

A Different Perspective
Having Faith That Moves Mountains (2)
09-23-4
Unravelling the Story of Faith

Over these last few days on the program, we've been taking a look at a story – well, not so much about our faith, but about God's faithfulness. It's the story of one of Israel's very darkest hours. They were under siege in Samaria, people were starving, the king had lost the plot and mothers were cannibalising their children.

The king enquires of God's prophet Elisha, the prophet tells him everything within 24 hours will be just fine. In just 24 hours says Elisha there's going to be more than enough food to go around.

Ever been in a siege in your life? Ever picked up the Bible and read some powerful, inspiring, impossible passage:

If you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain be lifted up and thrown into the sea, and if you do not doubt in your heart but believe that what you have said will come to pass, it will be done for you.

Great. That's just great Jesus. Great quote. But, in my circumstances, in my life, in the middle of my desperate siege and impossible circumstances, I just can't believe that. I'd like to I just can't. And everything that's human and rational about us makes it really much easier not to believe than to believe. And so today, today I just want to draw the story of this siege together – because as we chew it over and swallow it – I believe that God is going to feed us. I believe that God is going to build up our faith – because you and I, we have some mountains that need to be moved, don't we??

Now lets just stop and think about it for a minute. Israel is under siege. The king loses the plot. The people lose the plot. God speaks through His prophet and says it's going to be OK tomorrow, this time. These people who profess to believe in God show not a single ounce of faith. None. Zip. Nada.

You may at this point be asking yourself "What's this particular story have to do with faith?"

The king had lost hope. Mothers were eating their children. The lepers – the four lowly outcasts who were the only ones to step out

into the unknown – even they acted out of necessity instead of faith.

They sat at the gate to this city under siege and asked themselves the question “Why should we stay here and die? We can’t go back in there – they’re all dying in there. We can’t stay here. The only option is to see if we can convince the Aramean army to spare us.” So off they go only to discover that God has already done this mighty miracle and the Aramean camp, lies empty and ready to be plundered.

When they told the king he still didn’t believe. And the captain of the guard was trampled to death because of his unbelief. You can read about this in 2 Kings Chapters 6 and 7. It’s a really confronting historical account of an absolute lack of faith.

That’s it in a nutshell. And yet still God blessed Israel. Not one ounce of faith, and still the blessing flowed.

How can this be a story of faith? What’s it doing in a series of radio programs that I’ve called “Having Faith that Moves Mountains?” It has nothing to do with faith.

They’re all good questions. And my answer to them is this. It is precisely because not a single mustard seed of faith is to be found in this story that I’ve included it. Not one person showed any faith. Not one ... except the Prophet. Elisha. The man who stood his ground and spoke the Word of God to a king who was ready to kill him. The one man who trusted in God.

Did Elisha have any idea how this impossible Word from God was to be fulfilled? We’re not told, but even if he did, what a mighty amount of faith it would have taken to believe. This particular prophecy to the king didn’t give Elisha a whole bunch of wriggle room did it? It was very specific – with a twenty-four hour fuse on it. And if God didn’t show up, it was going to blow up in Elisha’s face.

Yet none of the others in this story showed any faith. And here’s why I’ve included it in this series of programs about faith. Because it demonstrates very clearly that God doesn’t depend on us to do His will. He isn’t sitting around waiting in heaven, scratching His head, wringing His hands, sweating on you and me to deliver. He’s not sitting there looking at me thinking, “Oh no! Oh no! Berni’s going to blow it again!! What am I going to do? How am I going to solve this dilemma without Berni?” Well may me laugh – but don’t we start getting this crazy notion that God’s eternal plan for the

cosmos hinges on the strength of our faith? Well. Get this – let it sink into your heart: ***This story is about the faithfulness of God, not the faith of men.***

This story tells us about a God who is worthy of our faith. It tells us that what God says and what God does are one and the same thing, however impossible things may seem God has a plan and He tells us about that plan through His Word. Read any story about any character whom you would choose to name in the Bible – even a story about four hapless lepers with no names – and you will discover a faithful God in that story.

The whole point of this story is this: ***that when God speaks, you and I can take Him at His Word.*** We never, ever have to worry about that. He doesn't depart from His Word. He is the one Person who always delivers on His promises. He always does what He says.

So, we can open our Bibles and believe that what it says about who God is, and what His plans are and who I am in Christ and how He's calling me to respond – We can believe that He means those things for me and for you and that He will never, ever fail me.

If we're going to talk about faith then let us not begin to conceive of faith as some inanimate object. It's not just faith that moves mountains. It's faith in the God with the power and the desire to move our mountains, that moves mountains.

Let me ask you something. Who benefited from the miracle in this story? The lepers did. They showed no apparent faith, but they did step out. They walked into the miracle. Kind of stumbled in on it rather than believing for it.

The king did. He was a hopeless leader whichever way you look at him. He was going to shoot the messenger but he didn't. He neither heeded the Word of God, nor believed it. He didn't even believe when he was told of what had happened. And yet the king benefited from the miracle.

Elisha too benefited from the miracle. Not specifically. Not in any special way. But only because he was part of Israel in the city of Samaria that once was under siege and starving but now had an abundance of everything.

The whole of Israel benefited from the miracle. But the one man who didn't was the captain of the guard. Because he defied God. He hurled his unbelief in God's face. This was the man who stood before the Prophet and said, in effect – *God, there is no way that*

you can do this. This was the one sin that God did not allow to go unpunished that day. The captain saw it, but he never ate of it. He never participated in the fruit of God's blessing.

Seems to me that the thing that we learn through this story is this: that even in the most dire of circumstances, amidst the most impossible of people, God remains the God of blessing. Our failure will not bring God undone. His plans don't depend on us. They won't be thwarted by us. And sometimes all we need do is to step out and walk into them. Can I ask you this? When these lepers had no faith and they were blessed, the Israelites had no faith and they were blessed, how much more then will we see the blessings of God when we hear God's Word and believe Him?

Let me ask you? What is the one thing that somehow you can't quite seem to believe God for? The miracle? The breakthrough? What if instead of imagining somehow that it all depends on your faith, you just abandoned it to God? What if instead of staying here in this place and dying, you just head off across "no-man's land" like those lepers? Well? What if?