



a word from Pastor Chuck



Faith, part 1

When I was growing up, my dad sold real estate on commission. That was great when he had a huge deal that earned him thousands of dollars—those were “feast” times for our family. But we had our share of “famine” times too.

I remember how quickly, as a child, a change in circumstance could alter my mood. When my father had some big deal percolating, I would excitedly think, *When Dad’s deal goes through, we can buy this and go there ...* Then the sale would fall through, and so would my hopes.

My dad’s faith, however, was always stronger than his circumstances. He had this motto—just two words—framed and positioned on his desk: “All things.” Whenever disappointments came along, my dad looked at those two words and remembered the rest of the verse and the promise within it:

All things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.
Romans 8:28b

A motto like that takes real faith to believe; it’s not our natural reaction to difficulty. When we experience a crisis, we do not automatically say, “Hey, it’s no big deal. Everything will work out in the end.” We’re more likely to cry, “Oh no! There goes our future!” But my dad’s faith was real. He truly believed in the promise of “all things,” and his life showed it.

Faith is the key to a successful Christian life. It enables you to accept the gift of salvation, and it walks you from one level of spiritual maturity to another. That’s why God’s Word says, **“Without faith it is impossible to please [God]”** (Hebrews 11:6a). But what is faith? Where does it come from, and how does it work? What does it accomplish? Why does it please God?

These are a few of the questions we will explore in this series of articles. If faith is so crucial to a joyful walk with God—and it

is—then we must learn how to exercise the faith God gives us. Without a vibrant faith, the Christian life becomes tedious, burdensome, and discouraging. But God means it to be marked by joy, peace, hope, and power (see Romans 15:13).

Faith means believing in God’s sovereignty. It means trusting that He is on the throne and is working through every circumstance. When we have that kind of faith, we have peace in the midst of trials. But when we forget God’s sovereignty, troubling circumstances cause us to despair. We survey the landscape with our eyes instead of with faith.

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Jacob did this. When his sons came home with the news that Pharaoh’s right-hand man was holding Simeon and wanted Benjamin brought to him as well, Jacob was filled with despair. He had already lost his beloved son, Joseph, and now this! **“All these things are against me,”** he moaned (Genesis 42:36b).

As far as Jacob’s eyes could see, it was true. All things did appear against him. But Jacob didn’t know the full plan of God. He didn’t yet know that the rough lord in Egypt was none other than Joseph, the long-lost son whom he loved. He didn’t realize that before long, he would be embracing Joseph and weeping joyfully with him.

We all have a choice to make when trouble comes. We can respond with Jacob’s “All things,” believing wrongly that **“All ... things are against me”**—or we can respond with my dad’s “All things,” believing correctly that **“All things work together for good to**

those who love God ...” One choice will arm us with peace and hope; the other will yield turmoil and hopelessness.

Faith waits for the next chapter, trusting that despite all we see, God is working out His plan in our lives. And what a perfect plan it is. How could it not be? It has the infinite thoughts of God backing it up. The Bible says God is thinking of us constantly. King David wrote, **“How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God! How great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they would be more in number than the sand”** (Psalm 139:17-18a).

The next time you get discouraged, go sit on the beach. Pick up a handful of sand and try to count the grains. Look along the shoreline and try to guess how many grains of sand it contains. If you could number God’s thoughts toward you, you would find they exceed the sands of the sea—and not just the sand on that one beach, but every grain of sand on every beach in the world, and every grain of sand lining the floor of every ocean. That’s a lot of sand, which should give you an idea of the number of God’s thoughts toward you. And what kind of thoughts are they? **“Thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope”** (Jeremiah 29:11b).

How glorious to be a child of God, to be under the Father’s care and concern! 🙌

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