

## Faith Series: Stone Rolling Faith

*(John 11:1-6 NKJV) “Now a certain man was sick, Lazarus of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha. {2} It was that Mary who anointed the Lord with fragrant oil and wiped His feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick. {3} Therefore the sisters sent to Him, saying, “Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick.” {4} When Jesus heard that, He said, “This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it.” {5} Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. {6} So, when He heard that he was sick, He stayed two more days in the place where He was.”*

Things can change suddenly. Situations can become uncomfortable, unmanageable and uncontrollable, beyond our power to do anything about them.

- Lazarus must have been thinking:  
“Jesus isn’t coming and I am dying.”
- Mary and Martha were getting desperate:  
“Jesus isn’t coming in time.”

Imagine the emotions they must have felt - disappointment, hurt, fear, and feelings of powerless!

Jesus was not surprised at their situation. Jesus did **not** wake up one morning, hear Lazarus was sick and say, “Oh No! How did this happen?” **The problem was no surprise to God.**

### Point 1.

**There are no surprises in heaven!  
God is never surprised at your problem.**

How does this principle affect your abilities and thinking as a leader in the church?

Sickness, disease, infirmity...are not a creation of God, but a consequence of the fall of Adam. They are not God’s will.

*(John 11:21 NKJV) “Then Martha said to Jesus, “Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died.”*

**It was impossible - there was no way out... But for God!  
Those involved were positioned to see a miracle!**

**Jesus is the miracle worker! He is:**

The Bread of Life	The Light of the World
The Good Shepherd	The Way the Truth the Life
The Door, the Gate	The True Vine
Resurrection and the Life	I AM THAT I AM

**He is **not** the great I WAS. He is the great I AM. He is never too late. He never lacks the power or the will! He never lacks the compassion... to make a difference.**

*(Psalms 46:1 NKJV) "God is our refuge and strength, A very present help in trouble."*

**There may not be divine authorship of your troubles...  
but divine purpose will use your troubles!**

**Sometimes the Lord will ask us to walk with Him to a place where our experience will teach us what nothing else can. Why?**

1. It is human nature to bring the Word of God down to the level of our experience, our thinking, and our faith. Jesus offers us the opportunity to come up to the level of His Word, to increase our faith through what we have seen.
2. Jesus knew He was about to demonstrate His power. As a result, everyone involved would go to a new level of trust, faith, understanding, and maturity.
3. In whatever manner trouble shows up, it has the potential for positive change in us - to teach us, to strengthen us and to transform us.

*(Romans 8:28 NKJV) "And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose."*

God's help may come only after we think all is lost. There may not be divine authorship of your troubles... but divine purpose will use your troubles! Faith has an expectation that goes beyond lost hope. Faith expects the unexpected: the supernatural intervention of God.

**Not only are health problems no surprise to God, but...**

### Point 2.

**God is bigger than your problems.  
(Why be downcast? Have faith in God!)**

How does this principle affect your abilities and thinking as a leader in the church?

**The possibility of healing seemed like a **dead issue**. Why?**

**Four days had gone by. Lazarus was in the grave. Healing was not in the realm of natural possibility.**

- It was a dead issue for Martha... There were no prospects for change or improvement.
- The tomb was sealed. It was the end of story... Or was it?

## **God was bigger than a sealed tomb. (He still is!)**

Have you experienced suffering in your life?

### **There is purpose when God allows suffering.**

Have you decided that some things are final in your life, some prayers not answered, some defeat inevitable... because God has not yet shown up?

### **There is purpose when God delays.**

When you are in God's hands, you can rest in the delay and abide in the expectation!

Will you take your faith up to the level of His Word?

*(Psalms 62:5 NKJV) "My soul, wait silently for God alone, For my expectation is from Him."*

You may not understand what you are going through. You probably will not like it. You can, however, know He loves you. His ways are higher than your ways. He is always ready to perform His Word over you. Take it to the bank!

*(Isaiah 55:9-11 NKJV) ""For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts. {10} For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, And do not return there, But water the earth, And make it bring forth and bud, That it may give seed to the sower And bread to the eater, {11} So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it."*

*(Jeremiah 1:12 NKJV) "Then the LORD said to me, "You have seen well, for I am ready to perform My word.""*

## **"All things work together..."**

God will take your circumstances, your trouble... and He will mix them into the clay of your life... and shape and reshape you so you can shine for His glory!

## **Delay, even apparent defeat play into the hands of THE POTTER!**

God wants to mold you into a city set on a hill that cannot be hidden. A faith-filled epistle for all the world to read!

## ***"I AM the Resurrection and the Life."***

*(John 11:21-25 NKJV) "Then Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died. {22} "But even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You." {23} Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." {24} Martha said to Him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day." {25} Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live."*

We have too many heavenly expectations and too few earthly ones. God often has to set us straight. One of His sayings, which we read often in the Gospels is, *"Oh you of little faith."*

Faith never has to say, *"Lord, if you had been here..."*  
Faith simply says, *"I believe." The rest is up to God!*

**"Faith simply believes, then behaves accordingly and lets God manage the outcomes."<sup>1</sup>**

**The natural condition of the situation stunk!**

*(John 11:35-38, 39 NKJV) "And He said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to Him, "Lord, come and see." {35} Jesus wept... {38} Then Jesus, again groaning in Himself, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay against it. {39} Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha, the sister of him who was dead, said to Him, "Lord, by this time there is a stench, for he has been dead four days.""*

**A dark cloud hung over Mary and Martha.**

Jesus said to Martha, *"Did I not say to you that if you would believe you would see the glory of God?" (John 11:40 NKJV)*

### Point 3.

#### Expect your miracle!

**God is never intimidated by the natural conditions of things. He is in total control. He has the ability to interrupt time and space with His grace and glory. God is bigger than even the stench of death.**

*(Psalms 62:5-6 NKJV) "My soul, wait silently for God alone, For my expectation is from Him. {6} He only is my rock and my salvation; He is my defense; I shall not be moved."*

<sup>1</sup> A saying I have heard from Dr. Charles Stanley on television and read from Pastor Joseph M. Stowell, Pastor of Moody Church.

**Perspective:**  
**Abraham's reaction to his faith test on the mountain.**  
**He behaved accordingly!**

Today... right now... How many of us have our expectations in God? How many of us really know that he alone is our Rock, our Salvation, and our Defense?

The Psalmist said, ***"I shall not be moved."***

Faith experiences the supernatural intervention of God. The same power that raised Christ from the dead will intervene for you, when you live and speak **Psalm 62:5 & 6!**

### **The stone represented the natural conclusion of the matter.**

The stone was a symbol of earthly expectation, limitation and even defeat, death and the grave. Often, we seal the circumstances of our lives with gravestones. A gravestone represents the end of hope and the futility of faith abandoned to the apparent result.

Looking at the gravestone, Martha said to Jesus,

- a. *"Don't bother, it stinks in there."*
- b. *"Don't bother, he has been dead four days."*
- c. *"Don't bother, it is finished."*

The only time the words "It is finished" have any authority is when you say them to remind yourself of Christ on the Cross.

#### **What was finished?**

- Weakened expectations were finished!
- Hopelessness was finished!
- Disillusionment

Defeat

Doom

Death

Hell

The grave...

ALL

FINISHED!

Jesus said, **TAKE AWAY THE STONE!**

When you obey and take away the stone:

- You give Christ access.
- Light floods into the darkness.
- A door of escape opens and a dead man walks through – alive again!

**When the natural conclusion stinks, wrap yourself in the sweet aroma of obedience. Take away the stone!**

**They took away the stone.**

*(Psalms 23:4-6 NKJV) “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. {5} You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; My cup runs over. {6} Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me All the days of my life; And I will dwell in the house of the LORD Forever.”*

There is only one voice that has the power and authority to bring the matter to its final conclusion – to declare its end! Jesus said, “walk!”

*(John 11:43-44 NKJV) “Now when He had said these things, He cried with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come forth!” {44} And he who had died came out bound hand and foot with graveclothes, and his face was wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, “Loose him, and let him go.””*

Dead men don't walk. God said walk and Lazarus walked!

1. He's not surprised by your problems.
2. He's bigger than your problems.
3. Expect your miracle (When you reach the end of your rope, let go and hang onto Him).

**Point 4.**  
**God will perform His Word!**

How does this principle affect your abilities and thinking as a leader in the church?

*(Psalms 34:19 NKJV) “Many are the afflictions of the righteous, But the LORD delivers him out of them all.”*

*(Isaiah 53:4-5 NKJV) “Surely He has borne our griefs And carried our sorrows; Yet we esteemed Him stricken, Smitten by God, and afflicted. {5} But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed.”*

*(1 Peter 2:24 NKJV) “who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness; by whose stripes you were healed.”*

*(Hebrews 13:8 NKJV) “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.”*

*(1 John 3:8 NKJV) “He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.”*

*(Mark 11:22-24 NKJV) “So Jesus answered and said to them, “Have faith in God. {23} “For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, ‘Be removed and be cast into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says. {24}Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them.*

**“...and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says...”**