

Love: The Fuel That Powers Faith

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..faith works by love. Galatians 5:6

If you went into a car dealership and chose to test drive a brand new beautiful car and the dealer had never bothered to fill it with gasoline, that car would go nowhere. Even though there was nothing wrong with the vehicle and all the parts functioned as they were designed, the car would not work because it lacked the fuel which was needed to power it.

It is the same with faith. If you prayed with a heart full of faith, believing God for the thing you have petitioned Him, quoting His Word of promise and having no doubt of His willingness to provide it, but you lacked love toward someone in your life, your faith would not work and your prayer would go unanswered. Love is the fuel that powers faith, and Galatians reveals to us that ***FAITH WORKS BY LOVE!***

This is a KEY PRINCIPLE for cultivating a lifestyle of walking by faith - we must simultaneously "*walk in love*" toward all persons. (Ephesians 6:1-2) That means we must never allow even a trace of anger, contempt, envy, jealousy or unforgiveness to enter our hearts toward anyone - even toward those who have wronged us deeply. We must forgive immediately any wrongs done to us.

Many times over the years I have observed people who decided that they wanted to live a life of faith, trusting God for provision and answers to prayer. Yet they were constantly frustrated as their prayers seemed to go unheeded by God. Eventually they quit, assuming this "faith business" does not work or they decided that the life of faith was for a few special people with a unique gift of faith. The truth was that in many of these cases, it was a LACK OF LOVE that prevented their faith from working. Often they had anger, bitterness or unforgiveness in their hearts from a wounding they endured many years ago. Perhaps it was toward a parent who abandoned them, a spouse who betrayed them, a teacher or employer who humiliated them, or even a criminal who raped, robbed or injured them. In such situations, the wounded person often feels perfectly justified in holding feelings of anger toward the offender due to the severity of the offense. Yet we are commanded by Jesus to love even our enemies.

Learning to forgive others immediately and refusing to allow an offense to linger in your heart, is a key to walking in love. There will always be people in this life who mistreat you, misjudge you or speak evil of you. But just as Jesus forgives us of any and all sin so willingly, we must be willing to forgive immediately as well. Though more than 20 years has past since the incident I am about to share with you occurred, I remember it vividly because the Lord taught me how to forgive an offense instantly through this event.

I met an older woman in church many years ago. If you had asked her, undoubtedly she would have told you she was a Christian. Yet she was one of the most bitter people I had ever met. Her words were caustic, critical and often sarcastic when speaking of other people. I did my best to stay away from her because the bitter spirit she carried was so unpleasant to be around. One day I overheard her say something critical and unkind about me to the pastor. Instantly, anger and resentment boiled up in me toward the woman - how could she say such an ugly thing about me! And to the pastor of all people! I was indignant. But in the next moment, I heard the voice of the Holy Spirit speak to me very firmly, **"If you don't forgive her RIGHT NOW, you will become just like her."** That revelation jolted me out of the self-pity that was trying to grip me. "GOD I FORGIVE HER COMPLETELY AND PLEASE FORGIVE ME FOR BEING ANGRY AT HER! PLEASE HELP HER LORD AND HEAL HER HEART!" My prayer of forgiveness shot up to heaven as quickly as the spirit of resentment had come over me moments before. God taught me that day that it was possible to forgive immediately - it was simply a matter of a choice of my will.

That woman had endured a horrible loss years before I had ever met her. Her only child was killed in a car accident. She had never gotten over that or been able to forgive those she felt were responsible for her son's death. Unforgiveness will not only prevent you from being able to exercise your faith and receive answers to your prayers, it will destroy your very life. In Mark 11:25 Jesus reveals how vital it is to forgive:

And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses.

Without God's forgiveness, not one of us will enter heaven. We must walk in love to be able to walk by faith successfully in this life, but even more importantly, we must walk in love - freely forgiving everyone - in order to live eternally with Christ. Choose to forgive everyone who has ever hurt or wronged you and you will begin to walk in love as the Word of God commands us. Then you will find that your "faith walk" will become a joy and you will begin to see your prayers answered!

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