

Not Your Ordinary Faith Message

We've all heard our fair share of faith messages. We walk by faith. We speak by faith. We live by faith. We prophesy according to our faith. We inherit the promises of God through faith (and patience). You've probably memorized all those Scriptures, too.

We've all marveled at the heroes in the Hebrews 11 "Hall of Faith." There we are edified by accounts of God's faithfulness to His people throughout the Old Testament. There we learn the practical elements of how faith works in the New Testament. Your Bible is probably colored and underlined on those pages just like mine.

Indeed, we've all learned that faith comes by hearing the Word of God. We are convinced that acting on the Word brings results (see Rom. 10:17). We know (that we know that we know) that if we don't doubt in our heart but believe those things that we say will come to pass we will surely have whatsoever we say (see Mark 11:23). We've learned well.

Ultimately, whatever we receive from God, it comes by faith. I'm oversimplifying, but that's the anatomy of faith in a nutshell. Now what about the other side of the coin?

There's so much focus on receiving God's promises by faith, winning battles by faith, taking the spoils by faith and so on. But what about living a life of holiness by faith?

Don't stop reading now just because I'm not promising you three keys to receiving your blessing—you need to eat your meat and veggies before you get to dessert.

The Bible says whatever is not of faith is sin (see Rom. 14:23). In order to get sinful habits, behaviors, speech and

the like out of our lives, we have to rely on God. Jesus is our deliverer.

Beloved, we're not going walk out of fleshly acts by the power of the flesh. It takes the Holy Spirit—the spirit of grace—to help us avoid caving in to the sinful weaknesses in our carnal nature. Just as we were saved by grace through faith, we must continue living the same way (see Eph. 2:8). Remember the foolish Galatians who thought they could begin in the Spirit and be made perfect in the flesh? (See Galatians 3.) The apostle Paul set that straight in a hurry and we'd do well to remember the lesson.

We've been delivered from the power of darkness. We've been made free from the law of sin and death (see Rom. 8:2). We don't have to sin. But we'll have to rely with everything in us on the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus to walk after the Spirit—so that we don't fulfill the sinful desires of the flesh. And we'll have to do that by faith.

Mind you, I'm not even talking about the abomination-type sins here ala Proverbs 6 (the proud look, the lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked imaginations, feet that are swift in running to mischief, a false witness that speaks lies, and he that sows discord among brethren). No, I'm talking about the idle words of our mouths that come from a tongue no man can tame. I'm talking about the selfish ambition in our hearts that causes us not to walk in love. I'm talking about the temptations we live with every day that squeeze our spiritual fruit.

None of us is perfect, and it's absolutely marvelous news that He doesn't expect us to be. Yes, we strive to be perfect (mature) even as our Father is perfect. But we all fall short of the glory of God each and every day of our lives. I'm not writing this unto condemnation. My point is that we in American society so often use our faith as a means to get what we want. What if we wanted holiness as much as that new car,

that unseen husband, or that physical healing?

What I am trying to say is this: Exercise your faith to receive God's best for your life in every area—financially, health-wise, socially, etc. But don't stop there. Exercise your faith to avoid the trap of sin. Like David, ask the Lord to show you if there is anything in you that offends Him (see Ps. 139). And when He starts convicting you, repent by faith, receive forgiveness by faith and determine not to walk with sinful thoughts, attitudes, words or actions—by faith. Amen?

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