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Faith of Our Fathers

Faith of our fathers! Living still
In spite of dungeon, fire, and sword.
O how our hearts beat high with joy
Whene'er we hear that glorious word!

Our fathers, chained in prisons dark,
Were still in heart and conscience free,
How sweet would be their children's fate
If they, like them, could die for Thee!

Faith of our fathers! We will love
Both friend and foe in all our strife,
And preach Thee, too, as love knows how,
By kindly words and virtuous life.

CHORUS: Faith of our fathers, holy faith!
We will be true to Thee till death.



A Psalm of Faith by Claudette Jones

You hold me in the palm of your hand as you rock me gently, soothing me and comforting me. You give me a peace that I can't even understand... Peace that encompasses me in the middle of trying circumstances. Peace that I haven't even asked for at times, and peace that at other times I have begged for. Once I remember your bringing me through many trials, and I trusted you to bring me through one more with peace. I felt my spirit being lifted up for refreshing and renewal. I was able to lean on you in total dependence. That's what faith is: leaning on you blindly, even when I didn't understand. Even when the answers were "No."

What have you promised me, O Lord? I know you will keep your promises. Do I sometimes hold you to promises you didn't make? Did you ever tell me I would have a problem-free life if I became a Christian? No. Rather, you showed me through lives of men like Paul, Peter, and Stephen that I could expect problems and trials as a Christian. You showed me through those same lives that I would receive eternal life, better than a problem-free life. Their lives taught me that "full of faith" life was possible. Their lives taught me that I would be made stronger and purified by my trials. Peter tells me that my faith—after being tried—will be more precious than gold.

Dear Father, you protect me and comfort me. You are my strength, my happiness. You love me, no matter what. How I must have broken your heart when I disobeyed you! I praise you for your goodness and kindness. I thank you for unending grace. You keep refreshing me by letting me start over and over again.

I remember your servants Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. They refused to worship idols. Their faith remained in you and your power. But they told the king that you were the only God they would serve, even if you didn't protect them. I believe you have the power to heal me. Even if you don't heal me, you are the only God I will serve. The only God I will love and trust. I will never question your love, strength, and power.

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FAITH OF OUR FATHERS

One morning at the shop where I work as a custom picture framer, I smiled ruefully as I applied yet another bandage to my hand. Its addition meant I now had a band-aid on every single knuckle on my right hand. Each finger had earned its scrape in a series of mishaps over the course of a few days, and I was oddly proud of it. There was no one to show it to, though. Only my father, who had spent his lifetime toiling as a carpenter, would have gotten the joke.

Later, when I showed my band-aids to my husband, I suppose he admired them as much as he knew how to. It wasn't really enough. Frankly, he didn't do it right at all. He didn't know what was needed, but it wasn't his fault. Our fathers fill a space in our lives that can't begin to be filled by anyone else—and, we don't want anyone else anyway.

Yet, as a young girl in this church family, God provided men who would carry out the assignment of godly father in my life: Bill Gillett, Martin Rinehart, and Bob McKune. These men—banished to the classroom behind the auditorium where many other good men quickly fainted away—walked alongside my own father and carried some of his burden to care for, love, and teach his children. These men thanklessly toiled year after year to gently shepherd and instruct us as we giggled through class one minute and then asked jarringly inappropriate and off-subject questions the next. While I trusted them implicitly and loved them without reserve, I also interrogated every concept they shared and tried to trap them with what I thought were clever insights.

I wonder—in my selfishness and immaturity—did my ingratitude and thoughtlessness make them feel discouraged and disheartened? Did they ever believe that nothing they said could make a difference to such a mob? Did they feel their sacrifice was wasted and worthless? Did I wound them in the house of their friends?

When fathers are godly men, their day-by-day interactions with their children instill a love and respect for God that surely cannot be taught. Well, not exactly. They do teach, but it's not always the power of their intellect that leads their children into a loving and obedient relationship with God. No. It's by the power of their sacrificial love and persevering leadership. They shepherd us by risking for us and by hurting for us and by silently and routinely taking our penalties and tirelessly praying for us.

So. Faith of our fathers? Sure. We have a faith passed down from our fathers. All of us would claim John and Peter and Paul as our fathers.

Some of us might claim Ignatius or Justin Martyr.

What about

Martin Luther? Anyone claiming Martin Luther? I know many in our tradition claim Alexander Campbell.



I'll tell you who I'm claiming. I'm claiming Bill Gillett and Martin Rinehart and Bob McKune. I'm claiming Tom Baird and Bosco Eudaly. I claim Ron Bramlett, Terry Parker and Jack Alexander. I claim Harmon Brown, Ernie Goggin, Gus Garver, Bill Heck, Jack Harris, and John Frank. I claim Bill Nelson, Junior Mace, Bill Miller, Hillard Johnmeyer, Dick Rogers, Hazel Poor, Jack Pruett, Gene Van Matre and John Webber. I claim Coleman Watson. I claim Fred Ziegler. I claim Bill Brown, Herb Hoffman, and Jess Robinson.... Our fathers.

In some ways, we know our fathers so well. We know what they'd say or do about this or that because we know their character. We overlook their flaws if we can. We depend on their stability. We take comfort in their approval and blessings long after they are around to voice it. They guide us throughout our lives, no words necessary.

Faith of our fathers, learned from uncompromising men. These compassionate fathers filled with love, filled with joy, filled with the fruit of the Spirit and sacrificing their time and resources for our sakes and in ways we'll never really know about, much less appreciate.

One morning as I stand before the Father, I'll smile ruefully as He inspects my wounds. He won't find any though, and I'll be oddly proud of it. "My Son bore that cost for you," He will say, because He gets it. And then

He will say, "...and I see someone took some of those scrapes meant for you, too." Then, turning slightly, He'll nod to an entire cadre of godly men. These men will be too humble to nod back. But I'll know them all. These fathers who shepherded me, year after year, as I sought my way to that throne—it was their faith, their championing, their devotion, their determination, and their love. And it'll be their crowns that are laid before the throne by the crystal sea.

Donna Roberts
Rolla, MO

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Mountain-Moving Faith

I woke this morning with thoughts of faith on my mind. The subject of faith has been on my mind for the last couple weeks as I prayed to the Lord for His help; praying that this piece would first glorify God and His precious Son, that it would encourage others, and that would help me in my everyday life as His child. I repeated the prayer several times over the period.

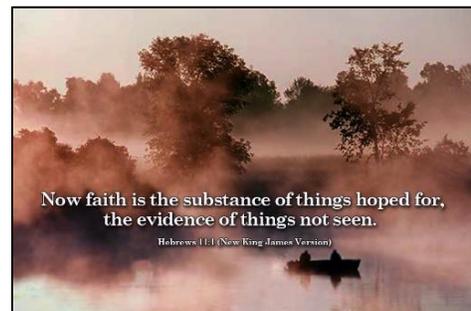
Daily, I would catch myself singing the words..."faith of our fathers, holy faith" and thinking about Hebrews 11:1 "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. The rest of that chapter about faith "giants" and other faith scriptures would filter through my thoughts. What would be my approach??



Today as I thought on faith, Jonathan, son of King Saul and beloved friend to David, came to mind. Particularly, I focused on that moment in Jonathan's life from 1 Samuel 14:1-14. *Now it happened one day that Jonathan the son of Saul said to the young man who bore his armor, "Come, let us go over to the Philistines' garrison that is on the other side." But he did not tell his father. And Saul was sitting in the outskirts of Gibeah under a pomegranate tree which is in Migron. The people who were with him were about six hundred men. Ahijah the son of Ahitub, Ichabod's brother, the son of Phinehas, the son of Eli, the LORD's priest in Shiloh, was wearing an ephod. But the people did not know that Jonathan had*

gone. ⁴Between the passes, by which Jonathan sought to go over to the Philistines' garrison, there was a sharp rock on one side and a sharp rock on the other side. And the name of one was Bozez, and the name of the other Seneh. ⁵The front of one faced northward opposite Michmash, and the other southward opposite Gibeah. Then Jonathan said to the young man who bore his armor, "Come, let us go over to the garrison of these uncircumcised; it may be that the LORD will work for us. For nothing restrains the LORD from saving by many or by few." So his armor bearer said to him, "Do all that is in your heart. Go then; here I am with you, according to your heart." Then Jonathan said, "Very well, let us cross over to these men, and we will show ourselves to them. If they say thus to us, 'Wait until we come to you,' then we will stand still in our place and not go up to them. But if they say thus, 'Come up to us,' then we will go up. For the LORD has delivered them into our hand, and this will be a sign to us." So both of them showed themselves to the garrison of the Philistines. And the Philistines said, "Look, the Hebrews are coming out of the holes where they have hidden." Then the men of the garrison called to Jonathan and his armor bearer, and said, "Come up to us, and we will show you something." Jonathan said to his armor bearer, "Come up after me, for the LORD has delivered them into the hand of Israel." And Jonathan climbed up on his hands and knees with his armor bearer after him; and they fell before Jonathan. And as he came after him, his armor bearer killed them. That first slaughter which Jonathan and his armor bearer made was about twenty men within about half an acre of land.

Another scripture, Matthew 17:20, came to mind this morning. *So Jesus said to them, "Because of your unbelief; for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you. I asked myself, "Do I have mountain-moving faith?"*



The Word states that mountain-moving faith only needs to be the size of a mustard seed. A mustard seed is small, very small. So, I realized that while we must have faith (as scripture states, *But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that*

He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him (Hebrews 11:6) and what makes really a work of ours—performed in conjunction with God—great and successful is the awesome power of God.

I believe that Jonathan had mountain-moving faith. Jonathan was camped with King Saul and 600 soldiers, and they were going to go to battle with the Philistines. But, Jonathan's belief in victory over the Philistines did not lay in the number of soldiers, but in power of the Lord. Jonathan and his armor bearer went up to do battle with faith in the power of God. I Samuel 14:6b states, "For **nothing restrains the Lord** from saving by many or by few."

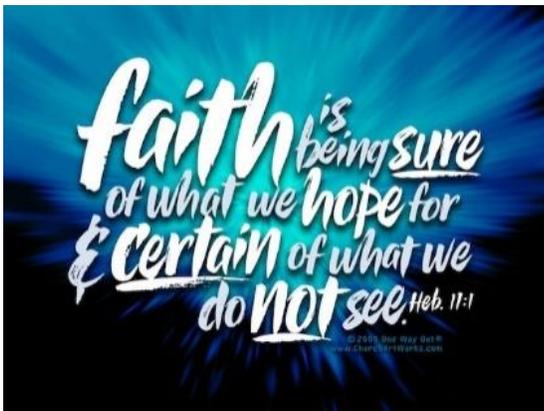
I pray that we all strive to develop our own faith by studying the Word, by asking the Father for faith, wisdom, and understanding in the name of the Son, by fully relying on the power of God, and by moving out in faith—mountain-moving faith.

Kathy Webber
Rolla, MO



SHINING EXAMPLES AMONG US

Growing old is not for the faint-hearted. I am so thankful for elderly Christians who are now in failing health but still face each day with a smile despite living with constant pain and failing bodies. They embody faithfulness. It is evident that long ago they sank their



roots deeply into the word of God and that the faith that grew from His word is what sustains them now. Thank God for their example and the inspiration they are for me and others following them. As Paul told the first century Christians to imitate him as he imitated Christ, so we can learn from and imitate these shining examples among us.

Evelyn Waite
Rolla, MO

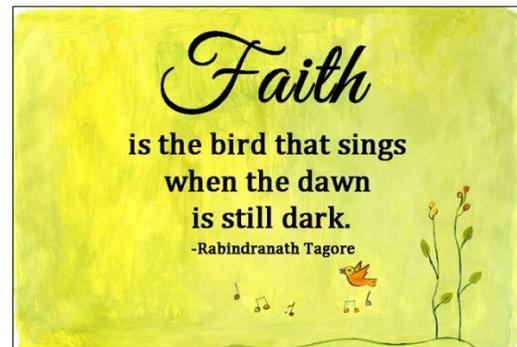


STAIRWELLS ARE QUIET PLACES

One hundred forty-two stairs will get you from the first floor to the seventh floor of the Doctors Building in Little Rock. While waiting for a friend, I sought the stairwell and walked from floor seven down to floor one, floor one back up to floor seven and then back again... three times. Stairwells are quiet places. Only the sound of my own footsteps echoed up and down. There are places here and there that only a few people choose to frequent... such as stairwells. I find such places mentally calming... no distractions. Finding a place of quietness is important and has purpose. "Early one morning, Jesus went up to the mountain to pray..."



Chuck Hicks
Searcy, Arkansas



Sunrise
The Newsletter For Women By Christian Women

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