



## ▶ DAILY DEVOTIONAL.

**Saturday/Sunday, 1/5-6/19**

**“Faith”**

**Philippians 4:1-13**

*Therefore, my brothers and sisters, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, dear friends!*

*I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. Yes, and I ask you, my true companion, help these women since they have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are in the book of life.*

*Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

*Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable — if anything is excellent or praiseworthy — think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me — put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.*

*I rejoiced greatly in the Lord that at last you renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you were concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it. I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all this through him who gives me strength.*

**Monday, 1/7/19**

**“Faith’s Direction”**

**Hebrews 11:1**

*Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.*

- Chapter 11 in the letter to the Hebrews is all about the ultimate hope that God’s people have in Jesus, the Founder and Perfecter of our faith. It is about God’s ultimate promises that we are enabled to know only through faith. Throughout, the author makes the claim that our faith has an ultimate direction. This is witnessed to by the heroes and prophets of the Old Testament, and is something that those with faith in Jesus will one day attain — the restoration of creation and union with Jesus. The nature of faith, therefore, is such that it is directed toward a goal that has not yet been fully realized; that we have confidence and assurance in God’s promises that we do not see, but in which we hope.

- Where is your faith directed? What do you hope for? What is it about your faith life that you have confidence in and assurance of?

**Prayer:** Holy God, we thank you for the gift of faith. We thank you for your promises toward which our faith is directed. Help us to keep before us the ultimate aim of our faith, that we may more faithfully follow you. In Jesus' name. Amen.

**Tuesday, 1/8/19**

**“Faith and Works”**

**James 2:14-26**

*What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, “Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,” but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. But someone will say, “You have faith; I have deeds.” Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds. You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that — and shudder. You foolish person, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? Was not our father Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. And the scripture was fulfilled that says, “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness,” and he was called God’s friend. You see that a person is considered righteous by what they do and not by faith alone. In the same way, was not even Rahab the prostitute considered righteous for what she did when she gave lodging to the spies and sent them off in a different direction? As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.*

- Faith is often referred to as belief or trust. As such, faith can easily be reduced simply to intellectual assent; merely a thought. Or, faith can be reduced to an emotion or feeling. The result is that some profess to have faith in Jesus Christ, but their lives in no way reflect what they claim to profess. In the words of James, such a faith is dead; it isn't really faith at all. The reality is that faith and deeds/works of mercy are inseparable. Deeds, or works of mercy, are simply the natural outpouring of a deep-seated faith. Our faith is made complete by how we live it out.
- What do you think it means to have faith in Jesus Christ? What do you think would be considered works of mercy? What are some ways that you live out your faith?

**Prayer:** Holy God, save us from a dead, lifeless faith! Help us to live out the simple trust we have in you. Give us eyes to see the many opportunities that pass our way each day and empower us by your Spirit to extend your mercy. In Jesus' holy name. Amen.

**Wednesday, 1/9/19**

**“Cosmic Faith”**

**John 3:16-17**

*For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.*

- John 3:16 is one of the best known and loved verses from all of Scripture. It is also one of the most memorized verses; perhaps you, too, have it memorized. What is less known, however, is verse 17 and what follows. Too often, verse 16 is read in a purely personal way: that God so loved *me* and gave his one and only Son for *me*, that *I* may have eternal life. This is certainly right, but to read it purely in a personal way misses the scope of what God has actually done in and through Jesus. For God so loved the *world*. The Greek word for world, here, is *cosmos*; which includes literally everything that has been created. Furthermore, God sent his Son not to condemn the *world/cosmos*, but to save the *world/cosmos* through him. Jesus' death and resurrection brought God's salvific work to fruition for the entire cosmos. This is the bedrock on which our faith is based. As such, our faith is to be cosmic in scope; that is, our trust in Jesus is to be rooted in the reality that one day all of creation will be restored to its intended glory, including us. Consequently, our lives in the meantime are to reflect this belief, joining Jesus in his work of cosmic restoration.
- What do you think it means to have a "cosmic" faith? In what ways does the Church witness to faith on a cosmic scale? How does the Church contribute to God's work of restoration? How might you contribute to God's work of restoration in the world? (Hint: God often works in small, seemingly insignificant ways.)

**Prayer:** Holy God, we praise you as the God of the entire cosmos. We also praise you as the God who knows every hair on our head. You are the God of all things and love each one of us as your own. We place our hope in your work of restoration and pray that you would empower us by your Spirit to join in on the restorative work you are doing. Give us hearts to know the ways that we can be vessels of your work in this world. In Jesus' name. Amen.

**Thursday, 1/10/19**

**"Faith and Love"**

**1 John 5:3-5**

*In fact, this is love for God: to keep his commands. And his commands are not burdensome, for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.*

- Belief in Jesus as the Son of God is the one belief that constitutes our faith. As John makes clear, this faith is a faith that is lived out through a love for God. Furthermore, we love God by keeping his commands. And what are God's commands? To love God with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength, and to love our neighbor as ourselves. Faith and love go hand in hand. To have faith is to live it out through love; to love is to exhibit our faith. It is through faith in Jesus, by living lives of love, that we overcome the trappings and brokenness of the world.
- What are some ways that you live out the love of Jesus Christ? What do you think it means to overcome the world? What are some things in your life that you need to overcome? How might faith and love play a role in overcoming those obstacles?

**Prayer:** Holy God, you have shown us who you are and who we are to be. Help us to live lives of faith and love that we might truly be called your children. Help us to overcome the trappings of the world and devote our lives to serving and loving you and our neighbor. In Jesus' name. Amen.

**Friday, 1/11/19**  
**“Joy and Peace”**

**Romans 15:13**

*May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.*

- Throughout the New Testament, in Paul's letters especially, joy and peace are the natural result of a life of faith. To live a life of simple trust in Jesus results in peace and joy. Peace is not merely the absence of conflict, and joy is not merely happiness. Rather, both imply a wholeness of life and spirit; and this no matter what our life circumstances may be. Faith, hope, peace and joy are all gifts of God, through the Holy Spirit.
- When do you most experience either peace or joy? Spend some time today thinking and praying about concrete ways that you can be faithful throughout your day.

**Prayer:** Let this verse guide you in your prayers throughout the day. Reciting this verse from a first-person perspective, ask God to fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him.

***This week's devotional was written by  
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