

## The Word of Faith (in Christ)

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### FAITH

*Hebrews 11:1-3 NRSV* Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. Indeed, by faith our ancestors received approval. By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was made from things that are not visible.

Is this not the word of faith (in Christ) that welcomes God to go to work and set things right for us? (Romans 10:8 MSG)

### Prayer for A Deeper Faith in Jesus

Father, as we recall the steadfast faith and hope in You that so many of the great cloud of witnesses displayed in Hebrews chapter eleven and elsewhere, we pray that we too may follow their example and place our entire faith in Your precious Word. May we develop an ever-deepening trust in You, knowing that Your Word is faithful and true. Thank You that in Christ, we have been forgiven of all our sins and delivered from the power of sin in our lives. May we pass on a trust in the Lord Jesus to our children and children's children, so that in the next generations a living trust in God may be their witness to the world and faith in Your Word may be a testimony that will also pass on to all their children. This we pray in Jesus' name, Amen. (Source:

<https://prayer.knowing-jesus.com/Prayers-for-Faith#1230>)

### An acronym for F.A.I.T.H.

F – Forsaking

A – All

I – I

T – Trust\*

H – Him

The key, of course, is TRUST – that which gives us the power to be and do whatever God asks of us! (Praise God, who is worthy of our trust! Amen!)

### **Affirmation of Faith:** *Let us hear again what we believe from Romans 8*

We believe there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, and we know that in everything God works for good with those who love God, who are called according to God's purpose. We are sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all of creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

*Is this not the **word** of faith (in Christ) that we **proclaim**? (Romans 10:**8 NRSV**)*

### **Remember Jacob, the Patriarch**

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Jacob, whose very name suggests “deceiver”, is renamed by God as “Israel” – “one who has struggled with God.” And an entire nation is named after this patriarch – the nation of Israel.

In an introduction to a Bible Study on the Life of Jacob in the book of Genesis, its' author writes that Jacob is ... “a troubling character in the Old Testament. He is conniving and he is spiritual too. He has moments of strong faith as well as of fear. His family is sometimes in disarray, and yet at the end he is the one who sets it straight.

Truthfully, Jacob may be a bit too much for us – with very human strengths and weaknesses, but a man with a striving for spiritual things. Yet from this imperfect man we learn important lessons of faith. Especially, as we

learn to accept God's grace ... "God's Riches At Christ's Expense" – Paul's very appeal in GOD'S WORD for today. Abandon legalism, accept grace, and make sure that every person in the world hears about it!

*Ephesians 2:8-9 NRSV* For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God— not the result of works, so that no one may boast.

*Is this not the **word** of faith (in Christ), which we **preach**? (Romans 10:8 KJV)*

Now, as you are aware, the events described in Jacob's story comprise most of the book of Genesis. If you haven't read the Old Testament much, you'll be pleased to find that God can speak to you here – loud and clear. The culture is vastly different, but you'll quickly learn that the people and their problems haven't changed much. And once again, be reminded that the story of Jacob is a great opportunity to learn important lessons about ourselves and our God.

### **The Patriarch Saga**

*Paul Lintern, pastor in the Northeastern Ohio Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, identified much of the ongoing saga of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph as an episode on the soap opera "As the Ancient World Turns Around the Guiding Light of the Days of All Our Ancestors Lives," brought to you by Noah's Ark Pet Shop, cleaning up after animals for many generations. Remember, when it comes to animal mess and grime, just say "Noah."*

We pick up the story of Jacob in ...

- Genesis 27 Jacob Tricks Esau and Isaac - steals Esau's birthright, as well as Isaac's blessing
- Genesis 28 Jacob's Dream - Jacob Meets God
- Genesis 29 The Girl of Jacob's Dreams – Rachel. It only seems that trickery leads only to more trickery and unhappiness. Yet within the context of the story (or the unfolding drama), the story insists like much all of Jacob's story, that God was working, even through the likes of Jacob. *God loved Jacob* – the "rascal" that he was. And linked with Paul's affirmations of faith in the book of Romans, *this story claims that not even our own scheming and meanness toward one another can separate us from the love of God.*
- And the story continues ... Jacob wrestled all night with the one who turned out to be God, was renamed Israel, which means "One who wrestled with God." I think it is probably what so many of us have done at one time or another in our faith journey as we wrestle with our faith and come to terms with our own perceptions of our faith journey as maybe flawed, thin or inadequate – much like Jacob who would eventually get up, limping and exhausted, to meet up with his brother Esau, reconciling with him, and eventually returning home to Bethel – the place where God first appeared to him. The place God made covenant with him as he did Abraham and Isaac, and where he reassured him of his love for him and his presence.
- The rest of Genesis recounts, of course, Jacob's depression, fears and hopes – and a growing faith. Rachel, who had given birth to Joseph, died in childbirth giving birth to Benjamin, the youngest of his 12 sons. Joseph is sold into slavery and imprisoned. Famine begins in the land. And Jacob's descent into Egypt is recounted ... all of which should remind us that we are we are *called to persevere to the end* because, even as God humbles us, has a plan for us, God works all things together for good for them who love God.

*Is this not the **teaching** of faith (in Christ) that we are telling? (Romans 10:8 NCV)*

Hebrews 11:21 NRSV By faith Jacob, when dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, "bowing in worship over the top of his staff."

### **Remember Joseph**

Hebrews 11:22 NRSV By faith Joseph, at the end of his life, made mention of the exodus of the Israelites and gave instructions about his burial.

The Bible records the story of Joseph (as well as all the Patriarchs of our faith) also in the Book of Genesis. He was, of course Jacob's favorite. Jacob loved Joseph more than all his sons and made a coat of many colors for him as a mark of preference. Joseph's elder brothers saw this preferential treatment from their father and got very jealous. All this made the brothers dislike Joseph even more. One day, when Joseph went to find his brothers in the field, the brothers saw him in the distance and planned to kill him but Reuben, Joseph's oldest brother, prevented them from executing that plot. Nevertheless, they still sold Joseph as a slave to traders going to Egypt who in turn sold him to Potiphar, an assistant to the Pharaoh of Egypt. The Psalmist, in remembering Joseph, describes Joseph's life after his brothers sold him, and recalls for us what Paul Harvey would identify as "*the rest of the story*".

Psalm 105:16-22 NRSV

- <sup>16</sup> When he summoned famine against the land, and broke every staff of bread,  
<sup>17</sup> he had sent a man ahead of them, Joseph, who was sold as a slave.  
<sup>18</sup> His feet were hurt with fetters, his neck was put in a collar of iron;  
<sup>19</sup> until what he had said came to pass, the word of the LORD kept testing him.  
<sup>20</sup> The king sent and released him; the ruler of the peoples set him free.  
<sup>21</sup> He made him lord of his house, and ruler of all his possessions,  
<sup>22</sup> to instruct his officials at his pleasure, and to teach his elders wisdom.

*Is this not the message concerning faith (in Christ) that we proclaim? (Rom. 10:8 NIV)*

Friends in Christ, take some consolation in the assurances of a powerful God as written in the scripture that He will assist us, as he did for Jacob and Joseph in times of need— and that He will bring us what we need, when we need it! And trust that “all things work together for good to them that love God” (Romans 8:28). Trust in the goodness of God and His mercy – it will follow us all the days of our lives ... *as he did in all the days of all of our Ancestors lives!*

### **God's Faithfulness to Israel**

Psalm 105:1-6; 45b

- <sup>1</sup> O give thanks to the LORD, call on his name, make known his deeds among the peoples.  
<sup>2</sup> Sing to him, sing praises to him; tell of all his wonderful works.  
<sup>3</sup> Glory in his holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice.  
<sup>4</sup> Seek the LORD and his strength; seek his presence continually.  
<sup>5</sup> Remember the wonderful works he has done, his miracles, and the judgments he has uttered,  
<sup>6</sup> O offspring of his servant Abraham, children of Jacob, his chosen ones.  
<sup>45b</sup> Praise the Lord!

*“The word is near you, on your lips and in your heart” (Romans 10:8 NRSV)*