

Dear Friend,

All of us want our faith to produce results in the earth. One of the classic teachings in the Bible on faith is the following:

Mar 11:22-26 And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God. (23) For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith. (24) Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive *them*, and ye shall have *them*. (25) And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. (26) But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.

Teachers often separate these verses into three categories:

1. The authority and power of the words we speak.
2. The prayer of faith.
3. Forgive others as we have been forgiven.

I also sometimes separate them because there is so much to learn about each subject. But today let's consider them all three together for just a moment. Jesus taught all three principles together for a reason. All three are necessary if our faith is going to be effective.

In all my years as a Christian, I have found that if I am living in unforgiveness toward anybody, my faith will be weak. If I doubt the Lord will hear and answer my prayers, my faith is weak. If I say all sorts of things that I don't really mean, my faith is weak.

Let us be honest. Most people do not believe the words they speak will come to pass. That is easy to prove because we often say things like, "You children are driving me crazy." Or, "This headache is killing me." We know those words are not true. We get in the habit of saying things that we know are not true. This damages our confidence. We then doubt that our words carry authority when we speak. All of this changes as we mature in the Lord.

God is merciful and longsuffering with us. He understands that we are not born again fully mature. He knows we come into the kingdom of God as little children. He knows that there is a growth process and He often makes great allowances for us when we are new Christians, and our faith is immature.

What do children ask for? Toys and sweets, the things that make them happy. I remember so well how the Lord answered my childish, somewhat selfish, prayer requests when I was freshly born again. In those days, my prayers centered around what "I" thought "I" needed. Things like a better car, a better job, a new shirt. We were children as Christians, and our "desires" were childlike. The Lord is so gracious, patient and kind. Just like a parent buys toys for their children, the Lord answered our childish prayers again and again.

But in the same way we do not expect a thirty-year-old child of ours to be asking for a tricycle, the Lord expects our "desires" to mature as we spend time studying the Word of God, time in prayer, time in worship, and time in fasting. As we do these things we are progressively changed into the image of Christ, and our "desires" change as we mature.

Eph 4:13-15 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: (14) That we *henceforth* be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, *and* cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; (15) But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, *even* Christ:

“What things so ever we **desire**.” Today my desires are so different than those early years. I want Christ to live through this body. I want the will of my heavenly Father to be done on the earth. I ache to see every person born again so they can live forever in God’s presence. I want every person’s body to be healed of whatever affliction the devil has put upon them. I want every child in the world to have enough to eat, to have a safe place to live, and to have a loving family that knows how to teach them about Christ.

In a nutshell, my life now is about “seeking first the kingdom of God” ... and as I do that ... I find that all those childish desires I used to pray for, are taken care of by my Father which is in heaven. This is what Jesus promised us:

Mat 6:31-33 Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (32) (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. (33) But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and **all these things shall be added unto you.**

Don’t get me wrong, I still ask for things. But they are the necessary things I need to be about my Father’s business. My fifteen-year-old computer recently crashed. (Did you hear that? That computer lasted 15 years. That’s a miracle in itself!)

Of course, I asked my heavenly Father for another computer because Jesus said your heavenly Father knows what you have need of before you “ask Him.” That means we are still supposed to ask Him.

Joh 16:23-24 And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give *it* you. (24) **Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.**

But the difference now is, the computer itself is no longer my “desire.” At one time I wanted a new computer just because I wanted a new computer ... like a child wants a new toy.

Now my “desire” is to do the work I’ve been called to do in my Father’s kingdom. His “kingdom” is my desire ... and the computer is simply a tool I need to do the work He has called me to do. He wants me to do the work and He knows I need a computer to do it.

It is so wonderful when our desires line up with His desires. Faith becomes easy. You know your prayers are heard. You know your prayers are answered. When you pray, of course you believe you receive when you pray, because you know it is His will for you.

We all want to have 100-fold faith the first time we pray. People often want to mature super-fast, but Jesus told us that faith grows much like plants grow.

Mar 4:30-32 And he said, Whereunto shall we liken the kingdom of God? or with what comparison shall we compare it? (31) *It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when it is sown in the earth, is less than all the seeds that be in the earth:* (32) **But when it is sown, it groweth up, and becometh greater than all herbs, and shooteth out great branches; so that the fowls of the air may lodge under the shadow of it.**

The type of mustard plant they have in Israel grows from a little seed that is about the size of a pepper grain. Yet it grows to be a tree about fifteen feet tall. Think about this; have you ever sat and watched a tree grow? Picture yourself sitting in a chair watching for a tree to grow right after you plant the seed. You watch all day the first day. Nothing. The second day you sit and watch all day. Nothing.

You begin to think this is not working at all. But it is working all the time. Underground, where you can't see it, growth is taking place. Maturity is taking place. The point is ... you cannot rush maturity. Just like a six-year-old boy wants to be a firefighter, that does not mean he is mature enough to be a firefighter yet.

This is where we must rely on the Holy Spirit. He is the one who has been sent to guide us into all truth. Our job is to love the Lord, study His Word, spend time in worship and fasting, praying in the Spirit ... and as we give ourselves to those things ... slowly ... like a tree growing ... we are maturing and growing up into Christ. His desires are becoming our desires and when we pray ... our faith is genuine ... and it will produce results in the earth.

Your friend and co-laborer,

GARY