

THE JUST SHALL LIVE BY FAITH

Part 3

Choose to Believe God!

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About two or three weeks ago we began looking at a new series on how “The just shall live by faith”. I think that we are coming to realize, hopefully, that faith is something that is very important to us all.

Romans 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith."

That expression “The just shall live by faith” appears three other times in scripture, and it is a very true statement. The just, hopefully that would be you and me, shall *live by* faith. So it is implying that faith is not some sort of a luxury, or nice to have. It says the just man or woman shall actually *live their lives by faith*. It is probably two weeks since we last talked about this topic. Last week we detoured to look at the real Nativity story. But in the two or three weeks since we last spoke, has faith been a key part of your life, of my life? Has it been central to our day-to-day living, or is today the first time we have thought about it since two weeks ago? Well, the scripture says that the just will be living by faith. It is not something that we just "switch on" once in a blue moon. You and I are to *live daily* by faith.

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

I think that we all recognize that God wants us to be pleasing to Him, and He is delighted when we are pleasing to Him. So, if faith is necessary to please Him then it is not going to be

something that has been made unreachable. To you and me, as believers, having faith should be just "natural." It might be very unnatural in the world, but you and I are not just in the world, we claim to *be believers*. Living by faith is what the just DO; hence we can be pleasing to God because we do have faith. We have seen previously that faith is not reliant on the five physical senses; although they are vitally important. But, the five physical senses, great as they are, do not operate in the spirit realm. Faith *transcends* the mere physical evidence.

II Corinthians 5:7 For we walk by faith, not by sight.

Walking, in a sense, meaning *how* we live. Of course, the just shall live by faith and not by sight. You and I are to walk by faith and not by sight, or by relying on the five physical senses. They are great, there is no question about that, but there are times when you and I have to deal with *spiritual reality*. If we try to do that based upon what we are seeing, what we are hearing with our ears, what we can reach out and touch, then we will get into trouble, because that is not how *the spirit realm* operates. As Paul says here, we walk, we conduct our lives, and we live our lives *by faith*, NOT by sight. There are times when you have to do what God says, believe it and trust in Him, irrespective of the physical evidence. I am going to title this message: "Choose to Believe God". We will see why as we carry on. But *choose* to believe God, and *choose* to walk by faith and not by sight.

Hebrews 11:1 Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

This is where we see a definition of faith. Obviously you cannot walk by sight if you are dealing with things that you cannot see — and faith is the evidence of things not seen. It does not say things which are *not real*; it says that faith is the evidence of things *not seen* with the physical eyes. It says that faith is the evidence, and other words could be *the assurance*, the PROOF, and the conviction. So faith is not some sort of a wishy washy hopeful thinking, faith is the *substance* of things hoped for. Faith is what gives hope its *substance*; healing perhaps, or a financial blessing. You could hope and hope all of your life and die hoping, but faith is what *gives substance* to that hope. Faith is the evidence of things not seen.

The Amplified translation adds the words “faith perceiving *as real fact* what is not revealed to the senses”. So faith says, ‘I believe as a fact that such and such is the case, even though there is no evidence to my physical senses, but the evidence that I have is my faith’. You could translate verse one as: “Faith is the assurance of things confidently expected; the proof and evidence of things not yet seen.”

We saw last time that we spoke, that the function of faith is not *to move God!* We spent some time looking at that, because some people’s concept of God is a bit strange, and I guess it depends how we grew up. Some people’s idea of God is that He is really quite a difficult Being, quite hard-hearted, quite reluctant and rather dismissive of these poor "worms" down on planet Earth. I am exaggerating for effect, but some people have a view that God is a little bit of a difficult character, awkward to deal with, and they think that they have to get everything exactly right, or God will come and "get you!"

There was a lovely girl in the church years ago, and she had been brought up in an Irish Catholic family (which always brings problems). I was brought up in a part Irish Catholic family, so I know what the problems are like. But, her idea of God was that He really was like a demon. She thought if you step out of line just once, innocently, God is there to *get you*. That honestly was her version of God; she thought that He was so hard and tough. Some people have a view of God a bit like that, and therefore they think somehow they have to "work up" this faith. They think that it is desperately hard, and that God puts these incredible challenges on us, and He requires us to work up and produce this strange mystical thing called faith. They think that if they get enough faith they can *move God* to help them. No, our faith does not move God; God does not need to move! It is not the purpose of faith *to move God*. Our faith may move mountains, but it does not move God. We are not pressurizing God when we produce faith. God does not need to move.

Faith is the means by which we reach out into the invisible reality *and receive* what God has already made provision for. God is gracious, and He is disposed to show us favor; that is the way that He is. God is not hard, not difficult, and not deaf in both ears. He is not too busy, off in some far part of the universe, and not paying attention. God has made available to us everything

that we need. Everything that pertains to life and godliness has been made available, but you and I have *to receive it*. We can see some illustrations of God's attitude and His willingness to give:

Matthew 7:7-11 "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you." "For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened." Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? "Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent? "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!

The point is not that God gives good things; the point is that God is *far more willing* to give good things to His sons and daughters than we are to give necessary things to our children. God is not distant, uncaring, remote, or too busy; He is aware at all times of what we need *before* we are aware. We do not go to God and surprise Him when we ask for His help in a situation. God knows our needs long before *we* become alert to them. When we go to God we are not trying to force Him, persuade Him and move Him, because God already desires to give. "...*How much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!*" We do have to ask, and we must acknowledge our source, and recognize our good God and thank Him. We saw before that faith is reaching out and receiving what God has made available for us. When we see Jesus in action we know that we are seeing the Father, because Jesus said that He only does what the Father showed Him to do and told Him to do.

Matthew 8:1-2 When He had come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed Him. And behold, a leper came and worshiped Him, saying, "Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean."

Lepers were in a difficult position in those days, as they would be today, and they looked pretty horrible and were shunned by society. Here he managed to make his way to Jesus, and he has heard what Jesus had been doing elsewhere. He understands that Jesus has the power, He has the ability, but he does not know if Jesus would *be willing* to use it on him. Anybody today who believes that there is a God believes that God *would be able* to do things. If you believe it is God

at all, you believe that He is all-powerful. There are many sincere Christians who believe that God *can heal*, but have absolutely no confidence that He is prepared to use it, at least for them. So what is the answer with the leper? Is Jesus willing, is the Father willing? Or did they turn the guy away and tell him it was "good for his character" that he live in a cave for another twenty years; it really develops perseverance, resourcefulness and resilience? 'These are eternal qualities far superior to the fact that you have diseased skin, clear off!' No, that is not how Jesus responds to requests for help!

Matthew 8:3 Then Jesus put out His hand and touched him, saying, "I am willing; be cleansed." Immediately his leprosy was cleansed.

So the answer to 'Is Jesus willing?' is 'Yes'. He said so, and it is not for you and me to say, 'Well I do not think that He will in this case'. The leper did not have access to the scriptures as we do, so he did not know a great deal, but you and I do. We should *know* and we have to know that we know that we know. We have to *be sure* of God's will and we do need absolute knowledge of God's will and His promises. We cannot just rely on our own ideas, our opinions of what God will or will not do. Or potentially worse, maybe other church member's ideas of what God will or will not do. Or other church traditions that we have inherited, in or out of the Church of God. We have to *know* God's will and know that we know it. For example, when it comes to healing, there are some Church of God websites that say you can pray for *healing three times*, but if you are not healed on those *three occasions* then it is not God's will, so stop — no further requests are permitted or allowed. That is complete nonsense, and it is twisting scripture. This means keeping people in bondage to someone's weird idea of what the scripture says. But if *you know* the word of God well enough, then you will not be fooled by such nonsense. Faith absolutely needs *the knowledge of the truth*; knowledge of the will of God.

Romans 10:17 So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

We can stretch that a wee bit and say faith comes by hearing, and hearing, and hearing, and hearing, and hearing and hearing the word of God. It takes time for our minds to be renewed, but faith comes not by prayer and fasting primarily, but faith comes *by hearing the word of God*. It

is if we put our noses into the Book and get to know what God says that He is, what God says that He has done, what God says that He will do, and what God says that you and I must do. This is not something that we get from watching the television or talking to unbelievers in or out of the church. Faith comes by hearing and hearing *the word of God*. We do not have a faith problem we have a *Word problem*. Our faith can never rise above the level of our knowledge of the Word.

If our knowledge of the word is poor then our faith will be impoverished. If our knowledge of the word is good, then our faith will be good.

I John 5:14 Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, 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 the petitions that we have asked of Him.

This sounds like a pretty good couple of verses, very positive. If we ask in accordance with His will, we know that God will hear us, and when He hears us, and we know that *we have* the petitions. God is going to say *Yes, Amen*, to what we ask in accordance with His will, but of course the question then is *how do we know* His will? Well, it is in the Word. Surprise, surprise - faith comes by hearing *the word of God*. It is not just what *you think* God might do, not what *you hope* God might do, what you wish that God would do, or what you absolutely desperately need God to do, but it is what *He said* in His Word. If He has said it in His word then fine, if He has not, well you are in danger of moving into foolishness. God's will is disclosed and revealed *in His Word*.

I mentioned before the guy in the church some years ago and his idea of finding out about God's will was foolishness in a number of ways. There was one occasion and he was lying in his bed in the morning, and he was not sure whether he should get up and go to work (!). Well now Scripture does say, 'Six days shall you labor and do all of your work' and so on. But anyway, he said to God, 'Well God I want to do your will, and I do not want to go to work today if it is not your will. So see that spider up in the ceiling in that crack nearby? If the spider walks across that crack that will be a sign of your will that I go to work. If the spider stays where he is and

does not pass the crack, then that is a sign of your will that I have to stay in bed'. So he stayed in bed. The spider was probably asleep on the ceiling and that was the end of that.

We do not find out God's will by staring at spiders; we find out God's will by looking at his Word. Faith comes by hearing the Word of God. If we ask anything according to His will, says John, we know that He hears us. So the question again is, "Do you and I know God's will, do we know His Word, and do we *know that we know?* Are we *really sure*, or is it all just a wee bit vague?" 'Well I thought God said such and such, but nothing has happened, maybe I misunderstood'. Well, maybe we did misunderstand, but that suggests that we really did not know that we know.

We need to get our noses into the Word of God, and it should be our priority. We should be spending many hours a week, and not five minutes here and there. You cannot say, 'Well, I have read my chapter a day today, job done,' and tick off the box. It is good to read a chapter or two a day, but that is not feeding off God's Word, to read five minutes here or there. Most of us would not live terribly well if we had five minutes eating a week. Most of us would be dead pretty rapidly. God's Word is no less important, and if we are going to know God's will which comes from His Word, then we have to invest the time in it. If we do not, then we can forget pleasing God that much; because without faith He is not pleased, and faith comes by hearing the Word.

How much time do you and I spend in the Word of God? You can answer that question. There was a question set some years ago in a church of God where the minister did say, "How long did you pray today?" Other questions were: "When was the last time you prayed for half an hour or more?" "When was the last time you fasted apart from the Day of Atonement?" The answers were revealing. You can see why God's people have not always been terribly successful because there is a large amount of carnality pretending to be good Christians. You and I must get our noses into the Book. If we are not sure of what God has said then it is easy to fall into doubt.

James 1:5 If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.

There is a pretty plain promise from Jesus' half brother. If any of us lacks wisdom about a particular situation we can ask of God. He gives wisdom generously, abundantly and does not reproach and say, "Not you again, did you not learn anything last time? I am not giving you any more wisdom, you just spoil it". That is not the way that God responds, thankfully. It says, "without reproach," meaning God just gives it.

James 1:6 But let him ask in faith, *with no doubting*, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind.

There is no sense of direction, blowing one way and then another way.

James 1:7 For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord;

If he is asking with doubting then he will not receive anything.

James 1:8 he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

The question would be what *is doubt?* We are told to ask in faith; God has promised to provide wisdom so we can ask in faith, but with no doubting. Otherwise we are like the wave tossed around in the ocean. Doubting is the Greek word, '*diakrino*' and the meaning is to halt between two opinions, to fail to judge between two or more options. If you are out jogging, (that may have been a long time for many of us), and you come to a fork in the path and if you know where you are going you just carry on running at speed. You take the right fork and away you go, but if you are not sure, you stop at that fork in the path and have to think which one takes you where you want to go. You hesitate, and you are no longer running at speed, you have now actually stopped and you are uncertain as to whether you go to the left or to the right. That is '*diakrino*': you are judging between two or more different ways and we cannot do that when it is question of taking God's Word or other physical evidence - there is only *one correct choice*.

To doubt is to stand there like it says in verse 8, "*a double-minded man.*" "Well I believe God, yes I am trusting God. Hmmm nothing has happened, maybe it is not God's will for me. On the

other hand God's word says ... " and that person is in two minds' – *diakrino* - they are failing to judge between two choices, two ways. Unfortunately for us, we do have to choose. We have to choose *what God says*, or we have to choose *our* opinions, to believe our sensory evidence or to believe the "great insights" of our fellow church members. Or do we choose to go according to God's Word? To doubt is to stand there, halting between two or more opinions. Until *you make a choice* you just stand there hovering, stand there wavering, stand there doubting and you have not made a choice.

Romans 4:18 who, contrary to hope, in hope believed, so that he became the father of many nations, according to what was spoken, "So shall your descendants be."

Abram had a promise, the word spoken by God. It said "*who, contrary in hope, in hope believed...*" Well *naturally* there was no hope, he was an old man and his old lady was an old lady. Sarai was barren even when she was young, and here she was 90 years old, so there was no chance. So there was no hope in the natural, but nonetheless Abraham had hope in the spirit. So contrary to natural hope, in the hope that God's word brings, he believed, so that he became the father of many nations, according to what was spoken, "So shall your descendants be."

Romans 4:19 And not being weak in faith, he did not consider his own body, already dead (since he was about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah's womb.

Abraham did not consider the physical evidence. He did not rely on it or give it the dominant position. He was aware of it, but did not give credence to that, and he did not consider or focus on what his physical senses told him.

Romans 4:20 He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God,

He was not undecided, he was not thinking, 'On the one hand God says that He is going to multiply my descendants as the sand of the sea, but on the other hand Sarah is ninety years old

and barren. Now, I could believe God or I could go with my physical senses. Which one will it be?' Well that is doubting.

Romans 4:21-22 and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform. And therefore "it was accounted to him for righteousness."

Abraham believed God despite and contrary to the quite strong physical evidence. He chose to believe God. It says that he was "fully convinced," and the King James says, "fully persuaded." You know that you are in faith when you are *fully persuaded*, and you are not stuck between two decisions — Will God come through and deliver or does He want me to suffer to teach me a lesson? Will God heal me or did He put this sickness on me? Those are people who are staggering, wavering and halting between two opinions. James said: "Let not that man [or that woman for that matter], think he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double minded man and unstable in all of his ways". You and I must *choose to believe*. We must be fully persuaded, fully convinced. Fully means completely, totally. Abraham was fully persuaded, not fixing his mind and thoughts on the physical.

We have seen before in II Corinthians 4 that it says that we look not at the things which are seen, but we look at things which *are not seen*. The things that are seen it says are temporary, meaning *subject to change*. There is no point on focusing on physical things if God's word says otherwise, because the physical things *can change*. In the case of Sarah, her dead womb changed. Abraham despite his age was able to become a father; and along came Isaac, the son of promise. Physical things can change immediately, or over a few days, so given a choice of believing the word of God or believing what we see and hear — well, we can go with God's Word because the physical things which we might otherwise want to rely on can *change*.

We have to know God's Word well enough, almost like the back of our hands. If you do not know it, if we "sort of" know God's Word "more or less," but we are a *bit vague* or a bit out of condition, then when an apparent contradiction comes along, when the physical evidence contradicts the word of God, we will be in danger of wavering. We will be doubting whether God has *really said* that He will deliver us. We should be like Abraham in that sense; there are

times when we must *not consider* the physical evidence. We have to choose to believe God and just make that decision. It is not natural, but then after all you and I are not supposed to be just natural, are we? We are supposed to be people who walk in the *supernatural*.

Romans 8:5 For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.

The mind that you and I have is not supposed to be just a natural mind; things that the natural man might find foolish should make sense to us. There are two types of mind. There is the natural and fleshly mind that everyone around us has (and maybe some of us too?), which is a mind that is influenced by, and moved by, the things of the flesh. But those who live according to the spirit, they set their mind on the *things of the spirit*.

Romans 8:6 For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.

To be carnally minded is to be fleshly minded; to be sense minded or sense dominated. A fleshly minded, the sort that you and I once had, and maybe in some cases still have too much of, and which the world around us has, relies on the physical senses of the flesh. It makes perfect sense driving a car — you do need eyes and ears and so on. But, if that is all that we have, if we are carnally minded and our mind only operates in the fleshly realm, it says that to be carnally minded is actually death.

Romans 8:7-8 Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

And, of course, without faith you cannot please God, and a fleshly mind is one that does not operate in faith; it operates only by what I can see, what I can touch, what I can hear, that is what will allow me to make my decisions. Everything must be in the flesh, must be hard physical evidence for me to do anything. That is a carnal, fleshly, natural mind, which does not please God because there is no faith there.

Romans 12:1-2 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

To walk by faith requires you and me to renew our minds. It is not natural, it is supernatural. We renew our minds by feeding them on the word of God so that God's word, His promises are more real to us than what our physical senses try to tell us. It takes time in the word to have a mind renewed to that point.

Titus 1:2 in hope of eternal life which God, *who cannot lie*, promised before time began,

Romans 3:3-4 For what if some did not believe? Will their unbelief make the faithfulness of God without effect? Certainly not! Indeed, *let God be true* but every man a liar. As it is written: "That You may be justified in Your words, And may overcome when You are judged."

God will always be proven true; every time and every situation, whether you are Job, Solomon, no matter who.

If you and I are looking at God's Word, and there is something else that contradicts God's Word, whether it is physical conditions, finances, other people — God will always turn out to be right. We will have to face that choice a number of times in our lives. Are we fully persuaded that what God has said *is true*? Is it so very hard to believe God when God cannot lie? Faith is far more powerful because it is based upon the word of a Being who cannot lie, and with that faith we can overcome anything.

I John 5:4 For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.

Another option to "born" is *begotten*. Victory is a strong word and it applies to people who are *more than conquerors*. You and I are not to be downtrodden and defeated; we have a great Commander in Chief, but it does require us to believe God. We must live by faith, and choose to

believe God and let every other man be a liar. That faith is *the victory* that overcomes the world, its pulls and its contradictions, because we have a foundation. The Word of a God who cannot lie, and we choose to believe that Word and we choose not to consider the physical evidence surrounding us one way or another. On the other hand, if we rely on our own intellect, on our own resources, and only what our senses validate for us, then the world will overcome us, because we are not that strong. To overcome the world requires faith. If we choose to rely on our own super duper mental powers and intellectual abilities, then the world will eventually overwhelm and overcome us.

Proverbs 3:5-6 Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths.

It says, "Trust in the Lord." Now you have this choice ahead of you. You have the physical evidence on one side and the Word of God on the other side. Which way are you going to go, and which choice are you going to make? The scripture is quite plain, "*Trust in the Lord with all your heart.*" Do not lean on your own intellectual analysis. "*And lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths.*"

It says trust in the Lord; it means trust in the Lord's Word, because that is how we connect to God. He gives us His word and faith comes by hearing the Word of God, and it is our choice. Even though it may look like foolishness, or even like it is impossible for it to happen. ("Therefore in this case I am going to rely on my own abilities and thoughts"). No — trust in the Lord and His Word. Not trusting in God's Word is foolishness, and you cannot just trust in your own view of things and hope that God will bail you out.

Earlier I mentioned the guy with the spider. On one occasion when we were out on a picnic with him, in the Derbyshire Dales, and there are many reasonable sized peaks there. We were actually down below one of them by a little stream having some sandwiches. He said, "I can walk up that peak there to the very top of the edge of that cliff and I could walk off it and God would pick me up and bring me down safely to the ground below, because I have faith that God will do that". Well, the answer is that is not faith, that is foolishness, and that is

presumptuousness. I had to step in and tell him not to walk off the top of the cliff because he would be dog meat at the bottom. Even Jesus said to Satan "let us not put God to the test." But this guy was just using his own weird ideas. The scripture says not to lean unto your own understanding. Find out what God's Word says and rely on it. Your faith is based upon the Word of God. There are times when you and I just have to switch off our intellect, our reasoning, our human carnal analysis. If God's Word is plain, irrespective of what our carnal minds tells us, we have to choose to go with the plain Word. If we choose to ignore the Word of God and rely upon our own great intellects we stand to miss out potentially on a blessing, and potentially miss out on a lot more than that.

Luke 5:1-3 So it was, as the multitude pressed about Him to hear the word of God, that He stood by the Lake of Gennesaret, and saw two boats standing by the lake; but the fishermen had gone from them and were washing their nets. Then He got into one of the boats, which was Simon's, and asked him to put out a little from the land. And He sat down and taught the multitudes from the boat.

So Jesus preaches to the audience for a while from the bank.

Luke 5:4 When He had stopped speaking, He said to Simon, "Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch."

It looks like Jesus felt that because he had used Simon's boat for a while he would give him a blessing to get some fish .

Luke 5:5 But Simon answered and said to Him, "Master, we have toiled all night and caught nothing; nevertheless at Your word I will let down the net."

The physical evidence that Peter had was insurmountable — there were no fish. 'By the way Lord Jesus, I am a fisherman. Me fisherman — you preacher. I know about fish and you do not. I have been here thirty years fishing and we know about fish, there are no fish. By the way Lord Jesus it is daytime and the fish are out at night. So basically forget it'. And most of what he

would have said would have been broadly correct. He was an experienced fisherman who knows that there are no fish. But had he relied purely on the physical evidence he would have lost potentially quite a bit of money. But he was thankfully just about able to hang in there and said, “*Nevertheless— at Your word I will let down the net.*” That is the same choice that you and I have to learn to make; the physical evidence might be really pretty negative —“Nevertheless God, at your Word I will do such and such.”

Luke 5:6 6-8 And when they had done this, they caught a great number of fish, and their net was breaking. So they signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink. When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus’ knees, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!"

Peter was a bit embarrassed, and rightly so. There is Peter who almost reasoned himself out of a great blessing. If he had relied purely upon his intellect, his analysis, his experience as a fisherman, and repudiated the word of Jesus he would have lost a lot of money. But he was fortunate that he did not quite go that far.

Luke 5:17 Now it happened on a certain day, as He was teaching, that there were Pharisees and teachers of the law sitting by, who had come out of every town of Galilee, Judea, and Jerusalem. And the power of the Lord was present to heal them.

Here are the Pharisees and the Scribes, the experts in the law (or the Jewish version of it); and they are all in this house where Jesus is teaching. It says that, “*power of the Lord was present to heal THEM.*” God is not a respecter of persons, as we know, so healing was available *to all* who were there. But it turns out that only *one person* gets healed, only one received. Yet the power was present to heal them all, so what happened?

Luke 5:18-19 Then behold, men brought on a bed a man who was paralyzed, whom they sought to bring in and lay before Him. And when they could not find how they might bring him in, because of the crowd, they went up on the housetop and let him down with his bed through the tiling into the midst before Jesus.

They did not turn away, they had an active faith, they took action and were not easily moved; they were going to get this guy to Jesus come hell or high water.

Luke 5:20 When He saw their faith, He said to him, "Man, your sins are forgiven you."

How do you *see* faith? Well, you see faith by actions; faith has works. So here the works demonstrate the faith.

Luke 5:21 And the scribes and the Pharisees *began to reason*, saying, "Who is this who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone?"

So they did not watch and learn, but they began *to reason* that this did not make sense; they said that it was contrary to their beliefs. They said, 'Who does this man think that He is? If anyone is holy around here it is us Pharisees'.

Luke 5:22 But when Jesus perceived their thoughts, He answered and said to them, "Why are you reasoning in your hearts?"

Unfortunately their reasoning took them out of God's blessing. The power of God was there to heal *them*, but only one man was healed that we know of. The problem was that the Pharisees and the Scribes started reasoning, using their great intellects, their insights and their knowledge.

Luke 5:23-25 "Which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Rise up and walk'?" "But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins" —He said to the man who was paralyzed, "I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go to your house." Immediately he rose up before them, took up what he had been lying on, and departed to his own house, glorifying God.

You and I have to be careful not to be like the Pharisees here. We must watch that we do not start reasoning. It may take some time to renew our minds to learn to see the invisible. But once

God's word is clear, it is wrong to reject it in favor of our reasoning, intellect or the opinions of others. We have to just believe God's word.

John 20:19-20 Then, the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, "Peace be with you." When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord.

One person who was not there was Thomas.

John 20:24-25 Now Thomas, called the Twin, one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said to him, "We have seen the Lord." So he said to them, "Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe."

Well, Jesus was highly unimpressed.

John 20:26-30 And after eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, "Peace to you!" Then He said to Thomas, "Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing." And Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said to him, "Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book;

He was quite firm with Thomas and told him that he was wrong for not believing *before he saw* the evidence physically. Jesus had spoken many times about His resurrection and this meant that Thomas did not believe the words of His Lord and Master. Thomas preferred to believe that Jesus was dead and he did not care what Jesus had told him beforehand. 'Unless I see him with my own eyes and touch him with my own hands, I will not believe'. So Jesus said, 'Wrong,

wrong, wrong, you cannot do that'. If you and I ignore God's Word or push it to one side and say, 'Unless *I see* something, I am not going to believe', then that is not good, that is not what Jesus said. Sometimes circumstances change, and you can get negative news, and the physical evidence may apparently contradict the Word, and we get a challenge to our faith. What we do when our faith is challenged and the decision that we make can be vital. It can be life and death.

Mark 5:35 While He was still speaking, some came from the ruler of the synagogue's house who said, "Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the Teacher any further?"

'It is too late Jairus, you may as well give up, the physical evidence is there. While she was alive perhaps this Man could have come and done something for her, but it is too late now she is dead'.

Mark 5:36 As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, He said to the ruler of the synagogue, "Do not be afraid; only believe."

'Do not fear Jairus, just believe. You have a choice Jairus. You can listen to your friends and consider the evidence of your daughter's body, now dead — or you can believe. You showed faith earlier saying come and lay hands on her and she will live; now Jairus, fear not, choose to believe'. Jesus needed Jairus to believe. When Jesus went to His own hometown once, He could do no mighty works there, because they would not believe. Jesus said, 'Jairus do not change, do not fear, do not rely on the physical evidence, just continue to only believe'.

Mark 5:37 And He permitted no one to follow Him except Peter, James, and John the brother of James. Then He came to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and saw a tumult and those who wept and wailed loudly. When He came in, He said to them, "Why make this commotion and weep? The child is not dead, but sleeping." And they ridiculed Him. But when He had put them all outside, He took the father and the mother of the child, and those who were with Him, and entered where the child was lying. Then He took the child by the hand, and said to her, "Talitha, cumi," which is translated, "Little girl, I say to you, arise." Immediately the girl arose and walked, for she was twelve years of age. And they were overcome with great amazement. But He

commanded them strictly that no one should know it, and said that something should be given her to eat.

Jairus started off in faith there, very hopeful to get home and have Jesus lay hands on the little girl. Then suddenly the terrible news that she is dead. Jesus knew at that point that Jairus was facing a choice: to continue to rely on the Lord Jesus and His Word and the faith that he had expressed earlier — or to give up and choose to rely on the evidence of his friends and family. Thankfully, it looks like Jairus made just about enough of the right choice. It is important that Jairus feared not, only believed. And you and I likewise need to do the same. Faith comes by really knowing the Word of God thoroughly, and then *choosing to believe* the Word of God over and above anything that tries to contradict it. We can learn this, and we can renew our minds. It might take a while, and for some it might take longer than others. So when we are facing a choice, let us choose to believe God.

Transcript by Patricia Plunkett (many thanks Trish!)