

Fact! Faith! Feeling!

by F.B. Meyer

The correct order of Fact, Faith, and Feeling is essential for a life of true faith and joyous feelings.

Scripture: Psalm 46:10, Isaiah 26:3, John 1:12, Romans 4:20, Romans 8:17, 2 Corinthians 5:7, Philippians 4:6-7, Hebrews 11:11, James 1:22, 1 Peter 1:8-9

Topics: "Faith", "Trust in God's Promises"

Description

F.B. Meyer emphasizes the importance of the correct order of 'Fact, Faith, and Feeling' in our spiritual lives. He warns against prioritizing feelings over facts, which can lead to instability, and instead encourages believers to ground their faith in the unchanging truths of God's Word. Meyer illustrates that true faith is rooted in the facts of God's love and promises, and that genuine feelings of joy and peace will follow when we trust in these truths. He also cautions that feelings can be deceptive and should not dictate our relationship with God. Ultimately, he calls for a faith that is anchored in the reality of God's faithfulness, leading to a life of joy and assurance.

Transcript

These three words stand for three most important factors in character and life. We all have to do with them in one form or another, but it is above all things necessary that we should place them in the right order.

Most people try to put Feeling first, with as much success as if they tried to build the top story of a house before laying its foundations. Their order is-

FEELING, FACT, or FAITH

or, FACT, FEELING, or FAITH

Others seek Faith first, without considering the Facts on which alone Faith and Feeling can rest. They resemble the man, who desiring to get warm on a frosty night, refuses to approach the fire which burns brightly on the hearth. The only possible order that will bring blessing and comfort to the heart is that indicated in our title:-

God's Facts are adamant.

Our Faith, apprehending and resting on them.

Joyous Feelings, coming, it may be at once, or after the lapse of days and months, as God will.

FACT

The facts of which we are told in the Bible are like steppingstones across a brook. Before you reach the shallows where they lie, you wonder how you will get over, but on stepping down to the margin of the water, they span the space from bank to bank. When you have reached one you can step to another, and so across. It is absurd to consult feeling, or look for faith, while still at a distance from the brookside, or if you persist in going above or below that primitive bridge of stones. You must come down to them, consider them see how strongly fixed they are in the cozy bed, notice how easily the villagers pass and repass; then you will feel able to trust them, and finally, with a light heart and great sense of relief, step from one to another.

Let us recall a few facts which may help us first to faith, and then to feeling.

It is a fact that God loves each of us with the tenderest and most particular love. You may not believe or feel it ; the warm summer sun may be shining against your shuttered and curtained window without making itself seen or felt within; but your failure to realize and appreciate the fact of God's love toward you cannot alter its being so.

It is a fact that in Jesus every obstacle has been removed out of the way of your immediate forgiveness and acceptance. God was in the dying Saviour, putting away sin, bearing our sins in His own body on the tree, reconciling the world to Himself. You may not believe this, or feel the joy of it, but that does not alter the fact that it is so.

After the peace was signed between the North and the South, ending the Civil War, there were soldiers hiding in the woods, starving on berries, who might have returned to their homes. They either did not know, or did not credit, the good news, and they went on starving long after their comrades had been welcomed by their wives and children. Theirs was the loss, but their failure in knowledge or belief did not alter the fact that peace was proclaimed and that the door was wide open for their return.

A friend may have paid all my debts in my native village, from which I have fled, fearing arrest and disgrace. He may have done it so speedily that my credit has never been impaired, or my good name forfeited. There may be all the old love and honor waiting to greet me. He may have told me so; but if I still absent myself, and refuse to return, my folly in this respect cannot undo those beneficent acts, though it perpetuates my misery.

It is a fact that the moment a soul trusts Christ, he is born into God's family and becomes a child. There is no doubt about this. You may not feel good, or earnest, or anxious; you may even be conscious of a recent failure; you may be spending your days under a pall of somber depression; but if you have received Christ, and have truly trusted in Him, you have been born again, not of man, or of the will of the flesh, but of God (John 1:12) . You may be a prodigal or inconsistent child, but you are a child. If you were wise you would take the child's place at the Father's table, and enjoy His smile. They await you. But if you still remain out in the cold, as the elder brother in the parable, you do not alter the fact that your place is ready for you to occupy when you will.

It is a fact that God takes what we give, and as soon as we give it. There is no long interval. When we let go, He receives. When we place ourselves on His altar, we are immediately sealed as His. When we

consecrate ourselves, He accepts. The divine act is instantaneous. You may not be aware of this, and continue giving yourself day after day. If you do, you burden yourself with needless anxiety; you continue offering what is not now yours to give, and you lose the blessedness of realizing what it is to be the absolute property, chattel and slave of the blessed Master; but your mistake cannot alter the fact that God took you at your word when first you made yourself over to Him in a solemn act of dedication. Shall our want of faith make of no effect the faithfulness of God?

It is a fact that in Jesus Christ we are seated in heavenly places. We cannot alter this. We may not believe it, or avail ourselves of all the privileges which it implies, or enjoy the blessedness of nearness to Jesus; but such is, nevertheless, our rightful position in the divine order. If we are united with Jesus by the slenderest strand of faith, we are as much one with Him as the loftiest saints; and where the Head is, there is also the Body. In Him we died on the cross, and so met the righteous demands of the holy law. In Him we lay in the grave, and so passed out of the region ruled by the Prince of the Power of the air. In Him we rose and ascended far above all might and dominion, principality and power.

Is Satan under Christ's feet? In God's purpose he is under ours also. Are death and the grave for ever behind Christ? So, in God's purpose, we have passed to the Easter side of them both, and are to the windward of the storm. As far as their sting or terror is concerned they are like the Egyptians dead on the sea shore. Has the great High Priest passed through the heavens within the veil? So, in the purpose of God, we too have passed from the outer court into the Holy Place, where we offer gifts, sacrifices, supplications, and intercessions for all men.

All this may appear unreal and impossible, as the idea of being the bride of a prince to a poor Cinderella, but is nevertheless our true position. These are the facts of the eternal world, whether you avail yourself of them or not. There are not a few cases on record of slaves starving in bondage because they would not avail themselves of freedom; and of noblemen living a hard and difficult life because they would not claim their rights!

It is a fact that there is a share in the gift of Pentecost waiting for each member of Christ. He received gifts even for the rebellious. To each grace has been given. The promise of the Holy Ghost is to as many as the Lord our God shall call. Without doubt you have a share in that infilling, that divine unction, that marvelous power in service, which transformed the apostles from being timid sheep to lions in fight. You may never have put in your claim, but there is no grace that others have which you may not obtain. All things are yours. God has made over to you the unsearchable riches of Christ. Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, all the stores of grace and love and power which are yours in Christ, accumulating for you in the Divine Deposit Bank. It seems a thousand pities that you should live a beggar's life when such wealth and power are yours; but if you persist in doing so, your folly and blindness do not alter the fact that the fullness of God is yours in Christ.

These are some of those facts, made known to us in the Word of God, which will conduct us over the brook of turbid emotion to firm standing ground. Let us give up worrying about our faith, or feeling the pulse of emotion, and come to rest on them, assured that they are more stable than heaven or earth.

FAITH

If you want a true faith, do not think about it, but look away to the facts of which we have been speaking. We find no difficulty in trusting our friends, because we open our hearts, like south windows, to their love. We recall all their interpositions in our behalf. We remember all they have promised and performed. Where

would be our difficulty about faith if we ceased worrying about it, and were occupied with the object of faith--Jesus Christ our Lord?

Faith is more than Creed. In a creed we believe about a person or circumstance; but in faith we repose our trust upon a person. We must not believe about Christ only, but in Him, as Livingstone did, when on one occasion he was opposed at nightfall by an army of infuriated savages, and was tempted to steal away in the dark; but his eye lit on the promise, "I will be with you all the days," and he wrote, "I went to sleep because I knew it was the word of a perfect gentleman." Do not believe about Christ, but in Him.

Faith concerns itself with a person. We are saved and blessed by the faith that passes through the facts of our Saviour's life to Himself. We rest not on the atonement, but on Him who made it; not on the death, but on Him who died; not on the resurrection, but on Him who rose, ascended, and ever liveth to make intercession; not in statements about Him, but in Him of whom they are made.

Many a time the question is asked by the inquirer, "Have I the right kind of faith?" It is a needful question, because there is a dead and spurious faith which will fail us in the supreme crisis, as the badly-canned meats did the Arctic exploration party, who on returning to their heap of stores, found them useless, and starved.

There is one simple reply, "All faith that turns towards Jesus is the right faith." It may bring no conscious rapture. It may be as weak as the woman's touch on His garment's hem. It may be small and insignificant as a grain of mustard seed. It may be despairful as Peter's cry, "Lord, save, or I perish!" But if its deepest yearning be Christ-Christ-Christ, it is the tiny thread which will bring the lost soul through subterranean passages, in which it had been well-nigh overwhelmed, into the light of life.

True Faith reckons on God's Faith. In earlier life I used to seek after greater faith by considering how great God was, how rich, how strong; why should He not give me money for His work, since He was so rich? Why not carry the entire burden of my responsibilities, since He was so mighty? These considerations helped me less, however, than my now certain conviction that He is absolutely faithful; faithful to His covenant engagements in Christ, faithful to His promises, and faithful to the soul that at His clear call has stepped out into any enterprise for Him. We may lose heart and hope, our head may turn dizzy and our heart faint, lover and friend may stand at a distance, the mocking voices of our foes suggest that God has forgotten or forsaken; but He abideth faithful, He cannot deny Himself, He cannot disown the helpless child whom He has begotten, because it ails. He cannot throw aside responsibilities He has assumed. He has made, and He must bear.

Oftentimes I have gone to God in dire need, aggravated by nervous depression and heart-sickness, and said, "My faith is flickering out. Its hand seems paralyzed, its eye blinded, its old glad song silenced forever. But Thou art faithful, and I am reckoning on Thee!" The soul loves to go behind the promises of God to Himself who made them, as the wife needs not quote the pledges made by her husband in the marriage-service when she is sure of him, and feels the pressure of his hand.

Do not trouble about your Faith; reckon on God's Faithfulness. If He bids you step out on the water, He knows that He can bring you safely back to the boat. When an Alpine guide takes you over a ragged piece of ice, he considers whether, in the event of your utter collapse, he is not able to carry you through by the strength of his iron grasp and sinewy frame. What iron is to the blood, that the thought of God's faithfulness is to faith. "Sarah . . . received power . . . since she counted him faithful who had promised" (Heb. 11:11, ASV); Abraham "waxed strong through faith, giving glory to God" (Rom. 4:20, ASV).

Faith bears Fruit. It cannot help it, because it links the soul with Christ, so that the energy of His life pours into it through the artery of faith, and, as it comes in, so it must make a way for itself out. Fruit is (so to speak) forced from the believing soul. Why does the lark sing? It cannot help it, because the spirit of spring has been poured into its heart. Why does the branch bear fruit? It cannot help it, because the life-forces are ever pouring up from the root. Why does a child run to meet its mother? It cannot help it, because its heart has imbibed her nature. So the believer, united to Christ, receives grace upon grace from His heart, and from the abundance of His indwelling his life speaks.

It is not difficult to obtain faith like this. Put your will on the side of Christ--not a passing wish, but the whole desire and choice of your being. Be willing to believe; or be willing to be made willing to believe. Lift your eyes toward Christ. If you cannot see Him, look toward the place where you think He is. Remind Him that He is the Author of faith, and that it is His gift. Claim it from Him, and reckon that in answer to your appeal He does confer this priceless boon. You may not feel faith, but you will find yourself unconsciously thinking of Christ, counting on Christ, going out toward Christ; and that engagement of the soul with Christ is faith.

Be careful of the tender plant which has thus been planted within you. Give it plenty of sunshine. Live outside yourself in the consideration of what Christ is. Feed faith on her native food of promise, and let her breathe her native air on the hills of communion.

Treat all suggestions of doubt as you would questions as to the fidelity of your dearest friend. Avoid the cold blast that sets in from skeptical books and talk. Be sure to live up to your highest conceptions of duty toward God and man. Your faith will be in exact proportion to your obedience. Inability to trust almost always denotes some failure to obey. If faith is faltering, ask yourself whether you have not dropped the thread of obedience, and go back to the place where you lost it. Christian(from Pilgrim's progress) could not face the lions till he had sorrowfully retraced his steps to the arbor where he slept and had recovered his roll.

Faith is pre-eminently the receptive faculty. It not only reckons that God gives, but it stretches out its hand to take. "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name" (John 1:12). We receive the at-one-ment from the Lord who died, and we receive the abundance of God's grace from the Lord who ever lives, so that we reign in this mortal life as we hope to reign when the heavens and earth have fled away, and there is no more sea to divide us from our beloved (Rom. 8 :17) . The beautiful garments are prepared, faith arrays herself in them. The armor hangs on the wall, faith girds herself in it. The water of life gushes at her feet, but faith catches it up, as did Gideon's three hundred men. Faith thus deals definitely with God. She does not simply see His gifts as the passer-by the jewels in the shop window, but she knows that all the regalia of God's kingdom are hers, and she takes them as she will. She hears the voice of her Father saying: "Thou art ever with Me, and all that I have is thine."

It was not enough that God should give the land of Canaan by promise and covenant to the chosen race. They had to go in to possess it, to put their foot down on its soil, to till its acres, and to live in its rich products. So it must be with the believer. He is first united with Jesus by a living faith, which rests in Him as Saviour, Friend, and King; then he reckons that the Son of God is well able to make him His joint-heir of all His boundless wealth, and, lastly, he learns the art of receiving and using the plenteous heritage, and year by year presses the fences of his possession farther back, taking in more and more of that vast extent of territory which has been assigned to him in Jesus.

Oh! Settler on the boundless continent of God's fullness in Jesus, get thee up into the high mountain. Look northward, southward, eastward and westward, over the lengths, and breadths, and depths, and heights of the love of God. It is all yours from the river of Time which rises at your foot to the utmost sea of Eternity. Be not slack to go up and possess the land, and to inherit all which God has freely bestowed on you in the Son of His love.

FEELING

Our feelings are very deceptive, because so easily wrought on from without. They are affected by the state of our health, changes in the weather, the society or absence of those who love. When the air is light, and the sun shines, and we have slept well, we are more likely to feel disposed toward God than when the dripping November fog drenches the wood lands. The Father who made us and knows our frame, understands this; so much so, that when Elijah, after the strain of Carmel, his swift flight, and his disappointment at Jezebel's continued obduracy, threw himself beneath the juniper tree and asked for a swift death, God sent him sleep for his exhausted nervous system, and food for his hunger.

As a rule, Faith fruits in Feeling. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God . . . and not only so but we joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ. "Believing we rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory." When the prodigal returned, the father bade them slay the fatted calf, saying: "Let us eat and be merry." There is relief from a heavy burden of sin, the ecstasy of pardon, the light of the Father's face, the sense of rightness, the calm outlook on the future. When the King comes to His own the bells ring out their peals on the waiting air, as though intoxicated with delight.

Happy and blessed feeling is the effect of the Spirit's work on the soul . "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace." He is the earnest of our inheritance, and though in our minority we cannot expect to enter on the fullness of our heritage, we are privileged to enjoy its first fruits. There are prelibations of the river of His pleasures, and stray notes from the full chorus of bliss. When the Holy Ghost reveals the Bridegroom, the loving heart is glad, even though the nuptials are not yet celebrated.

But the lack of feeling does not always indicate we are wrong. There may be causes, as we have seen, which account for our depression. It may be that Christ would teach us to distinguish between love and the emotion of love, between joy and the rapture of joy, between peace and the sense of peace. Or perhaps He may desire to ascertain whether we cling to Him for Himself or for His gifts.

Children greet their father from the window, as he turns the corner and comes down the street. He hears the rush of their feet along the hall as he inserts his key in the door. But one day he begins to question whether they greet him for the love they bear him or for the gifts with which he never forgets to fill his pockets. One day, therefore, he gives them due notice that there will be no gifts when he returns at night. Their faces fall, but when the hour of return arrives they are at the window as usual, and there is the same tramping of little feet to the door. "Ah," he says, "my children love me for myself," and he is glad.

Our Father sometimes cuts off the supply of joy, and suffers us to hunger, that He may know what is in our hearts, and whether we love Him for Himself. If we still cling to Him as Job did, He is glad, and restores comforts to His mourners with both hands.

Seek feeling, and you will miss it; be content to live without it, and you will have all you require. If you are always noticing your heart-beats, you will bring on heart disease. If you are always muffling against cold, you will become very subject to chills. If you are perpetually thinking about your health, you will induce

disease. If you are always consulting your feelings, you will live in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is. He that saveth his soul shall lose it.

Be indifferent to emotion. If it is there, be thankful; if it is absent, go on doing the will of God, reckoning on Him, speaking well of Him behind His back, and, above all, giving no signs of what you are suffering, lest you be a stumbling block to others. Then joy will overtake you as a flood. He will make you sit at His table, and gird Himself to come forth and serve you.

CAUTIONS

There are five concluding cautions for the culture of the devout life, attention to which will generally result in holy joy and peace.

1. We must be still before God. The life around us, in this age, is preeminently one of rush and effort. It is the age of the express train and telegraph. Years are crowded into months, and weeks into days. This feverish haste threatens the religious life. The stream has already entered our churches, and stirred their quiet pools. Meetings crowd on meetings. The same energetic souls are found at them all, and engaged in many good works beside. But we must beware that we do not substitute the active for the contemplative, the valley for the mountaintop. Neither can with safety be divorced from the other. The sheep must go in and out. The blood must come back to the heart to be recharged, and fitted to be impelled again to the extremities.

We must make time to be alone with God. The closet and the shut door are indispensable. We must lose the glare of the sunny piazza that we may see the calm angel-figures bending above the altar. We must escape the din of the world, to become accustomed to the accents of the still, small voice. Like David, we must sit before the Lord. Happy are they who have an observatory in their heart-house to which they can often retire beneath the great arch of Eternity, turning their telescope to the mighty constellations that turn beyond life's fever, and reaching regions where the breath of human applause or censure cannot follow!

It is only in such moments that the best spiritual gifts will loom in our vision, or we shall have grace to receive them. It is impossible to rush into God's presence, catch up anything we fancy, and run off with it. To attempt this will end in mere delusion and disappointment. Nature will not unveil her rarest beauty to the chance tourist. Pictures which are the result of a life of work do not disclose their secret loveliness to the saunterer down a gallery. No charter can be read at a glance. And God's best can be ours apart from patient waiting in His Holy presence. The superficial may be put off with a parable, a pretty story, but it is not given such to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven.

2. We must be possessed by an eager desire. There is a difference between wishing for a thing and willing it. In a single hour we may wish for a hundred differing objects, and forget them. But how different from this is the fixed determination, the settled purpose of the will!

The lad catches sight of some equipment for his fort, the student of a precious book, the lover of a jeweled ornament which he covets for the one he loves--and in each case the will is wrought upon till it resolves to acquire at any cost. Then privation and self-sacrifice and delay are cheerfully encountered. Nothing can extinguish or slacken the determination that follows hard after its quest. So with us. We must hunger and thirst; we must be possessed by strong and passionate desire; we must be resolved even to use violence to take the Kingdom of Heaven. The expressions of Scripture are all so tense--the heart pants for the waterbrooks; Jacob will not let the angel go; the widow troubles the unjust judge day and night. We too

may have this strong desire if we will let the Spirit of God produce within our hearts. But the merchantman must be bent on seeking and finding the goodly pearl. We must strive to enter the strait gate. We must agonize (to use the Apostle's word) as the athlete for the crown.

3. We must have a promise in our hand. This is the true method of dealing with God. Search the Bible for some holy word which exactly fits your case. It will not be hard to find one, since it abounds with personal incidents, culled from every conceivable variety of life. Then, when it has been discovered, and perhaps borne in on you by the divine Spirit, take it with you into the presence of God, or place your finger upon it as you pass into the presence-chamber with hushed and reverent step. The promises are our inventory of possession, and our need should make us look up for and claim the blessing intended to meet it.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/fb-meyer/fact-faith-feeling/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net