

083019

I. My Notes... WWC message 9/1

II. Series: Active Faith

a. Title: An Active Faith finds a Way

b. Text: Jer. 29:11; Prov. 3:5-6; Ps. 86:5

c. Quote: "True faith manifests itself through our actions." Francis Chan - Pastor, Author

III. Introduction

a. An elderly man was wandering on the beach when he found a magic lamp. He picked it up and rubbed it, hoping for a Genie to appear. One did. "Because you have freed me," the genie said, "I will grant you one wish."

The man thought for several moments and then responded, "My brother and I had a huge fight 30 years ago, he hasn't spoken to me since. I wish that he would finally forgive me."

There Genie waved his hand, and with a booming voice stated, "Your wish has been granted."

"You know," the genie continued, "most people would have asked for money, fame, or some combination of those things. You only wanted the love of your brother. Is it because you are old and dying?"

"Certainly not! That's not the reason at all" the man cried. "But my brother is, and he's worth about \$100 million."

- b. What motivates you? There are several theories about what might motivate (inspire, provoke) individuals. On the most basic level people do things like going to work and helping others in order to gain “good things” - (i.e. rewards and things they value). Additionally, it would seem they seek to avoid negative consequences. Now, I’m not seeking to turn this into a psychological study. The point I am trying to get to is this, what drives you to live out your faith??? Fear is a big motivator. (I’ll get to biblical fear in a moment). Many people are scared of Hell, and they should be. But is it a healthy fear or a fear of punishment? There are many who come into a relationship with the Lord to buy their “fire insurance”. It isn’t the unconditional love and acceptance that drives them, it is the fear of punishment. This kind of fear is a powerful motivator. Normally, we view fear as anything that causes a mild apprehension or awareness of anxiety all the way to outright, gut-wrenching terror. It can become so intense that it creates the “fight or flight” response.
- c. Now the Bible does talk about “fear” in reference to fearing the Lord. We are to be in awe, to act reverential, to behave reverently in our relationship with the Lord God. **Psalm 2:11 (NLT2)** says, *“Serve the LORD with reverent fear, and rejoice with trembling.”* And the Apostle Paul encouraged believers, *“So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling” (Philippians 2:12 NASB)*. Serving the Lord, doing our best to honor Him, is that step of reverence - that beginning of “fear”. We continue to live and to learn that our journey, our life, reflects the Lord God to others. The motivation in the life of a believer should be a desire that comes from experiencing forgiveness, finding

kindness and grace, and then wanting others to discover the same thing.

- d. The Lord wants believers to have a full life. A life marked by peace, one that chooses obedience, and one that finds a way to do good - to serve others. Jesus said that He came so that His followers will live “abundantly” (see John 10:10). Abundance... plenty. lavishness, great quantity... what a life! Our relationship with Jesus is a benefit to us, it is a benefit to the World. He is our protector, our benefactor, our security. We get to learn to live in the fullness of what the Lord has for us. Learning to prioritize, to place significance on His teachings is a place to begin. Beginning to focus on the Beatitudes (“BE” attitudes - Matt. 5: 3-10), we can learn to choose happiness in the face of difficulties and challenges. And as we learn these principles, we can allow our “lights” to shine, to be observable (Matt. 5:14-16). I believe that much of the richness of the life of a believer is found in obedience, it is found in being a living testimony. Allowing our behaviors to reflect our beliefs comes from (1) the realization we are a new creation. The relationship we have with Jesus makes us into something fresh, something different, new (2 Cor. 5:17); (2) it continues as we choose to renew our minds, to allow our lives to be statements of worship (Rom. 12:1-2); (3) and it is evident in the manner in which we love others (Phil. 2:3-4).
- e. I believe that people are looking for the hope and grace that comes from a relationship with Jesus Christ. Here, in our wonderful country, it may be that they don’t want the “American” Jesus. We have allowed faith to divide us. Heck, we can’t even get along in the church - why would we assume that unbelievers would want to be part of that. Jesus is not a politician. In 1979, the Moral Majority

made being an Evangelical a political party. (I'm sorry, I know that sounds critical). We need to move beyond politics and find ways to support and encourage each other. God wants and accepts us, the Holy Spirit guides and changes us, Jesus intercedes for us... we get to be those demonstrations of love and grace

- f. There are times each of us needs to rediscover the reason, to be refreshed, and to get motivated. Today, I want to touch on 3 promises found in the OT. They have helped believers for some time remember and find ways to stand in awe of God and live one's faith.

IV. God Knows

- a. There is a relatively new song that speaks to the fact that God understands. It's by King and Country...
- b. "God only knows what you've been through. God only knows what they say about you. God only knows how it's killing you. But there's a kind of love that God only knows..."
- c. You have heard that God is in control and His plans, His intentions for us and this world, are going to be accomplished
- d. There is a promise that was made to Israel some time ago. This promise applies to His Church today.
- e. **Jeremiah 29:11 (CSB)**

"For I know the plans I have for you" – this is the LORD's declaration – "plans for your well-being, not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope."

- f. This is an empathic statement toward His kids. “I know”, He can relate to our feelings. God shares in our struggles
- g. He is stating that He understands our plight and has plans to bring us to the best place for us.
- h. Now, as far as I am concerned, this encourages me to stand fast - to trust God, even when it doesn't make much sense.
- i. This can be a challenging stand to take. Holding on to hope when things seem to be unsettled around you is difficult. Our natural response is “I have to do something”.
- j. God has a plan... it will be accomplished... no matter how much we try to inflict our will and effort. God's will is perfect, His strength and ability is more than enough
- k. There is a passage in Psalms that I find incredibly encouraging. Though it can be a difficult way to learn to live.

l. Psalm 46:10 (AMP)

Let be and be still, and know (recognize and understand) that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations! I will be exalted in the earth!

- m. It is hard, when things seem to be falling apart, to follow the wisdom of that famous Beatles song - “Let it be, let it be, speaking words of wisdom, let it be”
- n. The NASB translates the first few words of this Scripture as “Cease striving”. It's as if the Lord God is telling us, ‘Relax - I got this. Stand back and watch My purposes be accomplished’

- o. Taking God at His word encourages one to live in obedience, to trust His plans, and to turn to Him in all moments

V. God Directs

- a. In this country, almost from the moment we are born, we are taught to be independent.
- b. We praise “self-made” people; we celebrate individualism; and the American Way is one of individual accomplishment
- c. That makes TRUST a difficult idea - an unfamiliar way to live
- d. And add in the hurt that seems to pour out on many, trust can seem to be an impossible ideal
- e. Yet, God says that trusting Him is what is best us
- f. Now, the world will tell you that trusting a God that you can't see, can't touch is absurd - it is a crazy way to live
- g. I think it takes more faith not to believe in God than it does to believe
- h. The life that comes from having faith in God makes sense. Creation didn't just “happen”. We aren't a result of a random happenstance
- i. So, in my simple way of thinking, TRUST - especially trust in the Lord, makes sense
- j. **Proverbs 3:5-6 (AMP)**

Lean on, trust in, and be confident in the Lord with all your heart and mind and do not rely on your own insight or understanding. In

all your ways know, recognize, and acknowledge Him, and He will direct and make straight and plain your paths.

- k. My wisdom, my strength, my abilities, often lead to errors. Because my thought process is imperfect misunderstanding and poor choices often result.
- l. Now, there are times that success can be the result. It's the law of averages. But the truth is, most life doesn't merit Hall of Fame consideration. (In baseball, failing 7 out of 10 times merits Cooperstown.)
- m. Trusting God, with all that I am, leads me to Heaven. Believing that God's will and intentions are perfect for me, leads me to peace and satisfaction. Not trying to do it on my own, allows me to find comfort - to rest and to learn
- n. Trust motivates, trust inspires, and trust testifies

VI. God Listens and Acts

- a. Isn't it a great comfort to know that God wants to hear what you have to say?
- b. It's not that we must speak Him into action. God knows what is best and what is needed in every circumstance.
- c. **Isaiah 55:8-9 (NCV)**

The LORD says, "My thoughts are not like your thoughts. Your ways are not like my ways. Just as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts higher than your thoughts.

- d. I'm so glad that He is God because I would certainly have things more messed up than they currently are... 😊
- e. It is nuts to second guess the Lord and His plans. We know in part and have limited vision. The Creator knows what is needed in every moment. That is comforting, that is inspiring
- f. When we get into difficulty - when there is misunderstanding or poor choices, God knows what is needed.
- g. In his time of trouble, David called out to the Lord... He waited and trusted God to respond. And during those moments David worshiped.
- h. Psalm 86:5 (CSB)**
For you, Lord, are kind and ready to forgive, abounding in faithful love to all who call on you.
- i. David knew that he needed help - he depended on the grace and kindness of the Lord to bring him thru the challenges of life.
- j. It's the right way to live out one's faith
- k. Calling out (praying) to the Lord results in forgiveness; it clears our view so that we can see His love in action; this expression of trust and dependence helps us find the rest and peace needed in the turmoil of the moment

VII. Wrapping Up

- a. This message began with a silly quip about the wrong kind of motivation.

- b. “Our culture says that ruthless competition is the key to success. Jesus says that ruthless compassion is the purpose of our journey.” (Brennan Manning)
- c. Living compassionately is living in faith. Seeking to accept and understand before inflicting my will and effort is a choice of a life of faith
- d. It’s about choosing joy and understanding that interdependence is so much stronger than independence
- e. It is essential that we learn to trust the gift that God has given us. Grace, compassion, understanding, acceptance we poured out on us through the Cross
- f. When Jesus said, “It is finished” (John 19:30), it was the starting point for our journey of faith. Jesus accomplished everything that was planned so that we could learn to live a life of faith
- g. Faith is simply trust and confidence instead of doubt and fear. Choosing to live in faith, simply said, is taking the Lord at His Word. And He hasn’t failed
- h. Let’s Pray
- i. Live grateful - the Creator of the Universe thinks (and says) you are something special; Live with joy - it is there that true strength and peace are discovered; live by the guidance of the Holy Spirit - there demonstrations of grace and compassion become common place and ministry is a way of life
- j. Grace first... grace always
- k. Live simple, live practical, love eternally