

Principles of Faith

by John Follette

The sermon emphasizes the necessity of specific faith grounded in God's revealed promises for spiritual fulfillment and divine intervention.

Scripture: John 11:4

Topics: "Faith Principles", "Spiritual Growth"

Description

John Follette emphasizes the importance of understanding and obeying the spiritual laws that govern our Christian experience, comparing them to the demanding laws of the natural world. Through the story of Lazarus, Jesus teaches Martha the process of faith, focusing on believing in the specific word He has spoken rather than a general declaration of faith. Faith must attach itself to the present 'Word of the Lord' for God's power to be demonstrated. It is crucial to seek and believe the exact promise that God speaks to our hearts, rather than selecting promises based on our limited understanding, to strengthen and grow our faith.

Transcript

Many Christians approach the realm of the Spirit as if it were a "happy hunting ground" in which they are free to move as they please, regardless of spiritual laws. Then they mistakenly expect to have a well-balanced Christian experience.

In our spiritual experience, there are principles which are as real as those in the natural world. The laws which operate in the realm of the Spirit are just as demanding as natural laws and require a like obedience.

Jesus often visited the home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. Since He was away when Lazarus became sick, the two sisters sent for Him. When Jesus arrived, Lazarus had been dead for several days. Here, we find Jesus giving voice to a word which is the epitome of the process of faith.

Just before Lazarus was called forth from the grave, Jesus spoke to Martha, "Did I not say to you, that

if you would believe, you would see the glory of God?" John 11:40. In this verse He disclosed the process of the development of faith.

These same principles apply today. He started with the phrase, "Did I not say to you?" This refers to something that had been spoken or given: a testimony, a word, a promise, a covenant, a revelation, which comes within the brackets of this question.

What had He said? "if you would believe." What was she to believe? Only "what" He had spoken to her, not the entire Bible. Jesus wanted Martha to say that she believed He could do what He had promised. He was not seeking a general declaration of faith, but faith in a specific matter - the word He had spoken. But she had only replied in a generality, "Yes, I believe in the resurrection."

That was good, but it was not what He intended. Finally, in John 11:26, He brought her to the point of faith - "Do you believe this?" There is always a "this" (the word He speaks). And if she would believe this, the very thing for which she had believed would be demonstrated before her.

Here is the divine process, the statement to which faith must attach itself. Faith must grasp the present "Word of the Lord." If we are obedient to the law which He gives, the demonstration of God's power will come forth as a natural result, because it is a basic law in the spiritual realm. If we have rightly believed, we have done our part and the rest is in His hands.

This is the divine arrangement and pattern. What particular thing did Jesus desire Mary and Martha to believe? He would not have said to them, "Did I not say to you, that if you would believe" unless He had mentioned something that they were to believe. He had told them what to believe in John 11:4, "this sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God." Also in verse eleven, "but I go so that I may awaken him out of sleep." And again in verse twenty three, "Your brother shall rise again." All these statements are positive words of victory.

His purpose was that Lazarus should live. All Martha and Mary had to do was to believe what He had said and then watch the Lord fulfill His promise. They need not be concerned with any of the details, but only say, "You have spoken the word, 'He shall live,' and we believe."

This is the threefold process of faith. Faith is never operative unless it has something on which to venture out. There is no such thing as just believing.

The Lord does not ask us to believe, unless He has given us something to believe. The Bible is His voice to us. There is no condition or circumstance in which we may find ourselves, for which God has not provided something from His Word. It matters not in which set of circumstances we may find ourselves; there is a "said I not?" of God to meet our need, and He expects us to believe what He has said. The rest is in His hands.

When there is a situation that requires faith, we usually go to the Word of God and find a promise that applies. Then we appropriate it and pray, attempting to force the Lord to fulfill this particular verse for us.

Such a procedure may be dangerous, for we are taking the initiative and are "claiming" a promise which we feel relates to our situation. Then we expect the Lord to answer because we are "standing" on His promise.

But He does not ask us to find a promise which seems to fit our need. We are too limited in our knowledge concerning all the ramifications involved in such situations. Whenever we select a promise, we usually take one which indicates a speedy deliverance and victory, not knowing if it complies with the purpose of the Lord concerning the matter.

In 2 Peter 1:4, we read, "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises." Let the Lord speak the word of promise to our heart, for He will give the exact promise which relates to His will and purpose. The promise which we select in order to cause the Lord to answer our prayer may not apply at all. We are not wise enough to know how God intends to answer our prayer.

When we select a promise upon which to stand, we can only hope that there will be spirit and life in it. But when He speaks the Word to us, we know we are safe in believing; and as we continue to believe, our faith grows.

When the Lord speaks the Word, it has two definite qualities; it has creative power and it is authoritative. The Word must be quickened by the Spirit. Then faith can lay hold of and wrap itself around that Word. Its creative power ministers to our faith and strengthens it.

Always be sure that the promise being used is the one the Lord gave, not one which we feel applies, and which we think God is obligated to answer. Promises are not given so we can make the Lord do

something for us. Rather, they are given to give us a means for strength, authority, and power, to build and encourage our faith.

We must ascertain the mind of the Lord in a matter. If we walk in the Spirit and commune with Him, He will be able to communicate it to us. Then we are to cling to the "word" which He has spoken into our heart.

We are to go before Him and say, "Father, I could find a number of promises in the Bible, but I refuse to do so because I have been defeated too many times by following that method. Lord, please reveal your will to my troubled heart; impart within me the attitude you wish me to take; and if it be your desire, give me a promise. Perhaps you can bring me into contact with someone who will be Your messenger to me. All I desire is to have the right attitude towards it."

Then wait until the Lord speaks His word to your heart. If you do so, neither heaven nor earth will move you, because that "word" has come from God and is established in your heart. Your faith has laid hold of it.

Believe the word the Lord gives and cherish it. It will bring forth the glory He desires and the deliverance you seek. They who trust in Him shall never be confounded.

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