

Dear Friend,

As we near the end of 2022, I hear the words of Jesus speaking loudly in my spirit saying, "Have faith in God." [Mark 11:22] That seems like such a simple truth, but it is not always easy to obey, especially in this season when it "appears" so much is going wrong. It is easy to "have faith in God" when everything is going well in our lives. But when everything appears to be going wrong, do we still have faith in God?

Paul wrote his understanding of having faith in God during extremely difficult circumstances. Everything appeared to be going wrong at the time, yet Paul told us the secret of continuing to have faith in God in the midst of hardship:

2Co 4:8-9 *We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; (9) Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed;*

This whole year has been full of many circumstances like that. We have been troubled on every side. What is our duty? To not be distressed [troubled, worried, distraught].

Circumstances have caused us to be perplexed [puzzled, baffled, confused]. When I am perplexed, it seems like I simply don't know what to do. Yet what is my duty? To not be in despair [hopelessness, gloom, despondency].

When we are persecuted for His name's sake, we must remember He has not forsaken us. When people cast us down, we must remember they have no power to destroy us.

How are we to have "faith in God" during difficult times? Paul gives us the answer at the end of the chapter:

2Co 4:18 *While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.*

There is no such thing as "faith in God" without having faith in God's Word. God and His Word are one. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. Said more simply, faith believes what God says.

Mat 4:4 But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

This has always been the truth, as illustrated in the Garden of Eden. God had told Adam,

Gen 2:17 But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.

Satan directly contradicted God's Word when he told Eve,

Gen 3:4 And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die:

We know what happens next. Eve ate the forbidden fruit. It is so important to notice that **Adam was with her** when she did.

Gen 3:6 And when the woman saw that the tree *was* good for food, and that it *was* pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make *one* wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.

Adam watched Eve eat the forbidden fruit. He is looking to see if she falls down dead or not. God said she would die. The serpent said she would not die. Who was telling the truth? Adam had no way of perceiving spiritual death. He was totally depending on what his five physical senses told him. Everything he could see, touch, feel, hear, and smell told him ... Eve did not die. Adam based his decision on what was "seen" instead of God's "Word" and sin was the result.

It helps me to say it this way: Living by sight instead of living by faith in God's Word was the way out of the blessing of God. The only way back in is to live by faith in God's Word instead of living by faith in what you see.

Paul says the secret is to keep our focus on what is not seen, rather than on what is seen. Get your eyes off the persecution, the circumstances, the perplexities and keep them on God's Word instead. This knowledge caused Paul and Silas to worship and praise God at midnight when they were beaten and held captive in the Philippian jail. They focused on the eternal rather than the temporary, and it so pleased the Lord that an earthquake loosed the bands and opened the prison doors.

No matter the difficulties you are facing, don't focus on what is seen. Focus on the eternal truth of God's Word. Have faith in God! You are not forsaken, You are not destroyed. You are not hopeless. God is for you. God is with you. God is your Helper.

Php 4:4-8 Rejoice in the Lord always: *and* again I say, Rejoice. (5) Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord *is* at hand. (6) Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. (7) And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. (8) Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things *are* honest, whatsoever things *are* just, whatsoever things *are* pure, whatsoever things *are* lovely, whatsoever things *are* of good report; if *there be* any virtue, and if *there be* any praise, think on these things.

Let me remind you again, "The best is yet to come!" Have faith in God!

Your co-laborer for Christ,

GARY