

Faith

by William MacDonald

William MacDonald emphasizes that true faith in God transcends human limitations and is essential for discipleship.

Scripture: Romans 4:18

Topics: "Trust in God", "Faith"

Description

William MacDonald emphasizes that true discipleship is rooted in profound faith in God, which enables believers to undertake great exploits. He illustrates that faith is anchored in God's promises and commands, allowing believers to trust Him implicitly, even in seemingly impossible situations. MacDonald highlights that faith operates beyond human limitations, bringing God into every challenge and dismissing doubts. He encourages disciples to deepen their faith through Scripture, as it is through God's Word that faith is strengthened and tested. Ultimately, faith glorifies God and affirms His trustworthiness, while unbelief limits His power.

Transcript

There can be no true discipleship without profound and unquestioning faith in the living God. He who would do exploits for God must first trust Him implicitly. "All God's giants have been weak men who did great things for God because they reckoned on God being with them"--Hudson Taylor.

Now true faith is always based upon some promise of God, some portion of His Word. This is important. The believer first reads or hears some promise of the Lord. The Holy Spirit takes that promise and applies it to his heart and conscience in a very personal way. The Christian becomes aware that God has spoken to him directly. With utter confidence in the trustworthiness of the One Who has promised, he reckons the promise as sure as if it were already fulfilled, even though, humanly speaking, it is impossible.

Or perhaps it is a commandment rather than a promise. To faith, there is no difference. If God commands, He enables. If He bids Peter to walk on the water, Peter can be sure that the needed power will be given (Matthew 14:28). If He commands us to preach the gospel to every creature, we can be sure of the needed grace (Mark 16:15).

Faith does not operate in the realm of the possible. There is no glory for God in that which is humanly possible. Faith begins where man's power ends. "The province of faith begins where probabilities cease and where sight and sense fail"--George Muller.

Faith says, "If 'impossible' is the only objection, it can be done!"

"Faith brings God into the scene, and therefore it knows absolutely nothing of difficulties--yea, it laughs at impossibilities. In the judgment of faith, God is the grand answer to every question--the grand solution of every difficulty. It refers all to Him; and hence it matters not in the least to faith whether it be six hundred thousand (dollars) or six hundred million; it knows that God is all-sufficient. It finds all its resources in Him. Unbelief says, 'How can such and such things be?' It is full of 'Hows'; but faith has one great answer to ten thousand 'hows,' and that answer is, God"--C. H. Mackintosh.

Humanly speaking, it was impossible for Abraham and Sarah to have a child. But God had promised, and to Abraham there was only one impossibility--that God could lie.

(He) against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations; according to that which was spoken, "So shall thy seed be." And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sara's womb: he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform (Romans 4:18-21).

Faith, mighty faith the promise sees

And looks to God alone;

Laughs at impossibilities

And cries, "It shall be done!"

Our God is the God Who specializes in impossibilities (Luke 1:37). There is nothing too hard for Him (Genesis 18:14). "The things which are impossible with men are possible with God" (Luke 18:27).

Faith claims His promise, "All things are possible to him that believeth" (Mark 9:23), and exults with Paul, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Philippians 4:13).

Doubt sees the obstacles--

Faith sees the way!

Doubt sees the darkest night--

Faith sees the day!

Doubt dreads to take a step--

Faith soars on high,

Doubt questions, "Who believes?"

Faith answers, "I!"

Because faith deals with the supernatural and the divine, it does not always seem to be "reasonable." It was not using "common sense" for Abraham to go out, not knowing where he was going, but simply obeying God's command (Hebrews 11:8). It was not "shrewd" of Joshua to attack Jericho without

death-dealing weapons (Joshua 6:1-20). Men of the world would scoff at such "insanity." But it worked!

Actually, faith is most reasonable. What is more reasonable than that a creature should trust his Creator? Is it insane to believe in One Who can neither lie nor fail nor err? To trust God is the most sensible, sane, rational thing that a man can do. It is no leap in the dark. Faith demands the surest evidence and finds it in God's unfailing Word. No one has ever trusted Him in vain; no one ever will. Faith in the Lord involves no risk whatever.

Faith truly glorifies God; it gives Him His proper place as the One Who is completely trustworthy. On the other hand, unbelief dishonors God; it charges Him with lying (1 John 5:10). It limits the Holy One of Israel (Psalm 78:41).

Faith gives man his proper place also--as a humble suppliant, bowed in the dust before the sovereign Lord of all.

Faith is opposed to sight. Paul reminded us that "we walk by faith and not by sight" (2 Corinthians 5:7). To walk by sight means to have visible means of support, to have adequate reserves for the future, to employ human cleverness in insuring against unseen risks. The walk of faith is the very opposite; it is a moment by moment reliance on God alone. It is a perpetual crisis of dependence on the Lord. The flesh shrinks from a position of complete dependence on an unseen God. It seeks to provide a cushion against possible losses. If it cannot see where it is going, it is apt to suffer complete nervous collapse. But faith steps forward in obedience to the Word of God, rises above circumstances, and trusts the Lord for the supply of all needs.

Any disciple who determines to walk by faith can be sure that his faith will be tested. Sooner or later, he will be brought to the end of his human resources. In his extremity, he will be tempted to appeal to his fellow men. If he is really trusting the Lord, he will look to God alone.

"To make known my wants, directly or indirectly, to a human being, is departure from the life of faith, and a positive dishonor to God. It is actually betraying Him. It is tantamount to saying that God has failed me, and I must look to my fellow for help. It is forsaking the living fountain and turning to a broken cistern. It is placing the creature between my soul and God, thus robbing my soul of rich blessing, and God of the glory due to Him"--C. H. Mackintosh.

The normal attitude of a disciple is to desire an increase in his faith (Luke 17:5). He has already trusted Christ for salvation. Now he seeks to extend the areas of his life which are submitted to the Lord's control. As he faces sickness, trials, tragedies, and bereavements, he comes to know God in a new and more intimate way, and his faith is strengthened. He proves the truth of the promise, "Then shall we know if we follow on to know the Lord" (Hosea 6:3). The more he finds God to be trustworthy, the more anxious he is to trust Him for greater things.

Since faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God, the disciple's desire should be to saturate himself in the Scriptures--to read them, study them, memorize them, meditate upon them day and night. They are his chart and compass, his guide and comfort, his lamp and light.

In the life of faith, there is always room for advancement. When we read of what has been accomplished through faith, we realize that we are like little children, playing at the edge of a boundless ocean. The exploits of faith are given in Hebrews 11. They rise to a magnificent crescendo in verses 32-40:

And what shall I more say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: and others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (of whom the world was not worthy): they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. 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.

One final word! We have already mentioned that a disciple who walks by faith will doubtless be considered a dreamer or a fanatic by men of the world or even by other Christians. But it is good to remember that "the faith that enables one to 'walk with God' enables him also to attach the proper values to the thoughts of men"--C. H. Mackintosh.

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