

Free Grace Broadcaster

ISSUE 157

FAITH

*Now faith is the substance of
things hoped for, the evidence
of things not seen.*

Hebrews 11:1

Our Purpose

*“To humble the pride of man,
to exalt the grace of God in salvation,
and to promote real holiness in heart and life.”*

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FAITH

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FAITH

Charles Spurgeon (1834-1892)

THE Object of Faith; or, to what faith looks. I am told in the Word of God to believe. What am I to believe? I am bidden to look. To what am I to look? What is to be the object of my hope, belief, and confidence? The reply is simple. The object of faith to a sinner is *Christ Jesus*. How many make a mistake about this and think that they are to believe on *God the Father*! Now, belief in God is an after-result of faith in Jesus. We come to believe in the eternal love of the Father as the result of trusting the precious blood of the Son.

Many men say, "I would believe in Christ if I knew that I were elect." This is coming to the Father, and no man can come to the Father except by Christ. It is the Father's work to elect; you cannot come directly to Him. Therefore you cannot know your election until first you have believed on Christ the redeemer, and then through redemption you can approach to the Father and know your election.

Some, too, make the mistake of looking to the work of God the Holy Spirit. They look within to see if they have certain feelings, and if they find them, their faith is strong; but if their feelings have departed from them, then their faith is weak, so that they look to the work of the Spirit, which is not the object of a sinner's faith. Both the Father and the Spirit must be trusted in order to complete redemption; but for the particular mercy of justification and pardon, the blood of the Mediator is the only plea. Christians have to trust the Spirit after conversion; but the sinner's business, if he would be saved, is not with trusting the Spirit nor with looking to the Spirit, but looking to Christ Jesus and to Him alone. I know your salvation depends on the whole Trinity; but yet the first and immediate object of a sinner's justifying faith is neither God the Father, nor God the Holy Ghost, but God the Son, incarnate in human flesh, and offering atonement for sinners.

Hast thou the eye of faith? Then, soul, look thou to *Christ as God*. If thou wouldst be saved, believe Him to be God over all, blessed for

ever (Rom 9:5). Bow before Him, and accept Him as being “very God of very God”;¹ for if thou doest not, thou hast no part in Him.

When thou hast this believed, believe in Him as *man*. Believe the wondrous story of His incarnation. Rely upon the testimony of the evangelists, who declare that the Infinite was robed in the infant; that the Eternal was concealed within the mortal; that He who was King of heaven became a servant of servants and the Son of man. Believe and admire the mystery of His incarnation, for unless thou believe this, thou canst not be saved thereby.

Then specially, if thou wouldst be saved, let thy faith behold Christ in His *perfect righteousness*. See Him keeping the law without blemish, obeying His Father without error; preserving His integrity without flaw. All this thou art to consider as being done on thy behalf. Thou couldst not keep the law; He kept it for thee. Thou couldst not obey God perfectly. Lo! His obedience standeth in the stead of thy obedience—by it thou art saved.

But take care that thy faith mainly fixes itself upon Christ *as dying and as dead*. View the Lamb of God as dumb before His shearers. View Him as the man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. Go thou with Him to Gethsemane, and behold Him sweating drops of blood. Mark, thy faith has nothing to do with anything within thyself. The object of thy faith is nothing within thee, but a something without thee. Believe on Him, then, Who on yonder tree, with nailed hands and feet, pours out His life for sinners. There is the object of thy faith for justification—not in thyself or in anything which the Holy Spirit has done in thee or anything he has promised to do for thee; but thou art to look to Christ and to Christ Jesus alone.

Then let thy faith behold Christ *as rising from the dead*. See Him—He has borne the curse, and now He receives the justification. He dies to pay the debt; He rises that He may nail the handwriting of that discharged debt to the cross. See Him ascending up on high, and behold Him this day pleading before the Father’s throne. He is there pleading for His people, offering up today His authoritative petition for all that come to God by Him. And He, as God, as man, as living, as dying, as rising, and as reigning above—He, and He alone—is to be the object of thy faith for the pardon of sin.

¹ **very God of very God** – from the Nicene Creed, originally the theological confession resulting from the Council of Nicea in 325 A.D. This confession reflects the teaching that the Son is of one substance with the Father.

On nothing else must thou trust. He is to be the only prop and pillar of thy confidence; and all thou addest thereunto will be a wicked antichrist, a rebellion against the sovereignty of the Lord Jesus. But take care if your faith save you, that while you look to Christ in all these matters you view Him as being *a substitute*.

This doctrine of substitution is so essential to the whole plan of salvation that I must explain it here for the thousandth time. God is just; He must punish sin. God is merciful; he wills to pardon those who believe in Jesus. How is this to be done? How can He be just and exact the penalty—merciful, and accept the sinner? He doeth it thus: He taketh the sins of His people and actually lifteth them up from off His people to Christ, so that they stand as innocent as though they had never sinned, and Christ is looked upon by God as though He had been all the sinners in the world rolled into one. The sin of His people was taken from their persons and really and actually, not typically and metaphorically, but really and actually laid on Christ. Then God came forth with His fiery sword to meet the sinner and to punish him. He met Christ. Christ was not a sinner Himself; but the sins of His people were all imputed to Him. Justice, therefore, met Christ as though He had been the sinner, punished Christ for His people's sins, punished him as far as its rights could go, exacted from Him the last atom of the penalty, and left not a dreg in the cup.

And now, he who can see Christ as being his substitute, and puts his trust in Him, is thereby delivered from the curse of the law. Soul, when thou seest Christ obeying the law, thy faith is to say, "He obeys that for His people." When thou seest Him dying, thou art to count the purple drops, and say, "Thus He took my sins away." When thou seest Him rising from the dead, thou art to say, "He rises as the head and representative of all His elect"; and when thou seest Him sitting at the right hand of God, thou art to view Him there as the pledge that all for whom He died shall most surely sit at the Father's right hand. Learn to look on Christ as being in God's sight as though He were the sinner. "In him is no sin" (1Jn 3:5). He was "the just," but he suffered for the unjust (1Pe 3:18). He was the righteous, but he stood in the place of the unrighteous. And all that the unrighteous ought to have endured, Christ has endured once for all, and put away their sins for ever by the sacrifice of Himself.

Now, this is the great object of faith. I pray you do not make any mistake about this, for a mistake here will be dangerous, if not fatal. View Christ, by your faith, as being in His life and death and sufferings and resurrection, the substitute for all whom His Father gave

Him—the vicarious sacrifice for the sins of all those who will trust Him with their souls. Christ, then, thus set forth, is the object of justifying faith.

Now let me further remark that there are some who may read this, no doubt, who will say, “Oh, I should believe and I should be saved if...” If what? If Christ had died? “Oh no, sir, my doubt is nothing about Christ.” I thought so. Then what is the doubt? “Why, I should believe if I felt this, or if I had done that.” Just so; but I tell you, you could not believe in Jesus if you felt that, or if you had done that, for then you would believe in yourself, and not in Christ. That is the English of it. If you were so-and-so, or so-and-so, then you could have confidence. Confidence in what? Why, confidence in your feelings and confidence in your doings, and that is just the clear contrary of confidence in Christ.

Faith is not to infer from something good within me that I shall be saved, but to say in the teeth, and despite of the fact, that I am guilty in the sight of God, and deserve His wrath, yet I do nevertheless believe that the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth me from all sin (1Jo 1:7); and though my present consciousness condemns me, yet my faith overpowers my consciousness, and I do believe that “he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him” (Heb 7:25). To come to Christ as a saint is very easy work. To trust to a doctor to cure you when you believe you are getting better, is very easy; but to trust your physician when you feel as if the sentence of death were in your body, to bear up when the disease is rising into the very skin, and when the ulcer is gathering its venom, to believe even then in the efficacy of the medicine—that is faith.

And so, when sin gets the master of thee, when thou feelest that the Law condemns thee, then, even then, as a sinner, to trust Christ, this is the most daring feat in all the world; and the faith which shook down the walls of Jericho, the faith which raised the dead, the faith which stopped the mouths of lions, was not greater than that of a poor sinner, when in the teeth of all his sins he dares to trust the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ. Do this, soul; then thou art saved, whosoever thou mayest be. The object of faith, then, is Christ as the substitute for sinners. God in Christ, but not God apart from Christ, nor any work of the Spirit, but the work of Jesus only must be viewed by you as the foundation of your hope.

II. The Reason of Faith; or, why doth any man believe, and whence doth his faith come? “Faith cometh by hearing” (Rom 10:17). Granted, but do not all men hear, and do not many still remain unbeliev-

ing? How, then, doth any man come by his faith? To his own experience his faith comes as the result of a sense of need. He feels himself needing a Saviour; he finds Christ to be just such a Saviour as he wants; and therefore because he cannot help himself, he believes in Jesus. Having nothing of his own, he feels he must take Christ or else perish; and therefore he doth it because he cannot help doing it. He is fairly driven up into a corner; and there is but this one way of escape, namely, by the righteousness of another, for he feels he cannot escape by any good deeds or sufferings of his own. And he cometh to Christ and humbleth himself because he cannot do without Christ and must perish unless he lay hold of Him.

But to carry the question further back, where does that man get his sense of need? How is it that *he*, rather than others, feels his need of Christ! It is certain he has no more necessity for Christ than other men. How doth he come to know, then, that he is lost and ruined? How is it that he is driven by the sense of ruin to take hold on Christ the restorer? The reply is: this is *the gift of God*—this is the work of the Spirit. No man comes to Christ except the Spirit draw him, and the Spirit draws men to Christ by shutting them up under the Law to a conviction that if they do not come to Christ they must perish. Then by sheer stress of weather, they tack about and run into this heavenly port. Salvation by Christ is so disagreeable to our carnal mind, so inconsistent with our love of human merit, that we never would take Christ to be our all in all if the Spirit did not convince us that we were nothing at all and did not so compel us to lay hold on Christ.

But, then, the question goes further back still: how is it that the Spirit of God teaches some men their need and not other men? Why is it that some of you were driven by your sense of need to Christ, while others go on in their self-righteousness and perish? There is no answer to be given but this, “Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight” (Luk 10:21). It comes to divine sovereignty at the last. The Lord hath “hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes” (Luke 10:21). According to the way in which Christ put it, “My sheep hear my voice...ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you” (John 10:27, 26). Some divines would like to read that: “Ye are not my sheep, because ye do not believe.” As if believing made us the sheep of Christ; but the text puts it, “Ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep.”

“All that the Father giveth me shall come to me” (Joh 6:37). If they come not, it is a clear proof that they were never given; for those who

were given of old eternity to Christ, chosen of God the Father, and then redeemed by God the Son—these are led by the Spirit, through a sense of need, to come and lay hold on Christ.

No man yet ever did or ever will believe in Christ unless he feels his need of Him. No man ever did or will feel his need of Christ unless the Spirit makes him feel. And the Spirit will make no man feel his need of Jesus savingly unless it be written in that eternal book in which God hath surely engraved the names of His chosen. So, then, I think I am not to be misunderstood on this point, that the reason of faith, or why men believe, is God's electing love working through the Spirit by a sense of need, and so bringing them to Christ Jesus.

III. The Ground of the Sinner's Faith; or, on what ground he dares to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. My dear friends, I have already said that no man will believe in Jesus, unless he feels his need of Him. I have often said, and I repeat it again, that I do not come to Christ pleading that I feel my need of Him. My reason for believing in Christ is not that I feel my need of Him, but that I have a need of Him. The ground on which a man comes to Jesus is not as a sensible sinner, but as a sinner, and nothing but a sinner. He will not come unless he is awakened; but when he comes, he does not say, "Lord, I come to thee because I am an awakened sinner. Save me." But he says, "Lord, I am a sinner; save me." Not his awakening, but his sinnership is the method and plan upon which he dares to come.

You will, perhaps, perceive what I mean, for I cannot exactly explain myself just now, if I refer to the preaching of a great many divines. They say to a sinner, "Now, *if you feel* your need of Christ, *if you have repented* so much, *if you have been harrowed* by the law to such and such a degree, then you may come to Christ on the ground that you are an awakened sinner." I say that is false. No man may come to Christ on the ground of his being an awakened sinner; he must come to him *as a sinner*. When I come to Jesus, I know I cannot come unless I am awakened, but still I do not come *as* an awakened sinner. I do not stand at the foot of His cross to be washed because I have repented; I bring nothing when I come but sin. A sense of need is a good feeling, but when I stand at the foot of the cross, I do not believe in Christ because I have got good feelings, but I believe in Him whether I have good feelings or not.

*Just as I am without one plea,
But that Thy blood was shed for me,
And that Thou bidst me come to Thee,
O Lamb of God, I come.*

The gate of mercy is opened, and over the door it is written, “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save *sinners*” (1Ti 1:15).

Between that word “save” and the next word “sinners,” there is no adjective. It does not say, “penitent sinners,” “awakened sinners,” “sensible sinners,” “grieving sinners,” or, “alarmed sinners.” No, it only says “sinners,” and I know this, that when I come, I come to Christ today, for I feel it is as much a necessity of my life to come to the cross of Christ today as it was to come ten years ago. When I come to him I dare not come as a conscious sinner, or an awakened sinner, but I have to come still as a sinner with nothing in my hands. I saw an aged man lately in the vestry of a chapel in Yorkshire. I had been saying something to this effect. The old man had been a Christian for years, and he said, “I never saw it put exactly so, but still I know that is just the way I come. I say, ‘Lord,

*Nothing in my hands I bring,
Simply to thy cross I cling;
Naked, look to thee for dress;
Helpless, come to thee for grace;
Black—(“Black enough,” said the old man.)
I to the fountain fly,
Wash me, Saviour, or I die.”*

Faith is getting right out of yourself and getting into Christ. I know that many hundreds of poor souls have been troubled because the minister has said, “If you feel your need, you may come to Christ.” “But,” say they, “I do not feel my need enough; I am sure I do not.” Many a score [of] letters have I received from poor troubled consciences who have said, “I would venture to believe in Christ to save me if I had a tender conscience, if I had a soft heart, but oh, my heart is like a rock of ice which will not melt. I cannot feel as I would like to feel, and therefore I must not believe in Jesus.” Oh, down with it, down with it! It is a wicked antichrist; it is flat popery! It is not your soft heart that entitles you to believe. You are to believe in Christ to renew your hard heart and come to Him with nothing about you but sin.

The ground on which a sinner comes to Christ is that he is black, that he is dead, and not that he knows he is dead—that he is lost, and not that he knows he is lost. I know he will not come unless he does know it, but that is not the ground on which he comes. It is the secret reason why, but it is not the public positive ground which he understands. Here was I, year after year, afraid to come to Christ because I

thought I did not feel enough; and I used to read that hymn of Cowper's about being insensible as steel—

*If aught is felt 'tis only pain
To find I cannot feel.*

When I believed in Christ, I thought I did not feel at all. *Now* when I look back I find that I had been feeling all the while most acutely and intensely, and most of all because I thought I did not feel.

Generally the people who repent the most think they are impenitent, and people feel most their need when they think they do not feel at all, for we are no judges of our feelings, and hence the gospel invitation is not put upon the ground of anything of which we can be a judge. It is put on the ground of our being sinners, and nothing but sinners.

“Well,” says one, “but it says ‘Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest’ (Mat 11:28)—then we must be weary and heavy-laden.” Just so—so it is in that text; but then there is another—“Whosoever will, let him [come]” (Rev 22:17)—and that does not say anything about “weary and heavy-laden.”

Besides, while the invitation is given to the weary and heavy-laden, you will perceive that the promise is not made to them as weary and heavy-laden, but it is made to them as coming to Christ. They did not know that they were weary and heavy-laden when they came; they thought they were not. They really were; but part of their weariness was that they could not be as weary as they would like to be; and part of their load was that they did not feel their load enough. They came to Christ just as they were; and He saved them, not because there was any merit in their weariness or any efficacy in their being heavy-laden. But He saved them as sinners and nothing but sinners, and so they were washed in His blood and made clean. My dear reader, do let me put this truth home to thee. If thou wilt come to Christ as nothing but a sinner, He will not cast thee out.

Old Tobias Crisp says in one of his sermons upon this very point, “I dare to say it, but if thou dost come to Christ, whosoever thou mayest be, if He does not receive thee, then He is not true to His Word, for He says, ‘Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out’” (Joh 6:37). If thou comest, never mind qualification or preparation. He needeth no qualification of duties or of feelings either. Thou art to come just as thou art; and if thou art the biggest sinner out of hell, thou art as fit to come to Christ as if thou wert the most moral and most excellent of men. There is a bath; who is fit to be washed? A

man's blackness is no reason why he should not be washed but the clearer reason why he should be. When our city magistrates were giving relief to the poor, nobody said, "I am so poor; therefore I am not fit to have relief." Your poverty is your preparation; the black is the white here. Strange contradiction! The only thing you can bring to Christ is your sin and your wickedness. All he asks is that you will come empty. If you have anything of your own, you must leave all before you come. If there be anything good in you, you cannot trust Christ. You must come with nothing in your hand. Take Him as all in all; and that is the only ground upon which a poor soul can be saved—as a sinner, and nothing but a sinner.

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Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892): Influential Baptist minister in England. History's most widely read preacher apart from those found in Scripture. Today there is available more material written by Spurgeon than by any other Christian author, living or dead. Born at Kelvedon, Essex.



THOUGHTS CONCERNING FAITH

Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)

FAITH is a belief of a testimony. “When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day” (2Th 1:10). It is an assent to truth, as appears by the 11th of Hebrews; and it is saving faith that is there spoken of, as appears by the last verses of the foregoing chapter: “And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect” (Heb 11:39-40). “Saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel” (Mar 1:15). “But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name” (Joh 20:31). “But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth” (2Th 2:13).

It is a belief of truth from a sense of glory and excellency, or at least with such a sense. “Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed” (Joh 20:29). “She said within herself, If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole” (Mat 9:21). “Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost” (1Co 12:3).

It is a belief of the truth from a spiritual taste and relish of what is excellent and divine. “Yea, and why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right?” (Luk 12:57). Believers receive the truth in the love of it and speak the truth in love. “But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ” (Eph 4:15).

The object of faith is the gospel as well as Jesus Christ. “And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel” (Mar 1:15). “For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that

thou didst send me” (Joh 17:8). “But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom 10:16-17).

Faith includes a knowledge of God and Christ. “Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, according as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue” (2Pe 1:2-3). “And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent” (Joh 17:3).

A belief of promises is faith, or a great part of faith. “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Heb 11:1). “And they rose early in the morning, and went forth into the wilderness of Tekoa: and as they went forth, Jehoshaphat stood and said, Hear me, O Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem; Believe in the LORD your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper” (2Ch 20:20). A depending on promises is an act of faith. “For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith” (Gal 5:5).

Faith is a receiving of Christ. “But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name” (Joh 1:12).

It is receiving Christ into the heart. “But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thy heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:) Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation” (Rom 10:6-10).

A true faith includes more than a mere belief; it is accepting the gospel and includes all acceptation. “And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief” (1Ti 1:14-15). “For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have

not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him” (2Co 11:4).

It is something more than merely the assent of the understanding because it is called an obeying the gospel. “For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?” (Rom 10:16). “For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?” (1Pe 4:17).

It is obeying the doctrine from the heart. “But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin; but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness” (Rom 6:17-18).

This expression of obeying the gospel seems to denote the heart’s yielding to the gospel in what it proposes to us in its calls. It is something more than merely what may be called a believing the truth of the gospel. “Nevertheless, among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue” (Joh 12:42). And Philip asked the eunuch whether he believed with all his heart (Act 8:37). It is a fully believing, or a being fully persuaded. This passage evidences that it is so much at least.

There are different sorts of faith that are not true and saving, as is evident by what the Apostle James says, “Shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works” (Jam 2:18), where it is supposed that there may be a faith without works, which is not the right faith. When he says, “I will show thee my faith by my works,” nothing else can be meant than that I will show thee that my faith is right.

It is a trusting in Christ. “Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him” (Psa 2:12). “That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise” (Eph 1:12-13). “For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day” (2Ti 1:12).

Many places in the Old Testament speak of trusting in God as the condition of His favour and salvation. “Therefore the Lord heard this, and was wroth: so a fire was kindled against Jacob, and anger also came up against Israel; because they believed not in God, and trusted not in his salvation” (Psa 78:21-22). It implies submission. “And again, Esaias saith, There shall be a root of Jesse; and he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles; in him shall the Gentiles trust” (Rom 15:12). “For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe” (1Ti 4:10). “For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day” (2Ti 1:12). “Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?” (Mat 8:26). “Which when Jesus perceived, he said unto them, O ye of little faith, why reason ye among yourselves, because ye have brought no bread?” (Mat 16:8). “These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God. And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us” (1Jo 5:13-14). Believing in Christ in one verse is called confidence in the next.

It is a committing ourselves to Christ. “For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have *committed* unto him against that day” (2Ti 1:12). This is a scripture sense of the word *believe*, as is evident by John: “Jesus did not commit himself unto them” (Joh 2:24).¹

It is a gladly receiving the gospel. “Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls” (Act 2:41). It is approving the gospel. “But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him...But wisdom is justified of all her children” (Luk 7:30, 35). It is obeying the doctrine. “But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you” (Rom 6:17). It is what may be well understood by those expressions of coming to Christ, of looking to Him, of opening the door to let Him

¹ The word *commit* here in John 2:24 is *pistueo* in Greek, which has the primary meaning of “to have faith in” and is translated most commonly in Scripture as “believe.”

in. This is very evident by Scripture. It is a coming and taking the waters of life, eating and drinking Christ's flesh and blood, hearing Christ's voice and following Him. "But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me" (Joh 10:26-27). "Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (Joh 8:12). "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else" (Isa 45:22).

Faith consists in two things, *viz.*² in being persuaded of and in embracing the promises. "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth" (Heb 11:13). Charity "believeth all things, hopeth all things" (1Co 13:7). If that faith, hope, and charity, spoken of in this verse, be the same with those that are compared together in the last verse, then faith arises from a charitable disposition of heart, or from a principle of divine love. "But I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you" (Joh 5:42 with the context). "Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for the LORD your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul" (Deu 10:3). "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him" (1Jo 5:1).

It is a being reconciled unto God, revealing Himself by Christ in the gospel, or our minds being reconciled. "And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (2Co 5:18-21). "And you, that were sometimes alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled" (Col 1:21). It is the according³ of

² *viz.* – from Latin *videlicet*: that is to say; namely.

³ **according** – agreement.

the whole soul and not merely of the understanding. “Blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me” (Mat 11:6).

There is contained in the nature of faith a sense of our own unworthiness. “Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters’ table. Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith” (Mat 15:27-28). See [also the passages] concerning the centurion (Luk 7:6-9), the woman which was a sinner (Luk 7:37-38, especially verse 50), the prodigal son (Luk 15), [and] the penitent thief (Luk 23:41). Consult also Habakkuk: “Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith” (Hab 2:4; See also Proverbs 28:25; Psalms 40:4; 131).

It is a being drawn to Christ. None can come unto Christ, but whom the Father draws. The freeness of the covenant of grace is represented thus, that the condition of finding is only seeking; and the condition of receiving, asking; and the condition of having the door opened is knocking. From whence I infer that faith is a hearty applying unto God by Christ for salvation, or the heart’s seeking it of God through Him. “If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water” (Joh 4:10). It is calling on Christ; it is the opposite unto disallowing and rejecting Christ Jesus (Luk 23:42). “I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness. And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day” (Joh 12:46-48). “Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner” (1Pe 2:7).

Love either is what faith arises from or is included in faith. “He that believeth not is condemned already...And this is the condemnation, that...men loved darkness rather than light” (Joh 3:18-19). “And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness” (2Th 2:10, 12).

The being athirst for the waters of life is faith (Rev 21:6). It is a true cordial seeking of salvation by Christ. Believing in Christ is heartily joining ourselves to Christ and to His party, as is said of the followers of Theudas (Act 5:36). And we are justified freely through

faith, *i.e.*, we are saved by Christ only on joining ourselves to Him. It is a being persuaded to join ourselves to Him and to be of His party. “Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life” (Joh 8:12). To believe in Christ is to hearken to Him as a prophet, to yield ourselves subjects to Him as a king, and to depend upon Him as a priest. Desiring Christ is an act of faith in Christ, because He is called the desire of all nations (Hag 2:7), that is, He that is to be the desire of all nations, when all nations shall believe in Him and subject themselves to Him, according to the frequent promises and prophecies of God’s Word. Though there are other things included in the sense, yet this seems to be principally intended.

There belongs to faith a sense *of the ability and sufficiency of Christ to save*, and of His fitness for the work of salvation (Mat 9:2, 21, 28-29). “And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform” (Rom 4:21). *Of His fidelity*: “But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?” (Mat 14:30-31). *Of His readiness to save* (Matt. 15:22-28). “Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned...And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry” (1Ti 1:5, 12). *Of his ability*: “And behold, there came a leper and worshipped him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean” (Mat 8:2). “The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed” (Mat 8:8).

It is submitting to the righteousness of God. “For they, being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God” (Rom 10:3). It is what may be well represented by flying for refuge, by the type of flying to the city of refuge. “That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us” (Heb 6:18). It is a sense of the sufficiency and the reality of Christ’s righteousness, and of His power and grace to save. “He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment” (Joh 16:8). It is a receiving the truth with a love to it. It is re-

ceiving the love of the truth. “And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved...That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness” (2Th 2:10, 12). The heart must close with the new covenant by dependence upon it and by love and desire. “Although my house be not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he make it not to grow” (2Sa 23:5).

Upon the whole, the best and clearest and most perfect definition of justifying faith, and most according to the Scripture, that I can think of is this: *faith is the soul’s entirely embracing the revelation of Jesus Christ as our Saviour*. The word *embrace* is a metaphorical expression; but I think it much clearer than any proper expression whatsoever. It is called believing because believing is the first act of the soul in embracing a narration or revelation; and embracing, when conversant about a revelation or thing declared, is more properly called believing, than loving or choosing. If it were conversant about a person only, it would be more properly called *loving*. If it were only conversant about a gift, an inheritance, or reward, it would more properly be called receiving or accepting, etc.

The definition might have been expressed in these words: faith is the soul’s entirely adhering and acquiescing in the revelation of Jesus Christ as our Saviour—or thus: faith is the soul’s embracing that truth of God that reveals Jesus Christ as our Saviour—or thus: faith is the soul’s entirely acquiescing in and depending upon the truth of God revealing Christ as our Saviour.

It is the whole soul according and assenting to the truth and embracing of it. There is an entire yielding of the mind and heart to the revelation and a closing with it and adhering to it with the belief and with the inclination and affection. It is admitting and receiving it with entire credit and respect. The soul receives it as true, as worthy and excellent. It may be more perfectly described than defined by a short definition by reason of the penury of words. A great many words express it better than one or two. I here use the same metaphorical expressions; but it is because they are much clearer than any proper expressions that I know of.

It is the soul’s entirely acquiescing in this revelation from a sense of the sufficiency, dignity, glory, and excellency of the Author of the revelation.

Faith is the whole soul's active agreeing, according, and sympathizing with this truth, all opposition in judgment and inclination, so far as he believes, being taken away. It is called believing because fully believing this revelation is the first and principal exercise and manifestation of this accordance and agreement of soul.

The adhering to the truth and acquiescing in it with judgment is from a sense of the glory of the revealer and the sufficiency and excellency of the performer of the facts. The adhering to it and acquiescing in it with the inclination and affection is from the goodness and excellency of the thing revealed and of the performer. If a person be pursued by an enemy and commit himself to a king or a captain to defend him, it implies his quitting other endeavours and applying to him for defense and putting himself under him and hoping that he will defend him. If we consider it as a mere act of the mind, a transaction between spiritual beings considered as abstracted from any external action, then it is the mind's quitting all other endeavours and seeking and applying itself to the Saviour for salvation, fully choosing salvation by Him, and delivering itself to Him—or a being willing to be His, with a hope that He will save him. Therefore, for a person to commit himself to Christ as a Saviour, is quitting all other endeavours and hopes and heartily applying himself to Christ for salvation, fully choosing salvation by Him, and acquiescing in His way of salvation, and a hearty consent of the soul to be His entirely, hoping in His sufficiency and willingness to save.

From: *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*

Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758): American Congregational preacher. Regarded as America's greatest evangelical theologian and well-known for his preaching in the Great Awakening along with George Whitefield. Author of *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God*, *A Treatise Concerning Religious Affections*, and numerous other titles. Born in East Windsor, Connecticut Colony.



THE FIGHT OF FAITH

Arthur W. Pink (1886-1952)

THERE are some who teach that those Christians who engage in spiritual fighting are living below their privileges. They insist that God is willing to do all our fighting for us. Their pet slogan is, "Let go, and let God." They say that the Christian should turn the battle over to Christ. There is a half-truth in this, yet only a half-truth, and carried to extremes it becomes error. The half-truth is that the child of God has no inherent strength of his own. Says Christ to His disciples, "Without me ye can do nothing" (Joh 15:5). Yet this does not mean that we are to be merely passive or that the ideal state in this life is simply to be galvanized automations. There is also a positive, an active, aggressive side to the Christian life, which calls for the putting forth of our utmost endeavours, the use of every faculty—a personal and intelligent cooperation with Christ.

There is not a little of what is known as "the victorious life" teaching which is virtually a denial of the Christian's responsibility. It is lopsided. While emphasizing one aspect of truth, it sadly ignores other aspects equally necessary and important to be kept before us. God's Word declares that "every man shall bear his own burden" (Gal 6:5), which means that he must discharge his personal obligation. Saints are bidden to "cleanse...[themselves] from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit" (2Co 7:1), and to "keep...[themselves] unspotted from the world" (Jam 1:27). We are exhorted to "overcome evil with good" (Rom 12:21). The apostle Paul declared, "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection" (1Co 9:27). Thus, to deny that a Christian is called upon to engage in a ceaseless warfare with the flesh, the world, and the devil is to fly in the face of many plain Scriptures.

There is a very real twofoldness to the Christian life, and every aspect of divine truth is balanced by its counterpart. Practical godliness is a mysterious paradox, which is incomprehensible to the natural man. The Christian is strongest when he is weakest, wealthiest when he is poorest, happiest when most wretched. Though unknown (1Jo 3:1), yet he is well known (Gal 4:9). Though dying daily (1Co 15:31), yea, dead, yet, behold, he lives (Col 3:3-4). Though having nothing, yet he possesses all things (2Co 6:10). Though persecuted, he is not forsaken; cast down, he is not destroyed (2Co 4:9). He is called upon to "rejoice with trembling" (Psa 2:11), and is assured, "Blessed are ye

that weep now” (Luk 6:21). Though the Lord maketh him to lie down in green pastures and leadeth him beside still waters (Psa 23:2), he is yet in the wilderness, and “in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is” (Psa 63:1). Though followers of the Prince of peace, Christians are to “endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ” (2Ti 2:3); and though “more than conquerors” (Rom 8:37), they are often defeated.

“Fight the good fight of faith” (1Ti 6:12). We are called upon to engage in a ceaseless warfare. The Christian life is to be lived out on the battlefield. We may not like it. We may wish that it were otherwise, but so has God ordained. And our worst foe, our most dangerous enemy, is *self*, that “old man” which ever wants his way, which rebels against the “yoke” of Christ, which hates the “cross”—that “old man” which opposes every desire of the “new man,” which dislikes God’s Word and ever wants to substitute man’s word. But self has to be denied (Mat 16:24), his affections and lusts crucified (Gal 5:24). Yet that is by no means an easy task. Oh, what a conflict is ever going on within the true Christian. True, there are times when the “old man” pretends to be asleep or dead, but soon he revives and is more vigorous than ever in opposing that “new man.” Then it is that the real Christian seriously asks, “If it be so [that I truly am a child of God], why am I thus?” (Gen 25:22)...

“Fight the good fight of faith” (1Ti 6:12). Our circumstances are the battleground. The “flesh” is never long satisfied with the circumstances in which God places us, but always wants to change them, or get into another set than we are now in. Thus it was with Israel of old. The circumstances into which God had brought the children of Israel were the wilderness, and they murmured, and wished they were back in Egypt. And that is written as a warning for us! The tendency of circumstances is to bind our hearts to the earth—when prosperous, to make us satisfied with things—when adverse, to make us repine over or covet the things which we do not have. Nothing but the exercise of real faith can lift our hearts above circumstances, for faith looks away from all things seen, so that the heart delights itself and finds its peace and joy in the Lord (Psa 37:4). This is never easy to any of us. It is always a fight, and only divine grace (diligently sought) can give us the victory. Oftentimes we fail. When we do, this must be confessed to God (1Jo 1:9), and a fresh start made.

Nothing but faith can enable us to rise above circumstances. It did so in the case of the two apostles, who, with feet fast in the stocks, with backs bleeding and smarting, sang praises to God in Philippi’s dungeon. That was faith victorious over most unpleasant circum-

stances. We can almost imagine each reader saying, “Alas, my faith is so weak.” Ah, ponder again this word: “Fight the good fight of faith”—note the repetition! It is not easy for faith to rise above circumstances. No, it is not. It is difficult, at times, extremely difficult; so the writer has found it. But remember, a “fight” is not finished in a moment, by one blow. Oftentimes the victor receives many wounds and is sorely pounded before he finally knocks out his enemy. So we have found it, and still find it. The great enemy, the “flesh” (*self*), gives the “new man” many a painful blow, often floors him; but, by grace, we keep on fighting. Sometimes the “new man” gets the victory, sometimes the “old man” does. “For a just man falleth seven times and riseth up again” (Pro 24:16).

Yes, dear reader, every real Christian has a fight on his hands. Self is the chief enemy which has to be conquered—our circumstances the battleground where the combat has to be waged. And each of us would very much like to change the battleground. There are unpleasant things which, at times, sorely try each of us until we are tempted to cry with the afflicted psalmist, “Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away” (Psa 55:6). Yes, sad to say, the writer has been guilty of the same thing. But, when he is in his right mind (spiritually), he is thankful for these very “circumstances.” Why? Because they afford an opportunity for faith to act and rise above them, and for us to find our peace, our joy, our satisfaction, not in pleasant surroundings, not in congenial friends, nor even in sweet fellowship with brethren and sisters in Christ—but in God! He can satisfy the soul. He never fails those who truly trust Him. But it is a fight to do so. Yes, a real, long, hard fight. Yet, if we cry to God for help, for strength, for determination, He does not fail us, but makes us “more than conquerors” (Rom 8:37).

There is that in each of us which wants to play the coward, run away from the battlefield, our circumstances. This is what Abraham did (Gen 12:10), but he gained nothing by it. This is what Elijah did (1Ki 19:3), and the Lord rebuked him for it. And these instances are recorded “for our learning” (Rom 15:4), as warnings for us to take to heart. They tell us that we must steadfastly resist this evil inclination, and call to mind that exhortation, “Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you [act] like men, be strong” (1Co 16:13).

“Fight the good fight of faith.” Nor does the Lord call upon us to do something from which He was exempted. Oh, what a “fight” the Captain of our salvation endured! See Him yonder in the wilderness: “forty days, tempted of Satan; and was with the wild beasts” (Mar

1:13), and all that time without food (Mat 4:2). How fiercely the devil assaulted Him, renewing his attack again and yet again. And the Saviour met and conquered him on the ground of faith, using only the Word of God. See Him again in Gethsemane. There the fight was yet fiercer, and so intense were His agonies that He sweat great drops of blood. Nor was there any comfort from His disciples: they could not watch with Him one hour. Yet He triumphed, and that on the ground of faith “when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared” (Heb 5:7).

Those two instances are recorded for our instruction, and, as ever, their order is beautifully significant. They teach us how we are to “fight the good fight of faith.” Christ Himself has left us an example! And what do we learn from these solemn and sacred incidents? This—the only weapon we are to use is the sword of the Spirit, and victory is only to be obtained on our knees “with strong crying and tears.” The Lord graciously enables us so to act. Oh, that each of us may more earnestly seek grace to fight the good fight of faith! We shall have happy and peaceful fellowship together in heaven; but before we get there, the “fight” has to be fought and won or we shall never get there at all (2Ti 4:6-8).

Tract available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

A.W. Pink (1886-1952): Pastor, itinerant Bible teacher, voluminous author of *Studies in the Scriptures* and many books including his well-known *The Sovereignty of God*. Born in Great Britain, immigrated to the U.S., and later returned to his homeland in 1934.



THE ACTIVITY OF FAITH, OR ABRAHAM'S IMITATORS

Thomas Hooker (1586-1647)

“And the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised”—Romans 4:12.

I PROCEED now to show who those are that may, and do indeed, receive benefit as Abraham did. The text saith, They that “walk in the steps of that faith of...Abraham.” That man that not only enjoyeth the privileges of the church, but yieldeth the obedience of faith according to the Word of God revealed and [that] walketh in obedience—that man alone shall be blest with faithful Abraham.

Two points may be here raised, but I shall hardly handle them both. Therefore I will pass over the first only with a touch, and that lieth closely couched in the text.

I. Faith causeth fruitfulness in the hearts and lives of those in whom it is. Mark what I say. A faithful man is a fruitful man. Faith enableth a man to be doing. Ask the question: by what power was it whereby Abraham was enabled to yield obedience to the Lord? The text answereth you: They that walk in the footsteps not of Abraham, but “in the steps of that faith of...Abraham.” A man would have thought the text should have run thus: They that walk in the footsteps of Abraham. That is true, too, but the apostle had another end. Therefore he saith, They that walk in the footsteps of the faith of Abraham, implying that it was the grace of faith that God bestowed on Abraham that quickened and enabled him to perform every duty that God required of him and called him to the performance of. So that I say, the question being, whence came it that Abraham was so fruitful a Christian? What enabled him to do and to suffer what he did? Surely it was faith that was the cause that produced such effects [and] that helped him to perform such actions. The point then, you see, is evident: faith it is that causeth fruit.

Hence it is, that of almost all the actions that a Christian hath to do, faith is still said to be the worker. If a man pray as he should, it is “the prayer of faith” (Jam 5:15). If a man obey as he should, it is the “obedience of faith” (Rom 16:26). If a man war in the Church mili-

tant, it is the "fight of faith" (1Ti 6:12). If a man live as a Christian and holy man, he liveth by faith (Gal 2:20). Nay, shall I say yet more, if he died as he ought, he dieth by faith. "These all died in faith" (Heb 11:13). What is that? The power of faith directed and ordered them in the cause of their death, furnished them with grounds and principles of assurance of the love of God, [and] made them carry themselves patiently in death. I can say no more, but with the apostle, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith" (2Co 13:5). Why doth not the apostle say, Examine whether faith be in you, but "whether ye be in the faith"? His meaning is, that as a man is said to be in drink, or to be in love, or to be in passion, that is, under the command of drink, or love, or passion, so the whole man must be under the command of faith (as you shall see more afterward). If he prays, faith must indite¹ his prayer; if he obeys, faith must work. If he lives, it is faith that must quicken him; and if he dies, it is faith that must order him in death. And wheresoever faith is, it will do wonders in the soul of that man where it is. It cannot be idle. It will have footsteps. It sets the whole man on work; it moveth feet and hands and eyes and all parts of the body. Mark how the apostle disputeth: "We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak" (2Co 4:13). The faith of the apostle, which he had in his heart, set his tongue agoing. If a man have faith within, it will break forth at his mouth. This shall suffice for the proof of the point. I thought to have pressed it further, but if I should, I see the time would prevent me.

The use, therefore, in a word, is this: if this be so, then it falleth foul, and is a heavy bill of indictment against many that live in the bosom of the Church. Go thy ways home, and read but this text, and consider seriously but this one thing in it: That whosoever is the son of Abraham, hath faith, and whosoever hath faith is a walker, is a marker. By the footsteps of faith you may see where faith hath been. Will not this, then, I say, fall marvelously heavy upon many souls that live in the bosom of the church, who are confident, and put it out of all question, that they are true believers, and make no doubt but what they have faith? But look to it: *wheresoever faith is, it is fruitful. If thou art fruitless, say what thou wilt, thou hast no faith at all.* Alas, these idle drones, these idle Christians! The Church is too full of them. Men are continually hearing, and yet remain fruitless and unprofitable; whereas if there were more faith in the world, we should have

¹ **indite** - compose.

more work done in the world. Faith would set feet and hands and eyes and all on work. Men go under the name of professors, but alas, they are but pictures! They stir not a whit. Mark, where you found them in the beginning of the year, there you shall find them in the end of the year—as profane, as worldly, as loose in their conversations, as formal in duty as ever. And is this faith? Oh, faith would work other matters and provoke a soul to other passages than these!

But you will say: may not a man have faith and not that fruit you speak of? May not a man have a good heart to godward, although he cannot find that ability in matter of fruitfulness?

My brethren, be not deceived. Such an opinion is a mere delusion of Satan. Wherever faith is, it bringeth Christ into the soul. Mark that: whosoever believeth, Christ dwelleth in his heart by faith. “And if Christ be in you,” saith the apostle, “the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness” (Rom 8:10). If Christ be in you, that is, whosoever believeth in the Lord Jesus, Christ dwells in such a man by faith. Now if Christ be in the soul, the body cannot be dead; but a man is alive and quick and active to holy duties, ready and willing and cheerful in the performance of whatsoever God requireth. Christ is not a dead Savior, nor the Spirit a dead Spirit; the second Adam is made a quickening spirit (1Co 15:45). And wherever the Spirit is, He works effects suitable to Himself. The Spirit is a spirit of purity, a spirit of zeal, and where He is, He maketh pure and zealous. When a man will say he hath faith, and in the mean time can be content to be idle and unfruitful in the work of the Lord—can be content to be a dead Christian—let him know that his case is marvelously fearful. For if faith was in him indeed it would appear. Ye cannot keep your good hearts to yourselves. Wherever fire is it will burn, and wherever faith is it cannot be kept secret. The heart will be enlarged, the soul quickened, and there will be a change in the whole life and conversation if ever faith takes place in a man. I will say no more of this but proceed to the second point arising out of the affirmative part.

You will say: what fruit is it then? Or how shall a man know what is the true fruit of faith indeed whereby he may discern his own estate? I answer, the text will tell you: He that walketh in the footsteps of that faith of Abraham. By footsteps are meant the works, the actions, the holy endeavors of Abraham; and where those footsteps are, there is the faith of Abraham. So that the point of instruction hence is thus much (which indeed is the main drift of the apostle).

II. Every faithful man may, yea, doth imitate the actions of faithful Abraham. Mark what I say. I say again, this is to be the son of Abraham, not because we are begotten of him by natural generation, for so the Jews are the sons of Abraham; but Abraham is our father because he is the pattern for the proceeding of our faith. "Thy father was an Amorite," saith the Scripture (Eze 16:3): that is, thou followest the steps of the Amorites in thy conversation. So is Abraham called the father of the faithful, because he is the copy of their course (Rom 4:11), whom they must follow in those services that God calleth for. So the point is clear: every faithful man may, yea doth, and must imitate the actions of faithful Abraham. It is Christ's own plea, and He presseth it as an undeniable truth upon the hearts of the scribes and Pharisees, who bragged very highly of their privileges and prerogatives and said, "Abraham is our father" (Joh 8:39). No, saith Christ, "if ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham" (Joh 8:39). To be like Abraham in constitution, to be one of his blood, is not that which makes a man a son of Abraham, but to be like him in holiness of affection, to have a heart framed and a life disposed answerably to his. The apostle in like manner presseth this point when he would provoke the Hebrews, to whom he wrote, to follow the examples of the saints: "Whose faith," says he, "follow, considering the end of their conversation" (Heb 13:7). So the apostle Peter presseth the example of Sarah upon all good women: "Whose daughters ye are," saith he, "as long as ye do well" (1Pe 3:6).

For the opening of the point, and that ye may more clearly understand it, a question here would be resolved. *What were the footsteps of the faith of Abraham?* Which way went he? This is a question, I say, worthy the scanning; and therefore (leaving the further confirmation of the point, as already evident enough) I will come to it that you may know what to settle your hearts upon.

I answer, therefore: there are *six footsteps of the faith of Abraham*, which are the main things wherein every faithful man must do as Abraham did in the work of faith—I mean in his ordinary course. For if there be anything extraordinary, no man is bound to imitate him therein. But in the works of faith, I say, which belongeth to all men, every man must imitate Abraham in these six steps; and then he is in the next door to happiness, the very next neighbor, as I say, to heaven.

1. The first advance which Abraham made in the ways of grace and happiness, you shall observe to be *a yielding to the call of God*. Mark what God said to Abraham: "Get thee out of thy country, and from

thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee...So Abraham departed," saith the text, "as the LORD had spoken unto him" (Gen 12:1, 4). Even when he was an idolater, he is content to lay aside all and let the command of God bear the sway. Neither friends, nor kindred, nor gods can keep him back; but he presently stoopeth to the call of God. So it is, my brethren, with every faithful man. This is his first step: he is content to be under the rule and power of God's command. Let the Lord call for him, require any service of him, his soul presently yieldeth and is content to be framed and fashioned to God's call and returneth an obedient answer thereto. He is content to come out of his sins and out of himself, and to receive the impressions of the Spirit. This is that which God requireth, not only of Abraham, but of all believers: Whosoever will be my disciple, saith Christ, must forsake father and mother and children and houses and lands (Mat 19:29); yea, and he must "deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me" (Mat 16:24). This is the *first step in Christianity*, to lay down our own honors, to trample upon our own respects, to submit our necks to the block, as it were, and whatever God commands, to be content that His good pleasure should take place with us.

2. Then Abraham, as doth every faithful soul, set forward, in the next step in this wise. He showed that whenever faith cometh powerfully into the heart, the soul is not content barely to yield to the command of God, but *it breatheth after His mercy, longeth for His grace, prizeth Christ and salvation above all things in the world, is satisfied and contented with nothing but with the Lord Christ*. And although it partake of many things below, and enjoy abundance of outward comforts, yet it is not quieted till it rest and pitch itself upon the Lord, and find and feel that evidence and assurance of His love, which He hath promised unto and will bestow on those who love Him. As for all things here below, he hath but a slight and mean and base esteem of them. This you shall see apparent in Abraham. "Fear not, Abram," saith God, "I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward" (Gen 15:1). What could a man desire more? One would think that the Lord makes a promise here large enough to Abraham. "I will be thy buckler, and exceeding great reward." Is not Abraham contented with this? No, mark how he pleadeth with God: "Lord GOD," saith he, "what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless?" (Gen 15:2). His eye is upon the promise that God had made to him of a son, of whom the Savior of the world should come. "O Lord, what wilt Thou give me?" as if he had said, what wilt Thou do for me? Alas, nothing will do my

soul good unless I have a son, and in him a Savior! What will become of me so long as I go childless, and so Saviorless, as I may so speak? You see how Abraham's mouth was out of taste with all other things, how he could relish nothing, enjoy nothing in comparison of the promise, though he had otherwise what he would, or could desire. Thus must it be with every faithful man. That soul never had, nor ever shall have Christ, that doth not prize Him above all things in the world.

3. The next step of Abraham's faith was this: *he casteth himself and flingeth his soul, as I may say, upon the all-sufficient power and mercy of God for the attainment of what he desireth.* He rolleth and tumbleth himself, as it were, upon the all-sufficiency of God. This you shall find in Romans 4:18, where the apostle speaks of Abraham, "who against hope believed in hope." That is, when there was no hope in the world, yet he believed in God, even above hope and so made it possible. It was an object of his hope, that it might be in regard of God, howsoever there was no possibility in regard of man. So the text saith, "He considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sara's womb...but was strong in faith" (Rom 4:19, 20). He cast himself wholly upon the precious promise and mercy of God.

4. But he took another step in true justifying faith. He proved to us the believer is informed touching the excellency of the Lord Jesus and that fullness that is to be had in Him, though he cannot find the sweetness of His mercy, though he cannot or dare not apprehend and apply it to himself, though he find nothing in himself, yet *he is still resolved to rest upon the Lord and to stay himself on the God of his salvation and to wait for His mercy till he find Him gracious to his poor soul.* Excellent and famous is the example of the woman of Canaan when Christ, as it were, beat her off and took up arms against her [and] was not pleased to reveal Himself graciously to her for the present. "I am not sent," saith He, "but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel," and, "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs" (Mat 15:24, 26). Mark how she replied: "Truth, Lord, [I confess all that]: yet [notwithstanding] the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table" (Mat 15:27). Oh, the excellency and strength and work of her faith! She comes to Christ for mercy. He repelleth her, reproacheth her, [and] tells her she is a dog. She confesseth her baseness, is not discouraged for all that, but still resteth upon the goodness and mercy of Christ, and is mightily resolved to have mercy whatsoever befalleth her. Truth, Lord, I confess I am as

bad as Thou canst term me; yet I confess, too, that there is no comfort but from Thee, and though I am a dog, yet I would have crumbs. Still she laboreth to catch after mercy, and to lean and to bear herself upon the favor of Christ for the bestowing thereof upon her. So it must be with every faithful Christian in this particular. He must roll himself upon the power and faithfulness and truth of God, and wait for His mercy (I will join them both together for brevity's sake, though the latter be a fourth step and degree of faith). I say he must not only depend upon God, but he must wait upon the Holy One of Israel.

5. But a further step of Abraham's faith appeared in this: *he counted nothing too dear for the Lord*. He was content to break through all impediments, to pass through all difficulties. Whatsoever God would have, he had of Him. This is the next step that Abraham went; and this you shall find when God put him upon trial. The text saith there "that God did tempt Abraham" (Gen 22:1), did try what He would do for him; and He bade him, "Go take thy son, thine only son, Isaac, whom thou lovest, and slay him." And straight Abraham went and laid his son upon an altar, and took a knife to cut the throat of his son—so that Abraham did not spare his son Isaac. He did not spare for any cost. He did not dodge with God in this case. If God would have anything, He should have it, whatsoever it were, though it were his own life; for no question Isaac was dearer to him than his own life. And this was not his case alone, but the faithful people of God have ever walked the same course. The apostle Paul was of the same spirit. I know not, saith he, "the things that shall befall me there: save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God." Oh, blest spirit! Here is the work of faith! Alas, when we come to part with anything for the cause of God, how hardly comes it from us! "But I (saith he) pass not; no, nor is my life dear unto me." Here, I say, is the work of faith indeed, when a man is content to do anything for God, and to say, if imprisonment, loss of estate, liberty, life, come, I pass not, it moveth me nothing, so I may finish my course with comfort. Hence it was that the saints of God in those primitive times "took joyfully the spoiling of [their] goods" (Heb 10:34). Methinks I see the saints there reaching after Christ with the arms of faith, and how, when anything lay in their way, they were content to lose all, to part with all, to have Christ. Therefore saith Saint Paul, "I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at

Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus" (Act 21:13). Mark, rather than he would leave his Savior, he would leave his life, and though men would have hindered him, yet was resolved to have Christ, howsoever though he lost his life for Him. Oh, let me have my Savior, and take my life!

6. The last step of all is this: when the soul is thus resolved not to dodge with God, but to part with anything for Him, then in the last place there followeth *a readiness of heart to address man's self to the performance of whatsoever duty God requireth at his hands*. I say this is the last step, when, without consulting with flesh and blood, without hammering upon it, as it were, without awkwardness of heart, there followeth a readiness to obey God—the soul is at hand. When Abraham was called, "Behold," saith he, "here I am" (Gen 22:1). And so Samuel: "Speak, LORD; for thy servant heareth" (1Sa 3:9). And so Ananias: "Behold, I am here, Lord" (Act 9:10). The faithful soul is not to seek, as an evil servant that is gone a-roving after his companions, that is out of the way when his master would use him, but is like a trusty servant that waiteth upon his master and is ever at hand to do His pleasure. So you shall see it was with Abraham, when the Lord commanded him to go out of his country, he "obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went" (Heb 11:8). He went cheerfully and readily, though he knew not whither; as [the one] who would say, if the Lord calls, I will not question, if He command I will perform, whatever it be. So it must be with every faithful soul. We must blind the eye of carnal reason, resolve to obey, though heaven and earth seem to meet together in a contradiction, care not what man or what devil saith in this case, but what God will have done, do it. This is the courage and obedience of faith. See how Saint Paul, in the place before named, flung his ancient friends from him, when they came to cross him in the work of his ministry. They all came about him, and because they thought they should see his face no more, they besought him not to go up to Jerusalem. Then Paul answered, "What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart?" (Act 21:13), as [one] who should say, "It is a grief and a vexation to my soul, that ye would burden me, that I can not go with readiness to perform the service that God requireth at my hands." The like Christian courage was in Luther when his friends dissuaded him to go to Worms: "If all the tiles in Worms were so many devils (saith he) yet would I go thither in the name of my Lord Jesus." This is the last step.

Now gather up a little what I have delivered. He that is resolved to stoop to the call of God; to prize the promises and breathe after them;

to rest upon the Lord and to wait His time for bestowing mercy upon him; to break through all impediments and difficulties and to count nothing too dear for God; to be content to perform ready and cheerful obedience; he that walketh thus and treadeth in these steps, peace be upon him. Heaven is hard by; he is as sure of salvation as the angels are. It is as certain as the Lord liveth that he shall be saved with faithful Abraham; for he walketh in the steps of Abraham, and therefore he is sure to be where he is. The case, you see, is clear, and the point evident, that every faithful man may, and must, imitate faithful Abraham.

It may be here imagined, that we draw men up to too high a pitch; and certainly, if this be the sense of the words and the meaning of the Holy Ghost in this place, what will become of many that live in the bosom of the church? Will you therefore see the point confirmed by reason? The ground of this doctrine stands thus: every faithful man hath the same faith, for nature and for work, that Abraham had; therefore, look what nature his faith was of and what power it had; of the same nature and power every true believer's faith is. Briefly thus: the promises of God are the ground upon which all true faith resteth. The Spirit of God it is that worketh this faith in all believers. The power of the Spirit is that which putteth forth itself in the hearts and lives of all the faithful. Gather these together: if all true believers have the same promises for the ground of their faith, have one and the same spirit to work it, [and] have one and the same power to draw out the abilities of faith, then certainly they cannot but have the very self-same actions, having the very self-same ground of their actions.

Every particular believer (as the apostle Peter saith) hath "obtained like precious faith" (2Pe 1:1). Mark, that there is a great deal of copper faith in the world—much counterfeit believing; but the saints do all partake of the "like precious faith." As when a man hath but a sixpence in silver, or a crown in gold, those small pieces, for the nature, are as good as the greatest of the same metal, so it is with the faith of God's elect. And look, as it is in grafting, if there be many scions² of the same kind grafted into one stock, they all partake alike of the virtue of the stock, just so it is here. The Lord Jesus Christ is the stock, as it were, into which all the faithful are grafted by the Spirit of God and faith. Therefore, whatsoever fruit one beareth, another beareth also. Howsoever, there may be degrees of works, yet

² **scions** – detached shoots or twigs containing buds from a woody plant which are grafted onto the stock.

they are of the same nature. As a little apple is the same in taste with a great one of the same tree, even so every faithful man hath the same holiness of heart and life, because he hath the same principle of holiness. The fruit indeed that one Christian bringeth may be but poor and small in comparison with others, yet it is the same in kind. The course of his life is not with so much power and fullness of grace, it may be, as another's; yet there is the same true grace and the same practice, in the kind of it, for truth, however in degree it differ.

Let us now come to see what benefit we may make to ourselves of this point thus proved and confirmed; and, certainly, the use of this doctrine is of great consequence. **In the first place, it is a just ground of examination.** For if it be true (as cannot be denied, the reasons being so strong and arguments so plain) that every son of Abraham followeth the steps of Abraham, then here you may clearly perceive who it is that hath saving faith indeed [and] who they be that are true saints and the sons of Abraham. By the light of this truth, by the rule of this doctrine, if you would square your courses and look into your conversations, you cannot but discern whether you have faith or not. That man whose faith showeth itself and putteth itself forth in its several conditions, agreeably to the faith of Abraham, that man that followeth the footsteps of the faith of Abraham, let him be esteemed a faithful man, let him be reckoned for a true believer.

You that are gentlemen and tradesmen, I appeal to your souls whether the Lord and His cause is not the loser this way? Doth not prayer pay for it? Doth not the Word pay for it? Are not the ordinances always losers when anything of your own cometh in competition? Is it not evident, then, that you are not under the command of the Word? How do you tremble at the wrath and threatenings of a mortal man? And yet, when you hear the Lord thunder judgements out of His Word, who is humbled? When He calls for fasting and weeping and mourning, who regards it? Abraham, my brethren, did not thus. These were none of his steps. No, no. He went a hundred miles off this course. The Lord no sooner said to him, "Forsake thy country and thy kindred and thy father's house," but he forsook all. Neither friend nor father prevailed to detain him from obedience, but he stooped willingly to God's command.

There is a sort that comes short of being the sons of Abraham, and they are the close-hearted hypocrites. These are a generation that are of a more refined kind than the last; but howsoever they carry the matter very covertly, yea, and are exceeding cunning, yet the truth will make them known. Many a hypocrite may come thus far, to be content to

part with anything, and outwardly to suffer for the cause of God, to part with diverse pleasures and lusts, and to perform many holy services. But here is the difference between Abraham and these men. Abraham forsook his goods and all; but your close-hearted hypocrites have always some god or other that they do homage to—their ease, or their wealth, or some secret lust, something or other they have set up as an idol within them—and so long as they may have and enjoy that, they will part with anything else. But thou must know that if thou be one of Abraham's children, thou must come away from thy gods—the god of pride, of self-love, of vainglory—and leave worshipping of these, and be content to be alone by God and His truth. This shall suffice for the first use. I cannot proceed further in the pressing thereof, because I would shut up all with the time.

The second use is a word of instruction, and it shall be but a word or two; that if all the saints of God must walk in the same way of life and salvation that Abraham did, then *there is no byway to bring a man to happiness*. Look, what way Abraham went, you must go. There are no more ways. The same course that he took must be a copy for you to follow, a rule, as it were, for you to square your whole conversation by. There is no way but one to come to life and happiness. I speak it the rather to dash that idle device of many carnal men that think the Lord hath a new invention to bring them to life, and that they need not go the ordinary way, but God hath made a shorter cut for them. Great men and gentlemen think God will spare them. What, must they be humbled and fast and pray? That is for poor men and mean men. Their places and estates will not suffer it; therefore surely God hath given a dispensation to them. And the poor men, they think it is for gentlemen that have more leisure and time. Alas, they live by their labor, and they must take pains for what they have; and therefore they cannot do what is required! But be not deceived; if there be any way beside that which Abraham went, then will I deny myself? But the case is clear, the Lord saith it, the Word saith it. The same way, the same footsteps that Abraham took, we must take, if ever we will come where Abraham is.

You must not balk in this kind, whoever you are. God respecteth no man's person. If you would arrive at the same haven, you must sail through the same sea. You must walk the same way of grace if you would come to the same kingdom of glory. It is a conceit that harboreth in the hearts of many men, nay, of most men in general, especially your great wise men and your great rich men that have better places and estates in the world than ordinary. What, think they, may not a

man be saved without all this ado? What needs all this? Is there not another way besides this? Surely, my brethren, you must teach our Savior Christ and the Apostle Paul another way. I am sure they never knew another; and he that dreameth of another way must be content to go beside. There is no such matter as the devil would persuade you. It is but his delusion to keep you under infidelity and so shut you up to destruction under false and vain conceits. The truth is: here is the way, and the only way, and you must walk here if ever you come to life and happiness. Therefore, be not deceived, suffer not your eyes to be blinded; but know, what Abraham did, you must do the same, if not in action, yet in affection. If God say, forsake all, thou must do it, at least in affection. Thou must still wait upon His power and providence. Yield obedience to Him in all things; be content to submit thyself to His will. This is the way you must walk in if you ever come to heaven.

The last use shall be a use of comfort to all the saints and people of God, whose consciences can witness that they have labored to walk in the uprightness of their heart as Abraham did. I have two or three words to speak to these.

Be persuaded out of the Word of God that your course is good, and go on with comfort, and the God of heaven be with you. And be sure of it, that you that walk with Abraham shall be at rest with Abraham; and it shall never repent you of all the pains that you have taken. Haply³ it may seem painful and tedious to you; yet, what Abigail said to David, let me say to you. Oh, saith she, let not my lord do this: "when the LORD shall have done to my lord according to all the good that he hath spoken concerning thee, and shall have appointed thee ruler over Israel; that this shall be no grief unto thee, nor offense of heart unto my lord, either that thou hast shed blood causeless, or that my lord hath avenged himself" (1Sa 25:30-31). My brethren, let me say to you, you will find trouble and inconveniences and hard measure at the hands of the wicked in this world. Many Nabals and Cains will set themselves against you; but go on, and bear it patiently. Know it is a troublesome way, but a true way. It is grievous but yet good; and the end will be happy. It will never repent you, when the Lord hath performed all the good that He hath spoken concerning you.

Oh, to see a man drawing his breath low and short, after he hath spent many hours and days in prayer to the Lord, grappling with his corruptions, and striving to pull down his base lusts, after he hath

³ haply – perhaps.

waited upon the Lord in a constant course of obedience! Take but such a man, and ask him, now his conscience is opened, whether the ways of holiness and sincerity be not irksome to him, whether he be not grieved with himself for undergoing so much needless trouble (as the world thinks it); and his soul will then clear this matter. It is true he hath a tedious course of it, but now his death will be blest. He hath striven for a crown, and now beholds a crown. Now he is beyond the waves. All the contempts and imprisonments and outrages of wicked men are now too short to reach him. He is so far from repenting, that he rejoiceth and triumpheth in reflecting back upon all the pains and care and labor of love, whereby he hath loved the Lord Jesus, in submitting his heart unto Him.

Take me another man, that hath lived here in pomp and jollity, hath had many livings, great preferments, much honor, abundance of pleasure, yet hath been ever careless of God and of His Word, profane in his course, loose in his conversation, and ask him upon his death-bed, how it standeth with him. Oh, woe the time, that ever he spent it as he hath done! Now the soul begins to hate the man and the very sight of him that hath been the instrument with it in the committing of sin. Now nothing but gall and wormwood remaineth. Now the sweetness of the adulterer's lust is gone, and nothing but the sting of conscience remaineth. Now the covetous man must part with his goods, and the gall of asps must stick behind. Now the soul sinks within, and the heart is overwhelmed with sorrow. *Take but these two men, I say, and judge by their ends, whether it will ever repent you that you have done well, that you have walked in the steps of the faith of Abraham.*

My brethren, howsoever you have had many miseries, yet the Lord hath many mercies for you. God dealeth with His servants as a father doth with his son after he hath sent him on a journey to do some business; and the weather falleth foul, and the way proveth dangerous, and many a storm and great difficulties are to be gone through. Oh, how the heart of that father pitieth his son! How doth he resolve to requite him, if he ever lives to come home again! What preparation doth he make to entertain and welcome him! And how doth he study to do good unto him! My brethren, so it is here. I beseech you: think of it, you that are the saints and people of God. You must find in your way many troubles and griefs (and we ought to find them), but be not discouraged. The more misery, the greater mercy. God the Father seeth His servants; and if they suffer and endure for a good conscience, as His eye seeth them, so His soul pitieth them. His heart bleeds within Him for them. That is, He hath a tender compassion of them, and He saith

within Himself, Well, I will requite them if ever they come into My kingdom. All their patience and care and conscience in walking My ways, I will requite; and they shall receive a double reward from Me, even a crown of eternal glory. Think of these things that are not seen; they are eternal. The things that are seen are temporal, and they will deceive us (2Co 4:18). Let our hearts be carried after the other, and rest in them forever!

Taken from a sermon.

Thomas Hooker (1586-1647): English Puritan preacher, who fled the persecution of Archbishop Laud to Holland, then later sailed to the colony of Massachusetts Bay in America; founder of Hartford, Connecticut. Author of *Survey of the Summe of Church Discipline*. Born in Marfield, Leicestershire, England.



REAL FAITH

George Mueller (1805-1898)

*“Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.
Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word
of God, so that things which are seen were not made
of things which do appear”
—Hebrews 11:1, 3.*

FIRST: **what is faith?** In the simplest manner in which I am able to express it, I answer: Faith is the assurance that the thing which God has said in His Word is true, and that God will act according to what He has said in His Word. This assurance, this reliance on God’s Word, this confidence is faith.

No impressions are to be taken in connection with faith. Impressions have neither one thing nor the other to do with faith. Faith has to do with the *Word of God*. It is not impressions, strong or weak, which will make any difference. We have to do with the written Word and not ourselves or our impressions.

Probabilities are not to be taken into account. Many people are willing to believe regarding those things that seem probable to them. Faith has nothing to do with probabilities. The province of faith begins where probabilities cease and sight and sense fail. A great many of God’s children are cast down and lament their want of faith. They write to me and say that they have no impressions, no feeling; they see no probability that the thing they wish will come to pass. *Appearances are not to be taken into account.* The question is—whether God has spoken it in *His Word*.

And now, beloved Christian friends, you are in great need to ask yourselves whether you are in the habit of thus confiding, in your inmost soul, in what God has said, and whether you are in earnest in seeking to find whether the thing you want is in accordance with what He has said in *His Word*.

Second: how faith may be increased. God delights to increase the faith of His children. Our faith, which is feeble at first, is developed and strengthened more and more by us. We ought, instead of wanting no trials before victory, no exercise for patience, to be willing to take them from God’s hand as a means. *I say—and say it deliberately—trials, obstacles, difficulties, and sometimes defeats, are the very food of faith.* I get

letters from so many of God's dear children who say: "Dear Brother Mueller, I'm writing this because I am so weak in faith." Just so surely as we ask to have our faith strengthened, we must feel a willingness to take from God's hand the means for strengthening it. We must allow Him to educate us through trials and bereavements and troubles. *It is through trials that faith is exercised and developed more and more.* God affectionately permits difficulties that He may develop unceasingly that which He is willing to do for us. And to this end we should not shrink; but if He gives us sorrow and hindrances and losses and afflictions, we should take them out of His hands as evidences of His love and care for us in developing more and more that *faith* which He is seeking to strengthen in us.

The Church of God is not aroused to see God as the beautiful and lovable One He is, and hence the littleness of blessedness. Oh, beloved brothers and sisters in Christ, seek to learn for yourselves, for I cannot tell you the blessedness! In the darkest moments I am able to confide in Him; for I know what a beautiful and kind and lovable Being He is. And if it be the will of God to put us in the furnace, let Him do it, that so we may acquaint ourselves with Him as He will reveal Himself, and that we may know Him better. We come then to the conclusion that God is a lovable Being; and we are satisfied with Him, and say: "*It is my Father, let Him do as He pleases.*"

When I first began to allow God to deal with me, relying on Him, taking Him at His Word, and set out fifty years ago simply relying on Him for myself, family, taxes, travelling expenses, and every other need, I rested on the simple promises I found in the sixth chapter of Matthew. Read Matthew 6:25-34 carefully. I believed the Word; I rested on it and practiced it. I took God at His word.

A stranger, a foreigner in England, I knew seven languages and might have used them perhaps as a means of remunerative employment, but I had consecrated myself to labor for the Lord. I put my reliance in the God who has promised, and He has acted according to His Word. I've lacked nothing—nothing. I have had my trials, my difficulties, and my purse empty, but my receipts have aggregated thousands of dollars, while the work has gone on these 51 years.

Then, with regard to my pastoral work: for the past 51 years I have had great difficulties, great trials and perplexities. *There will always be difficulties, always trials. But God has sustained me under them and delivered me out of them, and the work has gone on.* Now, this is not, as some have said, because I am a man of great mental power, or endowed with energy and perseverance—these are not the reasons. It is be-

cause I have confided in God; because I have sought God, and He has cared for the Institution, which, under His direction, has 100 schools, with masters and mistresses and other departments which I have told you before.

I do not carry the burden. And now in my 67th year, I have physical strength and mental vigor for as much work as when I was a young man in the university, studying and preparing Latin orations. I am just as vigorous as at that time. How comes this? Because in the last half century of labor I've been able, with the simplicity of a child, to rely upon God. I have had my trials, but I have laid hold upon God, and so it has come to pass that I have been sustained. It is not only permission, but positive command that He gives, to cast the burdens upon Him. Oh, let us do it! My beloved brothers and sisters in Christ, "*Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and He shall sustain thee*" (Psa 55:22). Day by day I do it. This morning sixty matters in connection with the church of which I am pastor I brought before the Lord; and thus it is, day by day I do it, and year by year—ten years, thirty years, forty years.

Do not, however, expect to obtain full faith at once. All such things as jumping into full exercise of faith in such things I discountenance. I do not believe in it. I do not believe in it. *I do not believe in it, and I wish you plainly to understand I do not believe in it.* All such things go on in a natural way. The little I did obtain, I did not obtain all at once. All this I say particularly, because letters come to me full of questions from those who seek to have their faith strengthened. Begin over again, staying your soul on the *Word of God*, and you will have an increase of your faith as you exercise it.

One thing more. Some say, "Oh, I shall never have the gift of faith Mr. Mueller has got." This is a mistake—it is the greatest error—there is not a particle of truth in it. My faith is the same kind of faith that all of God's children have had. It is the same kind that Simon Peter had, and all Christians may obtain the like faith. My faith is their faith, though there may be more of it because my faith has been a little more developed by exercise than theirs; but their faith is precisely the faith I exercise—only, with regard to degree, mine may be more strongly exercised.

Now, my beloved brothers and sisters, begin in a little way. At first I was able to trust the Lord for ten dollars, then for a hundred dollars, then for a thousand dollars, and now, with the greatest ease, I could trust Him for a million dollars, if there was occasion. But first, I should quietly, carefully, deliberately examine and see whether what

I was trusting for, was something *in accordance with His promises in His written Word.*

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George Mueller (1805-1898): Prussian-born English evangelist; a man of great faith and prayer, established orphanages in Bristol, England, which cared for over 100,000 orphans during his life; born in Kroppenstedt, Prussia.



SOME CONCLUDING THOUGHTS ON FAITH

L. R. Shelton Jr. (1923-2003)

SOME concluding thoughts as we close these articles on faith. They are taken from my booklet *Christ the Object of True Saving Faith*.

1. **There is no salvation in Christ apart from faith**, and no instrumental means other than faith as these Scriptures bring out so clearly: “For by grace are ye saved *through faith*” (Eph 2:8); “the just shall live *by faith*” (Rom 1:17); and “*without faith* it is impossible to please him” (Heb 11:6).

2. **Saving faith must of necessity be a gift of God because it comes to us by grace through the effectual working of the Holy Spirit in our hearts by the Word of God.** “For *by grace* are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the *gift* of God: not of works, lest any man should boast” (Eph 2:8-9). When Apollos had come to Achaia, he “helped them much which *had believed through grace*” (Act 18:27). “When ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which *effectually worketh* also in you that believe” (1Th 2:13). “That our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of his goodness, and *the work of faith with power*” (2Th 1:11). “And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but *in the power of God*” (1Co 2:4-5).

3. **Even though the Scriptures show plainly that true saving faith is a gift of God, worked in us by the Holy Spirit, which comes to us by grace; yet in no place do they teach that the Holy Spirit believes for us.** The Holy Spirit frees our wills and enables us to believe. Therefore, the act of faith, the coming to Christ as *the object* of our faith, is spoken of in Scripture as the sinner abandoning all hope in himself to merit salvation, going outside of himself to Another for help, and looking *only* to Jesus, the Christ of the Bible, Whom he has personally trusted and obeyed. This is clearly shown in 2 Timothy 1:12 in these words: “For I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he

is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.”

4. Saving faith is not an isolated act, but is continuous all the days of our lives. The Amplified brings this out in such a blessed way in Romans 1:17—“For in the Gospel a righteousness which God ascribes is revealed, both springing from faith and leading to faith—disclosed through the way of faith that arouses to more faith. As it is written, The man who through faith is just and upright shall live, and shall live by faith.” The eleventh chapter of Hebrews tells us that the Old Testament saints were saved by faith, lived and worked by faith, and died in faith, as does every soul whom God saves.

As it was at conversion, so it is every day of our lives. The impulse to faith is a felt need. The motion of faith is always from self to another; and *the object* of faith is always Christ Himself. As we came then, empty-handed, to receive of Him (Joh 1:11-12; Col 2:6), so we do now. As we came then, hungering and thirsting after Christ Who is the Water of Life and the Bread of Life (Isa 55:1; Mat 5:6; Joh 6:35, 50-56; 7:37), so we do now. As we came then, casting our heavy burden of sin and all of our ways and works upon Him (Mat 11:28-30; 1Pe 5:7), so we do now. As we came then, turning our weary eyes upon Him Who alone could save us, forgive us, and cleanse us (Isa 45:22; Joh 1:29; 3:14-15; Num 21:8; Zec 12:10; Heb 12:2), so we do now. As we came then, fleeing to Him as our Refuge and our Hiding Place (Heb 6:18), so we do now. As we came then, to receive all our needs from Him (Joh 6:35, 37; Phi 4:19), so we do now.

Surely the child of God follows “the Lamb whithersoever he goeth” (Rev 14:4) all the days of his life.

5. Therefore, since “faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God” (Rom 10:17), how important it is for us to heed our blessed Lord’s admonition: “Search the scriptures...for...they...testify of me” (Joh 5:39). “And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself” (Luk 24:27). Search the Scriptures, for we find in them the foundation of our hope. It is the Word that testifies of Christ and His ability to save.

Then, when we have searched them, how important it is *to believe* what we read and the witness God gives of His Son. As 1 John 5:9-12 tells us, “If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which He hath testified of his Son. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he

that believeth not God hath made Him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.”

The question is asked, “What is the record that God has given us that testifies of His Son’s ability and willingness to save?” The record we are to believe is that the Lord Jesus Christ *came voluntarily* from heaven’s heights to earth’s depths to be born of a virgin, to take upon Himself the nature of man, “that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage” (Heb 2:14-15).

The record we are to believe is that the Lord Jesus Christ *emptied himself* so He could manifest the glory of the Father here upon earth (Phi 2:8), doing the will of the Father so He might pay our sin debt in full by the giving up of Himself upon the cross as God’s substitute for sinners. It is that He died, the Just for the unjust, the Godly for the ungodly, the Righteous for the unrighteous, that He might bring many sons into glory, and by the shedding of His blood, satisfy God’s holy law and justice (1Pe 3:18; Heb 2:10).

The record we are to believe is that in His death, burial, and resurrection, our blessed Lord has *opened the way* for poor sinners to come back to God in repentance and faith, and that God can be just in justifying every poor sinner who comes unto Him through Christ (Rom 3:26).

My dear friend, my prayer is that as you read the Scriptures, you will meditate upon them and cry unto the living God of the Bible that He, by His Spirit, will make the promises, which are beacons that lead us to Christ, real to your heart, so your faith will rest in Christ Himself Who is the very life of the promises, the very marrow and sweetness of the promise, Who alone can be our resting place, our refuge, our mediator, our salvation and our standing before God for time and eternity.

*Willing to take the cross was He,
Willing to suffer misery,
Willing to go to Calvary,
Laying His glory aside;*

*Willing to hang there on the tree,
Willing to bear the agony,
Willing to die for you and me;
Jesus the Crucified.*

—F. W. Hawkins

Booklet available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

L.R. Shelton, Jr. (1923-2003): was born and raised in New Orleans, Louisiana, where he later became associate pastor in his father's Baptist church. While he did not have the opportunity to attend college or seminary, as a young man he devoured the writings of Spurgeon, Pink, the Puritans, and Lloyd-Jones. In 1970 he began a church, Christian bookstore, and gospel outreach in Litchfield, Minnesota. There he developed a God-given burden to share classic Christian literature from prior centuries freely worldwide, beginning to reproduce sermon booklets on a mimeograph machine. In 1978 the small ministry moved to Pensacola, Florida, where Mount Zion Bible Church was founded.

