

## 1 What is more precious than Gold?

- If there was one thing you could do that would give you the most long-term benefit, what would that one thing be?

## 2 Our Greatest Asset?

- An asset is a useful or valuable thing, person, or quality that provides, security, wealth, and well-being.
- If someone were to ask you, what is your most important asset, what would you say?
- Some people may say things like:
  - Cash in the bank.
  - House, automobile, or other tangible possessions.
  - Investments (i.e., stocks, money markets, bonds, and etc.).
  - Intangible possessions (i.e., education, skills, family, and friends).

## 3 What is our Greatest Asset?

- But according to the Bible, what is our greatest asset?
  - According to 1 Peter 1:7b, this asset has greater worth than gold (refined and purified gold) (1 Pet 1:7 NIV)
  - It is so important to us that God even allows trials to come in our lives, so that it can grow and be more valuable and helpful to us.
  - One day Jesus' disciples asked for more of it, but Jesus turned them down cold. He simply told them to use what they had and more would be given.
  - Most importantly, just a little bit of this commodity has the power to not only move mountains, open the eyes of the blind, make the lame walk, but to bring us into eternal glory.
  - So then, what is this important asset that is worth more than precious gold? It is not our faith!

## 4 Purpose of sermon

- However, I'm going to assert tonight that this precious commodity is so neglected by most Christians that we don't nurture it as we should.
- If fact, I'm going to make the point that most of our problems are both the result and effect of disregarding the nurturing of our faith.
- In other words, what business do we have going to God in prayer, if we don't believe God in the first place.
- Show me someone who believes God and I'll show you someone who seeks the Lord with all their heart.

## 5 The Circle Maker

- In recent weeks, several of our Cell-Groups have been watching a video series called, The Circle Maker.
- While the basic premise of the series is on prayer, it goes much deeper.

- It's focus is praying in accordance with the promises of God and not resting until something happens.
- However, most Christians are so ignorant of God's promises that they don't realize what God is committed in doing for those who are faithful to believe.

## 6 **The Circle Maker**

- According to Mark Batterson (author of The Circle Maker), we ought to rediscover what God has promised his people.
- We are in a covenant and God says, if we do this, he will do that.
- So when we saturate ourselves in God's word that tells us what He'll do for those who trust him, something else that is amazing can happen—faith grows!
- When faith starts to grow our prayers change.
- No longer are they filled with pitiful whining, but contain words of faith and confidence in God.

## 7 **Finding Faith**

- So where do we find faith?
  - According to the Bible, . . . faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ. (Rom 10:17 NASB)
  - In other words, faith comes when we hear what God has done for others.
  - So when we read in the Bible all the great things God has done for others, we grow in our confidence that God can do the same thing for us.
  - The same thing happens when we hear testimonies. It gives us confidence that the same thing can happen in our lives and through our prayers.
  - Faith is not something that is mystical, but simply our confidence God will do what he has promised.
  - Faith is the confidence that what we hope for will actually happen; it gives us assurance about things we cannot see. (Heb 11:1 NLT-SE)

## 8 **Finding faith**

- To put it in plain English . . .
  - Faith is a confident assurance, a well-grounded assurance that something we want and hope for is going to happen. It is a conviction (strong belief) of the reality of things we hope for, which we cannot yet see.
- So where do we find this confident assurance?
  - When we read the Bible.
  - When we fellowship with other Christians and hear their stories.
  - When we use what faith we already have and put it into action.

## 9 **Why Faith is so Important?**

- The reason why faith is so important is because it is so powerful.
  - I tell you the truth, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there’ and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you.” (Matt 17:20 NIV)
  - “‘If you can?’” said Jesus. “Everything is possible for him who believes.” (Mark 9:23 NIV)

## 10 Heroes of faith

- In Hebrews chapter 11, there is listed a “Heroes of Faith - Hall of Fame.”
- Listed are Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Rahab, Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, and undisclosed others; who through faith
  - Conquered kingdoms
  - Administered justice, and
  - Gained what was promised

## 11 Heros of faith

- The writer goes on to say as well that these “heroes of faith,”
  - Shut the mouths of lions,
  - Quenched the fury of the flames,
  - Escaped the edge of the sword,
  - Whose weakness was turned to strength, and
  - Became powerful in battle and routed foreign armies.
- Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. (Heb 12:1 NIV)

## 12 Context of Matthew 17:20

- In Matthew 17:20, Jesus tells his disciples that if they have faith as small as a mustard seed, . . . you can move mountains.
- But do you remember the context of this teaching?
- “O unbelieving and perverse generation,” Jesus replied, “how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy here to me.” Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of the boy, and he was healed from that moment. (Matt 17:17–18 NIV)
- Then the disciples came to Jesus in private and asked, “Why couldn’t we drive it out?” He replied, “Because you have so little faith.” (Matt 17:19–20 NIV)

## 13 Mustard seed faith

- In order for us to see “mountains moved” in our lives all we need is faith the size of a mustard seed, which is a very small seed.
- However, our faith may be so small, it is smaller than a mustard seed.
- It may be so small, only a microscope can pick it up.
- If this is the case and we need God’s help, shouldn't we be investing in our faith?
- In other words, the reason why our prayers are not being answered and the devil is making a monkey out of us is simply because we’re not spending time nurturing our faith.

#### 14 **Growing our Faith**

- According to Hebrews, we need to throw off everything that hinders the growth of our faith.
- In other words, we need to rid ourselves of spiritual slothfulness.
- If faith comes by reading the word and mustard seed size faith moves mountains, shouldn't we be making the growth of our faith a very high priority?
- As Mark Batterson says in *The Circle Maker*, we need to circle the promises of God and stand on them in faith—believing that God is a rewarder of those who seek Him.
- So feeding our faith by the stories of what God has done for others (great clouds of witnesses) builds our faith.
- What God has done for others, he can do for you!

#### 15 **Faith destroyer**

- One of the other things we need to throw off, according to the writer of Hebrews, is the sin that so easily entangles.
- The problem with temptation is that if we’re not careful, it will cause us to sin.
- This creates guilt and guilt is toxic to both our soul and spirit—even our faith.
- It is hard to pray believing when there is guilt hanging over our head.
- We need to first deal with that sin and the best way to do that is through confession and repentance. We may even need to make restitution and seek reconciliation before confidence with God can be restored.

#### 16 **Guilt & Faith**

- Remember, we don't need to be perfect to be in right relationship with God and have our prayers answered.
- However, we do need to be blameless.
- We are blameless before God when we're innocent of wrong doing.
- We are innocent of wrong doing, when we walk according to God's commands and seek His forgiveness when we stumble.

- So then, when we do unto others what we would want them to do to us, and keep ourselves from being corrupted by the world, we should have confidence before God and receive from him anything we ask we obey his commands do what pleases him. (1 John 3:21-22)

## 17 Unanswered Prayer

- The reason why God may not be answering our prayers is because our faith, which is more precious than gold, is being starved of spiritual nutrients.
- When we don't read our Bibles, attend church, or fellowship with other believers, our faith can grow so weak and small it may be smaller than a mustard seed.
- When we don't read our Bible, we may as well not realize what pleases the Lord and pray amiss.
- According to James, You do not have, because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures. (James 4:2-3 NIV)
- However, according to 1 John, when our highest priority is to honor God we should have confidence before God. This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us — whatever we ask — we know that we have what we asked of him. (1 John 5:14-15 NIV)

## 18 Trails are for a Purpose

- According to James 1:2-3 and 1 Peter 1:6-7, God allows us to face trials of various kinds so that our faith, which is more precious than gold, is exercised where like a muscle; through use—it will grow bigger and be strong where we can run and finish the race marked out of us.
- However, when trouble comes, we often choose to whine, complain, and pout, instead of nurturing our faith and circling the promises of God.
- With this kind of attitude, will we ever see the promised land?
- This is why the Scripture says, Therefore, strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees. “Make level paths for your feet,” so that the lame may not be disabled, but rather healed.” (Heb 12:12-13 NIV)

## 19 Summary

- Let us throw off . . .
  - All attitudes of all unbelief and self pity.
  - The neglecting of our faith where we don't spend enough time and work encouraging ourselves in God's promises.

- The neglecting of God's people and their needs because when we help each other with their burdens, we fulfill the Royal Law of Christ and receive whatever we ask for in prayer—because we're blameless before Him.
- There is a temptation that we need huge faith to see small answers to prayer. The reality is we only need to have a mustard seed size of faith to see miracles in our lives.
- So then, let us circle the promises of God.

## 20 **Sample Prayer of Faith**

- Dear God who is faithful and true whose mercies are new every morning, I your servant chosen by your grace come to you with high expectations because you are able to do immeasurably more than all I ask or imagine according to your power that is at work in me.
- For I know O'Lord I'm more than conqueror because nothing can separate me from your love. As your word says, if you are for me, who can be against me.
- So Lord God Almighty, fill me with all wisdom and understanding so that I can please you with my faith where I can grow in my knowledge and understanding of you. For you O'Lord are the compassionate and merciful God, who is slow to anger and abounds in love.
- Help me Lord with my trouble so that I can bring praise, honor and glory to your great name. Don't let my enemies triumph over me. Instead of wishing them harm, I pray for them and ask you to open their eyes, so that they may find your mercy too.
- Lord I know the plans you have for me, plans to prosper me and not to harm me. For you O'Lord give strength to the weary and increase the power of the weak. Therefore, I will not fear when hard times come because you O'Lord are my shield and very great reward. No doubt you will meet all my needs according to Christ's glorious riches. Amen

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