

FAITH TO RECEIVE — OR TAKE!

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We've been talking recently about the overall topic of faith. "The just shall live by faith". The eye of faith ... the enemies of faith ... and last week — the Power Twins ... faith and patience to receive the Promises.

We know faith is important. Hebrews 11:6 tells us ... without faith it is impossible to please God.

And most of us have had our disappointments when we have tried to walk by faith!

Perhaps we have confused Biblical faith with feelings ... mental assent ... presumptuousness ... maybe a dead faith. Maybe we've only sustained our faith for 5 minutes rather than 5 months or more.

A related problem I want to cover today is that we may have a faulty underlying concept of how faith relates to our relationship with God.

When we exercise faith ... typically we're looking —and hoping — to receive something from God.

It might be healing ... deliverance from some difficult circumstances that we are in ... wisdom ... to enjoy more prosperity or get out of chronic lack ... whatever.

And so we start to look for some place/promise in God's Word — and make that faith decision. Pray that Prayer of Faith.

But — how do we think God is looking at our situation when we approach Him? What are we expecting our faith to accomplish with God?

The faulty concept many people have is thinking they're using their faith to move God — to change God — to get God to respond.

The thinking is: If I can conjure up enough faith ... and keep it going long enough ... God will have to keep His Word and respond. He'll move in answer to my faith.

And what probably underlies this idea is that God is reluctant to help us. He's remote. He's busy elsewhere. He doesn't really care about our personal issues — He's too lofty for that.

And ... because God is not bothered — we've got to work on God — to labour — to get His attention — to show by our great faith that this time He ought to answer — that this time we deserve an answer.

And we may feel the need to back it up by extra activity to ensure we've got His attention.

- Bawl ... squall ... beg loudly
- Get the email chain going
- Fasting ... if all else fails!!

The underlying reason — we believe that God is reluctant to help. So somehow we've got to get His attention and somehow persuade Him to respond. Our faith is part of this picture — if we use our faith properly ... we can force Him to act. 😊

But this whole approach is wrong.

Psalms 145:8-9 (NKJV)

**8 The Lord is gracious and full of compassion,
Slow to anger and great in mercy.**

**9 The Lord is good to all,
And His tender mercies are over all His works.**

It is God's disposition to show favour. He is not stubborn — hard-hearted — cranky! He is easy to entreat — no need to push Him around — to seek to move Him.

Romans 8:31-32 (NKJV)

31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?

32 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, **how shall He not with Him also *freely give us all things?***

Romans 8:36-39 (NKJV)

36 As it is written:

“For your sake we face death all day long;
we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.”

37 **Yet in all these things *we are more than *conquerors* through Him who **loved us.****

38 **For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, 39 nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.**

Nothing can come between us.

*“More than conquerors” = Hupernikao

Huper = above or beyond

Nikao = victor or conqueror (Nike = Goddess of victory?)

It's God's nature to be generous ... easily accessible to His beloved sons and daughters. NOT DEAF AND IN HIDING.

Matthew 7:7-11 (NKJV)

7 **“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.**

8 For **everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.**

9 Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone?

10 Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent?

11 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!**

ASK —RECEIVE

HOW MUCH MORE!

God is a SUPER-GENEROUS GIVER!

There is no suggestion of a wrestling match with God. But ... we do need to ask ... acknowledge Him as our source?

Matthew 6:25-34 (NKJV)

25 “Therefore I say to you, **do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on.** Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?

26 Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?

27 Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature?

28 “So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin;

29 and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

30 Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, **will He not much more** clothe you, O you of little faith? *(If you have faith ... you won't have to worry)*

31 “Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’

32 For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For **your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.** *(It's not a surprise to Him)*

33 **But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.**

34 Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

MUCH MORE!

God is described as our Heavenly Father (whom we ought to know and see as such). God would always win a “Best Dad” contest!

Hebrews 4:14-16 (NKJV)

14 **Seeing then that we have a great High Priest** who has passed through the heavens, **Jesus the Son of God,** let us hold fast our confession.

15 For **we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathise with our weaknesses**, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. (*We do have a High Priest who can sympathise with our weaknesses*)

16 **Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.**

Jesus sympathises — understands.

Come boldly! That we may obtain. Knowing that we are going to receive.

This scripture should encourage us. Not hang back — nervous — ashamed — guilty. Be bold — confident! And we'll obtain ... find. There is no hint of wrestling ... fighting God's reluctance ... storming the Gates of Heaven.

This whole concept that we've got to fight a reluctant God to obtain His support — or to access His promises by faith — is wrong and harmful — satanic!

God is described as a Father. He would want His children to come to Him for help. If He's promised something ... He'll delight to make it available.

1 John 5:14-15 (NKJV)

14 Now **this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.**

15 **And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.**

We have confidence ... we know.

There is no hint of a prolonged battle ... a reluctant God being bombarded by us and hundreds of our email buddies ... hoping that by the sheer weight of numbers ... we might wear God down.

Looking at the scriptures ... it looks pretty black and white.

Matthew 6:5-8 (NKJV)

5 **"And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites.** For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward.

6 But you, **when you pray**, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, **pray to your Father** who is in the secret place; and **your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.**

7 And **when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do.** For **they think that they will be heard for their many words.**

8 “Therefore **do not be like them.** For **your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him.**”

There is no need for VAIN REPETITIONS! The Father already knows what you want or need. There is no need to badger Him continually over and over. HE PROBABLY KNEW OUR PREDICAMENT BEFORE WE DID!

Verse 7 in some translations: “Don’t BABBLE ON AND ON” ... “Don’t talk on and on” ... because it’s not a question of wearing God down ... overcoming His reluctance.

Though ... if you’ve genuinely got a lot to talk about ... then that’s fine. On occasions ... Jesus prayed all night.

But doesn’t the Bible say we should pray persistently — almost become a nuisance to God? Let’s have a look at that passage.

Luke 11:1, 5-8 (NKJV)

1 Now it came to pass, as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, that one of His disciples said to Him, “Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.”

5 And He said to them, “**Which of you shall have a friend, and go to him at midnight and say to him, ‘Friend, lend me three loaves;**

6 for a friend of mine has come to me on his journey, and I have nothing to set before him’;

7 and **he will answer from within and say, ‘Do not trouble me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give to you’?**

8 **I say to you, though he will not rise and give to him because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will rise and give him as many as he needs.**”

Is God a reluctant friend? Doesn’t He want to help? Is God in bed? So ... we have to bawl ... squall ... nag ... pester — eventually wear God down with our persistence?

It looks like it superficially ... in the NKJV. Verse 8 “Persistence”. KJV: “Importunity”.

In the Greek: Anaideia = Impudence or Shamelessness (Thayer).

Luke 11:8 (NIV)

8 ... yet **because of the man’s boldness** he will get up and give him as much as he needs.

Here in the UK — we might say “Because of his cheek, his friend will respond”.

But — in any event — this isn’t **comparing** the Father to a reluctant friend in bed. It’s **contrasting** the difference!

Luke 11:9-13 (NKJV)

9 “So I say to you, **ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.**

10 For **everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.**

11 If a son asks for bread from any father among you, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish?

12 Or if he asks for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion?

13 If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, **how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!**”

How much more! Heavenly Father.

One of the flaws with this type of approach to God is believing that He’s the problem. So we have to overcome His “reluctance”.

Actually — the problem’s not at the “giving end” (God’s end) so much as the “receiving end” (you and me).

Think of the analogy of a TV station that broadcasts 24/7. If you don’t have a receiver — you can’t receive the signals — even though they’re there. If not tuned in properly — you can’t receive. If you are tuned in properly — great — access to more episodes of Gunsmoke. 😊

If we can't receive the Kardashian update ... no point bellyaching at the broadcaster ... no point persistently nagging ... asking your friends to send emails.

If it's being broadcast and you're not receiving it — the problem's at the receiving end. That's where you need to put your attention.

God's largely done His part. Jesus has been ... shed His blood ... died on the cross ... been resurrected.

If we're not receiving the promises ... we need to check ourselves — not keep on badgering God.

Is our receiver switched on? Are we tuned in?

Another illustration. Someone could offer you a gift ... but it's of no value unless you reach out and receive it. Reach out and take it.

If you keep your hands in your pockets ... and refuse to reach out and take it ... there is no point you or 100 of your friends shouting at the other person to give it to you. THERE'S A PROBLEM AT THE RECEIVING END.

The same with God. He's done a lot. IT IS UP TO US TO RECEIVE — TO TAKE! That's where our faith comes in — not to move God ... but TO BELIEVE THAT WE RECEIVE.

Ephesians 1:1-3 (NKJV)

1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God,

To the saints who are in Ephesus, and faithful in Christ Jesus:

2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

3 **Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed US with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ,**

Past tense!! GOD HAS DONE THIS! IT'S DONE! "NOT WILL BLESS US tomorrow with every blessing". (KJV: All)

It is NOT NECESSARY TO TWIST GOD'S ARM. CAMP ON HIS DOORSTEP. BAWL AND SQUALL!

God is a generous giver who has given. It is up to us — He's a Father. Not a remote ... unreachable God-being. Jesus said He was the "MUCH-MORE" Father.

It is up to us to see that we need to do more believing to receive — than to pester God over and over.

We need to be confident of what God's blessings are. That's why we've got The Word.

2 Peter 1:2-5 (NKJV)

2 **Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord,** (*Epignosis ... full and comprehensive knowledge*)

3 as **His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness,** **through the knowledge of Him** who called us by glory and virtue,

4 **by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises,** that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

5 But also for this very reason, **giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge,**

We need knowledge — not just guessing ... or being presumptuous.

George Müller: God will do what He has said in His Word. The Word is key. Faith comes by hearing the Word. It declares God's will.

There is no substitute for knowledge and familiarity with the Word ... though the Word is not "the end" in itself ... it reveals the Father and the Son.

Matthew 21:18-22 (NKJV)

18 Now in the morning, as He returned to the city, He was hungry.

19 And **seeing a fig tree by the road, He came to it and found nothing on it but leaves,** **and said to it, "Let no fruit grow on you ever again."**

Immediately the fig tree withered away.

20 And when the disciples saw it, they marveled, saying, "How did the fig tree wither away so soon?"

21 So Jesus answered and said to them, “**Assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what was done to the fig tree, but also if you say to this mountain, ‘Be removed and be cast into the sea,’ it will be done.**

22 And **whatever things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive.**”

We use our faith to move mountains — not try to move God.

Don’t doubt — so we need the knowledge of the Word.

Do we wait to receive before we believe? No! BELIEVING COMES FIRST!

“Receive” in Greek is LAMBANO. The meaning is NOT JUST PASSIVELY RECEIVE — but — ACTIVELY TAKE!

Greek lexicons : “To lay hold by aggressively accepting what is available or offered — to accept with initiative ... emphasising THE ASSERTIVENESS OF THE RECEIVER”.

We can think of the lady with the issue of blood. Did she just passively “receive” her healing ... or did she go out and take (LAMBANO) her healing?

Mark 11:20-24 (NKJV)

20 Now in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots.

21 And Peter, remembering, said to Him, “Rabbi, look! The fig tree which You cursed has withered away.”

22 So Jesus answered and said to them, “Have faith in God.

23 For assuredly, **I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, ‘Be removed and be cast into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says.**

24 **Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them.** (*Receive = Lambano*)

Mark 11:24 (NIV)

24 ... **believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.**

You have to do the believing first!

Mark 11:24 (NASB)

24 ... **believe that you have received them, and they will be granted you.**

Mark 11:24 (TPT ... The Passion Translation)

24 **I urge you to boldly believe for whatever you ask for in prayer — believe that you have received it and it will be yours.**

When do you believe? When you receive? No — WHEN YOU PRAY! Assertive believing — akin to TAKING. (Lambano)

It's the receiving end that needs tweaking — not the giving end.

Of course we will still need patience — perseverance. Faith and patience.

But not perseverance in continually badgering God to move. We believe we've already received. NO NEED TO NAG GOD thereafter — though we may continue to thank Him ... talk around it (though not in a negative ... complaining way).

A harvest takes time. There can be delays for myriads of reasons.

Even the greatest of men of God have faced delays. We don't always see what's happening ... but ... we shouldn't lose heart.

Daniel 10:2-3 (NKJV)

2 In those days **I, Daniel, was mourning three full weeks.**

3 **I ate no pleasant food, no meat or wine came into my mouth, nor did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled.**

Daniel 10:5-6 (NKJV)

5 **I lifted my eyes and looked, and behold, a certain man clothed in linen, whose waist was girded with gold of Uphaz!**

6 His body was like beryl, his face like the appearance of lightning, his eyes like torches of fire, his arms and feet like burnished bronze in colour, and the sound of his words like the voice of a multitude. *(An angel)*

Daniel 10:10-14 (NKJV)

10 Suddenly, a hand touched me, which made me tremble on my knees and on the palms of my hands.

11 And he said to me, "**O Daniel, man greatly beloved, understand the words that I speak to you, and stand upright, for I have now been sent to you.**"

While he was speaking this word to me, I stood trembling.

12 Then he said to me, "**Do not fear, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart to understand, and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard; and I have come because of your words.**

13 **But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days; and behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me,** for I had been left alone there with the kings of Persia.

14 Now I have come to make you understand what will happen to your people in the latter days, for the vision refers to many days yet to come."

Verses 10-14:

- Vitally important message
- From God's own headquarters ... from an archangel
- Took 3 weeks
- Spiritual opposition

Princes = Archon in Greek Septuagint. The same word as Paul uses in Ephesians chapter 6 about needing the armour of God — we wrestle against principalities (Arche — plural).

Conclusion. It is important to pay attention to our believing — our receiving — rather than endlessly pestering God for the same thing over and over again.

Let's focus on our believing. And ... BE PATIENT!