

(Radical Jesus) 28 Radical Faith

by Glenn Meldrum

Radical faith is the passionate pursuit of God, which leads to great faith, miracles, and a high view of God.

Duration: 24:27

Scripture: Matthew 8:10, Matthew 15:28, Acts 2:17, Acts 10:34, Hebrews 11:1-13

Topics: "Faith"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of trusting in God, even when it feels scary or uncertain. He highlights that the alternative to trusting God is disbelief or disobedience, which can lead to broken relationships and families falling apart. The preacher emphasizes the need for Christians to have a burning passion for God and to live out their beliefs in order to draw others to the Savior. He also discusses the concept of surrendering oneself fully to God as a key principle for having great faith. The sermon concludes with the idea that God is always working to build our faith, even if it means leading us to uncomfortable or dangerous places.

Transcript

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We are going to dig into the subject of radical faith one more day before moving on to our next subject, which is radical prayer. In our study on the radical nature of the true faith, we have looked at two people Jesus praised for great faith, and both of them were Gentiles, or non-Jews. They were the Canaanite woman that had a demon-possessed daughter, and the Roman centurion that had a beloved servant that was dying.

In the face of such blatant unbelief that the majority of Israelites possessed in Jesus' day, we see these two people stand above the rest by demonstrating great faith in the face of great need. Now isn't that the way great faith works? That it must have a great need to act upon? Of course, none of us want to be confronted with such great needs that require us to use great faith. But until our faith is tried, tested, and proved, we will never really know the caliber of our faith.

Smith Wigglesworth was referred to as the Apostle of Faith, because he operated in great faith by seeing the power of God heal the sick, make the blind see, the lame walk, the deaf hear, and even saw many dead people raise to life. This man of God was seriously tested and was able to say, We need to wake up and strive to believe God. Before God could bring me to this place, He broke me a thousand times.

I have wept, I have groaned, I have travailed many a night until God broke me. It seems to me that until God has mowed you down, you can never have this long-suffering, this endurance for others. We will never have the gifts of healing and the working of miracles and operation unless we stand in the divine power that God gives us.

Unless we stand believing God and having done all to stand, we stand believing. Until we can come to a firm understanding of the caliber of our faith, we will never be able to grow in our faith so that the Lord could do greater things in and through us. If you notice in the accounts of the Canaanite woman and the centurion, the great need they faced was not one that had to do with their own personal need, but the need of another that forced them to arise to the occasion with great faith.

Many times our faith must go through a maturing process by having to believe for our own needs. The better we are at believing God to meet our own needs, the easier it will be for us to believe for the needs of others. That is the place where I think the Lord wants to move His people, to the place where they are striving to believe for others, whether it has to do with salvation, healing, or other genuine needs.

When we look at the book of Acts, we can clearly see that the early church operated with signs and wonders, or we could say that they were a signs and wonders church. I believe this is the normal condition of the church, and it is what we should be today. When signs and wonders in one way or another are not operating in and through the church, it means that there is something terribly wrong with the church and individuals.

There is something that is grieving the Spirit right out of the church. It may be the false doctrine that claims the age of miracles has passed, so they will never even try to operate in a miracle-working faith. Or it may be sin and compromise that is grieving the Spirit.

Or it may be unbelief. Or it may be the Spirit has never even given opportunity to move in the church. No matter the reason, if the body is sick, then it is important that the cause of the sickness is discovered so that the disease will not spread or become fatal.

Do we have the courage to read the New Testament, especially the Gospels and Acts, and see the extremely obvious point that signs and wonders were normal for the early church? And if it was normal for them, then it should be normal for us. We need to abandon the modern faith that is dead and barren and return to the teaching and life of the primitive church. What they were, we can be if we will only be willing to live and believe as they did.

There is much more at stake than we think concerning this issue. The church is in desperate need of seeing a miracle-working God in their midst once again. There are so many needs in the church from the healing of our bodies to the supernatural power to live holy lives to the salvation of the lost that are in the church and to the revealing of God's manifest presence.

We need to have a testimony in the now, not just what Jesus did in the past. We need to speak of a God that is still doing miracles, not one that did them in bygone days but no longer does them today. The

church needs to experience the awesome miracle of God's manifest presence, which is seen in the power of the Spirit revealed in vibrant worship, anointed preaching, and altars filled with repentant people.

We are in desperate need to see great faith rise up in prayer so we can once again experience full-blown revival where vast numbers of people are being saved. The world is also in desperate need of seeing a miracle-working God reveal himself in and through the church. Otherwise, they will not be greatly interested in our dead and boring religion.

In our present condition, the world is not impressed with our lukewarm religion and defeated lives. The power of God is withheld from us because we will not meet the conditions he has established to reveal himself as a miracle-working God. We cannot blame the world for the terrible spiritual condition of the church.

It is not their fault. There is nobody to blame but ourselves. Most of the lost never go to church and never will unless something dramatically changes with the church.

They are not interested in our programs, our fundraising campaigns, our motivational messages, and doctrinal differences. Until we have something that can genuinely impact their lives, they will not pay us much attention. Revival swept through the Philippines in the early 1960s, and the reason it happened was that signs and wonders accompanied the preaching of the word.

The preacher would enter a village, begin to preach, and then pray for the sickest person in the village to be healed. When the person was healed and the power of God was clearly revealed, sometimes even whole villages got saved. Miracles do not save because only Jesus saves, but miracles tell people that there is a God, and then the ministers of the gospel can reveal who this God is and how to know him.

The world is hurting. The philosophies and religions of the world are bankrupt because they cannot meet their needs. Drugs and alcohol cannot satisfy the soul.

Their relationships are in shambles and their families are falling apart. Do you honestly think that tame religion will grab hold of their attention when the glitter and glamour of this world is all around them? Do you think that a spineless, faithless type of Christianity will draw them to the Savior? If we do not have a burning passion for God, then why would they be interested in what we have? Until we live out what we say we believe, our testimonies will be virtually meaningless. And if there is no substantial difference between the church and the world, why would they give up their Sunday mornings to sleep in for a dead church service, or give up their beer and pot money to a church that is little more than a social gathering? They can get all that at the bar or on the streets.

We will never have great faith until we see more clearly the greatness of our God. And until the world begins to see the greatness of our God manifested in and through his true disciples, they will not pay us much attention. This takes us back to an issue I have dealt with in the past of a low and high view of God, and how our view of God directly determines how we live and what we do with Jesus.

And according to our view of God is how we portray Christ to a lost and dying world, which will either bring him glory or disgrace. Tied into our view of God will be the condition and strength of our faith. A low view of God cannot produce great faith, because when the belief in God is small, there leaves little room for the supernatural.

But a high view of God opens the door to see miracles, because there is a God worth trusting, and a life that is striving to live worthy of such a God. Paul told us in Hebrews 11, 6, And without faith it is impossible to believe God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists, and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him. We are told that we please God according to our faith.

This faith is expressed both in the object of our faith and the operation of our faith. If the object of our faith is only a little God that is predominantly concerned about our personal happiness and not our holiness, then the operation of our faith will be very anemic, and our life of faith will be very shallow. And when we place our faith in the biblical God, who is infinitely beyond what our little minds can fathom, we know that since he is holy, he will only fellowship with holy people, and if we come to grasp that he is a miracle-working God, then we have the potential to see God do great things in and through us.

So the only way we can please God is to have faith in him as he has revealed himself, and then to live out that faith in our everyday life. There are two things Paul told us we needed to believe in this verse in Hebrews 11. The first point we need to know is that he exists, or more specifically, who he is in character and nature.

This means that we need to know him as he has revealed himself to mankind, not as we imagine him to be. Our faith cannot be pleasing to God if it is focused on a God that does not exist, on a make-believe fairy-tale deity. The Lord has revealed himself clearly enough to us so that we are without excuse if we do not know him and serve him.

The second point that we need to know is that he rewards those that earnestly or diligently seek him. This teaches us that God can be found because he is a personal being, and since we are made in his image, we too have personhood, so that there can be authentic fellowship between God and man. There is a condition that the Lord has firmly established about how we can come to know him, and that non-negotiable condition is that we must diligently seek him.

In other words, we must want him enough that we will invest our lives in seeking after him. Unfortunately, many church folk are little better than professing agnostics that claim there is a God, but that he cannot really be known in a personal way. Notice that the faith that is pleasing to God must be focused on knowing God as he has revealed himself in the scriptures, and then passionately seek after him with all of our strength.

The passionate pursuit of God can only happen when we are striving to know him and his nature. We can see then that faith is far more than just believing that God exists, but that it consists of the passionate pursuit of God as well. When we understand this, then we can see just how wicked apathy, indifference, and lukewarmness actually are, and that they are an insult to God.

For the Lamb deserves the reward of his suffering, which is wholehearted, uncompromising devotion and faith from the entire race of man, but especially from the church. The kind of faith that pleases God is faith that believes in the truth of who he is and then passionately seeks after him. True faith is action-based.

It does something. It accomplishes something. This is the faith that sees miracles, the church made holy, the sick healed, the lost saved, and captives set free.

Great faith is not static or dormant, because the object of our faith is a miracle-working God that will use whosoever will believe and put themselves in a place where God can use them. Without great faith,

Christians will become increasingly irrelevant in a world of great need. They will fail to meet people at their point of need.

Only through the supernatural power of God will we be able to intervene for the temporal and eternal well-being of those who are without Christ. Both the church and the world need more than mere words. They need a demonstration of the Spirit's power, the verifiable evidence that can bring them first to saving faith and then to a greater faith that will see God do wonders through them.

The true biblical faith is radical, and like the great cloud of witnesses we find in Scripture and through church history, we are commanded to live this radical faith both through life and through death. Great faith has a daring to it. It is not a safe, comfortable thing, because it puts you on the edge where you will either be victorious or defeated.

But a safe faith, which is really no faith at all, is already defeated before the battle even begins. It will never obtain the victory, because it is not willing to trust God. So it always lives in defeat.

We see in the Scriptures that all those men and women that live by faith accomplished the Lord's will because they were willing to believe God rather than man or the lies of doubt and fear. They stepped out to see the miraculous, and the Lord did not let them down. The Lord is always laboring to build our faith.

Imagine that Jesus leads you to a gigantic cliff. He moves you closer and closer to the edge, yet you frantically resist him because the precipice is so high that when you look down, all you see is the top of the clouds. The drop is enormous, so you struggle to stay as far away from the edge as possible.

You are seeking to save your life from such a horrible fall. Still, the Lord nudges you closer and closer to the edge until your toes are hanging over, and you quake in fear and question why a good God would lead you to such a dangerous place. Then Jesus whispers some terrifying words into your ears, My child, jump.

Your blood seems to freeze in your veins at such a radical, terrifying command. You begin arguing with yourself, saying that that cannot be the voice of God. God would not tell me to jump.

The voice of self screams out in fear, save yourself. The voices of the world warn you of sure and lasting doom. The hordes of hell add their horrifying forebodings to fill you with fear that will immobilize you.

Your knees go weak, and you want to run as far away from the precipice as possible. Then once again you hear the sweet voice of Jesus. Trust me, child, and jump.

I have never lost one who trusted me. So with trembling knees, you close your eyes and you jump. The next thing you know, you are safe and secure in the arms of Jesus.

You learn once again that God always keeps his word, for he is always faithful. The Lord may stretch our faith and let us fall until we are one foot from the ground, but he has never yet lost a single saint that fully trusted in his infinite wisdom and power. To trust God can be very scary at times, but what is the alternative? To disbelieve? To disobey? To rebel? There is no joy and victory in that.

The Lord never made a promise that there would be no pain and suffering in our life, just that if we would trust him, we would find that he is more than enough for any and every situation. Though at times disconcerting, faith remains the safest place to be because it allows us to rest in Christ's tender embrace and omnipotent power. Without such precipices in our life, we will never know how wonderful and mighty

our God is, nor will we ever have the joy of seeing miracles operate for us and through us.

Though true followers of Jesus are bona fide saints, they have not yet graduated the sanctifying process until they walk through death's door. We are fallen and frail and weak, and we have a sinful nature that we have to battle with, so we can have these terrible bouts of doubt and fear. I did not say that to make an excuse for sin or unbelief.

I said that we may understand our humanity and fallen nature and go to the only one that has a remedy to our doubt and unbelief. Even the best of believers are subject to bouts of doubt and unbelief and fear, and we have a spiritual adversary that is ruthless in his efforts to feed our fears and unbelief so that we do not become powerhouses for God. Fear is the great enemy of faith.

Paul told us in Galatians 5, 6, For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything but faith working through love. Through Paul we are taught that faith works or operates through love. I have already dealt with the subject of how faith is directly tied into our love for God.

The greater the love we have for God, the greater our faith will be. Add to this idea that faith operates through love with what John told us in 1 John 4, 18, There is no fear in love, but perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.

Fear is a byproduct of a lack of faith and a lack of loving God enough to trust Him. Fear literally causes people torment. There is no joy or peace in fear, only anxiety, worry, and regret.

But love drives those things out of our heart and mind. How? Inherent with love is trust. So the greater the love, the greater the trust.

Great faith is a result of great love that chooses to believe God in the face of great obstacles and fear. Another enemy of faith is our inherent self-love that makes us so consumed with personal happiness, success, and comfort that we refuse to trust God or give ourselves away for others. Here faith is strangled in one's effort to feed the fleshly desires of the carnal nature.

Self-love will always displace love for God. If we want to love God more, then we must seek to die to self. But if we will not die to self, then we are sure to be feeding the self-life that is contrary to God.

Great faith will never rise up in the heart of a person when the love of self rules. It is impossible to live by faith when one goes through life attempting to avoid every difficulty and pain because they have somehow come to believe that life is all about the pursuit of pleasure and that God exists to make them happy. To love people is costly.

To do the work of God is costly. To reach a perishing world is costly. To have great faith is costly.

Like I said earlier, radical faith contains a daring element. It is willing to step outside of what is comfortable, familiar, and safe. Pride and the fear of man are powerful tools in the enemy's hands to hinder the work of God by keeping us from operating in great faith.

How often has pride and the fear of man stopped us from ministering to someone or kept us from obeying what we believe the Lord told us to do? More ministry has been thwarted than we can understand because of these two diabolical weapons that have been used against the saints ever since the fall of man. Our natural propensity of pride and the fear of man means that to overcome them we are sure to

have a gruesome fight on our hands. But if we do not strive to crucify these two devil-inspired works of the flesh, then we will never know the joy of operating in the power of great faith.

Apathy and indifference are two more powerful weapons the enemy employs against believers to keep them from operating in great faith. Probably the two greatest weapons the church has against hell and the world is spirit-inspired prayer and real Holy Ghost revival. Apathy and indifference are killers of both.

And as a result, people will never apply themselves to operate through great faith. Let the world creep into the heart and mind of believers and they will soon be so taken up with the things of this life that they will not have any desire to invest in the hereafter. They will cease being people of prayer and cease desiring the move of God.

When people are consumed with this life, they will not have the desire to sacrifice themselves to be used by God through acts of great faith. I want to close this section on radical faith with a few concluding remarks. If we get down to the nitty-gritty about radical faith, we will see that it is ultimately about surrendering to Jesus.

No matter what weapon the enemy uses against us, they really only have one purpose, to kill our faith in God, which moves us away from knowing Him. Just think about this for a moment. Faith is all about surrendering to Jesus.

Just like the Canaanite woman and the Roman centurion that we looked at in our last two podcasts, they both had come to the place of surrendering to Jesus so they could have great faith. They had to acknowledge that they were not good people, but sinners that were in desperate need of Christ's intervention in their lives or they would have never obtained the remedy to their problem. We have to surrender to Jesus to make leaps of faith when He moves us to the edge of the precipice.

To throw ourselves off the safety of whatever cliff we have been hanging on to means that we have to surrender to Jesus, that we cannot resist Him or His commands any longer. To step out in faith, to believe for the need of another, means we must go deeper in our surrender to Jesus because great faith is rooted in great surrender. Smith Wigglesworth once said, I know that Jesus was separated from His own family and friends.

He was deprived of the luxuries of life. It seems to me that God wants to get every one of us separated to Himself in this holy war, and we are not going to have faith if we do not give ourselves wholly to Him. That is a profound statement.

We are not going to have faith if we do not give ourselves wholly to Him. This man knew what faith was all about. This man saw the miraculous in a tremendous way.

Surrender is one of God's great principles to our having great faith. Let me take this just a little bit further. Can God bless disobedience and rebellion? No, for they are thoroughly hostile to His will.

Can God bless sin? No, for sin in all of its various forms are hostile to God's will and nature. And when they are in the life of a person, faith is dead in trespasses and sin. From these two simple questions, we can see that whatever is contrary to God is sure to suffer His disfavor.

Great faith comes out of lives that are the complete opposite of lives of sin and rebellion. Great faith comes out of lives of loving devotion, explicit obedience, and absolute surrender. Now this leads me to the

next point, that God blesses those who walk wholly, so great faith must come out of holy lives.

Look at the church in compromise and you will not see the power of God. Look at those who are striving to be as worldly as possible, yet think that they will still go to heaven. There is no Holy Spirit power in their lives.

They are defeated by their compromise and blinded by their sin. God blesses those that walk before Him in holiness out of loving devotion. When faith is operating through a life that is striving to live wholly, then powerful things can happen.

Charles Finney was probably the 19th century's greatest revivalist. He stated, true faith in Christ will always and inevitably produce a holy life. Then let me quote Smith Wigglesworth again, purity is vital to faith.

We need to listen to the testimonies of those who lived out lives of great faith and learn from them, not from those who are living lives of compromise and worldliness. Personal holiness is central to a life of great faith. We cannot escape this.

Though I have dealt with this already, I want to once again highlight that faith operates by love. At the root of our lack of faith is a lack of love that is strong enough to cause us to trust Him in any and every circumstance. Smith Wigglesworth was noted for this simple statement of faith, God said it, I believe it, and that settles it.

It was Wigglesworth's passionate love for Christ that brought him to such a point of great faith. His passionate love for God caused him to seek hard after God, even when it looked like there was no possible answer to the problem. So he saw miracle after miracle because he profoundly loved the God in whom he believed.

Faith must be more important to us than all the wisdom and wealth of this world, or we will not operate in great faith. Faith compels us to trust and obey, even when it seems contrary to our emotions or reason, even when the world is hostile against us or family is rejecting us. This kind of faith is rooted in a firm relational knowledge of who Jesus is and what He promised to do.

Leonard Ravenhill so aptly stated, faith links our impotence with His omnipotence. Our reasonable service and the only wise thing for those who would be true followers of Jesus is to have wholehearted, persevering faith, and as Finney once said, persevering faith is that which gets an answer. Such faith acknowledges that God is good and can only do good, and that He wants to do good for us and through us.

It was great faith and dependence upon God that caused the early church to turn the known world upside down, even in the face of severe persecution. God is not a respecter of persons. What He has done before, He can do again.

The revivals of old are prophecies of what God wants to do once again, and the miracles of times past are testimonies to boost our faith for the present. We are living in times of great evil, and nothing but great faith in an infinitely great God will be able to do anything of substance in such a time as this. Let me close with a short account from one of Smith Wigglesworth's meetings that took place in Ireland.

There were many sick carried to that meeting. Many people were seeking the baptism in the Holy Spirit. There were sinners there who were under mighty conviction.

A moment came when the breath of God swept through the meeting. In about ten minutes, every sinner in that place was saved. Everyone who had been seeking the Holy Spirit was baptized, and every sick one was healed.

God is a reality, and His power can never fail. As our faith reaches out, God will meet us, and the same rain will fall. It is the same blood that cleanses, the same power, the same Holy Spirit, and the same Jesus made real through the power of the Holy Spirit.

What would happen if we would believe God?

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