

A Life of Humble Faith & Personal TQs

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[0 : 00] Let's go to our big, big God and ask for his help. Father, we just come to you. We just ask that you will make your word, open your word to us, make it clear to us, give us tender hearts that we might be obedient to what you tell us.

We ask for your Holy Spirit's help, that Lord, we might hear your word and know that it is from you. In Jesus' name we pray.

Okay, faith. What's that? Is it just wishful thinking?

If you believe hard enough, it will come true? Internet gurus say, faith is an energy deep in ourselves.

Or another say, no, no, no. It is out there in the universe which we can harness to our advantage. For others, it is maybe positive thinking, so that things will go the way we picture it.

[1 : 07] The apostles ask in verse 5, increase our faith. What is biblical faith? Now, Hebrews 11.1 defines faith.

And it says this, Now, faith is the assurance of things hoped for and the conviction of things not seen.

It is a confidence that what we hope for will surely happen. And things we do not see are really there.

Now, unlike worldly, wishy, washy, wishful thinking kind of faith, biblical faith is not something we conjure out of thin air, but it is based on God's revelation of himself in the Bible.

So we can have assurance, confidence, and conviction because of the basis of our faith, because the basis of our faith is on God himself.

[2 : 11] Now, this God is creator. He is sovereign. He is all-powerful, all-knowing, and all-loving.

And we can be sure that things hoped for, which at this moment we cannot see, but which God has promised, will surely come to pass because he fulfills his promises.

And because we know enough about him, we can put our faith in such a God. We can trust him and so obey him. Now, what was the task the apostles thought they lacked faith for?

So Jesus just told them, don't cause the little ones, that are those who believe in him, to stumble, to rebuke brothers or sisters who sin against them, and then, to forgive the repentant.

The overarching theme seems to be that they are to care for the spiritual well-being of each other in the community of believers. And I think we can examine each command under these headings.

[3 : 23] 1. 1. They must watch their own lives and not cause other Christians to stumble in their faith. 2. They must care for righteousness in the Christian community.

3. 3. They must preserve relationships in the Christian community. 1. Verses 3 to 4. 1.

They must watch their own lives and not cause other Christians to stumble in their faith. Jesus tells them in verse 1, things that cause people to stumble are bound to come.

Now, things that cause people to stumble is a single word in Greek and translated in other versions as temptations to sin, offenses, or stumbling blocks.

There are anything that might cause believers to lessen their allegiance to Jesus, to sin, or to lose their faith. A literal translation would read like this, it is impossible for stumbling blocks not to come.

[4 : 32] In other words, they will come. No doubt about it. So, our first responsibility then is to watch ourselves, call on God for faith, to resist and to overcome these stumbling blocks that come to us and to seek for forgiveness when we fail.

But, Jesus gives a very stern warning. But, woe to anyone through whom they come.

Don't you be the source that stumbles the faith of another. The world already comes at believers to shake their faith.

Persecutions, messages assaulting the Christian faith, false teaching and false gospels, some from even popular pastors, teachers, and worship leaders, promoted in person, streamed online, posted on social media, and messaging apps.

some influencers and pop culture icons draw large numbers into lies and ungodly living. Jesus says, woe to anyone through whom they come.

[5 : 56] and he tells his disciples in verse 3, so watch yourself. Yes, you. Yes, me.

Jesus is talking to us. How might we be stumbling blocks within our church community? Now, Paul writes to the Corinthians not to stumble others when it came to eating food sacrificed to idols.

For some, this is still an issue today. For others of us, it may be the books we read, the movies we watch, or the media we consume.

Think twice before you forward links. You may well be passing on heresy or other fake news. Be careful what we say and do.

Also, watch our attitudes. Perhaps it is pride, snobbishness, racism, or self-righteousness that drives others from Jesus.

[7 : 07] Perhaps there are other sins that can affect the faith of others. Can huge in his commentary on Luke relates this story. He says, I have occasionally prayed with my pastoral colleagues.

Lord, if one of us here is headed for adultery, take him home now. All my colleagues nodded their verbal consent.

Here is a group of pastors who have taken the warning of Jesus seriously. how so? Because Jesus goes on to say in verse 2, it is better for them, for those who will cause others to stumble, to be thrown into the sea with a millstone tied around their necks than to cause one of these little ones to stumble.

Jesus is driving home the point or the seriousness of the matter. He is not asking us to drown ourselves. Rather, he says, by comparison, it is better to die prematurely than to be a stumbling block and face God's anger, which is far worse than physical death.

So seriously, watch yourself. Things that cause Christians to stumble will come, but don't be the one through whom they come.

[8 : 39] Is there something that the Spirit is prompting in you now, that you may need to change in your life? Call on Jesus for faith, to obey him.

Secondly, they must care for righteousness in the Christian community. We know we are prone to sin, and this world is corrupted by sin, and we don't always treat one another as we should in the Lord.

There will be occasions of conflict, of hurts, of anger, of misunderstanding, insults, and the like.

Jesus says in verse 3, if your brother or sister sin against you, rebuke them.

Perhaps she slandered you, or he cheated you, or lied to you, or being unnecessarily critical, or condemning, or he may be affecting your faith and the faith of others by unsound teaching, or being an ungodly example.

Jesus says, rebuke them. Do not tolerate sin in the community. Work towards a righteous community. but be careful of your own attitude.

[10 : 02] This passage implies that the aim of rebuking the person is to bring about repentance, to correct and to restore him, not to humiliate, defeat, or drive him out of the church.

The rebuke must therefore be frank, it must be serious, but gentle, loving, and caring, rather than condemnatory.

It is not an occasion to lash out, to give free reign to your tongue in anger. After that you sigh, that felt so good, he deserved it.

Surely, my brothers and sisters, such confrontations call for godly self-control. However, most of us, if we tell our truth, we would rather go the other way.

We would rather stay silent. We hate to confront. We nurse our hurt and anger and let resentment build.

[11 : 15] Sin festers, stumbling blocks are not removed, relationships broken, people second guess one another, go out of their way to avoid the offending party, avoid serving together with them.

Some choose to leave the fellowship. To build a healthy and faithful church, Jesus gives us no choice. If your brother sins, rebuke him.

So we gather our courage, we pray, we seek his enabling and self-control and we step out in faith to obey him. But Jesus is not finished.

Three, they must preserve relationships in the Christian community. We don't stop at rebuking. Jesus says, if they repent, forgive them.

Even if they sin against you seven times in a day and seven times come back to you saying, I repent, you must forgive them. The word must give us no other option.

[12:27] But you'll notice that forgiveness is conditional. It depends on whether repentance is expressed. But if they repent, but once repentance is expressed, forgiveness is to be given freely and unconditionally, you must forgive the repentant sinner.

And there's no limit to the number of times you forgive. Seven times is not the limit. Seven is the number of completeness. And by his deliberate use of that number, rather than say three, four, five times, Jesus is saying that our forgiveness has no limit.

we are to keep on forgiving as often as we are wronged and repentance is expressed. Why should we forgive like that?

The Bible tells us that we are to forgive because we ourselves have been forgiven. Ephesians 4.32 says this, Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other just as in Christ God forgave you.

And we pray, forgive us our sins as we forgive those who have sinned against us. Forgiven sinners forgive. Unforgiveness may reflect that we have not fully understood the gospel and how much the Lord has forgiven us and continue to do so.

[14:10] we want to forget that we daily sin against him and often for the same recurrent sin. Unforgiveness may betray a lack of faith in our God of justice.

We fear that God will not do right for us, that we might not get the justice the offender deserves. So we refuse to forgive. We want the offender punished here and now.

unforgiveness may also betray a spirit of pride and self-righteousness. We think the offender doesn't deserve our forgiveness.

So let us in humble faith let go of our pride and our rights and let us trust that God will act justly and punish if necessary.

Allow God to heal our hearts knowing that he loves us as much as he loves the repentant. What of the unrepentant sinner you ask?

[15:20] What of restitution after repentance? Other passages deal with that. What of those who are insincere or pretend to repent?

Scripture says God knows and he judges. here in this passage Jesus' emphasis is this he puts the burden of responsibility on the one who must forgive.

You must forgive if repentance is expressed. To quote a commentator it is better to be willing to forgive seven times a day even though the brother is not sincere than to refuse to forgive a truly repentant soul and thus place a stumbling block in his way.

Both repentance and forgiveness must be real sincere and sincere. If not true reconciliation will fail. The whole aim to rebuke and to forgive is not for the two parties to part company and never to be in each other's life again.

No. It is so that broken relationships can mend, can be renewed and even strengthened and the unity of the fellowship preserved.

[16:49] When you reflect and realise the gravity of what Jesus is saying, that in this life things that cause Christians to stumble will come, we wonder if we have the faith to stand firm.

And we worry if we have the spiritual discernment and wisdom and self-control not to be that stumbling block in another Christian's life. and we are to rebuke even when we don't want to and to forgive repeatedly when we fear we may be taken advantage of.

The apostles are absolutely right that we needed faith to live that way. But what they got wrong was that they thought they needed more faith.

Jesus tells them and us that they don't need more faith. faith that they already have was more than enough to obey and serve Jesus if they trusted in him.

If you have faith as small as a mustard seed you can say to this mulberry tree be uprooted and planted in the sea and it will obey you.

[18:11] Faith as small as a mustard seed so small that it can be almost invisible in our hand is enough to uproot even a mulberry tree which is endowed with a thick and wide and deep root

system.

Jesus was not telling the disciples to go uprooting trees or in another passage to move mountains. He was simply illustrating that even a little bit of faith if it is in Jesus can achieve incredible things for him.

The outworking of faith does not depend on the intensity or clarity of faith exercised by you, by a disciple.

It depends on who he is, who God is and whether we trust him enough to obey his instructions. Don Carson illustrates this so well in the story he told at a pastor and church leaders conference in Minneapolis in 2016 and recorded in the Gospel Coalition website.

He asked us to imagine two Jews in Egypt just before the first Passover. They are in Egypt and God has already proclaimed judgment.

[19 : 40] Picture these two Jews by the name of Smith and Brown. The day before the first Passover, they were having a little discussion in the land of Cushion.

And Smith says to Brown, Boy, are you a little nervous about what's going to happen tonight?

Brown says, Well, God told us what to do through his servant Moses.

Moses, you don't have to be nervous. Haven't you slaughtered the lamb and doped the two-door post with blood and put blood on the lentil?

Haven't you done that? You're all ready and packed to go? You're going to eat the whole Passover meal with your family?

Smith answers, of course I've done that. I'm not stupid. But it's pretty scary when you think of all the things that have happened around here recently.

[20 : 47] You know, flies and river turning to blood. It's pretty awful. And now there's a trap of firstborn being killed.

You know, it's alright for you. You've got three sons. I've got only Charlie and I love my Charlie. And the angel of death is passing through tonight.

I know what God says. I put the blood there but it's pretty scary. I'll be glad when this night is over.

And the other one responds, bring it on.

I trust the promise of God. that night the angel of death swept through the land. Which one lost a son?

The answer is neither. Because death doesn't pass over them on the ground of the intensity or clarity of the faith exercise in them.

[21 : 59] but on the ground of the blood of the lamb sprinkled on their doorposts and lentils. It was their faith whether big or small but faith in a big big God whom both obeyed.

It was obedient faith that kept Charlie and other Israelite firstborns alive while all around them was death. So Jesus tells the disciples you only need a mustard seed sized faith to do all I have told you to do but it is a faith that trusts and obey.

Later the disciples and then disciples who came after them down through all the ages including us here are beneficiaries of Jesus death on Calvary and the outpouring and the indwelling of his Holy Spirit.

This God who dwells with his people who reminds us of what pleases him and what does not who when we cry out to him to help us in the face of trials and temptation provide strength to say no or to provide a way of escape.

When we cry for wisdom he gives it so that we'll be careful not to be assembling blocks to others and we ask him and when we ask him he enables us to repent and he enables the offended party to forgive and be gracious and like him to forgive and then to embrace the offending party in fellowship.

[23 : 55] By doing so he conforms us more and more to the image of his son. Then he tells us he tells them and he tells us when you have faithfully obeyed him and done all that he called you to do do not be proud.

Do not think that God owes you anything. And he tells them a parable based on the culture of the day. Suppose one of you have a servant plowing or looking after sheep.

Will he say to the servant when he comes in from the field come along now sit down to eat. Won't he rather say prepare my supper get yourself ready wait on me while I eat and drink after that you may eat and drink.

Will he thank the servant because he did what he was told to do? No he didn't need to. So you also you also when you have done everything you were told to do should say we are unworthy servants we have only done our duty.

Jesus is telling the disciples that after they have done the work of the kingdom plowing in the field of God looking after the well-being of the believers the sheep in his field they are to remain humble.

[25 : 23] These things that they are called to do not to cause others to stumble to rebuke brothers or sisters who sin against them and then to forgive the repentant these are not extraordinary Christianity these are simply the way we are to live this is the ordinary life of a disciple such life is our duty we do not need to be applauded for doing them so when we dutifully serve God we please him but we are not putting God in our debt we are not chalking up points with him so that as if he owes us favors we have been safe to serve Ephesians 2 10 Titus 2 14 says that our humble service to him is a loving response a grateful response to what he has already done for us there's no place for pride entitlement boasting or presumption only grateful eternal praise because we are but forgiven sinners undeserving servants and out of his grace grace and grace alone not because he owes us anything he continues to bless you know

Ephesians 2 tells us that the faith we have in him was given by him it was not even ourselves from ourselves it's his gift God truly owes us nothing we owe him everything remember the master in the parable after his servant has faithfully ploughed and tended to the ship will not say to the servant when he comes in from the field come along now sit down to eat but do you realize that our Lord Jesus is not like this master listen to an earlier parable Jesus gave in Luke 12 in verse 35 be dressed ready for service keep your lamps burning like servants waiting for their master to return from a wedding banquet so that when he comes and knocks they can immediately open the door for him it will be good for those servants whose master finds them watching when he comes truly I tell you he will dress himself to serve will have them recline at the table and will come and wait on them Jesus is the master who serves at the end of the age is a wedding feast he has prepared for us his bride but even back then in Palestine he came not to be served but to give his life as a ransom for many he served you on the cross he died that you might live he he then calls you to humble service to share this good news to others he calls you to care for one another so that all might together when Jesus comes be rewarded for the good deeds and services we have rendered that reward is that we will be with

God and Christ for eternity in a new heaven and a new earth to come but everything is of grace perhaps we should pause to reflect what are we doing for the kingdom today why are you serving are you living that extraordinary ordinary Christian life can I or you say I have only done my duty Luke then records another story along the road to Jerusalem there Jesus meets ten men with leprosy this story happens at the border of Galilee and Samaria and so this group consisted of Jews and Samaritans who despite their cultural and religious enmity found friendship in their common affliction so they moved together they seem to know that

Jesus is master and they call out for pity Jesus tells them to go and show themselves to the priest something that only a cured leper would do the priest would examine them and declare them cleansed and fit to join their community nothing had happened for them before they started off but off they went to the priest as they went along things happened one looked at his amputated fingers and realised they had grown back another felt the middle of his face hey his nose is back foot drop is gone dead nerves can fill again thickened disfigured faces restored to normal they were healed all of them a while later one of them came back looking for

[31 : 39] Jesus full of gratitude for his healing he praises God aloud and then he falls flat on his face at Jesus feet and thanked Jesus he was a Samaritan a foreigner Jesus was obviously disappointed with the other nine lepers were they not healed yes they were where were they has no one returned to give praise to God except this foreigner the word foreigner is only used once here in the New Testament but it is a word known to all Gentiles who ever wandered near the Jewish temple they would have seen signs placed at the entrance of the temple proper that read foreigners cannot enter under the penalty of death that is the word foreigner used here they must remain in the court of

Gentiles which is outside the temple worship for this foreigner who was not welcome into the Jewish temple is here face down at Jesus feet praising his disposition suggests an act of worship he recognizes God's power and presence in Jesus this foreigner was here worshipping God himself in Jesus Christ Jesus says to him, Rise up and go.

Your faith has made you well. But literally it says, Rise up, go. Your faith has saved you. We must let Jesus' declaration have its deepest spiritual meaning.

This Samaritan's faith has been a means not of only cleansing from leprosy, but of a deeper cleansing of his spiritual state.

When Jesus proclaims this, he is saying that this man has been saved spiritually. And the evidence of his saving faith was his worship of Jesus.

[34 : 11] We shake our heads at the ingratitude of the nine lepers. But the spotlight actually falls back on us.

We who have been cleansed, not of physical infective leprosy, but of a leprous heart and soul, healed not by a word from the Lord, but by his very death on the cross.

We, foreigners, who were not welcome at the Jewish temple, but now worship God in the most holy place because of what Jesus has done.

You who have received all this, is your heart and your mouth constantly filled with gratitude, praise and thanksgiving to him.

What about everything else the Lord has given us? Are we thanking God always and for everything, as Paul puts it? God is the giver of everything.

[35 : 21] Your very breath, the food you consume, every comfort in life, every note of music, every beauty in the world around us, every smile on the face of a loved one or a stranger.

We have been given so much. We are promised an eternity with him forever, where everything wrong will be put right, where everything will be made new.

While on earth, we enjoy the salvation he has already won for us, we have fellowship with him. He blesses us with all the things we need and then some.

A saving and humble faith in him should fill our hearts with gratitude and our lips with thanksgiving and praise. Here are words of scripture.

1 Corinthians 15, 57 But thanks be to God. He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. 2 Corinthians 9, 15 Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift.

[36 : 39] Colossians 1, 12-14 Give joyful thanks to the Father who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light.

For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sin.

Colossians 3, 17 And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Hebrews 13, 15 Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer God a sacrifice of praise, the fruit of lips that openly profess his name.

Oh, give thanks to the Lord. What is it you think you can thank and praise God for today? What grateful prayers are arising in your heart to him?

[37 : 44] Allow me to share my list. I am so thankful to God that 44 years ago, by his grace, he gave me faith to believe in the good news of Jesus Christ, that my sins have all been forgiven in Jesus.

I praise him that he is faithful and over the years have brought me repeatedly back to the fact that Jesus is all I need and that his gospel and his grace is enough.

I am grateful for the life he has given me. And to this day, I thank him that he has seen it fit to give me Esther, who has been my constant companion and loving partner for the last 34 years.

I thank God every day for allowing Esther to beat cancer 14 years ago. And I never stop thanking God for the two wonderful children he has given me.

Us. I thank him for allowing me to serve him in whatever small ways I can, whether at work, at home, or in church.

[38 : 59] Life has not, her life is not, and has not ever been perfect or easy. Sin and pain are constant realities.

And aging is really no fun. But creation is still beautiful. Sunsets and sunrises still take my breath away.

And most of all, most of all, I am thankful that God is good. God is faithful. And God is gracious.

Let us walk with humble faith in our big, big God. And may our lives be marked by gratitude as we continue to serve him and to walk in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen.