

Use what you have

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[0 : 00] The Apostle Paul writes in Romans 10, If you openly declare that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by openly declaring your faith that you are saved.

Paul is implying that you have what you confess, what you believe and have faith for. I'm not talking about name it and claim it, but I'm talking about what you believe in your heart and know that God has done.

And when we confess that, that brings salvation, it brings life. And there's a lot of people that name it and claim it, says, well, because we're Christians, we can just say it.

And if we keep saying it enough, it'll happen. Well, that doesn't really work, does it? We need to believe in our heart what is true. And when we believe in our heart that it's true and we speak it out, it becomes life.

[1 : 09] Muhammad Ali died the other day. Probably most people in the world know who Muhammad Ali is. And we used to watch him when I was growing up on Friday night fights. And it was better than seeing the rest of my family fight.

We can see it on television. But he would, when he was still Cansius Clay, you know, he had come on and just bragging about that he was the greatest.

And he had kept saying that. And one of the, Howard Cosell, I think, was always giving him a bad time, this sports announcer. But the thing is that Muhammad Ali, or which he is now, Cansius Clay, he believed that he was the greatest.

He wasn't just saying it because, you know, he did say it to intimidate his opponents. But he also believed it. And then he practiced it. He knew what he had.

And so he was proclaiming that. And it proved in the end that he is one of the greatest fighters, heavyweight boxers in the world.

[2 : 15] He was confessing what he believed. And then he backed it up by being in shape. And what I want to talk about this, I was going to say tonight, isn't tonight yet, but this morning, I want to ask a question is, what do you have?

What do you have? What do you have?

In Acts chapter 3. It's nice to hear the rustling of pages.

Peter and John went to the, and this is out of the New Living Translation. Peter and John went to the temple one afternoon to take part in the three o'clock prayer service. As they approached the temple, a lame man from birth was being carried in.

Each day he was put beside the temple gate, the one they called the beautiful gate, so he could beg from the people going into the temple. When he saw Peter and John about to enter, he asked them for some money.

[3 : 51] Peter and John looked at him intently, and Peter said, look at us. The lame man looked at them eagerly, expecting some money. But Peter says, I don't have any silver or gold for you, but I will give you what I have.

In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, get up and walk. Then Peter took the lame man by the right hand and helped him up. And as he did, the man's feet and ankles were instantly healed and strengthened.

He jumped up, stood to his feet, and began to walk. And then walking, leaping and praising God, he went into the temple with them. All the people saw him walking and heard him praising God.

When they realized he was a lame beggar they had seen so often at the beautiful gate, they were absolutely astounded. They all rushed out in amazement to Solomon's colonnade, where the man

was holding tightly to Peter and John.

Peter saw his opportunity and addressed the crowd. People of Israel, he said, what is surprising about this? And why stare at us as though we had made this man walk by our own power or godliness?

[5 : 04] Then verse 16, through faith in the name of Jesus this man was healed. And you know how crippled he was before. Faith in Jesus' name has healed him before your very eyes.

The man had been lame from birth. As we see later on when the religious leaders interrogate Peter and John, they find out, and they interrogate the lame man, that he had been about 40 years of age.

He had been lame all that time. Begging kept him alive, but Peter and John were broke. They didn't have any money. They didn't have any credit cards. They didn't have their Barclay card or American Express.

They had nothing. But what they had, they gave him. They used the authority Jesus gave them to do a miracle.

That miracle, though, got them in trouble. In spite of the crowd giving glory to God for this incredible healing, the religious leaders hauled Peter and John in for questioning.

[6 : 11] They thought they had gotten rid of Jesus. Now these two disciples were stirring things up again. And why were the religious leaders worried, especially when a man was made whole and God received the glory?

The problem was that the religious leaders is what they had, and that was dead religion and unbelief. In their heads, they knew the word of God.

And probably a lot of these, the boys growing up in the Jewish faith, if I remember right, you know, they were encouraged to read what the first five books of the Bible, the books of Moses, and to often memorize.

And so these religious leaders probably had it all memorized. So they knew the written word of God for that time. And probably when they were young, they probably had a faith in God that probably was a living relationship at one time.

But then over the years, it became stagnant, routine, legalism, and unbelief settled in. They lost what was really important. And it's easy to do in the Christian life, isn't it?

[7 : 24] I mean, you can get in the ministry, and you can get so caught up in doing different things that you begin to lose that fresh living relationship with the Lord.

You forget what you had. Spiritual disappointment. Somebody, you know, hurts you.

Someone's negative teaching, the demands of life, the world's cynicism, the devil's lies, or the desires of the flesh begin to wear us down. We lose sight of the incredible promises, authority, and power God makes available to us.

This is why, you know, I mentioned a couple of weeks ago, you know, it's so important to treasure God's word in our heart, to keep our relationship with God alive and living, to keep knowing what he says about us, who he is, and what he says about us, his promises, his authority, the power that he makes available to us.

This is why the Apostle Paul challenges believers in 2 Corinthians 13, verse 5. He says, I think John Wesley, when he and his brother, you know, started, well, the Wesleyan movement, they would have little groups of people.

[9 : 00] And when I read about it, it almost scares me because they were really into making sure you examine one another so that they'd be broken up into different groups.

I'm not sure whether a dozen or something like that. And whenever they'd meet, which was either at least weekly, maybe every day, they would ask one another, how are you doing in God?

Have you sinned? Are you being tempted in any way? Because they wanted to make sure their relationship with God was going to continue to be on fire.

And then you can see why there was such a powerful move of God during the time of John Wesley and George Whitefield and others. Because these were ones who knew what they had in God.

They kept examining themselves to make sure they were fresh, that it was real. Now, when I'm speaking, okay, I always speak to myself as well, okay?

[10 : 06] I'm talking to myself here as well. Basically, Paul is challenging us to check out what we have. Do we really believe what God says about us?

Not just that he loves us and sent his son Jesus to die on the cross for us, but that we, his church, are the answer to this world. Did you know that?

You are God's answer to the world. It's the church. God bless, you know, all the Reinhard Bonnke's and Billy Graham's and others, because they're there to reach people for Jesus.

But the scripture makes it clear that it's the church that is the answer to the world. That's why it's so, you know, awful when the Church of Scotland and other churches begin to trash the word of God and say, it's okay, you can opt out of this and you can opt out of that and you can opt out of something else.

And then what do we have when we opt out on what the scripture says? We have nothing. So Paul is challenging us to examine what we have.

[11 : 28] Do we remember what God says about us? Do we remember the authority that he gives us? Do we remember the challenge, the command he gives us? Commands to go into all the world and to preach the gospel.

He doesn't command us to come to church twice a Sunday, does he? He never says go to church, does he? But he does say, go into all the world and share the good news.

And make disciples and baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. But because of our love for God and wanting to grow in him, then we meet together.

Because we're stronger together. I'm not talking about Europe, okay? That's just, you can decide whatever you want.

I can't vote. But that Jesus sent his Holy Spirit to empower us to do as well. That we are given his living word and the gifts of his Holy Spirit to reveal God to those who don't yet believe.

[12 : 38] Do you know what you have? What do you have? Do you have those promises in your heart? Not just for your pastor or the elders or the, you know, the biblical hot shots.

But what do you have? Do you have those promises of God and the recognizing that he has given each individual believer authority in God?

To heal the sick, to set the captives free, to preach the gospel. God sometimes uses a broken world to reveal his power.

In 1 Corinthians chapter 17, 8 through 15, it says, Then the Lord said to Elijah, Go and live in the village of Zarephath near the city of Sidon.

I have instructed the widow there to feed you. So he went to Zarephath and he arrived at the gates of the village. He saw a widow gathering sticks and he asked her, Would you please bring me a little water and a cup?

[13 : 48] As she was going to get it, he called to her, Bring me a bite of bread too. But she said, I swear by the Lord your God that I don't have a single piece of bread in the house.

And I have only a handful of flour left in the jar and a little cooking oil in the bottom of the jug. I was just gathering a few sticks to cook this last meal and then my son and I will die.

But Elijah said to her, Don't be afraid. Go ahead and do what I've just told you. But make me a little bread first. That sounds terrible, doesn't it?

You go up to somebody, they have nothing. And say, by the way, could I have what you have? Then use what's left to prepare a meal for yourself and your son.

For this is what the Lord God of Israel says, There will always be flour and olive oil left in your containers until the time when the Lord sends rain and the crops grow again.

[14 : 57] So she did as Elijah said. And she and Elijah and her family continued to eat for many days. The prophet didn't ask her to do something she couldn't do.

And he didn't ask her to give something she didn't have. He says, What do you have? Okay, use that. You know, sometimes we're waiting for something.

You know, we're waiting for something. And, you know, it never shows up, does it? Because God's saying, Use what you have. I have given you incredible promises.

You know, these are astounding promises. And God is just waiting for us to say, Wait, we have these. These are ours. These promises are mine.

And I can use them. Though I feel like a widow with a couple of sticks and a little tiny bit of bread and hardly any oil. God promises to multiply what I have and to use it to feed the world.

[16 : 08] He asked her just to use what she had. And this is what Jesus asked of his disciples when the multitude were standing around hungry. Sometimes we think, Oh, I'd love to be around when Jesus was around, be one of his disciples.

I don't know if I would have. You know, they went through some tough training. I thought I had it rough in Youth with a Mission. But, you know, being one of Jesus' disciples that time, he put them in difficult spots.

And here he had just spoken out in the wilderness. And there were at least, one time was 4,000 men. And then it said in one of the scriptures that besides women and children.

And another time was 5,000. So there could have been 15,000 to 20,000 people each time. And so they were stuck out there with, you know, no food.

There's no town around. And they were begging Jesus, please send them home. And he knew they were going to be too hungry by the time they got home. He says, no, you feed them.

[17 : 20] Can you imagine the terror that was on their faces? Jesus, what do you mean? We don't have anything. I know sometimes, you know, in our house we get down to just leftovers.

And I'm sure everybody has leftovers. So it's not just our house. And then somebody pops by. You know, a whole family pops by or something. Just about time. Emma has just taken the little bit of leftovers that will stretch to those of us there.

And then in comes somebody. And you can see the terror. I know you ladies feel that at times, don't you? The cupboards are bare. You have just enough to feed your family.

And here comes your relatives. Just dropping in at dinner time. So you use what you have, don't you? I've seen at times where physically God multiplied what we had.

So that it was more than enough. When normally it wouldn't feed half of the ones that it did. And Jesus says, you feed them. And then when they were, he asked them, what do you have?

[18 : 40] What do you have? We only have five loaves of bread and two fish. But what good is that? And he took what they had.

He didn't ask them to do what they couldn't do. He just asked them, what do you have? And he multiplied that. And there was more than enough for those 4,000 men plus women and children. Those 5,000 men besides women and children. There was food left over. This is what the Lord is asking of you and me.

What do you have? What do you have? Do you have Jesus? Then you have everything, don't you? Can you still talk?

Then you are able to share. You're able to pray. You have some money. You think, well, hold on to your wallet. He's going to call an offering. If you have any money, you can give.

[19 : 45] As God leads. Do you have a few minutes? I know some of you are very busy. But there's a couple of you who confessed to me you're retired. So I know you have more time.

But actually, sometimes you're busier when you're retired than before. And then you think, how did I ever have time to do anything?

But we all have some time, don't we? We all have some time. And maybe that five minutes or that half an hour, that hour could be used of interceding for the fellowship, interceding for your community.

Praying, you know, for a work colleague or somebody at school or somebody in your neighborhood or your family of interceding. You think, well, there's not a whole lot I can do, but I can pray.

I can go to my neighbor that hardly ever has a visitor. Her family doesn't visit her. And you can maybe cook a meal or just take some fresh donuts or cookies by and knock on our door and say, would you like, can we have a cup of coffee together?

[20 : 52] And then pray that that would turn into a divine appointment to share Jesus. I know there are, I've been to different prisons. I don't know if our brother that works in the prison is here today, but there's a lot of prisoners who never get a visitor.

Never have a visitor. There are people in care homes that never have anybody visit them. Now, the family all show up when, you know, when they die and they want to claim on their part of their state. But what do we have? Do we have time to visit somebody that's housebound? Do we have time just to go to somebody that we know about that never sees anybody and say, let me share what I have? Not to pounce on them with the gospel, but to look for an opportunity to share what we have, to share the peace that God has given us, to share the, you know, maybe a mother that's going through a terrible time with all kinds of kids.

And just to go and say, hey, can I come and help watch your kids with you? Or even, I'll watch your kids while you go shopping. Or go have yourself a cup of coffee.

[22 : 11] What do we have? And then out of that, look for an opportunity. Do you know that there were, last year, as of 31st of March, there were 69,540 children in care in the United Kingdom?

There are probably even more now. How many would benefit from a Christian home? There are thousands of children waiting to be adopted.

How many of those would benefit from a Christian home? Fostering can be a tough and thankless job. You may never see the fruit of your efforts in this life.

But it can transform not only a child's life, but that of his or her whole family. My wife and I have seen, you know, a difference, a transformation in the little boy that we fostered and now we befriend.

We see him about every four weeks. Now, his life has changed. Now, we keep praying for him and as long as he wants to keep seeing us, we'll keep seeing him as often as we can.

[23 : 27] But what do you have? You know, maybe you can't adopt or foster. Maybe you're not in that position or maybe it isn't God's will. But there's a little boy or a little girl out there that could stand some befriending.

Maybe once a month or different programs. Just to befriend somebody. That's why I'm alive today is because some adults befriended me.

When my family was a mess, people reached out to me. They took what they had and they shared it with me. What about the elderly prisoners or housebound who seldom or never have visitors?

I just mentioned that. Jesus said that the way we treat the least of these is the way we treat him.

And no condemnation, okay? I'm sharing all these things because I'm sharing, talking to myself as well.

What do I have? What can I still give? But I'm asking, what do you have? What has God given you, however small or insignificant you think it is, that could make the difference to discourage mother, a broken marriage, a struggling addict, a rejected child, or a hopeless community?

[24 : 49] What do you have? What do you have that you can give this community? These people out there, some who have never heard the gospel, hiding away, they don't want to hear, but they're hopeless.

What do you have? Matthew Barrett, the son of a well-known American pastor, his dad has this massive church, I think, in Arizona.

Matthew could have stayed there and probably become the pastor. I don't know if he actually has by now, but at this time when he was a teenager, 19 or something like that, he had a heart to go to a very needy and violent part of Los Angeles.

And at this church that, you know, had really killed off, almost literally, every minister they had, this little Assemblies of God church in Los Angeles, a terrible community.

You know, he had come to church and they'd have to step over bodies that were there because of violence the night before or because somebody died of overdose. They wanted to reach out to the community.

[26 : 02] And what did they have? So what they did, they start cleaning up the streets, start picking up the garbage and cleaning it up. And they'd go and volunteer to go to people's homes and mow their lawns.

And then when somebody would lost somebody because of, you know, a gang warfare or something, they would go and bring the compassion of Jesus. into that home.

Into that home where there was violence and turmoil. And pretty soon the people began to respond to the love that was shown in practical and spiritual ways.

They didn't bring in any big, you know, evangelist or something. They just used what little they had with the love of God. And the community began to transform. The people came to faith and the church began to fill up.

They just used what they had in the power of the Holy Spirit. You have a great pastor and a great church. You made a difference in this community. But I believe with all my heart that God has something far greater for you as individuals and as a fellowship.

[27 : 15] I don't say that because it's on my notes and I don't say it because I want to butter you up. Why should I bother butter you up? That's, I believe it's true.

God has far more for us than we can ever imagine. Because he says in his word that greater things will you do.

And he wasn't just talking to his disciples. Back then he was talking to you and me that believe today. Greater things will you do than I did. Because he went back to the Father. Father, what do we have that God wants to use to make this happen? Discovering and using what you have is not just for the church and others.

It's also for you. For you to be released and fulfilled in your calling. I don't know if you saw it on the Facebook. There was a video on Facebook the other day about this little girl that in their community, I think it was in America, she saw a bunch of homeless women.

[28 : 19] And so she got together with her great-grandmother and they bought a bunch of really nice material and they made these bags. Guys wouldn't want to wear them, but the ladies who maybe take them shopping or something.

Really colorful bags. And then she went and got shampoo and soap and other really nice things for hygiene for these ladies.

And then she would go and give these ladies that everybody passes by she would hand these bags to them and would just overwhelm these ladies that somebody, a little girl, would do that.

But it didn't just touch those ladies that received those bags, but the change in that little girl was amazing. Just the joy that she had and using what little she had to touch somebody's life.

And then on the video, her mom and great-grandmother also said that it had made a difference in them as well. When we give what we have, however little or insignificant, whether it be a little bit of time or a little bit of encouragement or sharing with somebody that had never heard about the Lord, that it not only blesses them and could change their eternity, but it touches us, it changes us.

[29 : 43] What do you have? As I was finishing, and I'm almost done, okay? Or is it not lunchtime yet, is it? I was finishing yesterday, the last, in my daily reading, is the last chapter of Romans, chapter 16.

And I'd not noticed it before, but, or it didn't click before, but after all the wonderful teaching of Paul in Romans 10, and it comes, and Paul had given, you know, greetings to different people, then it says, I, Tertius, who wrote this letter, greet you.

And I thought, he was Paul's secretary. He's not mentioned anyplace else in the whole Bible. But he used what he had to enable Paul to touch us even today.

And sometimes you may think, nobody's ever going to know anything about us but God does. And so we have the benefit of Romans and other things in the Bible because somebody who will never know gave what they had.

Let's pray. Let's pray. Okay. Amen.