

Chapter 12

**FAITH is
“Believing God
Rewards”**

The second part of believing God is to believe He rewards those who diligently seek Him.

Again, Hebrews 11 says,

"Without faith, it's impossible to please God. for he that comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him."

Do you believe that? Do you believe God answers prayer? Does He always answer your prayers? Do you believe He hears and answers all your prayers? Or do you believe He answers some of your prayers? Do you believe God arbitrarily rejects a lot of your prayers, some of your prayers, or many of your prayers?

Faith believes GOD ANSWERS PRAYER, not sometimes, not occasionally, not once in a while, but all the time. When we pray with the right motives, in the will of God, and are submissive to His plans and purposes, He always answers our prayers.

Beware of the holy cop-out.

There is a common thread of unbelief in some of our biblical interpretations. Take 1 John 5:14-15 for instance.

This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him.

People frequently resort to this verse as a blanket cop-out for unanswered prayer. We excuse our unanswered prayer because God didn't will it.

Our reasoning goes something like this:

We can't know the perfect will of God, so can't pray in absolute faith. If we ask for something that happens to fit within God's sovereign will, then He hears us and we get what we asked for.

That interpretation of the passage contradicts what John was saying. He is talking about confidence (not uncertainty) in approaching God. He is not opening the door to unbelief.

He is not saying, “Since we don’t know the will of God, then we cannot be sure our requests are going to be granted.” Or “If we pray for something that is according to the will of God, then and only then, will we get what we pray for. Therefore, we shouldn’t expect God to answer all our requests since we don’t know what His will is.”

Let’s turn his phrases backwards, putting the end of his sentence at the beginning.

*“We know we have whatever we ask of him,
because we ask according to his will, therefore,
we have great confidence in approaching God.”*

So, the real issue here is knowing the will of God when you pray. What is the will of God? The will of God becomes evident through His promises. He cannot contradict himself. He does not lie. He does not say one thing and do another. So, if you want to know the will of God then you should first search the promise of God and pray His promises back to him. Too often, our wills get in the way of His will.

I have often heard people say, “Prayer moves the hand of God.” Not true. God’s will moves His hand, we just need to get into the place where He is moving. When we are in the center of His will, our prayers are always answered.

I love the approach of George Mueller, that great man of faith and prayer who built orphanages by faith.

How I Ascertain the Will of God? By George Mueller

1. I seek to get my heart into such a state that it has no will of its own in a given matter. When we are ready to do the Lord's will—whatever it may be—nine-tenths of the difficulties are overcome.

2. Having done this, I do not leave the result to feeling or simple impression. If I do so, I make myself liable to great delusions.

3. I seek the will of the Spirit of God through, or in connection with, God's Word. The Spirit and the Word must be combined. If I look to the Spirit alone

without the Word, I lay myself open to great delusions also. If the Holy Spirit guides us, He will do it according to the Scriptures, never contrary to them.

4. Next I take into account providential circumstances. These often plainly indicate God's will in connection with His Word and Spirit.

5. I ask God in prayer to reveal His will to me.

6. Thus, through prayer, the study of the Word and reflection, I come to a deliberate judgment according to the best of my ability and knowledge. If my mind is thus at peace and continues so after two or three more petitions, I proceed accordingly. I have found this method always effective in trivial or important issues.

Did this plan work? He wrote three years before his death,

"I never remember in all my Christian course, a period now of sixty-nine years and four months, that I ever sincerely and patiently sought to know the will of God by the teaching of the Holy Ghost, through the instrumentality of the Word of God, but I have been always directed rightly. But if honesty of heart and uprightness before God were lacking, or if I did not patiently wait upon God for instruction, or if I preferred the counsel of my fellow men to the declarations of the Word of the living God, I made great mistakes."

Hoping Prayers vs. Believing Prayers

We need to get out of this nebulous faith that has no anchor. Genuine faith is not faith in faith. We say we exercise faith; we talk about faith; we pray in faith, but much of the time, it is not faith at all. It's a hope or a wish. We are not believing God to do something. We are only hoping God does something. There's a difference. Our prayers often are not based on the word of God nor on his promises, but on hopes and wishes.

What is the "prayer of faith?"

Faith is total assurance, with no shadow of a doubt, that God is going to do what he promised. Let me say it again. Faith is total assurance without any doubt that God is going to do what He promised. Faith is absolute certainty. Real faith has no room for doubt, has no room for possibilities of error. It has no room for the possibility that God's not answering prayer.

The prayer of faith is the absolute certainty that God is going to answer your prayer and fulfill His promises.

The Biblical View of Hope

If you have any doubt about that, then it is not the prayer of faith, it is a prayer of hope. The biblical view of hope is not the common western view of hope. To our 21st century world, hope is a wish for a good outcome. There is no certainty to it. In the biblical world, hope was an excited expectation. That is why the return of Christ for his church is called "*The Blessed Hope.*" (Titus 2:13) Those who believe in the second coming of Christ have an excited expectation that it may happen at any time. There is not room for suspicion that it might not happen. It is a certain hope. It is not "*The Blessed Wish.*"

Biblical hope is the excited expectation that what God promises will happen. It is an absolute assurance that what God promised, that HE WILL DO. We don't know when Christ will return, but we are certain of it, therefore we wait in excited expectation for that day. We hope in the resurrection, we don't wish it were true and hope it might happen. We know it is true and are absolutely certain it will happen because Christ's resurrection guaranteed it. We just don't know when it will happen.

Now apply that hope principle to your prayer for healing. Are you just hoping for it, or are you excitedly expecting it to happen? Of course, we don't know when or how it will happen, but we pray for it in faith, believing that God has something special in store for us, because He promised it. Faith hangs on to the answer and excitedly waits for it. It expects it to happen either now or later, but it will happen because of God's faithfulness to His promises.

Faith is a Substance

There are many promises in the word of God. Faith is not just believing something to be true, or that something is going to happen. True faith is believing God's promises.

For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ. And so through him the "Amen" is spoken by us to the glory of God. – 2 Corinthians 1:20

"His Word is forever settled in heaven." – Psalm 119:89

"Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." – Matthew 5:18

In Hebrews chapter 11:1, God says,

He King James Version says, "*Faith is the substance of things hoped for.*" The New International Version says, "*Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.*"

I like both translations. The King James Version translated the Greek word as substance. I thought that was a strange word to use here. The Greek word here is the word is *hupostasis* that comes from the idea of stasis, to cause to stand. It was a word used of assaying gold, or weighing gold, to verify that it is a genuine substance, and thus the translator said faith has a substance. Faith then, is an actual thing that has been weighed and found to be real. The Apostle is saying faith is an actual substance, not something imagined. The NIV translation is also correct.

"Now faith is being sure of what we hope for, (not just hoping for it) being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see."

In the past, the church asked religious people to accept doctrines "by faith" without any biblical support. Over time, belief in something for which there is no proof became the most accepted definition of "faith."

This is known as "blind" faith. This is harmful because people then import that made-up definition of "faith" back into the Bible. Often we are told to accept something by faith, implying there is no substance, no reality to it. Faith became

defined as accepting something as real when there is no proof to back it up. So, faith becomes “blind” faith or a wishful thinking.

Your doctor’s diagnosis does not define faith. Faith is about what God says, not what the doctor says. Faith is your absolute trust in God's promises, and His absolute character. Faith is not simply hoping that when you pray God might answer. It's not a flip of a coin. There is no luck with it. It is an absolute certainty.

Have You Ever Really Believed?

When we see it that way, we have to ask ourselves, "Have I ever really had faith? Have I ever really believed God?" Faith is absolute certainty that God will act. I think most of the time, our faith is wishful thinking. The truth is, we are always believing something, either the truth or a lie. Either what God says, or we believe what our emotions feel, or our opinions dictate.

Consider Abraham’s Faith – Romans 4:17-21

¹⁷ He (Abraham) is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed—the God who gives life to the dead and calls things that are not as though they were. ¹⁸ Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, "So shall your offspring be." ¹⁹ Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead--since he was about a hundred years old--and that Sarah's womb was also dead. ²⁰ Yet he did not waver (stagger, vacillate, wobble, double mind) through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, ²¹ being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised. ²² This is why "it was credited to him as righteousness."

I like this definition of faith:

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 he had promised, he was able also to perform.

Six truths that encourage us to believe against all hope, all facts, all realities

1. He Believed in God – was able to raise dead. (Exodus 34)

2. He Faced the Facts – Reality, not mind over matter. (99 years old!)
3. He Did Not Waver – He was not double-minded. (James 1:8)
4. He Grew Strong in Faith – His faith grew stronger. (The Word)
5. He Gave Glory to God – He praised God in the storm. (Job 13:15)
6. He Was Fully Persuaded – God was able & willing to do it. (Eph. 3:20)

"But without faith it is impossible to please Him; for he that comes to God must believe that He is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." – Hebrews 11:6

Prayer is, and always should be, the core of the church. It is the umbilical cord that ties us to the Lord Jesus. Jesus said, *"Without me you can do (accomplish) nothing."* (John 15:5) Paul further expounds this truth in Hebrews 11 when he declares it is virtually impossible to please God without seeking Him, and believing that He hears and answers.

Conditions for Answered Prayer

To put it another way, without being involved in believing prayer, you cannot expect that you can receive any reward from Him. Let's look at the conditions of believing prayer:

I. Believe that He is...

1. He is Able - Jeremiah 32:17, 27
2. He is Sovereign - I Chronicles 29:11
3. He is Still on the Throne - Ephesians 1:18-21
4. He is Listening - Psalm 34:15

II. Believe He rewards "diligent seekers"

1. He Answers - Isaiah 59:1-2
2. He Does More Than We Ask - Ephesians 3:20
3. He Rewards Us - Luke 11:9-13
4. He Blesses His Children - Luke 12:32

Are You a "Believer" or "Doubter"?

God is not a wishing well that we should cast our prayers at His feet and hope for the best. Wishful praying is not praying in faith. It is not part of Jesus' promise that

“Whatever you desire when you pray, believe that you shall have it and it shall be done to you.” (Mark 11:34) Jesus meant “know assuredly” that you will have, not wish hard enough and maybe God will hear you.

What Is This Prayer Faith?

The prayer of faith is God-focused. It is God-centered and God-confident. It is Christ-centered, that is, Christ purchased all the promises of God for us. He paid for them and he died on the cross to prove that he could fulfill them. He rose from the dead to show us that absolute power belongs to him to do everything in heaven and on earth.

The prayer of faith is word-focused. Do you have a Bible? I want you to pick it up. Hold it in your hand. This book is God's word. God does not lie. The word that is contained here is not uncertain. It is not ambiguous. It is not up in the air. It's not false. It's not speculation. It's not wishful thinking. His Word is the absolute truth and is our certainty from God Almighty.

The prayer of faith is promise-focused. Often we say we are believing God's promises, but we can't even articulate what they are? How can we live by them day by day? Jesus said, *“Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.”* (Matthew 4:4) If we don't even know the promises, how can we trust God for His promises?

What does the Scripture say? It says God doesn't promise one thing and give another. He promises even though there is a storm, He will be with you in the storm and through the storm. The disciples feared they were going to be destroyed by the storm on the Sea of Galilee. Think about it. Jesus didn't fear. He was asleep in the boat. When Jesus is in the boat, you have nothing to fear!

Where Are His Promises?

Do we know them? If we haven't hidden them in our hearts, it's no wonder that Satan can come along and distract us and take away the little faith that was in our hearts, because we have no anchor. Our faith is based on hope and wishes, rather than on God, Christ, his word, and his promises.

There was an 80-year-old woman in my church with whom I have never had a conversation in which she did not bleed scriptures. Every conversation she had was filled with quotations from God's word. It was not a forced thing. She was not trying to impress me. She talked that way. She lived that way. She believed that way.

When I'm 80, I want to bleed scripture. I want the promises of God to be pouring out of me to everybody I meet. I want their anchor to be not in me, not in my testimony, not in my experience, but in the Lord Jesus Christ and his promises, which he says are "yes and amen" throughout all eternity. God wants us to believe His promises, but we can't believe what we don't possess. We cannot possess what we don't even know.

I want to challenge you to learn the promises of God. We have a PDF document of 365 promises from Scripture covering a wide range of topics on our web site at www.PrayerToday.org. I challenge you not just to learn them, or quote them, or read them once in a while. I challenge you to pray them. Believe them. I challenge you to excitedly expect them to happen. They are to be the anchor of your soul.

Where Can We Get More Faith

"Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God." – Romans 10:17

We need to understand that faith is a gift from God. Faith is His gift. It's not something we earn. It's not something we come up with on our own, but it's something that God gives us as a gift. The day that you received Jesus Christ as Savior, you didn't pump up your faith and get enough to be saved. God gave you faith to believe. You took that faith, and you embraced it, and you trusted Christ as your Savior. The same principle is true for faith in anything in life, for your marriage, for your money, for your medical health. It needs to be a faith that is a gift of God.

If faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God, then why aren't we reading it every day? Faith is related to His word, just as my heart is related to His word.

First, ask God for it.

If you don't yet have it, ask God for it. Do like the man whose son had epilepsy, and kept falling into the fire, and the disciples tried to deliver him and they couldn't, and he came to Jesus and Jesus said, "Do you have faith to believe it?" and he says, "Lord, I believe. Help my unbelief." (Mark 9:24) Give me the faith to believe and trust you. I don't have enough on my own, and Jesus did that willingly. He gives us faith if we're willing to trust him.

Second, Get Close to Jesus.

James said in chapter four, "*Draw near to God and he will draw near to you.*" (James 4:8) Spend time alone with God. Prayer is scary to many people. That is because we treat prayer as asking God for stuff. Prayer is not supposed to be about asking. Jesus said, "*The Father knows the things you need before you ask Him.*" Prayer is about getting alone somewhere (Jesus said, "*in a closet.*") closing the door, and communing with the Father. (Matthew 6:6) It is about spending time with God. It is about quieting your busy mind and being still in the presence of God. It is about listening more than speaking. This is an eternal principle. If you do not draw near to Him, He will not draw near to you. If you don't love Him, He'll love you in return, but you won't experience His love. We need to spend time alone with God.

Third, Hear God's Word.

Faith doesn't come by listening to worship music, although that is good. Faith doesn't come by going to church or listening to the preacher, but I hope you do. There is only one place to get faith. Faith comes by hearing the word of God. It comes by reading the Bible. It comes by studying the word. It comes by memorizing the word. Faith is anchored to the word. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God.

The more we read God's word and make it a regular part of our life, the more God grants us faith, because faith comes through this word. Finally, faith comes through finding the promises of God; by reading them, by thinking about them, by memorizing them, by repeating them out loud, and by praying them back to God.

Think About It

Chapter 12:

Defining Faith – Part 3: Believe He Rewards

Does God always answer your prayers?

Which of your prayers has God not answered?

Have you ever been disappointed with God? When? Why?

How do you feel when God doesn't answer your prayer?

