

Scripture Reading

A Reading from the Letter to the Hebrews (*Hebrews 11:1-2, 6*)

Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. This is what the ancients were commended for. And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him. The Word of the Lord. R. Thanks be to God.

Reflection ~ The Victory that Conquers the World is our Faith (1 John 5:4)

Faith enables us to operate on a supernatural plane. Old and New Testaments are full of examples attesting to this fact. God called Abraham to leave his country and go to Canaan -the land of promise- when he was seventy-five years old. Abraham had not the faintest idea of what this promised land will be like. Nevertheless, he uprooted himself and his loved ones and did as God instructed. Then God asked him to sacrifice Isaac through whom God has promised to bless him with many descendants. Still, Abraham did not rebel but carried out God's command without a murmur, thinking that since God had made this promise, He is able to raise Isaac from the dead after the sacrifice. Such was Abraham's great unflinching faith. Another outstanding example in the Old Testament is the account of three young courageous men: Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego (cf. Daniel: 3). For refusing to worship the golden statue set up by the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar, they were thrown into a furnace so hot that even the men who pushed them in were devoured by the white hot flames. However, the three men were unharmed and when they came out, not even a single hair was singed and no smell of fire was on them! In the New Testament, Peter was able to walk on water to Jesus till his faith faltered and he started to sink (cf. Matthew 14: 28-31).

Faith is unshakeable trust in God overcoming all fear. We see in the afore-mentioned stories that the underlying support in all the different difficult situations is unshakeable trust in God. With unshakeable trust in God, there is no room in the heart for fear (F.E.A.R = False Evidence Appearing Real). The heart is open for the grace of God to operate in its fullness. The Holy Spirit is able to work unhampered in guiding the soul to react in a difficult situation in accordance to God's holy will. With the power of the Holy Spirit, Peter was able to walk on the water; elderly Abraham was able to uproot himself and his loved ones for a foreign unknown country and even willing to sacrifice Isaac, his son to God. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were strong enough to defy the king's order to worship the golden statue and to face calmly the terrifying prospect of being thrown into a white hot furnace. Unshakeable trust in God empowered all these people to rise above their human fear.

Faith is proven only by testing. We see in Scripture how God tested His people. The two most important people in Scripture, Jesus and Mary can be said to be tested to the most extreme through their difficulties, littleness, rejection, humiliation, pains and sufferings. Their sufferings in the spiritual dimension are probably unknown to us. The two are the most precious to God, and God tested them to prove them worthy of Himself. God did not spare them but in His infinite wisdom subjected them to the most extreme of testing so that they can be accorded the highest of glory. *All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance, admitting that they were foreigners and strangers on earth (Hebrews 11:13).* Mary indeed did not see the glory of Her Son on earth but in Her Heart she knows without a doubt the future is certain.

Without faith, it is impossible to please God (cf. Hebrews 11:6). God puts us on earth for His own glorious purposes. He wants to share His love and glory with us. He puts a measure of His own life (sanctifying grace) into our souls. Scripture tells us that God created us to participate in the good works that He wants to do on earth (cf. Ephesians 2:10). Without faith, our hearts cannot open to the Holy Spirit who would like to work within us to create God's Kingdom within ourselves and then spilling out to those around us.

Conversation with Jesus

Precious Lord, thank you for the great gift of faith. I must hold on to my faith regardless of what may happen in my life, knowing that You are always in charge. I know I will surely be tested by our Heavenly Father just as You Yourself are tested. Strengthen my faith and trust in You. It is Your sorrowful passion, Your sufferings, Your rejection and humiliation that strengthen my faith in and love for You. Help me to meditate and ponder with love Your sorrowful passion in my heart, knowing that this spiritual exercise pleases You greatly, provides a deep insight into Your personal love for me and strengthen my faith in You. Mary, Protectress of the Faith, make my faith strong like Yours. Thank You Jesus. Praise You Jesus.