

Is there someone in your life that inspires you in your Christian walk?

They seem to live in such close union with God.

Their will seems to conform to God's will almost effortlessly.

The Bible would refer to this as righteous – meaning they have a right relationship with God, their will in union with God's will.

Their lives seem to match up with God's commandments, love and purposes.

These people seem to not only understand the promises of God that are in the Bible, but somehow they seem to just know that the promises are for them?

When you think of one of these kind of people or talk to them, they encourage you on your Christian journey?

Maybe that hero of faith for you is sitting right beside you today,

Maybe you talked with them on the phone yesterday or emailed them

Maybe they are no longer alive

Regardless, they are your example of the Christian faith in action.

Cornelia Johanna Arnolda ten Boom is one of those people for me.

You may know her better by the name **Corrie ten Boom**.

I didn't know her personally but I have read books about her and by her.

Corrie ten Boom was born on April 15, 1892 and died April 15, 1983

She was a Dutch Christian Holocaust survivor who helped many Jews escape the Nazis during WWII.

Ten Boom co-wrote her autobiography, *The Hiding Place*, which was later made into a movie by the same name.

Corrie traveled to more than 60 countries for speaking engagements and wrote numerous books, in which she talked about her faith in God and in his faithfulness in keeping his promises.

In her book *Tramp for the Lord* (1974), she tells the story of how, after she had been teaching in Germany in 1947, she was approached by one of the cruelest former Ravensbrück camp guards.

That was the concentration camp she had been in and her sister had died at. He came forward after her talk and asked for her forgiveness.

She was reluctant to forgive him, but prayed that she would be able to.

She wrote that,

For a long moment we grasped each other's hands, the former guard and the former prisoner. I had never known God's love so intensely as I did then.

One of the main reasons I so like Corrie ten Boom is she is such an inspiring example to me of the Christian faith.

When I think of all she went through, all she endured, yet her faith in God remained intact, even stronger because of her obstacles, I can't help but be encouraged in my Christian walk.

Corrie had a plate that hung on her wall for many years quoting **Psalm 31:15a**. It said, *“My times are in His hands.”*

She believed that all of life's circumstances are under God's control. Knowing that God loved her - enabled her to keep steady in her faith regardless of her circumstances and trust that God would fulfill his promises to her that she found in Scripture.

In December, 1967, Ten Boom was honored as one of the ***Righteous Among the Nations*** by the State of Israel.

Centuries earlier the Apostle Paul was talking to some Christians in Rome and he told them about one of his favorite inspiring examples of the Christian faith. He spoke to them about Abraham. Listen to what he has to say.

READ - Romans 4:13-25

In Genesis 12 you read where God had promised Abraham that he would be the father of many nations and that the whole world would be blessed through him.

In Genesis 17 over 20 years have passed and Abraham and Sarah have still not had a child. Abraham is now 100 and Sarah 90.

But Abraham continues to believe that God will fulfill his promises.

Perhaps Abraham had a plate hanging in his tent that read,

“My times are in His hands.”

Paul lifts up Abraham's story not only as an example of Christian faith, but also in an effort clear up some misunderstandings among the Christians in Rome. Many of these Christians were of Jewish descent, they loved to be referred to as the children of Abraham, and they strictly followed the letter of the law.

They became upset when they heard Paul teaching the Gentile believers to disregard the law.

Paul reminded them that Abraham lived by faith, having lived before the laws had even been given to Moses, believing in God's promises.

By emphasizing faith, Paul is not saying that God's laws are unimportant, but that it is impossible to be saved simply by obeying them.

Paul lifts up Abraham as the Christian model of faith, pointing out that Abraham was saved by faith and not by the law.

And because of his faith - Vs 22 says, “God declared him (Abraham) to be righteous.”

Today I want to take a look at this great faith of Abraham and Corrie ten Boom.

Faith that declared them both to be righteous.

Perhaps as we look at them and their faith, we will see some common traits they share - traits of that hero of faith you are thinking of as well.

So what must we do in order to receive God's promises:

1) TRUST

First we must choose to trust God.

We need to first trust or believe that God's promises are for us.

One of the most important subjects talked about in the Bible is trusting God. The truth is our relationship with the Lord and our whole way of life is based on our ability to trust Him.

God has given us so many incredible promises in the pages of Scripture –

Promises of healing, hope, abundance, and restoration...

Promises that were secured by the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

It is very important to understand, however, that just because the Bible says we can have something, doesn't mean we automatically will have it.

In order to receive God's promises, we must first trust they are ours through Jesus Christ.

God whispers in that still, small voice, he calls us to develop confidence in him;

he calls us to abandon the confidence we have in what we see and the *confidence we have in our fears*.

God keeps the curtain of our future drawn so we will learn to live by faith and not by

sight, so we will become certain of what we hope for and become sure of God, even

when we cannot see how he's working in our current circumstances. (Hebrews 11:1)

So the question is – Do we have more trust in God or in our fear?

Your behavior and decisions are most often rooted in what you believe.

When you experience fear, ask yourself, "What does this fear say about what I believe in this circumstance?"

When my niece, Hannah, who will graduate this year, was only 2, she used to love to jump through the air and have me catch her.

She trusted that I would catch her every time because I loved her so much.

She had complete faith in me.

One day at my sister's house, we were out in the backyard.

I was swinging on the porch swing and Hannah was standing on a chair beside me.

All of a sudden she jumped for me to catch her.

The only problem was she didn't tell me about her decision until she was airborne and then yelled, "catch me, Aunt Nita."

Unfortunately as you can imagine I didn't catch her in time.

She fell and hit the swing and busted her head.

So we took a trip to the emergency room to get her stitched up.

A few days later, however, she was ready to come flying through the air again and have me catch her.

Just because we had experienced a little setback, was not enough reason for her to give up her trust in me.

In fact, she trusted me even more because she knew I would never let her fall a second time.

I had promised her that night, that if she would yell first for me to catch her, I would never miss again.

And I didn't.

Hannah knew she could trust my promise and so she put her complete faith in me.

She could just have easily put her energy into fear, and never jumped again.

But we would have missed out on some wonderful times together.

Facing this obstacle together strengthened Hannah's faith in me and our relationship grew stronger over the years.

Trust is not something we learn to do automatically.

It is developed over time and through experience.

God doesn't just want us to just trust him for things;

he wants us to trust him *through* things as well.

If fear and unbelief are holding you back from experiencing all of God's promises for you - then it is time to break free.

Abraham never feared that God would fulfill his promises.

His faith did waver from time to time and he made some foolish mistakes and decisions, but as he faced these obstacles, his faith strengthened and his trust grew deeper.

If Abraham had looked only at his own resources, he would have given up in despair.

Instead, he looked to God, trusted God, obeyed him and waited for God to fulfill his promises.

You need to stop fearing that God's promises aren't real and that God won't come through for you.

You may not get everything you want exactly the way you want it, but God will give you something so much greater if we trust in him instead of our fear.

Joyce Meyer, a pastor I like to listen to, has said many times, "I would much rather believe God for a lot and receive a little, than believe Him for nothing and get it all."

And consider this...it takes no more energy to believe God can and will do something for you than it does to believe that he can't or won't.

So why not use your energy on exerting your faith, which will help you overcome, instead of spending it on fear and distrust, which will only end in defeat.

2) GRACE

Second, we need to accept God's grace.

Romans 4:13-25

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Paul reminds us that Abraham was not the great father of faith because he kept the letter of the law, but rather because he lived his life in faith.

Abraham's life was marked by mistakes, sins, and failures as well as by wisdom and goodness.

Corrie ten Boom would have been the first to tell you that she had made mistakes in her life as well.

Yet both were credited as righteous.

Look again at Romans 4:23-25

God's promise to bless the whole world through Abraham was fulfilled in Christ Jesus.

Jesus was from the line of Abraham.

In Jesus the law was fulfilled, God's promise was fulfilled, and Abraham was credited as righteous.

This is another way of saying that the life-giving God, in whom Abraham believed and was justified, gave life to Jesus, in whom we believe and are justified.

So what does this mean for us?

This means that a great exchange takes place.

We give Christ our sins, and he gives us his righteousness.

Christ takes our guilt, we take his innocence and purity

Christ takes our broken relationship with God

We take his right relationship with God, his perfect union

Christ takes our stubborn, self-focused will

We take Christ's selfless, God-centered will

Christ takes our sin and death,

We take his righteousness and eternal life.

This gracious gift of God is for all who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

John 3:16 says – For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son that whosoever believes in him shall not perish but have everlasting life.

There is nothing you or I can do to earn it.

We cannot obtain it by obeying any law or by any good deed on our part. Knowing this, I can set my mind on the *things above*, not focusing on the things below, such as my failures, my strength, my weaknesses, and all the material, temporary matters that keep me focused only on the things in front of me.

Instead, I can get out of the way, inviting the Holy Spirit to work a transformation in my life through the saving grace of Christ.

Whether I succeed or fail, I fall upon the grace of God.

I remain immersed in his grace, knowing I cannot create myself holy.

The Spirit of God within me and the blood of Jesus Christ allow me to connect with, and be cleansed by, a holy God and to be declared righteous, just, freed from sin's hold.

What an amazing promise, and it is ours through the grace of God if we just accept it.

3) Allow Christ to make a Difference.

Lastly, we need to allow Christ to make a difference in our lives.

Corrie ten Boom was released from the concentration camp in December 1944.

In the movie *The Hiding Place*, ten Boom narrates the section on her release from camp, saying that she later learned that her release had been a clerical error.

The women prisoners her age in the camp were killed the week following her release.

Abraham was 100 and Sarah was 90 before she finally gave birth to their promised son.

They were well beyond child-bearing years, they were by all outward appearances dead with infertility and no more life was in them.

Yet God brought things into existence – like a son named Isaac.

And the promise to bless the whole world through Abraham – well Abraham obviously never lived long enough to see that fulfilled through Jesus Christ.

Yet he died trusting that it would most definitely be fulfilled.

After all, hadn't God done everything else he had promised he would do for Abraham?

Vs 17 reminds us that, "Abraham believed in the God who brings the dead back to life and who brings into existence what didn't exist before."

God has the power to deliver on promises of new life in the place of death.

God has the power to create something out of nothing.

God has the power to do the impossible.

Just ask Abraham, or Corrie, or yes even Jesus.

Just ask your hero of faith.

When all seems hopeless, we have new life waiting for us as well through Christ Jesus.

When all seems hopeless, we need to fall upon the grace of God.

When all seems hopeless, we need to trust in a God whose promises exceeded our problems.

After all, weren't we **once dead in our sins and now are alive to God in Christ Jesus.**

Romans 6:11