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Daily Devotional - Wednesday, May 23, 2018 - How to Have Steadfast Faith

MAY 23RD 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

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Hebrews 11:1-31

The apostle James challenges us to understand the connection between faith and obedience. In James 2:17, he writes that faith without works is dead. In other words, we cannot have unshakeable beliefs without obeying.

Developing steadfast trust takes time. We are born spiritually through simple, childlike faith that receives Jesus as Savior. Convictions are nourished by a growing knowledge of God and a deepening confidence in Him. Experiencing His protection, provision, and power in moments of testing strengthens our beliefs. Daniel is a good example of this. Each time his loyalty was tested, he chose to depend on God. Sometimes the circumstances were thrust upon him—such as whether to eat food sacrificed to idols (Dan. 1:8). At other times, he voluntarily initiated a difficult situation in order to help (Dan. 2:24). In each case, he followed God's leading.

Hebrews 11 lists other examples of obedience as critical to steadfast faith. Noah, when warned about things not seen, obeyed God and built the ark. And at the Lord's direction, Abraham left home to go to a place not yet known to him. Then in the New Testament, Paul was planning to arrest Christians when he encountered the Savior. He made a complete turnaround: Despite threats, beatings, and shipwrecks, he obeyed God and preached the gospel.

Knowing and trusting God through His Son, experiencing His presence, and living obediently are the elements needed to develop an unshakeable faith. Jesus Himself said that our work is to believe in Him (John 6:29). With the Holy Spirit's help, each of us can have unwavering faith.

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Daily Devotional - Tuesday, May 22, 2018 - The Comfortable Church

MAY 22ND 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

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Isaiah 6:8

I think it's fairly obvious that the society we live in is very self-centered, and this same characteristic can be present in a church. Whenever a local body of believers develops an inward focus, its fruitfulness in ministry begins to decrease, and each member's Christian walk is hindered. Many believers want their church to be cozy and comfortable. They come to listen to a nice sermon, fellowship with friends, and have their needs met. But God never intended for the gathering of His people to be like a country club; He calls us to join an army that will bring the gospel into enemy territory.

An effective church—one that poses a real threat to the enemy—is a body of disciplined people who have been taught the truth of Scripture, helped to mature spiritually, and trained for service. But all this is accomplished for the purpose of going out into the world, not for becoming a self-contained sanctuary of Christian comfort.

The urgency of the Lord's command and the desperate condition of humanity should motivate us to leave the safety of our Christian fellowships and deliver the message of salvation through Jesus. To avoid this responsibility is to miss the Father's plan for your life and the opportunity to help build His kingdom.

None of us want to waste time or energy on trivial things and thereby miss the exciting fulfillment of God's will. He has called us, not to a life of comfortable tradition, but to an adventure of obedience. Answer His call—you'll help fill His kingdom with people from every tribe and nation.

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Daily Devotional - Monday, May 21, 2018 - How Christ Modeled Humility

MAY 21ST 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

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Philippians 2:1-11

Although humility is not highly valued in our society, it's essential in the Christian life. And the one who set the pattern for it is Jesus Himself. Therefore, as His followers, we too should seek to have a humble spirit. Humility is lowliness of mind that does not seek to exalt or assert self, and from today's passage, we learn that it's characterized by several traits:

Humility is other-focused (Phil. 2:3-4). Christ was looking out for our interests when He came to earth to rescue us from sin and condemnation.

Humility doesn't grasp rights and privileges (Phil. 2:6-7). Although Jesus was fully God, He emptied Himself and took on the limitations of humanity.

Humility willingly serves others (Phil. 2:7). The Lord didn't come as a self-serving ruler who wanted to conquer and subjugate the world. Instead, He came as a lowly slave serving others.

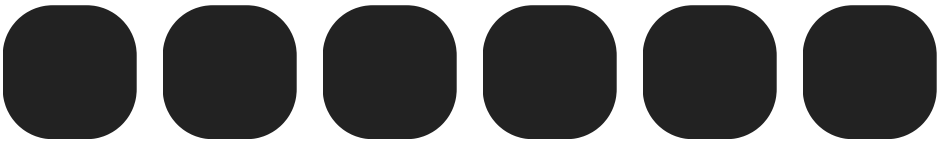
Humility obeys God (Phil. 2:8). The Son came to earth in full obedience to the Father. He did and said only what His Father commanded Him (John 5:19), including His ultimate act of obedience: laying down His life on the cross to pay for the sins of mankind.

These qualities are the exact opposite of the ambition, self-promotion, and self-advancement our culture values. From the world’s perspective, humility is weakness. But which takes more strength—to deny self or to promote self? Humility requires the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit to overcome our natural self-centeredness. Instead of being a sign of weakness, it’s actually a sign of Christ’s life in us.

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Daily Devotional - Thursday, May 17, 2018 - When Our Faith Wavers

MAY 17TH 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

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James 1:2-8

We all experience variation in the strength of our faith. If all is well, we feel confident that the Lord is trustworthy, because we see His blessings all around us. But when troubles increase, so do our doubts about God's faithfulness. We start to wonder whether He will ever answer our prayers for deliverance. As hard as we try, we can't see Him working in the situation. And as our trials drag on, we begin to lose hope in God and may start looking for more reasonable ways to resolve the matter ourselves.

James points us to a different perspective. Instead of thinking that the Lord has forgotten about us, he reminds us of God's divine purposes for our hardships. They test our faith in order to produce endurance and maturity. Our Father isn't trying to break us; rather, He wants to grow us and provide what is lacking in our spiritual life.

What we really need in our trials is wisdom, and that is exactly what James 1:5 tells us to request from Him. Instead of focusing on the circumstances and letting feelings overcome our faith, we must shift our thoughts to the Lord and confidently believe He'll give us the wisdom we need, both to handle the situation and to grow from it.

Giving in to doubts is dangerous, as it could develop into a lifestyle of spiritual uncertainty in which we're "driven and tossed by the wind" (James 1:6). When we handle our misgivings in this way, we'll often make wrong decisions that are costly. How much better it would be to anchor ourselves to the Lord and His Word and ride out the storm in peaceful assurance.

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Daily Devotional - Wednesday, MAY 16, 2018 - God's Ultimate Purpose for Our Trials

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Romans 8:29-30

Difficult situations are easier to bear if we know that something good is going to result from them. The problem is that our idea of good may not be the same as God's. Since His ways and thoughts are much higher than ours, we must trust Him to know what is best, even if it causes us pain, frustration, or hardship (Isa. 55:9). The ultimate good the Lord is working to accomplish is our conformation to the image of His Son, and trials are one of the tools He uses in the process.

However, we should never think that God sends affliction into our lives and then sits back to see what will happen. Our loving heavenly Father oversees every aspect of the situation.

The Lord designs our trials. God considers every adversity necessary to achieve a specific purpose in our life (1 Peter 1:6-7). He knows each of us intimately and sees where we need correction or spiritual growth to become more Christlike.

God determines the length of our trials. From our perspective, any suffering lasts too long. But when we depend on the Lord, He gives us grace and strength to endure until His purpose is accomplished (Phil. 4:13).

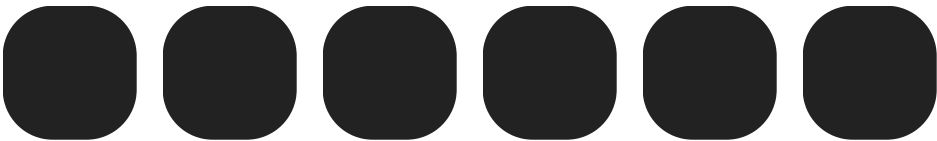
The Lord limits the intensity of our trials. He knows what we can handle and will not give us more than we can bear (1 Corinthians 10:13).

Nothing in our life is random or meaningless. Even when we don't understand what the Lord is doing, we can trust that He will use our trials to make us more like His Son in character, conduct, and conversation.

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