

Run With the Angels

What is it? What does it look like? If I were to believe the man on the TV, it looks exciting, and the more excited I get about it, the more I'll see it. I know it's the stuff that leads to giant-killing and water-walking; I've seen cancer cured and drug addictions instantly gone. I've known a dying child raised to life, seen the earth literally moved and been provided for in the most miraculous ways.

But I've also been beaten to a pulp by a giant, over-whelmed under the waves, seen cancer kill and addictions destroy. I've known a living child to die, mountains to menace and taunt and the desperation of being penniless for years in foreign lands.

So what is it? And what does it look like, really? Is it here when the five thousand are fed but gone on the cross? Is it present when the sea and wind are stilled but absent in the garden tomb?

Was it there when John said, "Behold the Lamb of God," but only a memory when he asked, "Are you the One?"

Was it there when Job said, "*The Lord gives and the Lord takes away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.*"?

How about when he uttered, "*Oh, that I were as in months past, As in the days when God watched over me;*

When His lamp shone upon my head,

And when by His light I walked through darkness;

Just as I was in the days of my prime,

When the friendly counsel of God was over my tent;

When the Almighty was yet with me,

When my children were around

me;

When my steps were bathed with

cream,

And the rock poured out rivers of oil for me!

Is it here today and gone tomorrow? Is it that which dances with me the first dance and then only flirts the rest of the night? Perhaps, it ebbs and flows like the tide? Or maybe it lifts me like a whirlwind and then drops me as it abates?

Some say that either you've got it or you don't. Some say it grows. Some say that if you don't do certain things with it, you don't have it. What is it and what does it look like?

I was prompted to consider these things when my dearest friend said to me, "When I was younger, I had such great faith. But, after all the things I've been through, it's like I need to have faith again." To which I responded, "I'm sure your faith has not failed." Let me explain:

The Bible says a whole lot about faith – Jesus said it could be great or little. That fear and doubt are its opposites. Paul says that the just shall live by it. And that we can be weak in it or strong in it. That God has dealt to every man a measure of it. It works through love. It grows. James said that it is tested and made complete in how it acts out in your life. Peter said our faith will be tested. John said that it is the vehicle by which we overcome the world.

Most of us consider Hebrews 11 as the defining chapter in the Bible for faith and I would not disagree. I

submit, however, that modern popular teaching of the scriptures has placed more emphasis on what faith does that is 'spectacular' than what it does that is eternal. Now, when I say 'spectacular' I mean that which startles or surprises, that which is outward and visible – you know, like Lazarus shuffling out of the tomb wrapped in grave clothes or the lame man jumping and leaping or the leper cleansed or fire from the sky consuming the false prophets... When I say 'eternal', I mean ... eternal. And this, I believe, is God's great concern.

Now, Jesus implied that faith can fail but what we learn from the Bible is that its failure is not expressed in what you might expect. You see, just before His crucifixion, the Lord told Peter, "*Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren.*" (Lu 22:31,32) You remember the story – Peter did turn away. He denied Christ three times. He wept bitterly as a result and he was not present at the cross. However, I submit that the Son of God never prayed a prayer that wasn't answered, therefore we can be assured that Peter's faith never failed. Now, it sure looked like it did. Peter probably felt that way. I mean he denied knowing Jesus with strong language. He deserted His Savior. By all outward appearance, we might conclude that indeed his faith failed.

But it did not. And Jesus knew.

On the other end of the spectrum, the most impressive and expressive

feat of faith in the Bible is found in the following passage:

Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and said to the disciples, "Sit here while I go and pray over there." And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and He began to be sorrowful and deeply distressed. Then He said to them, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch with Me."

He went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, "O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will."

Then He came to the disciples and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, "What! Could you not watch with Me one hour? Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

Again, a second time, He went away and prayed, saying, "O My Father, if this cup cannot pass away from Me unless I drink it, Your will be done." (Mat 26:36-42)

Mark recorded Jesus praying, "*Abba, Father, all things are possible for You. Take this cup away from Me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will.*" (Mark 14:36)

In Luke's gospel, it is amplified -- *And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground.* (Lu 22:44)

Dear one, Jesus sought another way; Peter turned away. Their faith never failed though. What you've been through may have left you feeling broken, beaten or bereft of the youthful exuberance and

experiences of faith you once had. You may feel very hard pressed to place your trust in God and obey Him; but don't mistake that for the absence or failure of the faith He has planted in your heart. Jesus said, "Nevertheless, not my will but yours be done," and went to the cross. Peter returned to the Lord and eventually met a cross as well. God knows your life in Christ has meant carrying a cross and that it can get burdensome at times. But He has been helping you and will see you through to the end. If you need help carrying it, He will provide that – He did so for His Son.

As Paul wrote, "*For we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of our trouble which came to us in Asia: that we were burdened beyond measure, above strength, so that we despaired even of life. Yes, we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead, who delivered us from so great a death, and does deliver us; in whom we trust that He will still deliver us..." (2 Cor 1:8-10)*

Perhaps what you see and feel is not as spectacular as when we were younger but remember, *faith is the substance (that which under girds – a foundation) of things hoped for; evidence (a proof) of things not seen.* Those things hoped for and things not seen are mostly on the other side of the cross so to speak. Keep in mind where we're headed. That's where your faith will ultimately be fulfilled. That's where you'll run with the angels. Mark Harris sings a beautiful song about it:

*I wanted to tell you how closely I've kept
The memories of you in my heart
And all of the lifetimes that we had to
share*

*Live even though we're apart
But don't cry for me
'Cause I'm finally free*

(Chorus)

*To run with the angels
On streets made of gold
To listen to stories of saints new and old
To worship our Maker
That's where I'll be
When you finally find me*

*No don't you be weary cause waiting for
you*

*Are wonders that you've never known
Just hold on to Jesus, reach out for his
hands*

*And one day They'll welcome you home
And that's when you'll be*

Finally free

Finally free

(Chorus)

*I wish you were here, I wish you were
here*

*And all of the dreams that you treasure
Will soon come together*

*And that's when your sorrow will find
tomorrow*

And you will rise again

(Chorus)

*We'll run with the angels on streets made
of gold*

*We'll listen to stories of saints new and
old*

*We'll worship our maker that's where
we'll be*

When you finally find me

*I wish you were here, I wish you were
here*

(Mark Harris - Wish You Were Here
From the album *The Line Between The Two*)