

Doing Big Things with Big Faith

By Bobby Schuller

Today we're going to talk about faith. Faith trusts the word of God that it is true, that God is for you, that God loves you that God will bless you and you believe that. You are a person who trusts in God and not in this world. And you will endure in that faith, and as you do, all of heaven will open up to bless you with opportunity, with favor, with forgiveness, with wisdom. Good things are coming.

So to trust in God, we have to believe that God actually believes in us. That God really does love us. That he does trust that in creating you he made something pretty spectacular. Most of us don't believe that deep down inside. You do, but a lot of us struggle with that. To have faith in God means to have faith that God has the best for us in mind; that God wants us to go to heaven; that God wants us to thrive; that God wants us to do well, and he does.

I remember when I was a kid, I went to this Baptist school, and it was a great school, actually. I had a great experience, but you know every batch of apples has got a rotten one in it somewhere. And I had this teacher and she sat us all down, I think I was in 4th or 5th grade, which means I had to be maybe 10, you know, we were kids. And we sit down and we're learning a bible study about Noah. And she asked the class, "Class, how did God destroy the world the first time?" And we said

“with the flood. He destroyed the world with the flood.”

And then she said, “And what is the rainbow?”

“It’s a promise that he won’t destroy the world again.”

She’s like “No! It’s a promise that he won’t destroy the world again with a flood.” And I’m like oh, okay. And she goes “So what does that mean?” What does that mean?

And we’re like “We don’t know.”

“That he’s going to destroy the world again with fire.” She didn’t say it like that, but she said “He’s going to destroy the whole world with fire.”

And we’re like “Oh, he’s going to destroy the world with fire. That’s what the rainbow means.”

And she said, “You know God burns things to purify them.” I’m like I don’t know about that, but okay. And she said, “And that’s what hell is. Hell is where you will go if you don’t confess all your sins.” And so we were like okay. And she said, “In other words,” basically what she said was.. and she kept going on this, “If you don’t confess every single sin you’ve ever done at the point of your death, you go to hell.” Like you’ve got to not only remember them all.. (that’d be hard for me. I got a lot.) ..you got to remember them all, and you got to confess them, so if I pull my sister’s hair, and then she stabs me to death, that’s it. I’m going to hell. But she can confess it and go to heaven.

So this was a problem for me because it was a dialogue about the character and the nature of God. I mean to me that sounds like God's a mean old man looking to throw me into hell, looking for any reason to get me to go to hell and one little thing he's going to get me.

So I talked to my mom about this and she said that's stupid. That's the dumbest thing I've ever heard. She goes no you're saved by grace, not by your works, and you don't have to worry about confessing every sin. It's good to confess your sins. You should do that. It's good for you. It's going to make you a better person; it's going to make you a more Jesus kind of person.

But God is not a cranky old man looking to throw you into hell. There is a hell. There is a heaven. But I guarantee you that there is no one in the whole universe that wants you to go to heaven and not to hell more than God. If you can't believe that, how can you trust in God? How can you? God is a loving Father, and he wants you, he wants you to choose him. He wants you to be in heaven when you die. And more than that, he wants heaven to open up to you right now! God wants you to live a thriving good life. If it is good, it is from God. If it is not good, it is not from God. God gives only what is good. He does not give what is not good for you. He loves you!

And if we talk about having faith in the character of someone who doesn't have character, that's not faith. Faith in God is not just believing

in him, its trusting that God's ways are better than my ways not only for God but for me. Look if my kids: my ways for my children are better for my kids than my kids' ways for my kids. Amen? Right? So God will ask us and command us to do things we don't want to do, but part of living by faith is trusting that that's the best way to be. Loving your enemies takes a lot of faith. To love your enemies is trusting that that's the best thing for me, for God, and for my enemy. It's the best thing, even though it's a terrible, horrible thing to do. Who wants to love their enemy? But it's amazing and it requires faith.

So too often we take our own vices, you know, our resentment, our anger, and we project it on God. Voltaire said this famous criticism. He said, "In the beginning God created man in his own image, and man has been trying to repay the favor ever since." We try and project all of our stuff onto God. He's not that way. God is love. And if you hear anything I say now, this is one of the most Christian things you can say: Jesus shows us what God is like. Jesus does not go around making people sick. He goes around healing people. Jesus does not go around telling people they're stupid. He goes around teaching people. Jesus is a friend of sinners. Thank you, Jesus. I need a friend like that. So do you.

And you have a friend like that. You can trust in God that he's on your side, that he's with you and you do. You've put your trust in God, and it's made all the difference. Keep faith alive in him. He will not

abandon you because you messed up. He will not abandon you because you doubt from time to time. He will not abandon you. He's not looking to trip you up. He's on your side. He loves you. And trusting in God begins there. That he loves us, not for what we do, not for what we have, and not for our reputation, he just loves us because he does; because he's our dad. Dad's love their kids. God loves you. So put your faith in God and continue to do it. Put your faith in Jesus Christ. He'll never let you down.

Faith is to trust that in the midst, and life is hard, I know. We suffer. Really unfair horrible things can happen in life, but faith is the trust that in the end the good is going to so far outweigh the bad, it will make sense. It will! It will. So carry on. Keep faith alive.

In Matthew chapter 8, today's scripture reading we read the story about the famous story of the centurion. And in Jesus' day, centurions were not religious people. They were not liked by the religious elite. They were outsiders, they were enemies, they were pagans, they worshipped pagan Gods, they went to pagan festivals, and they observed pagan sexual rites among other bizarre things that were very Roman in those days. So they were not considered men of faith. They were not considered godly men. They didn't consider themselves godly men. They were practical, they were military men.

And this centurion, in particular, was hated because, well he was

a soldier. And in those days, the Roman Empire occupied Israel. And although Israel was a vassal in the sense that it got to have its own puppet king and have its own cultures and laws, there was always the Roman Empire looking over them. They hated that. In the temple, the temple was the center of Jewish life and just next to the temple, attached to it was a giant fortress higher than the temple called Antonia Fortress and there there would be a garrison of Roman troops with bows and arrows ready to fire on the people in the temple if anybody got out of line. So there was this dominant tyrannical rule of the Roman Empire. So the Jews hated the Romans. They were outsiders.

So here's this new Jewish rabbi, this hero, people were calling him a prophet and he's going around healing people and he's preaching and he's obviously anointed by God, and yet there's something really annoying about him and that's that he's inviting people to the table that aren't supposed to be there. It's bugging people. And in their narrative, you have to remember that in the Septuagint, in the apocryphal literature rather, there is a story that after the Jewish people slay all the enemies in warfare, they will gather for this massed feast where the most pure, most holy will eat of the behemoth and leviathan. It's this kind of heavenly end of the world image. So hold that in your mind as we get into the story.

So the evil pagans they'll be dead or cast outside where there's

weeping and gnashing of teeth, but the religious elite will be at the table. This centurion comes to Jesus. And he says Lord, my servant is sick, he's paralyzed, he needs you. I need you to heal him. And Jesus says you want me to come to your house and heal him? And the centurion says no, Lord, I'm not worthy to have you under my roof. I tell this man go and he goes. I tell him to come, and he comes. And they do it. Simply say the word and it will be so.

Now what Jesus says is offensive. He says not in all of Israel have I seen such faith like this man. He says I tell you that at the table in the end of time, many will come (that's pagans) many will come from the east and from the west, but many of those who are children of the kingdom will be cast out where there's weeping and gnashing of teeth. What is he saying there? That at my table, those who have faith will sit here and those who have pride and self righteousness will not. And he says to this man, your servant is well. And on that day, he was made well.

For the centurion all he needed was a word from God. That's it. He didn't need him to come to his house. He didn't need him to lay hands on him. He just had faith in the word of God that it was true. And that is central to the Christian belief is that faith is what saves us. Not our works. We respond in our works to faith, but in the end, it's every day trusting that God is faithful, God is true, and that God will do the

saving. That everything I do in life is in assistance to him. That he's the one doing the work and I'm along for the ride. That's faith.

And that's how you live. You've lived every moment of your life with faith. When you went through struggles, you said I trust in God. When you went through difficult times, when you got sick you said I trust in God. When you didn't have the money to pay your bills, you said I trust in God. When you're feeling riddled with shame and guilt, you said I trust in God. Keep trusting in him. God is faithful. God is faithful. He loves you and he is on your side. He's on your side. Believe it. God is not punishing you. He's not. He's going to bless you, and he is blessing you. And blessings are coming for you and heaven is opened up to you, just respond with faith. Amen.

So it's all about faith. It's all about you making a choice to trust in God. No one else can make that decision for you. You have to choose to follow God. Your mom can't make it, your dad can't make it, your brother and sister can't make it, and I can't make it. Only you can make the decision to trust your life to God. And most people don't. Most people trust in the world and in society, and they put their trust in other people, but ultimately you got to trust in God. You can't trust anyone, even yourself with your death, let alone your life. Trust in him and things will go better. Amen? That's the narrow road. That's the narrow road.

Jesus talks about this narrow road that leads to life and only a few find it. Who walks that road? Those who trust in God. Those who walk by faith and not by sight. Those who believe with all their heart that God is good, that he is faithful, and in the end, he will come through, so keep faith alive. Faith is trust. Faith is trust and it's really just that simple.

When you sat in your pew today, I doubt that you examined the pew before you sat in it; you just sat in it, right? Why? You trust it. You have faith that the pew is good, so you sit in it. Maybe not those chairs outside, but these pews here. You know the ones outside they're not very good, we know. We're working on it. But your pew, you didn't examine it, you didn't check it out, and you just sat on it. You trust that it's strong enough to hold you, even if you had a little extra pizza last night, no problem. When you go to a green light, you go through the green light assuming that the people on either side with the red light are going to stop. How do you know they're going to stop? They could drive right through, nothing's stopping that car, but you just know because you drive enough, they're probably going to stop, and if they don't, you're in trouble but that's what it means to drive by faith. So already today you've sat with faith, and you drove here by faith, today you're going to live by faith, as you always do.

I think living by faith is most like flying by plane, and this is

something that's personal to me. I travel all the time and I always am just a little bit nervous when I fly. Not a lot, a little, and that's okay. I'm being vulnerable. Flying on an airplane is so astronomically safe. You're actually safer on an airplane in flight than you are sitting in your house. According to a study by MIT, you're more likely to be shot while sitting at your computer from the outside through the window or wall, than you are to be in a commercial airplane crash.

Flying is safer than riding on a train. If you flew every day and rode on a train every day, you would be more likely to die on a train accident seventeen times than to die in a plane crash.

But I'm going to really get you now. You ready, choir? All right. If you drive every day and you fly every day, you will die in a car accident 500 times before you die in a plane crash. Statistically. You are so safe on a plane. When you get on a plane, all that information goes out the window. It just doesn't matter. I don't care, it doesn't matter, I am flying through the sky in a giant metal tube going several hundred miles an hour and I don't even know what's happening here. Like, right? Like I'll take my peanuts.

So you're rooted in knowledge. You get on the plane because you know it's safe, but you're still nervous. But you could get on a plane and you can be nervous. In fact you can be that gal or that guy that's like freaking out and drinking vodka and doing whatever you can to make it

to the other side. Don't drink vodka. You can be that guy in your spiritual life and still have faith as long as you get on a plane. Do you hear me?

Faith is about getting on a plane. Faith is about sitting in the chair. Faith is trusting God in what you do. Faith is released. It's not had, it's released. It's what it makes you do. It's courage. Courage is doing what you're scared of but still doing it. Faith doesn't mean you're not scared. Faith means you trust God enough to move forward. Amen? And you have faith and I'm proud of you. I'm so proud of you that through it all you've continued to be the person who says above all I trust God and not this world. I trust in God and I'm proud of you. Keep trusting in him. Keep your faith alive. You can trust God. He is on your side.

So something good's going to happen. Everybody say that to me. Something good's going to happen. (AUDIENCE: Something's good's going to happen.) Something good is going to happen. Something good's going to happen. Right? It's something good. And faith doesn't mean you know what the good thing is, but man when it comes, you're going to know. You're going to be like Pastor Bobby said something good was going to happen and man he was right! But I knew he was right, because I have faith. And you do.

So three things. Number one: pray with faith, not with sympathy.

Pray with faith not with sympathy. I remember when Hannah and I, we were with a small gathering of pastors in Houston, and Dottie Osteen, this beautiful but older little woman, Joel Osteen's mom, was praying for us pastors. And she prayed different than most Christians pray. When she prayed it was like she was wrestling with God; like she was warring with God. So she's praying, and she's like come on, God! Come on! You've got to heal Cohen! How's Hannah going to do your work if Cohen is sick all the time! You've got to heal him! And then she'd like pace around, like she's not done yet. She's like wait.. she's like come on God! You got to heal him! When she prayed, it was as though she actually believed God would hear her prayer and do it. It wasn't like oh Lord, we pray in thine holy name. No, she was like hey, hey, hey! That's somebody who's praying with faith, not with sympathy. That's someone who was told that she was going to die of cancer in a month, and received a miracle from God and today, 25 years later, is walking in complete health.

Hey look – I know people with big faith still die of cancer sometimes, but that's because something better is coming. And I just believe that. I just believe it. So when you pray, pray with faith. Believe that God will hear your prayer and that he'll do it. That he can, and he will. Pray with faith. And you do, you pray with faith. You don't pray like religious folks. You pray like a girl or a guy praying to his or her dad

because that's what you're doing. You're asking your dad for help. And he's a good dad, a loving dad, a present dad. A dad who's never abandoned you. He's your loving Father. Pray to him like that. Okay.

Number two: when you wait, wait with faith, not with worry. Wait with faith, not worry. Faith is so much about walking day by day than it is about leaping. Faith is about every day just trusting it's going to be alright. Faith means I don't see the future but God does and it's good and I trust in him and that's what you do. You walk and you wait with faith. I'm so proud of you. That in the suffering and the challenges of life, you wait with faith because you know God will come through because he always does, and you can. How many times do we worry about what might happen. How many times can our present be ruined because we're worried about our future. Things are fine now but we don't know if they'll always be fine forever. So get rid of that. Stop worrying. Don't worry about what might happen. Stop spinning your wheels in your head. Just trust and relax and kick your feet up and know that God loves you just as you are, not as you should be, and he hasn't abandoned you and it's going to be all right because that's the truth. That is true. It's going to be okay. Good things are coming. So when you wait, wait with faith, not with worry.

And number three: when you act, act with faith, not with second guessing. Look this is one I really believe in big time. If God has asked

you to do something, do it. If God has asked you to do something, if he's asked you to put your hand to the plow, don't look back, just do it. If God has asked you to do something, act with faith, with boldness, and with enthusiasm. Learn from Jonah. You say well what if it's not from God. I'm not sure if it's from God. Look, learn from Jonah. If you start going the wrong way, God will send something to you to turn you back to go towards Nineveh. He'll send you in the right direction. I just believe so much that faith pleases God that even when we accidentally put our faith in the wrong thing but still act with faith that he's still, in a way, pleased. Because I don't think the biggest problem facing the church today is people acting with boldness for something they're passionate about. The biggest challenge to the church today is people wallowing in indecision and never acting. But that's a decision in and of itself. If you don't make a decision, time will make a decision for you. If you have a flight to Atlanta at 2:00 today and you decide not to get on that flight that flight will leave without you. You've decided. So when you decide not to go somewhere, when you second guess, when you move towards a dream that God has given you in your heart, do it with all your heart. Do it with all your heart. And don't give up and go towards that goal and don't second guess yourself. Once you've made a decision and you believe it's from God, go for it. And eventually, if it's not where you're supposed to go, God will make it crystal clear. You won't have to guess.

Amen? Act with boldness.

Look – faith pleases God. And people admire boldness and enthusiasm, anyway. I can tell you from experience you can make the rest up at the end if you mess up. I've done plenty of times.

So when you pray, pray with faith not with sympathy. When you wait, wait with faith not with worry. And when you act, act with faith, with boldness, not with second guessing yourself all the time. Amen? God really does speak to you. God really does speak to you through knowledge. He really does put ideas in your heart. When you're a person of faith, you've trusted your life to God and that is a very, very good thing. Amen.

I can't let you leave here without giving you the opportunity to connect with God. Today is a great day to become a Christian. In a moment I'm going to ask you to come down so I can pray with you to receive Jesus Christ as your Savior. Are you at peace with God? If you died today, do you know where you'd spend eternity? Do you come today and you've completely lost your faith, or maybe and more likely, maybe you've been watching on television or you're just visiting today and you need to make a decision to follow Christ. I'm going to invite you today to come forward and let me pray with you. I'm going to ask that whoever you are, I want you to know that nobody here, if you were to come down here, would blame you or judge you. All we would do is cheer with every

angel in heaven to know that your name is in the Lamb's book of life.

So this morning I'm not going to take a long time, just give me two minutes. If wherever you are, every head up, everybody looking around; looking at your neighbor, looking at behind you to see if there's somebody. Look if you're going to do something great for God, it begins with courage. Every journey with God begins with an act of courage. Doing something that scares you, huh? So today if you want to receive Jesus Christ as your Savior and become a Christian, I want you to stand right where you are and come down here and let me give you a big hug and pray for you.

Wherever you are, come down. Stay right here, stay here. Just as you are. Just stand where you are, come down. Stand up for God. Anyone, just come on down. Give it just a few more minutes. If you want to receive Christ, just stand up and come down. I'll give you a big old hug and we'll pray together. All right guys. I'm going to pray with you. Would you just come around this way?

And everyone, if you're here, when I became a Christian, there was somebody giving an altar call like this and I just sat in my seat. But that was still a time when my life was changed. So let's all pray this together. Friends, would you hold your hands out like as a sign of receiving and repeat after me: Jesus Christ, Son of God have mercy on me, a sinner. I am a new creation in you. I am the beloved of God. I'm called. I'm

avored. I'm forgiven. I'm chosen. And I trust you, God. Fill me with your Holy Spirit and in Jesus' name, amen.