

FAITHFULNESS IN PRAYER

INTRODUCTION

Faithfulness is not only one of the attributes of God, but one that is highly extolled in Scriptures. Many times in the Psalms we find the faithfulness of God highlighted as a source of encouragement and comfort (**see Ps. 25:10; 30:9; 33:4; 36:5**). Because of God's faithfulness we can always count on God even though the picture is as bleak as the Arctic and the circumstances impossible. Though faced with the desolation of Jerusalem because of the nation's sin, the prophet Jeremiah could say of the Lord, "Great is Your faithfulness" (**Lam. 3:23**).

Of what value would the promises of God be without His faithfulness and of what value would we be to God, to our families, to the body of Christ, and to society as a whole without faithfulness? Absolutely none! The faithful person is one who can be counted on to carry out his or her responsibilities and promises to the best of his or her ability through thick and thin no matter how bad the situation.

Faithfulness, then, is a quality that God wants to reproduce in us through the salvation that comes in Christ. It is another of the qualities of maturity to be sought in the life of the Christian.

But what exactly is faithfulness? What does it look like? How do we develop a consistent faithfulness in the Christian life?

1. With God, All things are possible

Matthew 19:21-26

It doesn't say that " For God all things are possible."

The word "With"-' para' means in Greek "by the side of"...

We can do two things

With God or without God..

Faith is all about knowing that ' with God' everything becomes possible..

'All things' doesn't mean everything materialistic or success focused , but it means all things that God had promised.

Humility brings God to be with you. It's proven that the last resort for any man is God. **I Timothy 2:8**.. Lifting your hands and praying means you surrender

in the battlefield. Once you lift your hands, you will not be shot at...you lift your hands up when you are drowning and helpless.

I desperately needed help from God.

I would like to share how my whole perspective of prayer changed after 2014. It is not about "how long" or "how much" or "what" you pray for. It is about understanding "who" you are praying to? I had to, after so many years of being a disciple really make an effort to "know" God and appreciate and Honour His faithfulness towards me and my family.(slides of pics in the background)

It was in August 2014 that an epidemic of dengue spread in Bangalore and my 13 year old daughter Varsha was infected very badly. She was admitted in the ICCU for almost 20 days. Her internal organs were severely damaged and she was starting to have internal bleeding. I remember the day I entered the ICCU in St. Martha's hospital, feeling so scared and helpless because I saw a ward full of young mothers with babies infected with dengue fever. As I entered, I saw this lady sitting beside her daughter's bed, a girl as old as my daughter on the ventilator, breathing helplessly. I was so fearful even as I saw my daughter being put on a ventilator. Her pulse had gone below normal. But I saw this lady reading her bible and praying fervently. She looked up and saw me and my girl. I went up to her and enquired..she gave me a hug, a total stranger. She comforted me because she had seen the fear in my eyes. She told me that she had come in two days before I could. I can't remember what I mumbled in reply. But all I remember is she asking me to pray for her daughter whilst she would pray for mine and she requested if we could read the psalms together. I readily agreed because I was feeling so weak and numb already.

We continued to do so. Jayanti and I prayed together for two days and I began to introduce her to every disciple who came in to visit me. She was so encouraged as well. But on the third day around midnight as I kept watch over my daughter and Jayanti's daughter...she had gone to take a break. I suddenly saw her daughter breathe heavily and the nurses rushing to stabilize her. But in just 2 mins the child passed away in front of my eyes. I just didn't know what to do. I panicked. I ran out looking for my husband who was resting for a short while in the ward. I was blabbering in fear and I started to cry. Mark and I rushed back to the ICCU. Jayanti was there at her daughter's side crying bitterly. I went up to her and just wrapped my arms around her. I had no words to comfort her. I just kept praying ..wailing in fact asking God why would this happen ..I turned and then saw nurses rushing towards my daughter. Her pulse was going down too. Jayanti saw that and held my hand and said,"jasmine don't lose heart. Our God is faithful. Don't hold anything against him. He is doing what is right. My daughter was meant to go. But you keep fighting in your prayer for your daughter."

I was stunned and I was speechless. She kept telling me ,"God is faithful. His Time is perfect."

My daughter stabilized after an hour. By morning Jayanti was gone;her family had come and taken them. I looked for her. But the matron told me her story. Jayanti had lost her husband exactly a year ago, the same month to cancer and this was her only daughter who died a year later. Yet she had come into my life to give me life's greatest lesson that God is faithful in all situations. I had prepared my heart to face the inevitable, in case it happened. But it was hard to even imagine losing my 13 year relationship with my child. But Jayanti's words helped me see a new perspective. God's faithfulness was not bound by my time and my desires. She left the city and we lost touch. She did message me once that when she would be ready she would come to church with me. I am still praying for her. I know HE is faithful in spite of the outcome.

2. Visualise to actualize

Mark 11:22-24

Have the faith of God. What does it mean? Have a God-kind of faith..
What is God-kind of faith?
Imagining what you could sculpt out of a stone.

Gen 1:11- God saw a barren land and he could visualize what could come out of the land.

I must share sharadamma's story here.(slides of pics in the background)
Sharadamma is 63 years old, travels 86 kms one way to church every Sunday. Leaves home by 5:30am..after having fed her cattle and cooked her meals for the day. She owns about 5 acres of vineyard, has a eucalyptus grove left behind by her husband who had died about 8 years ago. She is the only Christian convert in a village of about 5000 orthodox Hindus. She has a 14 year old boy who studies in the city. He comes in during the weekend to help her out.

Sharadamma leaves home on Sundays at 5:30am to get the local village bus to reach the national highway. Waits there till 6:30am to get a bus that goes to Bangalore city. She reaches Bangalore city by 9:15am..her nephew who is a disciple comes there to pick her up for breakfast. Takes her home. She has a meal with his family and they reach the church hall by 9:45am every Sunday. The days her nephew is not in town, she just comes on her own getting into another bus to reach the hall. She has been a disciple for 3 years now. Travels a total of 172 kms every Sunday spending her own money and gets home by 3pm.She probably missed thrice because of sickness or sometimes due to harvest at her vineyard. She also travels 56 kms one way during mid weeks to get her fellowship with her nearest ministry and also for her discipling times every fortnight.

She and her husband were just simple unschooled folks in that village of Talahalli. They would often hear about Jesus on the radio and then sometimes some missionaries would come, hold camp in their village, play a movie about Jesus and leave. Her husband longed to be taught from the bible. They tried travelling to nearby towns and begged many pastors to teach them the bible. But no one really took interest. The only interest if any, was shown in buying property in their village. Disappointed they would return home. After a year or so, her husband fell ill and passed away. But before his death he pleaded with his wife not to give up the search for "Jesus". He died and Sharadamma kept praying fervently that someone would come to teach her the bible. Almost 8 years later, one fine day her distant relative Mahesh dropped in from the city to see her. Mahesh and his family belonged to that village but had left it about 20 years back to move into the city. Eventually he had become a disciple in our church. In 2013 he had received good news that his family had received a favorable judgement from the court settling a long standing land dispute in this village. Mahesh was overjoyed and had come back to the village to reclaim his ancestral land. Just then he remembered his distant aunt, Sharadamma and had dropped in to see her. He came in during lunch time and they got talking. He shared about how he had accepted Jesus and had become a Christian. Sharadamma was so excited. She remembered God's faithfulness. God had answered her prayer after 8 years. She pleaded with Mahesh to take her to his church. Mahesh tried explaining the distance and the hassles, but she just was determined. That Sunday she came to church and after about 4 months got baptized. It didn't matter how much she had to travel but she kept her heart connected to God's faithfulness. She has an audio bible now that she listens to every day. Last month we started the new mission family group closer to her village in a town called Doddaballapur. Every Sunday a group of 15-20 disciples conduct Sunday service at the lion's club hall at the main bus stop in the evening and we have no less than 10-15 adults joining in with a lot of kids. This town is about 25 kms away from Sharadamma's village.

CONCLUSION

The faithfulness of God is a tremendous encouragement in days when people's hearts are failing them for fear. If you build your life on people or on the things of this world, you will have no hope or security; but if you build on Christ, the Faithful One, you will be safe forever. He is faithful to chasten (**Ps. 119:75**); He is faithful to keep us in this life and unto life eternal (**1 Tim. 1:15; 1 Thes. 5:23-24**). We can commit our lives and souls into the hands of the faithful Creator (**1 Peter 4:19**) and know that He will do all things well.