

# Fact, Faith, and Experience

by Watchman Nee

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*God has accomplished everything for man, and we must acknowledge and utilize this fact by faith in order to experience the blessing of the inheritance.*

**Scripture:** Romans 4:4, Ephesians 2:8, Hebrews 9:15

**Topics:** "Spiritual Inheritance", "Faith", "Grace"

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## Description

Watchman Nee emphasizes the relationship between fact, faith, and experience in the context of God's grace. He explains that salvation and all spiritual blessings are accomplished by God and are facts that believers must acknowledge through faith. Faith acts as a means to 'cash in' on these facts, allowing believers to experience the fullness of what God has provided. Nee illustrates this with the example of an inheritance, where the ownership of the inheritance is a fact, but the enjoyment of it requires active faith and participation. Ultimately, he calls believers to recognize their position in Christ and to actively utilize their spiritual inheritance through faith.

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## Transcript

In the present age of grace, everything is "by grace" (Eph. 2:8). Everything being by grace means that everything is done by God. Man does not have to do anything to be saved because "to the one who works, his wages are not accounted according to grace, but according to what is due" (Rom. 4:4). Because God deals with man according to grace, there are certain facts.

### FACT

God has accomplished everything for man. Since everything has been accomplished, certain "facts" exist. And since they are existing "facts," man does not have to accomplish what has already been accomplished. All of God's works are complete.

However, God's grace is a righteous grace. This is why, with the "facts," there is still the need for human cooperation. What kind of cooperation is this? It is not to add anything to what He has finished, but to have man acknowledge that what God has done is real. This is faith.

### FAITH

Faith is to acknowledge that what God has said and done is true. Faith is to accept the facts, that is, to acknowledge them as facts.

Faith is a "cashing in." I use the words "cashing in" in the sense of one cashing a check at the bank. Suppose someone gives you a check. That the bank has the money is a fact. For you to cash the check for money is to acknowledge the fact that the bank possesses whatever amount is written on the check. It takes faith to "cash in." With faith, one can cash in and thereby have the money to use. Now, to spend the money is the "experience." To have the money in the bank is the "fact," to cash the check is "faith," and to spend the money is "experience." In God's grace, what He has done for man are facts. But man must still experience these facts.

## EXPERIENCE

To experience God's grace is to claim by faith the facts that God has accomplished for man. These facts are accomplished by God. What man needs is faith. The facts belong to God, and the experience belongs to man. Thus, faith is God's facts becoming man's experience. What the Bible shows us is simply "fact, faith, and experience."

## SUMMARY

We know that the Lord Jesus is the Word become flesh. He is the consummation of all divine virtues and the grand total of all perfections. His living is God's living, for He is God Himself. Christ has accomplished salvation on the cross. All those who sincerely accept the Lord Jesus as Lord and Savior, at the moment they believe, God accepts them as He accepted the Lord Jesus. At that time, all the divine virtues and accomplishments of the Lord Jesus come upon the believers. In God's view and before God, they are the same as the Lord Jesus. God sees every Christian as He sees Christ. Christians possess all of Christ's work and accomplishments through their union with Him. This is the "fact" that the Christians have been given by God. This fact was accomplished by Christ for the Christians. This fact is that through the believers' union with the Lord Jesus, everything that belongs to Christ now belongs to His believers also. This is a fact that has been accomplished by God alone; the believers themselves have no share whatever in its accomplishment.

The Bible points out this fact very clearly. The writer of the book of Hebrews uses a particularly simple illustration to point out God's accomplished fact for us. In 9:15-17 what the Lord Jesus has accomplished for us is illustrated by a person's making of a will. A will is a promise of "inheritance" to those who receive the will. But before the one who makes the will dies, the will is not effective. Once the person dies, the recipients of the will can receive the inheritance left by the one who made the will. The Lord Jesus is the One who made the will. He has died. Hence, all that He has promised goes immediately under our name. This is the fact that we have received from Him. Although we may not take possession of the inheritance all at once or enjoy the benefit and sustenance from the inheritance, yet the inheritance is indeed ours; it belongs to us and is under our name already. This is an immovable fact. To have the inheritance is one thing; to enjoy the inheritance is another. The ownership of the inheritance is the "fact," and the enjoyment of the inheritance is the "experience." We have the fact of owning the inheritance, not because of ourselves, but because of the One who has left the will. The possession of the fact comes first. The enjoyment comes afterward.

The teaching of this illustration is very simple. The Lord Jesus has died and has given to us all His righteousnesses, divine virtues, perfections, victories, beauties, and so forth. By these we become the same as He is before God, and God accepts us in the same way that He accepts the Lord. This is what He has given to us. These things are facts from the moment we become Christians. As far as the fact goes,

we are already as perfect as the Lord Jesus. But as far as experience goes, we may not be this way. The meaning of this "fact" is none other than the grace that God has given to us and accomplished for us through the Lord Jesus. This grace has been given to us through our union with the Son of God. It is possible for us to have the fact of inheriting the inheritance without having the experience of enjoying the inheritance. There is a big difference between fact and experience. Many believers are very rich in fact because everything that is God's is theirs. However, in experience they are the poorest because they do not practically use and enjoy their riches. The older son in Luke 15 is a good example of this condition. As far as the fact goes, he was the child who was "always with me, and all that is mine is yours" (v. 31). But as far as experience goes, he never had "a goat that I might be merry with my friends" (v. 29). He was the son of a rich man. This was his position, a fact. Yet it was possible for him not to have enjoyed even a goat. This was his condition, his experience.

We should be very clear concerning the distinction between the fact and the experience. These two things are two different aspects. In the first case, it is what God has accomplished for us; it is the position that God has given to us. In the second case, it is what we practice; it is our enjoyment of what God has given to us. At present, believers tend to go to the extreme. Some (actually the majority) do not know the riches they have in the Lord Jesus. They do not know that everything that the Lord Jesus has accomplished is theirs already. They plan and scheme to secure grace. They try to work out all kinds of righteousnesses by their own strength in order to meet God's demand and satisfy the inclination of their new life. Others (not a few) think that they understand God's grace all too well. They think that the Lord Jesus has already exalted them to a matchless position. They are satisfied already and do not seek to put into practice experientially the grace that they have received from the Lord Jesus. Both kinds of people are wrong. Those who pay attention to experience and forget the facts are bound by the law. Those who pay attention to the facts and despise experience take grace as an excuse for indulgence. On the one hand, a Christian should understand through the Scriptures his lofty position in the Lord Jesus. On the other hand, he should examine under God's light whether or not his walk matches the grace of his calling.

God has placed us in a most lofty position. Through our union with the Lord Jesus, all of the Lord's accomplishments and victories are ours. This is our position in fact. The question now is how we can experience all of the Lord Jesus' accomplishments and victories. Between the fact and the experience, that is, before the fact can be turned into experience, before God's accomplishment can be turned into man's practice, there is still the step of faith.

This step of faith is nothing other than the "utilization" or "management" of the inheritance. The Lord has left us a will. He has died, and the will is now in effect. We should no longer hold an indifferent or unconcerned attitude. Instead we should rise up to "utilize" the inheritance that we have received so that we can enjoy, or experience, the blessing of the inheritance. We are God's children already. All that God has is now ours (1 Cor. 3:21-23). We should not be like the older son who vainly possessed the promises without entering into the enjoyment of them. Due to his foolishness and unbelief, he did not ask nor did he utilize. Hence, he did not have anything. If he would have asked to exercise his right as a son, he would have had not just one goat but thousands upon thousands of them!

What we need now is nothing other than the utilization by faith of what God has promised to us; we should "cash in" by faith what God has prepared for us in the Lord Jesus. For the one who is to inherit a will, there are two things he has to do before he can enjoy and experience the inheritance. First, he has to believe that there is an inheritance. Second, he has to rise wholeheartedly to manage this inheritance. Of course, if one does not believe that there is an inheritance, he will not rise up to manage it. Therefore, we must

first acknowledge that God has indeed made the Lord Jesus our "wisdom...righteousness and sanctification and redemption" (1 Cor. 1:30), that all of the Lord's accomplishments and victories are our accomplishments and victories. If we do not have this faith, not only can we never expect any spiritual experiences, but we are sinning against God and doubting His work! Second, those in the world manage an inheritance with their physical strength. But for us to manage our spiritual inheritance, we have to use our spiritual strength, which is faith. As this spiritual inheritance is already ours, we must advance one step further by faith to "cash in," to utilize, and to manage our inheritance in the Lord Jesus.

In the Old Testament we see another instance which can adequately show us the relationship between fact, faith, and experience. This is the history of the Israelites entering Canaan. In the old days, God promised the land of Canaan to the Israelites. He mentioned this to Abraham, to Isaac, to Jacob, and even to the tens of thousands of people who left Egypt. To God, the land was already given. God promised to fight for them and that they would overcome all their enemies. It was a fact that God had given the land and the peoples of Canaan to the Israelites already. Although the fact was there, they did not yet have the experience. As far as the fact was concerned, the land was theirs already, yet in experience they still did not own an inch of it. This is why they had to "go up at once and possess it," for they were "well able to prevail" (Num. 13:30). However, due to their unbelief, despite the fact that God had given them the land, they were not able to possess it in experience. After one generation, God told Joshua, "Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses" (Josh. 1:3). They were to inherit the land that God had given them with the soles of their feet. Later when they went up, they inherited the land.

This shows us the secret of substantiating the perfection of Christ. God has already given us what Christ "is," "has," and "has done"; they are all ours already. Now what we have to do is to experience all that He is, has, and has done. There is no other way to experience all this except to acknowledge that Canaan is good; if we will realize every inch of God's land with the soles of our feet, we will indeed find ourselves inheriting the land that God has given to us. God gives; we believe and receive. This is fact, faith, and experience.

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