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Daily Devotional, Monday, Dec 18, 2017 - A Saving Faith

DECEMBER 18TH 2017 BY DEE LOFLIN

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Matthew 7:13-29

The greatest tragedy that can befall someone is to think he's saved, only to discover after death that he isn't. We'd all like to believe the claims of those who say they're Christians, but Jesus gives a harsh warning because He knows many will be deceived. They will sit in churches week after week, professing that Jesus is the Son of God, but won't ever really enter into a personal relationship with Him.

Intellectual faith isn't the same as saving faith. It's not enough to know facts about Jesus or to believe He died and rose again. Even demons believe that (James 2:19). Salvation involves more than mere knowing. It requires trusting that Jesus Christ paid the penalty for your sin, receiving His forgiveness, turning away from old sinful ways, and entering into a relationship with Him. What matters is not what we say with our mouth, but what we believe in our heart.

Although you probably won't understand all that happens at the moment of salvation, when Christ becomes your Savior, He also becomes your Lord. As the Master of your life, He then has a right to govern what you do. His Holy Spirit takes up residence within you when you are saved, and that means you will change—God's Spirit continually works to remove sinful attitudes and behaviors, replacing them with His spiritual fruit (Gal. 5:22-23).

We recognize a person's salvation not by his profession but by fruit. If you are truly saved, your character will become more Christlike over time, and your desire will be to obey the Lord. This does not mean you'll never sin or stumble, but overall, your life will be characterized by obedience.

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Daily Devotional, Friday, December 15, 2017 - Receiving Answers to Our Prayers

DECEMBER 15TH 2017 BY DEE LOFLIN

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1 John 5:13-15

In response to our prayers, the Lord uses His power to penetrate closed minds and hard hearts. In that way, He brings people to salvation and transforms unrighteous lives.

We all want our petitions fulfilled, so it is important to understand God's conditions for answered prayer. Besides having a relationship with Him (John 3:3) and confessing all known sin, we must have faith that His Word is true and His promises reliable. The Bible, which was divinely written by God through man, is without error. In this amazing book, the Lord reveals His nature—holy, sovereign, and perfect—and presents His plan of salvation (Rom. 10:9). Because God's promises are based on His perfect character, we can be certain He will do what He says; otherwise He would not be God. And Jesus' promises can be trusted because He always spoke the Father's words (John 12:49).

Another condition is that we ask according to the Lord's purposes. We're to pray for things that are in keeping with His divine plan and character. God wants us to discern His will, to pray for it to be carried out, and to do whatever our part might be in its fulfillment (Matt. 6:9-10). The Holy Spirit will help us know what to pray. And as we consider which petitions to make, we should ask ourselves, *Is my request based on God's Word? How will an answer to this prayer bring me or someone else closer to Him?*

It takes an investment of time to meet God's requirements for prayer. But in response, He will provide answers beyond anything we could ask or think (Eph. 3:20).

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Daily Devotional, Thursday, December 14, 2017 - Requirements for Answered Prayer

DECEMBER 14TH 2017 BY DEE LOFLIN

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John 14:12-14

Jesus taught many things about prayer and its central role in a believer's life. He also promised that our petitions will be answered when we meet certain requirements.

One condition is mentioned in John 14:14: After receiving Christ as our personal Savior, we have the right to present requests *in Jesus' name*, which means praying something that the Lord Himself might pray. To exercise this privilege, we must come to the Father, depending not on our own good works or character but on the merits of Christ alone. Jesus' atoning death on the cross is the only basis for approaching God and being assured of receiving an answer to our petitions.

A second requirement is separation from all known sin. Psalm 66:18 says, "If I regard wickedness in my heart, the Lord will not hear." This refers to ungodly behaviors and thought patterns that we know are wrong but refuse to give up. Remember, God looks at our heart attitude. If we struggle against our sinful ways, grieve over them, and ask for forgiveness, He will hear our cries and respond. But when He sees a hard heart, He is not obligated to listen.

Next time you pray, start with words of praise to God for His sacrificial love and gratitude to Jesus for dying in your place (1 John 4:10). Express that you understand why your prayers are heard—because you have a relationship with the Father through Christ, and not because of

anything you have done. Confess all known sin and ask for forgiveness. Then present your requests to God with anticipation, and trust His answers.

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Daily Devotional, Wednesday, December 13, 2017 - Skills Needed to Walk by Faith

DECEMBER 13TH 2017 BY DEE LOFLIN

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Genesis 12:10-20

Learning to walk by faith requires time. As we have seen, Abraham listened to God and obeyed Him. Then over the years he learned to master additional skills.

Dependence. The Christian life is one of reliance upon God. From the very start, Abraham recognized that his own knowledge was limited and the right way was not obvious. But he understood whom he could trust to meet his needs: God knew the plan perfectly and had all the necessary resources to accomplish His will through Abraham.

Waiting on God. This can be one of the hardest disciplines to master. Scripture shows that even Abraham, the great man of faith, had trouble in this area. While our human nature wants action, the Lord often asks His people to hold back (2 Chronicles 20:17). He wants us to let Him act first. Our part is to meditate on the Word, listen for God's voice, and hold off until He instructs us to act. The Lord, meanwhile, promises to bless those who wait (Isa. 64:4).

Confession. Abraham was not perfect. When famine threatened, he headed toward Egypt, not toward God. Then he lied, which made trouble for others. Later, Sarah found it too hard to wait for the promised child, so she and Abraham took matters into their own hands (Gen. 16:1-3). We also will stumble. But when we return to the Lord in repentance and acknowledge our failure, we will receive forgiveness and can resume walking by faith.

God knows we are imperfect people. He will patiently and repeatedly teach us faith-walking lessons until we learn to trust Him. We just have to maintain responsive hearts and teachable spirits.

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Daily Devotional, Tuesday, December 12, 2017 - Requirements of Walking by Faith

DECEMBER 12TH 2017 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional, Tuesday, December 12, 2017 - Requirements of Walking by Faith

Genesis 12:1-9

We all know people who live according to their own desires and natural abilities. Sometimes we do it too. But as children of God, believers are called to walk by faith (2 Corinthians 5:7). That means we are to live based on a confident assurance that the Lord is true to His character and keeps every promise.

In the school of faith-walking, the first skill to master is listening. Because God's Word is essential to our hearing from Him, we must cultivate the habit of biblical meditation. Through it, we will hear God's Spirit speak to ours, illuminating the meaning of Scripture and showing us how to apply its truths to our circumstances. But recognizing the inner voice of the Holy Spirit does not come automatically; it takes practice.

A second skill to acquire is obedience—carrying out what the Lord commands and then doing it His way, in His time. Abraham left his homeland just as God commanded, but he “adjusted” the divine plan by bringing Lot along (Gen. 12:4). The life of faith is one of submission to God's requests, methods, and time frames. As our listening skills improve, our faith in the Father will deepen, our commitment to Him will grow, and complete obedience will become easier.

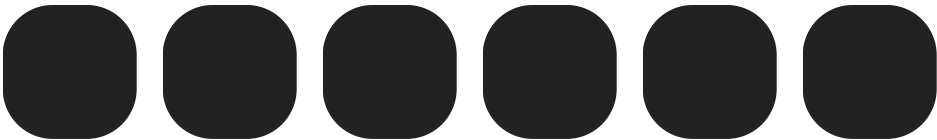
Faith-walking also involves remembering what happened when we obeyed God in the past—He communicates with us not only for today but also to teach us for the future. Can you recall what

He said to you last week? Have you put it into practice? Commit to being a better listener and a more obedient follower in the coming year.

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