORDING TO HIS PURPOSE.” NOTICE, HIS PURPOSE, NOT OURS. WE CAN PRAY AND PRAY FOR IMMEDIATE HEALING, BUT THAT MAY NOT BE HIS PURPOSE FOR US.

BE MINDFUL OF THE FACT THAT THE WAY WE, AS CHRISTIANS, HANDLE OUR AFFLICTION MAY BE THE CATALYST THAT BRINGS A LOST SOUL TO CHRIST.

I WOULD SUGGEST TO YOU THAT PRAYER IS DIFFERENT FOR BELIEVERS AND NON-BELIEVERS BECAUSE NON-BELIEVERS IN CHRIST DO NOT HAVE A RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD. GOD HAS NO OBLIGATION TO LISTEN TO A PRAYER, MUCH LESS ANSWER IT THE WAY ONE WANTS IT ANSWERED. THE ONLY EXCEPTION THAT WE CAN WE ASSURED OF IS WHEN AN UNBELIEVER PRAYS FOR GOD’S FORGIVENESS AND INVITES JESUS INTO HIS HEART. GOD WILL DROP EVERYTHING TO RESPOND TO THIS PRAYER.

FOR BELIEVERS, HOWEVER, GOD WILL ALWAYS HEAR THE RIGHTEOUS PRAYERS OF HIS CHILDREN WHEN WE PRAY WITH THE RIGHT ATTITUDE AND IN ALIGNMENT WITH GOD'S WILL. JAMES SAYS IN CHAPTER 4 AND VERSE 3, "YOU ASK AND DO NOT RECEIVE, BECAUSE YOU ASK WITH WRONG MOTIVES, SO THAT YOU MAY SPEND IT ON YOUR PLEASURES." WHEN WE ASK FOR THINGS WITH THE WRONG MOTIVE, I WOULD SUGGEST TO YOU THAT GOD CLOSES HIS EARS TO OUR SELFISH REQUESTS

IT IS CRITICAL TO UNDERSTAND, THAT FOR BELIEVERS, THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS AN UNANSWERED RIGHTEOUS PRAYER. GOD WILL ALWAYS ANSWER THEM, BUT, AND THIS IS A BIG BUT, NOT ALWAYS THE WAY WE WANT THEM ANSWERED OR IN THE TIME FRAME WE WANT THEM ANSWERED. GOD MAY SAY YES TO OUR PRAYER, NO TO OUR PRAY OR HE MAY SAY, NOT NOW, IT IS NOT THE RIGHT TIME. REMEMBER ONLY GOD KNOWS WHAT IS RIGHT AND BEST FOR US, WE DON'T.

THE POINT IS, DO YOU HAVE THE FAITH, AS DID THOSE IN HEBREWS CHAPTER 11, TO WAIT ON THE LORD TO COMPLETE HIS PROMISE? OR ARE YOU SO ANGRY THAT HE DID NOT RESPOND TO YOUR PRAY, AT LEAST TO YOUR WAY OF THINKING, THAT YOU GAVE UP ON ALL HOPE? IF THIS IS THE CASE, I WOULD ENCOURAGE YOU TO PRAY AGAIN, BUT THIS TIME TO ASK GOD TO GIVE YOU THE FAITH TO PERSEVERE THROUGH YOUR CIRCUMSTANCE.

GOD WILL ALWAYS, AND I MEAN ALWAYS, RESPOND TO YOUR REQUEST BECAUSE IT IS HIS WILL FOR YOU TO HAVE FAITH IN HIM AND ALL OF THE PROMISES HE HAS MADE. AMEN?

LET'S PRAY.