



Online@9 - Sunday 8 June 2008

**'Have Faith!'**

### **Hosea 5.15 - 6.6**

"I will abandon my people until they have suffered enough for their sins and come looking for me. Perhaps in their suffering they will try to find me."

The people say, "Let's return to the Lord! He has hurt us, but he will be sure to heal us; he has wounded us, but he will bandage our wounds, won't he? In two or three days he will revive us, and we will live in his presence. Let us try to know the Lord. He will come to us as surely as the day dawns, as surely as the spring rains that water the earth." But the Lord says, "Israel and Judah, what am I going to do with you? Your love for me disappears as quickly as morning mist; it is like dew, that vanishes early in the day. That is why I have sent my prophets to you with my message of judgement and destruction. What I want from you is plain and clear: I want your constant love, not your animal sacrifices. I would rather have my people know me than burn offerings to me."

5. What picture of God do we see in the first two verses of the Hosea passage?
  
6. The people appear to repent and recognise that God will return to bring new life and healing. However, what is God's response to this? What did he really want from them?

### **Romans 4.13-25**

When God promised Abraham and his descendants that the world would belong to him, he did so, not because Abraham obeyed the Law, but because he believed and was accepted as righteous by God. For if what God promises is to be given to those who obey the Law, then man's faith means nothing and God's promise is worthless. The Law brings down God's anger; but where there is no law, there is no disobeying of the law.

And so the promise was based on faith, in order that the promise should be guaranteed as God's free gift to all of Abraham's descendants - not just to those who obey the Law, but also to those who believe as Abraham did. For Abraham is the spiritual father of us all; as the Scripture says, "I have made you father of many nations." So the promise is good in the sight of God, in whom Abraham believed - the God who brings the dead to life and whose command brings into being what did not exist. Abraham believed and hoped, even when there was no reason for hoping, and so became "the father of many nations." Just as the scripture says, "Your descendants will be as many as the stars." He was then almost one hundred years old; but his faith did not weaken when he thought of his body, which was already practically dead, or of the fact that Sarah could not have children. His faith did not leave him, and he did not doubt God's promise; his faith filled him with power, and he gave praise to God. He was absolutely sure that God would be able to do what he had promised. That is why Abraham, through faith, "was accepted as righteous by God." The words "he was accepted as righteous" were not written for him alone.

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They were written also for us who are to be accepted as righteous, who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from death. Because of our sins he was handed over to die, and he was raised to life in order to put us right with God.

1. What basic message is Paul seeking to convey through this passage? Why use the story of Abraham to make this point?
2. From this passage how would you define 'faith'?

### **Matthew 9.9-13, 18-26**

Jesus left that place, and as he walked along, he saw a tax collector, named Matthew, sitting in his office. He said to him, "Follow me."

Matthew got up and followed him. While Jesus was having a meal in Matthew's house, many tax collectors and other outcasts came and joined Jesus and his disciples at the table. Some Pharisees saw this and asked his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with such people?"

Jesus heard them and answered, "People who are well do not need a doctor, but only those who are sick. Go and find out what is meant by the scripture that says: 'It is kindness that I want, not animal sacrifices.' I have not come to call respectable people, but outcasts.".....

While Jesus was saying this, a Jewish official came to him, knelt down before him, and said, "My daughter has just died; but come and place your hands on her, and she will live."

So Jesus got up and followed him, and his disciples went along with him. A woman who had suffered from severe bleeding for twelve years came up behind Jesus and touched the edge of his cloak. She said to herself, "If I only touch his cloak, I will get well."

Jesus turned round and saw her, and said, "Courage, my daughter! Your faith has made you well." At that very moment the woman became well.

Then Jesus went into the official's house. When he saw the musicians for the funeral and the people all stirred up, he said, "Get out, everybody! The little girl is not dead - she is only sleeping!"

Then they all laughed at him. But as soon as the people had been put out, Jesus went into the girl's room and took hold of her hand, and she got up. The news about this spread all over that part of the country.

3. In the reading, supported by the drama, three very different people come to Jesus in faith. Discuss the manner in which this was done and the reasons for it in respect of: a. Matthew b. Jairus c. the woman
4. People throughout the world and in all circumstances have come to know Jesus and the transforming effect he brings to their life. Would you be prepared to share with the group how you came to know Jesus?

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