

MEASURING AND FINDING FAITH

by Mark Huey

As the world far too rapidly approaches the second decade of the Twenty-First Century, with it has come a great deal of hype regarding the year 2012. For some reason or another, the subjects of the End of the Age and Second Coming have a tendency to arise in conversations with large numbers of Messianic Believers, or for that matter, well-informed seekers that we often encounter. This should be nothing new among those seasoned Believers acquainted with some basic eschatological tenets of evangelical Christianity, because the hope of Yeshua's return is surely promised to us in the Holy Scriptures. Nevertheless, it seems like every ten to fifteen years there is a new crop of people wanting the End to "come down," who get worked in a lather about either the rapture or the onset of the Great Tribulation. Many may remember some of the buildup around "The 88 Reasons for the Rapture in 1988," or the anticipated Y2k computer meltdown in 2000 that was supposed to initiate the final apocalypse. These relatively recent false alarms, including some lesser well known scares like the Oslo Peace Accords, should be familiar to many in the current generation of Messianic Believers from the early 1990s to the present.

In a recent discussion with a faithful Messianic missionary couple, who have been to Israel for three extended visits in the past three years, our conversation eventually migrated to end-time themes and the overlaying subject of faith. This couple was walking by faith, as the Holy Spirit was using them to minister in song to many believing and non-believing Israelis during their recent sojourns to the Land—without any significant, visible means of support. In separate individual conversations I had with this couple, I heard a distinct echo from both the husband and wife, when they each communicated some serious concern about whether Yeshua will actually find faith on Earth upon His return. This prompting urged me to take another look at where the Lord spoke about this, to see if there was something He wanted me to address in my own life:

"Now He was telling them a parable to show that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart, saying, 'In a certain city there was a judge who did not fear God and did not respect man. There was a widow in that city, and she kept coming to him, saying, "Give me legal protection from my opponent." For a while he was unwilling; but afterward he said to himself, "Even though I do not fear God nor respect man, yet because this widow bothers me, I will give her legal protection, otherwise by continually coming she will wear me out.'" And the Lord said, 'Hear what the unrighteous judge said; now, will not God bring about justice for His elect who cry to Him day and night, and will He delay long over them? I tell you that He will bring about justice for them quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?'" (Luke 18:1-8).

In this passage of Scripture, the principle of persistence and perseverance in prayer is obviously endorsed by Yeshua. The analogy of even the unrighteous judge ultimately succumbing to the consistent cries for justice, from the faithful widow, finally resulted in his ruling in her favor. The question that is asked by

Yeshua is whether the elect of God will have the same degree of determination in their prayer life to implore, beseech, and plead for justice from Him. The question is answered in the affirmative when Yeshua states that **God will bring about justice for them quickly**.

So I ask, are we as Believers persisting like the widow in our petitions for God's justice? Or are we simply complaining and jawboning about all of the problems leading to frustration and a sense of hopelessness?

In this day and age of apparent judgment, dripping down in slow motion upon America, I am convicted about my relative lack of prayer. I should be entreating the Almighty for relief from the sentence of ungodly rulers, among a multitude of other requests! Yet it dawned upon me that consistent prayer and supplication to our Heavenly Father requires a certain **measure of faith** that He should detect from our prayers. We have to believe in our hearts that taking the time to ardently come before Him, and plead our cause, is a worthwhile use of our time. When Paul addressed the Romans, encouraging them to offer themselves up as a living sacrifice, he told them that every Believer is endowed or allotted a certain measure of faith:

“Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, *which is your spiritual service of worship*. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith” (Romans 12:1-3).

In this informative chapter from Romans, Paul teaches about the importance of regularly—like the morning, evening, and daily sacrifices—taking the time to minister to the Lord as a part of your spiritual service of worship. Further on, while detailing the various spiritual gifts that are given to different Believers, he reminds everyone that a part of the walk of faith is being **devoted to prayer**:

“For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Messiah, and individually members one of another. Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, *each of us is to exercise them accordingly*. if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith; if service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching; or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness. *Let love be without hypocrisy*. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good. *Be devoted to one another in brotherly love*; give preference to one another in honor; not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, **devoted to prayer**, contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality” (Romans 12:4-13).

While ruminating on the subjects of finding faith when Yeshua returns, considering the measure of faith received, and devotion to prayer—the concept of faith without works definitely came to my mind. After all, as James the Just adroitly describes it, faith without works is dead:

“Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, *being* by itself. But someone may *well* say, ‘You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works.’ You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder. But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless? Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar? You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected; and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, ‘AND ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS,’ and he was called the friend of God. You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone. In the same way, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? **For just as the body without *the* spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead**” (James 2:17-26).

Here in this passage, James not only reminds his audience that faith without works is dead, but also that the demons—just like purported Believers—believe in the Creator God. However, the big difference should be that while the demons frightfully shudder—the redeemed should evidence their belief in God by living, walking, and acting accordingly by faith. **Obviously, one of the means to exercise such faith is to take the time and effort to be devoted to a consistent prayer life.** If you do not possess an adequate amount of faith, let me suggest that you appeal to the Holy One of Israel for an additional measure! James states earlier in his epistle that if someone lacks wisdom, then surely a fervent appeal to the Giver of all gifts might just warrant a faith upgrade:

“**But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him.** But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, *being* a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways” (James 1:5-8).

As you reflect upon the need for both faith in God and wisdom from God to guide you, I would encourage you to ask yourself these convicting questions:

- What measure of faith do I have?
- Can my faith be increased?
- Do I want my faith to grow?
- Is there a connection between consistent, devoted prayer and faith?
- Do I pray faithfully every day?
- If the Lord decides to return in my lifetime, will I be one of those He finds exhibiting faith?

Remember that without faith it is impossible to please God:

“And 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 seek Him” (Hebrews 11:6).

There is a poetic passage of Scripture, delivered in the final days of Moses’ life, as he was admonishing the Ancient Israelites just prior to their entrance into

the Promised Land. In this excerpt of his last loving poem to the people, who might affectionately be called “Jeshurun,” Moses prophetically describes many of the problems he foresaw. These problems would not only be seen in the many perverse generations of Israel—but perhaps also, as Yeshua similarly taught, in the Last Days generation that will be lacking in faith:

“But Jeshurun grew fat and kicked—you are grown fat, thick, and sleek—then he forsook God who made him, and scorned the Rock of his salvation. They made Him jealous with strange *gods*; with abominations they provoked Him to anger. They sacrificed to demons who were not God, to gods whom they have not known, new *gods* who came lately, whom your fathers did not dread. **You neglected the Rock who begot you, and forgot the God who gave you birth.** The LORD saw *this*, and spurned *them* because of the provocation of His sons and daughters. **Then He said, ‘I will hide My face from them, I will see what their end shall be; for they are a perverse generation, sons in whom is no faithfulness.** They have made Me jealous with *what* is not God; they have provoked Me to anger with their idols. So I will make them jealous with *those who* are not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation, for a fire is kindled in My anger, and burns to the lowest part of Sheol, and consumes the earth with its yield, and sets on fire the foundations of the mountains. I will heap misfortunes on them; I will use My arrows on them. *They will be* wasted by famine, and consumed by plague and bitter destruction; and the teeth of beasts I will send upon them, with the venom of crawling things of the dust. Outside the sword will be-leave, and inside terror—both young man and virgin, the nursling with the man of gray hair. I would have said, “I will cut them to pieces, I will remove the memory of them from men,” had I not feared the provocation by the enemy, that their adversaries would misjudge, that they would say, “Our hand is triumphant, and the LORD has not done all this.” For they are a nation lacking in counsel, and there is no understanding in them. **Would that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would discern their future!”** (Deuteronomy 32:15-29).

The key to avoiding the lack of faith as the return of Yeshua eventually approaches, just might be pleading with the Lord for not only the wisdom that James says He will give generously, **but also an increased measure of faith for praying with consistency.** With wisdom, faith, and a fervent prayer life, we might just be able, like the persistent widow in the parable, to receive justice from the Holy One—and *actually know what we need to be doing and how we need to live.* On the other hand, the alternative of lacking wisdom, faith, and prayer can keep us yoked to evil spiritual forces who already know what their final destination is.

Personally, my preference is to spend eternity with the Rock of my salvation! If consistent prayer is an indication that my measure of faith is increasing—and one of its by-products is enhanced wisdom, understanding, and discernment—then developing a regular time of prayer is surely a good thing. It is a tangible action that will pay great dividends, not only now, but in the days, weeks, months, and years ahead. And of course, such faithfulness will have its eternal rewards. *Choosing to start praying consistently now is an act of faith.* For when Yeshua does return, may each of us, or our progeny, be found among the faithful!

Until the restoration of all things...