

16 - Living and Working by Faith

by Ben Torrey

Ben Torrey discusses the challenges and revelations of living and working by faith in the context of the Three Seas Project and the importance of church unity.

Duration: 9:45

Scripture: Proverbs 3:5-6, Matthew 6:33, Ephesians 4:3, Philippians 4:19, 1 Timothy 2:1, James 5:16

Topics: "Living By Faith"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses a change in the way the church operates and seeks financial support. They mention their involvement in the Three Seas project and the transformation they witnessed in the Korean church. The speaker shares their personal struggle with fundraising and how they turned to the Lord for provision. They then describe a moment when they felt the Lord speak to them, instructing them not to ask for money but to trust in Him for their needs.

Transcript

Good evening once again, this is Ben Torrey back with you to talk about the strange twist that living and working by faith can take. You will recall that last week I spoke about the Three Seas Project and how my father had seemingly reversed the well-known and quite effective practice of Jesus' Abbey. He determined that for the building of the Three Seas Center it would be right for the Abbey to make the financial need known and seek assistance from others.

This seemed to be in direct contradiction to the Abbey's long-standing practice of quote, faith financing. Not letting people know the financial needs, but going only to God in prayer to meet them. He did explain that his reason for this was that asking for help in building the Center was not seeking to have the Abbey's needs or the needs of its members met by others, but asking donors to help meet the needs of those who would be benefited by the work of the Center.

I'm confident that the Holy Spirit guided him to this policy decision. I'm not sure that he understood all of God's reason for the change. I don't think that I know all of them either, but over the years of my involvement I have thought and prayed much about this.

With my part this story gets even stranger, at least from the perspective of the old tried and true ways of operating. At this point it is necessary for me to give a bit more background on my involvement and what we are seeking to do at the Three C's. In past broadcasts I've made passing references to some of these

things.

Now I will go into a bit more detail. My father passed away in 2002 at the age of 84. He had fallen, struck his head, and was in a coma for 12 weeks before the Lord took him to his well-earned rest.

At that point the effort to get permission to build the Three C's training center on the Forestry Department land that the Abbey leased and to raise the funds needed to build the Center almost came to a halt. My wife and I became convinced that God had called us to return to Korea and take responsibility for carrying the Three C's project forward, but with a slight shift in direction that I will share at more length in a future broadcast. For now it is enough to say that God had called us to build the Three C's training center and direct several works that are to be carried out there, including Jesus Abbey Global School that I spoke about last month.

For now it is enough to say that God had called us to build the Three C's training center and direct several works that are to be carried out there, including Jesus Abbey Global School that I spoke about last month, and the Fourth River Project, preparing for the opening of North Korea. More on that in the future. For our purposes now, our consideration of faith financing, it is enough to know that responding to God's call in this instance would require me to abandon my employment opportunities in the U.S. and to throw myself completely on the Lord for our own personal livelihood and for the millions of dollars needed to build the training center.

It was a bit overwhelming. While I had grown up learning and practicing the faith financing principles of George Mueller, Hudson Taylor, R.A. Torrey, and Jesus Abbey, I had also spent many years in business supporting myself. You might say that I was out of practice.

In any case, the road before me and the complete lack of visible means of support was somewhat daunting. But I knew that I had to pray. I also knew that my father had put his blessing on efforts to raise funds from people.

However, personal experience has shown me that I am not a very good fundraiser, perhaps because of the way I grew up. In any case, I had nowhere to turn but the Lord, and in my need I cried out to Him desperately. Specifically, I was praying one morning as I was brushing my teeth.

I talk to the Lord a lot as I am doing routine things during the course of the day. I was asking Him for provision for our livelihood and the funds needed to build the center. Much to my amazement, He spoke to me in no uncertain words.

There have been a few times in my life when I felt the Lord speak to me so clearly that I could not doubt it. This was one of them. He spoke into my mind, and this is what He said, Don't ask me for money.

The strength of this, the impact of these words, was so strong that I stopped brushing my teeth in mid-motion and froze, wondering why. Again He spoke to me, You are my workman. I will see that you have all that you need.

Don't ask me for money. You might think that this would be reassuring to me. It wasn't.

It meant that the only way I knew of seeking money was close to me. I could not pray for funds. I no longer had the security of petitioning the Lord.

I could not be the importunate widow of Luke 18. I had to keep silent before God about my needs and the needs of the project. No, I did not like that.

I wrestled with these thoughts for several hours as I went about my daily routine. Finally, I got to where I should have been to begin with. I said, Okay then, Lord, what do you want me to pray for? And just as strongly as before, the answer came to me.

Pray for the unity of the Korean church. Whoa! My response to that was that it would be far easier to pray for many millions of dollars. I don't think I have the faith for that.

At this point, I will make a brief sidebar comment. This was the late fall of 2002. I knew then and have known even more strongly as time has gone by that the unity of the church, the body of Christ, is one of God's greatest concerns.

It is an absolute imperative before North Korea opens to the gospel. I have been praying for this, calling others to pray for it, and proclaiming the importance of this just about every chance I get. I began these broadcasts back in January with this message.

As difficult as it is to believe that the church will actually become unified, not in organization or structure, but in heart and mind, I have seen God working and bringing that about. The big Transformation Korea 2007 meetings back in January were a major step in that direction as evangelicals and charismatics cooperated in staging the events and pastors confessed publicly to one another their sins of division. I witnessed the power of the Holy Spirit at work in the Korean church.

Praise God! He is answering these prayers. But there is still far to go. We can't stop yet.

Anyway, back to my story about faith financing. Here I was, left without recourse to pray to the Lord to meet our needs. At the same time, I also had permission from my father, no less, to seek support from others.

This was the direct opposite of Jesus Abbey's policy of not letting others know your needs and asking only God. I could not ask God. But I was supposed to make the needs known to others and ask their help.

Could it be the same God who gave both sets of instructions? It could and it was. I have also come to learn that this path, at least for me, is demanding more of my faith than the older one. This is indeed faith financing that stretches my faith seemingly to its limits.

At first, I assumed that it would be a simple task to let all the wealthy past supporters of Jesus Abbey know about this project and how God had called me to take up where my father had left off. It seemed to me that the resources were there, even the millions of dollars needed, and that out of respect for my father, they would come forward. I also figured that God would pour funds into our accounts so that we would not experience need.

Wrong. None of the old benefactors of the Abbey seemed interested and no funds showed up in our accounts. We faced a dark future with no way of knowing how we could pay.

This called for much greater faith on my part, since I could only go forward spending money that I did not think we had and could not ask the Lord to supply. I did pray for unity as he had commanded. I also prayed constantly, and still do, for his divine wisdom and guidance in all that I do.

Currently we face an enormous need to move forward and break ground within weeks, but do not have the funds that we need to take even that step. I should say that we don't have the funds that we think we need. I know that God knows better than I do.

Well, I see that our time is running out. Next week I will share with you the things that I have learned in struggling with this seeming contradiction and the even more foundational principle that I believe God has been teaching. Until then, good night.

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