

March 11, 2019

- *Faith requires vulnerability*
- *Prayer is to strengthen*

The light is upon you. The light that is God, the light that is love, is with you. There are so many times when you experience moments in seeming darkness or at the very least in the shadows. Human life at its fullest is never without its difficulties. As we have mentioned before, it is difficult to know of the presence of God when you are surrounded by so much that challenges that awareness. It is at moments when you feel the most frustrated, when you feel that somehow God is not so close by, that you are urged to exercise the most difficult outreach that is available to human beings. That outreach is faith.

Faith is not the full knowledge of the arrival of something that you hope for. Rather, faith is the belief that in the larger picture, the goodness and the love that is God is nevertheless present. It is a belief in that presence; it is not a certainty from evidence received of that existence. When you feel the presence of God in moments in your life, you are not exercising faith, but you may often exercise gratitude, and you may express your thanks, your response of love, in many different ways. Faith is not one of those ways.

Often, we emphasize the value, the service of faith in human life, but your experience of faith is most profound when the light feels dim. It is at such times when you want to reach out and call for God to be present. It is at such times when you feel the dimness that you wish to somehow energize God's presence, to convince God to make something right out of what feels to be so wrong at the moment.

Faith is the willingness to be vulnerable to God's light. This vulnerability is not an exercise in being a victim. It is the act of merely being open and receptive to the light that is.

You pray for patience, for healing, for peace and understanding. You pray for an absence of strife or conflict and the alleviation of suffering in all of its expression. But those prayers are really an effort on your part to achieve an openness for the light that is already there. The act of praying, therefore, is an act of faith. In its most meaningful sense, prayer is not asking God for help. It is an exercise in faith that the help, the presence, is already with you.

When you face difficulties, it is tempting to ask God to eliminate those difficulties, but it is not that God must step in and take away the pain. It is, instead, God's presence that enables the pain you may feel emotionally, physically, or spiritually to be addressed in such a way that there is a new level of comfort that is known and felt. You are, in a sense, praying for balance. It isn't taking away the difficulty; it is adding to your ability to feel some comfort in the presence of the difficulties that you face.

In effect, then, the exercise of prayer as being a measure of faith is one of strengthening who you are and not, by definition, removing what you face. You are

March 11, 2019

lessening the impact of what is being experienced because you are glimpsing, even for a few moments, a light, a light that assures you that you are loved. Exercising faith is therefore a kind of balancing act, but the balance that you achieve in exercising faith only comes when you are vulnerable enough to be open to that strength.

Not being vulnerable can come from fear, anxiety, anger, jealousy, or from feeling hurt emotionally. There are many barriers that often get in the way of being willing to be vulnerable. These are the barriers to faith. Faith, therefore, is not knowledge but a confidence in God's presence.

What is it that you need to know that proves beyond any doubt that there is a God? Consider the many individuals who worship corporately with others and yet still question the reality of God. They worship because they are seeking. They worship because they want to know more about what it is that we call God. What is that Spirit Center? They are seeking because it has not been fully found.

There are also many who claim that they know God fully, that there is no doubt in the reality of God. But it is true that even among those who claim full knowledge, full acceptance, they come to that realization from a desire for certainty. There is nothing in the human condition that can be seen as full proof that God is there, for if there were proof in concrete measure, then it could never be denied. The proof would be self-evident to all.

Therefore, for every human being there is the need to exercise a level of faith that carries one from what is hoped for to a state of what is seen with the heart and only with the heart. You cannot specifically prove electricity, and yet there is full evidence of what electricity does. It can be measured and conditions can be set so that some evidence can be seen. It may be described theoretically, but in the end, much of science cannot fully explain all the properties of electricity. There is much understanding, of course, but it is not complete. There are energy forms in life that are far less understood than the energy of electricity. They are also unseen, yet there are ways of recognizing their existence in some way.

We often say that God is a force, is an energy. Each of you has experienced moments in your lives when you have felt the presence of God, but God is not seen nor perceived with the senses available to humans. God has been described by countless theologians and philosophers. The number of books that describe who God is are beyond being counted. There is no lack of descriptions of God, but none of those descriptions are the kind of proof that would be evident to all people. The position of faith within that understanding is merely the willingness and vulnerability to accept the belief that there is an energy of love, of creation. But it is not knowledge. It is a belief, an act of faith.

Much of the benefit gained from human life is a strengthening of faith. It is not the acquisition of proofs. You are asked in your spiritual journey to live by faith, by your vulnerability, and by your openness. You are not asked to be knowledgeable but to be faithful. Faith exists on a plane independent of knowledge.

March 11, 2019

You have faith in the existence of spirit, your own spirit, your soul. You cannot prove the existence of spirit, but you see evidence of it all around you. You can appreciate beauty of the natural world and may say, "This is God at work," but where can you actually find God specifically? You can't, but you see evidence of God. You see evidence of God in your own daily life. You see evidence of God in the actions of others. You can receive the love of God through the love of others. All this contributes to the exercise of faith.

Faith is not believing in a myth. Faith is not belief in some sort of smokescreen. Faith is an openness, a receptiveness. These messages are acts of faith, for you are open to the possibility of being guided. It is through that guidance that your faith grows and deepens although there is nothing in your lives that you can point to that says, "This is my guide." You see evidence, you experience the expression of guidance, but in the end, it is your openness, your act of faith, that truly opens the window to allow the light to penetrate.

Often you pray for us that we can guide you in the most appropriate ways. But you also have offered your prayers for your guides, and those prayers strengthen us. You pray not because you see us; you pray because you are aware of evidence of our presence. There is nothing in your lives that would prove to another that we are your guides.

Faith is a powerful force, but faith comes not from strength, not from certainty, not from full knowledge, not from a feeling of dominance. Faith comes merely from your being open, opening your heart, being vulnerable to God's presence.

You grow truly in your lives by being open, not by being dominant. We pray for you of course, and you pray for us. You exercise your faith and your willingness to be open. You exercise a strength through your vulnerability, for that is the only strength that has value.

You are at your most human and godly place when you reach out to others. You are an embodiment to faith when you give up yourselves and devote your energies to those around you. That is an act of faith that is nourishment for the spirit, and it is that nourishment of spirit through faith that is the real reason you are given human life.

Be open, be vulnerable, stretch out your arms to receive God's presence that is there, and maintain those open arms to embrace all that surrounds you. You are blessed with our open arms, and we are blessed by yours. Find peace through your openness, and you will become peace.

Amen