

According to your faith be it to you. 1 of 4– 18 febr 2023

Hi all,

In the late 1980's I was the pastor of a small church in a rural community in eastern Colorado. Though the church was doing well, it was an agricultural town and winters were touch. By January our income after the church paid our rent and utilities was \$15. (\$40 US today). By the last week of the month we had no food.

Around 4pm (16.00) Barb asked what I had in mind for dinner, because she literally had nothing in the pantry, nothing in the refrigerator, nothing in the freezer, to feed us or more importantly, our 3 little boys. She opened the refrigerator in desperation showing me. She opened the cupboard to reveal bare shelves. She was rightly concerned.

I replied: "I don't know, but I know I am doing what the Lord has called me to do, so I know He will provide." I told her I had peace in my spirit, I had double checked my motives, the Father gave me peace, so I stayed focused on the peace in my spirit. But she was mom, so she had a right to know where dinner was for her 3 boys.

She was willing to go with my peace, though it is her nature to second guess situations: Was it really the Lord that brought us there? Did He want John to get a job (though my hands were full with the church)? What was wrong with John that he would risk his family for what, faith? Was it pride? What are we going to do? All these were questions any wife and mother would have in that situation. But in the end, she trusted me.

This was the point of 'according to your faith be it unto you' - The choice was simple: Trust the peace or take matters into our own hands with 'Plan B'.

About 20 minutes later a family from our church pulled into our drive in their big Chevy Suburban, which was at the time the largest SUV made. It was loaded full with groceries and even fresh milk from their dairy farm. In 10 minutes our refrigerator and cupboard went from completely empty to completely full.

Barb was thrilled as you can imagine. This couple had an idea float into their minds late that morning they recognized as the Lord; to buy us groceries. We lived out on the prairie of eastern Oklahoma so it was an hour drive to a store.

They drove over an hour to the store to load their vehicle, then an hour back AND they stopped at their house to get fresh milk on the way to our house - they were thrilled to be so used of the Father, and we were thrilled they had obeyed. In 10 minutes we went from empty to full. Amazing grace.

God's provision was already at work when Barb and I were talking and making the choice to trust the peace in our spirit. If I hadn't had a revelation in my spirit and the accompanying peace from the Father that He had dinner supplied, it would have been foolish. But I had a peace, so I stayed in that.

I was being moved from revelation, from peace in my spirit. This was faith, not foolishness. According to your faith be it unto you. Many times people have a revelation, have a peace from the Father, but fear creeps in, they second guess themselves.

They fall back on their own strength and working out their own 'Plan B'. Because they give in to the fear instead of subduing it by the peace in their spirit, they never see the miracle - and then wonder why God let them down.

"According to your faith be it to you" Matthew 9:27-30

This is stated only once in the New Testament, but it is repeated many times in different ways and terminology.

"And when Jesus departed from there, two blind men followed him, yelling loudly, saying, You son of David, have mercy on us. And when he had entered the house, the blind men came to him: and Jesus said to them, Do you believe that I have the power to do this? They said unto him, Yes, Lord. Then he touched their eyes, saying, According to your faith be it unto you."

Why did He say, 'According to your faith'?

This was not a sovereign move by the Lord. This was according to the faith of the blind men. Why was it 'according to their faith'?

First, they called Him the Messiah by calling Him the Son of David. This is perhaps the most well known of Jewish terms for Messiah, and Matthew starts his gospel in 1:1 stating that was what he would demonstrate in his gospel: "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the son of Abraham.." They had a revelation from the Father exactly Who Jesus was. They had faith.

Key point #1 - a personal revelation

This is the very key to anything we do called 'faith'. We first get a revelation from the Father about it. If we hear bad news, we check with the Father to see what His instructions and provision might be. When Peter exclaimed; 'You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God', Jesus said he knew that by revelation from the Father. The whole kingdom flows from and functions in revelation from the Father.

I've shared how II Peter 1:3-4 has been a foundation for me for decades: "Accordingly, His power has provided all things that pertain to life and godliness through the knowledge of Him who called us to glory and virtue."

That's either true or it isn't. He has either provided all things that pertain to life, or not. Year ago I let that revelation float over me and through me, exciting my spirit. He has provided EVERYTHING that pertains to life. I would never have to worry again.

A test of my faith

I was taking 5 cows to be sold at a barn about 40 miles away (70km). I had Chris in the seat with me, but for some reason I left his wheelchair at home. At a stop light about 10 miles from our house (18km) the truck quit. I had just enough momentum to roll to the side of the highway.

Remembering II Peter 1:3-4, I said: "Father, all things that pertain to life and godliness have been provided, so please reveal your provision, because we're stuck!" Just then a red pick up truck coming the other direction, slowed, cross the median, circled in front of us and asked if he could help.

Explaining the situation to him, he said he would take our cattle to the sale barn - I was amazed. We rolled the truck away from the trailer, hooked it to his truck, we lifted Chris into his truck and away the 3 of us went. He brought us back after we had dropped the cows off and I was able to call our middle son to come and get us.

According to your faith be it unto you. I had revelation from the Word and from experience, the kind of faith that comes by considering the Father's faithfulness through the years. Based on that ongoing revelation and His record in my life, I simply made the choice to act according to my faith, asking Him to reveal His provision. And He did.

Next week about times I missed it, and more from the Word...until then, blessings,
John Fenn

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According to your faith, 2 of 4, Hiding behind fear – 25feb2023

Hi all,

We often hide behind our fear while telling ourselves and others we are in faith. Sometimes we hide behind fear and blame whatever our troubles are on the devil, our rebukes doing no good whatsoever.

The phone bill

Back in the days before cell phones we had land lines. With land lines, if you called outside your area there was an extra charge based on each minute you talked. If you called someone a long way away it cost you more.

I couldn't pay the bill that first month, and the phone company let it go until I couldn't pay the second month as well. The total of about \$600, which is the same as \$1600 today. A relative was in trouble and I spent hours on the phone giving guidance and support. Our phone was shut off. Bye bye phone because I didn't have the money to pay it.

Where was my faith? I thought I was "believing the Lord" for the money to pay the bill, but no 'miracle' money came in to pay it. I was helping someone, giving good and godly advice - why wasn't the Lord there for me? What happened?

The truth is

I was afraid to call the phone company to work out a payment plan. In part, I didn't feel like I could truthfully tell them when I'd have money to pay them. I didn't know if they would demand it all at once, or if they would accept payments over a few months. I was afraid of what might be. What they might say. What I couldn't commit to. So I didn't call.

All this time I was 'believing the Lord' for the money to pay the bill. Later I learned if I had called they would have worked with me on a payment plan. My fear was for nothing, and what I thought was faith, was really me hiding behind my fear.

I've seen people do this with doctors. Afraid the diagnosis would be horrible news, or cost them money they didn't have. In some cases people died because they wouldn't go to a doctor because they were afraid of the office visit charge and any tests that would be done.

I've seen people delay home repairs, car repairs, and more because of fear what the total might be, so they 'believe the Lord' and think prayer will move God to do something. They never think that maybe the Lord wants them to deal with their fear and trust Him. Then when something worse happens, they are forced to deal with it and unfortunately, suffer the consequences of their fear-fueled delay.

Going through the fear...

I wish I knew then what I know now about II Peter 1:3-4, as I mentioned last week. "All things that pertain to life and godliness have been provided...."

We are all growing and learning. Back in the early 1980's I didn't know all things that pertain to life have been provided. I had not yet learned to make that tough decision in the midst of pressure, to stand and ask the Father to reveal His provision, based on His Word.

The difference between having the phone cut off in the 1980s, and Chris and I about 15 years later having a miracle provision as a man took our cows to sale when our truck broke, is that I learned to go through the fear, learned to deal with the circumstances.

I learned the Father's provision is most often just on the other side of the fear.

There was a lady in our church with an 11 year old son. Her son got sick with a bad fever, and for her, money was scarce. Even when she had it, she didn't like to spend it. After the

fever lingered for a few days many of us urged her to go to the doctor, but she was 'believing the Lord'...

After another week went by her son became so weak something was clearly wrong and we insisted she take him to the doctor. Her fear for his life became stronger than her fear of the doctor's bill. The virus had gone to a heart valve, and he needed immediate open heart surgery to replace the valve.

The bill in about 1989 was \$65,000 to put a mechanical valve in the boy's heart. When sitting next to him you could hear it click as his heart pumped blood. His mom was thrilled that because of her income and that he was a child, the hospital would use charity funds to pay the bill - she didn't owe anything.

We were amazed that she so rejoiced over this, when all she had to do was at the first be willing to pay or make payments for a doctor's appointment and all that trauma could have been avoided. And because of her actions, he beat her to heaven by several years - glad they are there now, but he should still be alive and living a good and fruitful life like his sister is.

All that because his mother didn't have the faith in her Heavenly Father to go through the fear to see His provision on the other side.

The two blind men...according to your faith be it to you...

People want God's provision, but it is according to faith, not according to fear. Faith requires a revelation from the Father for the situation. Fear argues against logic, fear argues against common sense. Fear only delays an action that then causes much more difficult consequences.

When Jesus wanted to turn water into wine, He first had them collect and then fill 6 stone water pots, THEN the miracle happened. When Jesus wanted to feed 5,000 men plus women and children, He organized to have them sit down in groups of 50s and 100s, THEN the miracle happened.

Fear asks why bother gathering the stone pots. Fear asks why go to the trouble of organizing the people into groups of 50s and 100s. Faith doesn't appear wise to those in fear. But faith deals with the natural circumstances realizing provision is on the other side of the fear.

And that is where the test of our faith is focused. We will pick it up there next week, until then, blessings,

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According to your faith 3 of 4, God tests us? – 4mrt2023

Hi all,

God doesn't test us with evil, but He does test us. Within the test we find an opportunity for growth according to your faith.

In James 1:2 we are told to; "...count it all joy when you fall into various tests/trials/temptations, knowing that the trying of your faith exercises consistency."

Notice he said to count it joy, which is a fruit of the spirit, meaning he isn't talking about 'be happy', which is an emotion. To count a trial/test/temptation as joy, you have to be in the fruit of the spirit of Galatians 5:22-23. We are to take our struggles to the Lord, and handle it spiritually, not a religious happiness and putting on our best Sunday morning church face.

Note: The reason I wrote 'fruit of the spirit' and not 'fruit of the Spirit', is because of the context. There are no capitals nor punctuation in Greek, so we only know by context if he is talking about the fruit of the Holy Spirit or the fruit of the born again human spirit. Because the context is the war between the works of the human flesh and the human spirit, it is clear the fruit of the spirit is the human spirit. We might also say the Holy Spirit IS love, joy, peace and so on. Fruit is therefore offspring of its parent tree. So the fruit of the human spirit is appropriate.

And to make sure everyone understands, James said in v13: "Now let no man say when he is tested/tried/tempted that God the Father is doing it to him. For God is not tested/tried/tempted with evil, and neither does He test/tempt/try anyone with evil."

How does He test us? The sacrifice of Isaac.

In Genesis 22:1 it says: "And after these things, God did tempt Abraham." A better translation would be, 'God did prove Abraham'. In other words, the Lord was going to put Abraham into a situation that would prove Abraham's faith and integrity, prove what was in his heart, as well as show his commitment to the covenant they two had made.

We might say that it certainly looks evil to ask Abraham to offer Isaac as a human sacrifice, but the other side is that God was proving what was in Abraham's heart. Even Abraham realized the outcome before it started, telling his son in v8 that 'God will provide a lamb (Lamb)', when in fact the Lord provided a ram for the sacrifice.

Abraham knew what was going on. He knew in covenant each covenant head, the ones who make the covenant, must give their most precious possession to the other. He also knew the Lord had appeared to him and told him his son Isaac would have children, which had not happened yet. So he knew either God would provide a sacrifice or his son would be raised from the dead, because Isaac was named by God as the one to father the nations. Hebrews 11:17-19 speaks of these things.

It was because his heart was proven that he from earth loosed his son of promise, that the Father God from heaven was loosed to offer His son of promise as the final sacrifice. "Because you have done this, not withholding your son your only son, that in blessing I will bless you, and in multiplying I will multiply you..."

Settled then, God does test us to prove what is in our hearts.

Psalm 7:9 talks of Him testing 'the reins of our heart', and Hebrews 4:12-13 reveal the Lord Jesus is the Living Sword of the Word who critiques our soul and spirit, thoughts and intentions of the heart.

He allows situations that give us the choice to accept or reject the challenge to grow. But the challenge to grow doesn't present itself with a big neon sign saying, "If you choose this path you will grow in the Lord!!! Choose me! Choose me!"

The opportunity comes with fear on one side and faith on the other. The key is having a revelation first, that the Father will provide if we make the right decision.

Pharaoh and Moses

There are at least 17 verses in Exodus telling us Pharaoh hardened his heart, and a couple that say God hardened it. How did God harden Pharaoh's heart? By giving him the opportunity repeatedly, to do the right thing. He kept sending Moses back to him.

Amy Grant's 1991 song; *How Can We See That Far* includes the lyrics: "The same sun that melts the wax can harden clay". The Lord kept sending Moses back to Pharaoh, who had the choice the whole time whether to cooperate or not. He chose poorly.

In John 6:1-13, feeding 5,000; the miracle of the loaves.

John 6:5 says:"He said to Philip, where shall we buy bread, that these may eat? This He said to Philip to test him, for He knew what He would do."

Any question coming from the lips of Jesus has to be a legitimate question. The miraculous provision later revealed had to have been there right then when Jesus asked Philip the question. The provision was hidden in the question and response.

If Philip had answered in line with the miraculous. In order to have faith, Philip had to have seen some things that would make Jesus consider that maybe, just maybe, Philip would look past the circumstances to faith.

What had Philip seen? He saw these things leading up to that question:

Jesus discerning (honesty) of his friend Nathaniel. John 1:45-46. He heard Jesus tell Nathaniel he would see angels ministering to Jesus. The turning of water into wine in Cana. The cleansing of the temple and ensuing teaching and discussion. Learned what Jesus told Nicodemus in John 3, including v16. Baptized people in John 3:22-36, heard Jesus teach. Saw the woman at the well and 2 days in Samaria where Jesus had told her about her whole life and the whole village believed.

He was there when the Nobleman's son was healed in 4:46-54. He was there when the lame man was healed at the pool of Bethesda in 5:1-15. He heard all of chapter 5 with Jesus teaching about His Father. In 6:1-2 he saw multitudes healed.

So with all that, the question:'Where are we going to buy bread for all these people to eat?', doesn't seem so out of place. Jesus we are told, was testing Philip.

Let us ask ourselves:Have we seen enough miracles in our lives over the months or years, to be able to make the choice for faith? Have you like Philip heard enough teaching, observed enough of His miracles, witnessed His faithfulness enough in your life up to today, when He asks your heart, "How are you going to handle this bill?" or "How will you handle this news", how will you answer? According to your faith be it unto you.

And that's where we'll pick it up next week. Until then, blessings,
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According to your faith 4 of 4, Go back to the original – 11mrt2023

Hi all,

Have you ever felt like the Lord gave you a promise for a loved one, perhaps years ago, but now that person is not walking with the Lord? Have you ever wondered if you should continue to pray or give up hope?

For example:A mom had wonderful things prophesied over her son when he was still young. But now the boy is a man in his twenties, and living like the world, not wanting anything to do with the God of his mother, and of his youth.

Yet she felt the Lord told her certain things in her heart about the call and purpose of his life - what does she do? Where does 'according to your faith be it unto you', enter this situation?

Every person faces circumstances contrary to their faith. Unexplained things. A child that gets deathly sick, a cancer that quickly takes a loved one. A tragic accident involving Christian teens. A job they thought God gave them and a few months later the company goes out of business.

Any number of things are allowed to happen by the Lord that we love so much, without any explanation from Him. What are we to do? How do we 'stand on the Word' when everything seems to have gone the opposite direction?

II Kings 4:8-37; the story of a woman who showed kindness to Elisha.

He passed by she and her husband's house regularly, and she showed him hospitality. Eventually they added a room to their house that he might spend the night as needed.

Elisha wanted to do something for her, and his servant, Gehazi mentioned they had no children. Elisha told her that 'next year according to the time of life you will embrace a son'. She told him at the time not to tease her, that he had better be right. Verses 16 & 17 tell us she did conceive and gave birth to a son as Elisha had prophesied.

Verse 18 tells us when the boy was grown, he was working in the field with his dad, and evidently became overheated, complaining of pain in his head. He died a few hours later. We need to remember the word of promise that Elisha had given her in v16, and that many years went by for the son to be 'grown' and working in the field with his father.

The power of the promise has not diminished over the years

Verses 22-28 tell us she laid the young man's body on the bed in Elisha's room, then only telling her husband "It is well", she saddled a donkey and raced to find Elisha. When she found him she said: "Did I ask you for a son? Didn't I say don't deceive me? Didn't I say don't tease me?"

In other words, she never asked for a son, she never asked for a promise from the Lord about him. Did God give her a word about having a son only to take him a few years later? She was rightly upset! The good news is Elisha raised him from the dead.

For our purposes we take the side of the mother of this young boy. She wasn't trying to get pregnant. When the man of God asked if God could do anything for her, she said she was fine. It was God's idea to have Elisha prophesy she would have a son. Now circumstances conspired to take her son of promise away.

What would you do?

According to your faith be it unto you. Would you say, "I don't understand it, but my son is dead. I guess that prophecy was just for the few short years we had him." Or would you do as she did, thinking that God would not have given the word to her had He not intended that baby to grow up to become a man and outlive his parents - and she was going to make sure that word came to fulfillment in her son's life!

Do you have promises closely held in your heart about a loved one? Does it look like those promises aren't happening in their lives? Do you ever wonder how the Lord will bring about what He promised to you?

Are you going to shrink back and say, 'Oh well, maybe I heard wrong'? Or will you be like the woman above who held onto the original promise and stand firm in the knowledge that the Lord will bring it to pass? Even if that loved one has to go through many sins before they give up and give in to the Lord, His promise will happen.

Jairus and his daughter

In Mark 5:23 the man Jairus came to Jesus saying: "My little daughter lies at the point of death, I beg you to come and lay your hands on her that she may be healed, and live."

That was the point of faith - if Jesus came to lay hands on her then she would live. As they were walking to his home a friend came and told Jairus that his daughter had died, so there was no use bothering Jesus about it. In v36 it says:

"Immediately when Jesus heard the news, He said to (Jairus), 'Be not afraid. Only believe.'"

What was Jesus telling Jairus to believe? It was the original point of faith: If you come and lay hands on her she will live. Once Jesus agreed to come to lay hands on his daughter, it really didn't matter whether the girl was alive or dead, with fever or dead, because Jesus said He would come and lay hands on her and she would live.

When Jesus told him: "Don't be afraid. Only believe", He was telling him to believe the original request - come lay hands on her and she will live. Sometimes we have to go back to the last time we knew that we knew the Lord had given us a word for someone or some situation, and rest in that word - even if it was given years ago.

It was the same with Lazarus in John 11. Once Jesus had determined He would visit Lazarus, it really didn't matter if Lazarus remained sick or was dead. Jesus is greater than any circumstance, so it didn't matter whether he had already been dead 4 days once he got there, or 4 minutes.

Go back to the last thing you know the Lord showed you, revealed to your spirit. Go back to that last promise you know that you know He gave you - and rest. He gave that word seeing the future, and yet He still gave it.

Let us recognize much of life is 'according to your faith be it unto you'. When faced with surprises in our life we can either expect to see 'all things that pertain to life and godliness' supplied, or we can bow to the circumstances. Whatever happens will be according to your faith. Let us choose faith over fear, the promise over the circumstance.

New subject next week, until then, blessings,

John Fenn

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