

# The True Discipleship Broadcast-1983-13 True Discipleship

by William MacDonald

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*The life of faith is a life of trusting and obeying God, even when we don't understand or see the outcome.*

**Duration:** 25:41

**Scripture:** Genesis 4:4-5, Genesis 6:22, Hebrews 11:3-4, Hebrews 11:7-8

**Topics:** "True Discipleship"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the concept of faith and its connection to the creation of the world. He explains that faith is understanding that God spoke and the world came into being, which aligns with scientific principles. The speaker also emphasizes the importance of faith in the lives of believers, particularly at the time of death. He encourages Christians to be content with their temporary existence on earth, knowing that everything ultimately belongs to them as children of God. The sermon also touches on the story of Cain and Abel, highlighting the need for an atoning sacrifice to approach a holy God.

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## Transcript

Now, the writer to the Hebrews, he wants to talk about the life of faith, and he says, where shall we begin? And he says, well, let's begin at creation. Verse three. By faith we understand.

What do we understand? The worlds were framed by the word of God. What does that mean? It means God spoke, and the world came into being. Is that scientific? I don't care whether it's scientific or not, but it's true, and it just happens to be scientific, too.

Because, some years ago, Einstein came out with his famous formula, and his formula says, E equals MC squared. Now, you can live a normal life without knowing that, but basically what it says is, energy equals matter times the square of light. Or just let me simplify it.

What it really says is, energy equals matter. That's what this says. Energy.

God spoke. Matter came into being. Speaking is energy.

Power in the word of God. God spoke, and matter came into being. So, I see nothing unscientific in this at all.

Although, don't tell them at the University of California they might not like it. By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible. How true! How true! How many years has it been since we knew about the atom, and the neutron, and the proton, and a lot of other invisible things that go to make up matter.

The things that are seen are not made of things that do appear. Absolutely true. So, to me, this verse is very, very satisfying, and I don't think it can be improved on.

So, then it goes over to Cain and Abel. Now, it doesn't say this in the Bible, but sometime in their lives, those fellows learned that a holy God can only be approached by sinful men on the basis of an atoning sacrifice. I don't know where they learned that, or how they learned it.

Probably through their parents telling them about the coats of skin. But I know they knew. I know they knew that the proper way to approach God was through a sacrificial animal.

An offering to God of an animal, where the blood has been shed. Cain said, well, I never did care about that slaughterhouse religion, and he came with his basket of fruit and vegetables. And Abel probably said, well, I don't understand all the theological intricacies of atonement by blood, but God said it, and I'm going to do it.

And as a result of that, if you read by faith, Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous. God testifying of his gift, and through it he is dead, you'll see. How did Abel manifest faith? By believing the revelation that God had given to them.

Although the verse doesn't say it, it presupposes a definite revelation of God didn't hold Cain responsible for something he didn't know about, did he? Cain knew that he was acting in disobedience to God. He was the beginning of the whole world of salvation by work. He's the one who started it all.

He was the original modernist, the original liberal. I like the last part of the verse. It says that the life of faith enables you to go on talking long after your body has returned to dust in the grave.

Isn't that a wonderful thing? Abel still talks to us today. What does he say? Faith is a friend. The right life is a life of faith.

Believe God and you won't make any mistakes. The next man is Enoch. What's the story with Enoch? Well, once again, the Bible doesn't say it in so many words, but it presupposes that sometimes, in Enoch's life, God came to him and said, Enoch, you're never going to die.

I'm going to take you to heaven without dying. Well, really, that was a blockbuster, because up till that time in the history of the world, everybody had died or was in the process of dying. And if Enoch had gone down to the local library and checked the encyclopedias, he never could have found a record of anybody being translated to heaven without dying.

There was no instance of it in human history. But God said it, and Enoch believed it. And one day he was out walking, and God took him home to heaven without dying.

And that's what this verse says, by faith Enoch was translated so that he did not see death. And was not found because God had translated him. They went looking for him, and they couldn't find him.

There was no trace of his body. For before his translation, he had this testimony that he pleased God. How did he please God? By a life of devoted service? No, by believing God.

By taking God at his word. What word? The word that he'd never die. Translated.

Now, you and I believe that we might be translated. Behold, I show you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed.

In a moment, as the twinkling of an eye at the last trumpet shall sound, the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. You and I believe that. We believe it, because God said it.

But it's not of much credit to you and I to believe it, as it was to Enoch. Because we can say, well, it's happened at least twice in the history of the world before. It's happened twice, it can happen three times.

You know, Enoch and Elijah went to heaven without dying. We know that. We can go to the Bible and see a historical precedent for it.

So, no big deal for us to believe it. Enoch didn't have that to look back to, did he? He had the bare, naked word of God, and he believed it, because God said it. And he pleased God.

Now, verse six says, without faith it's impossible to please him. I don't blame God for that. I tell you something, and you say to me, I don't believe you.

What do you say? I say, you're a liar. When God says something and man says, I don't believe it, what do they say? They say, God is a liar. God doesn't like to be called a liar.

He's the only person in the universe who can't lie, can't tell an untruth, can't deceive, can't be deceived. The only one whose word is absolutely trustworthy. And when a person doubts him, believes not, as John says in his first epistle, he makes God a liar.

It's a serious thing, isn't it? A serious thing. Without faith, it's impossible to please him. He who comes to God must believe he is.

You must believe in the existence of God, but that isn't enough. You must believe that he's a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. That means you must not only believe that God exists, but you must believe that he'll do what he says he'll do.

In other words, he says, He that heareth my word and believeth on him that sent me hath everlasting life. You must believe that when he says that, and you do it, you have everlasting life. That he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

God cannot go back on his word. It's a moral impossibility for God to lie. Then it goes on to Noah.

This is remarkable, too. God appears to Noah. We know this because it's stated.

God says to Noah, Noah, I'm going to destroy the earth with a flood. And Noah could have said, what's a flood for? Because up until that time in the history of the world, as far as we know, not only has there been no flood, we don't even think it had rained up until that time. The ground had been watered by a mist that came upon it.

And now God says to Noah, Noah, I want you to build an ark. I'm going to destroy the world with a flood, but I want you to build an ark for the salvation of yourself and your household. And here Noah went to work, building a landlocked ark, and preaching to the people of his generation.

He's called a preacher of righteousness. A foolish thing, wasn't it? Building an ark, and no water to float it in. And I don't doubt that Noah was really ridiculed, and I'd like to tell you that there is that about the life of faith that might make them look ridiculous to others.

I see Noah being divinely warned of things not yet seen. That expression, not yet seen, could have two meanings. It could mean that there never had been a flood, or it could mean that the flood hadn't come yet.

It wouldn't come for 120 years. Moved with fear, moved with godly fear, that's it. Well, you have to admire these men because, you know, they didn't have a Bible.

They didn't have a concordance. They didn't have commentary. God just spoke to them.

They said, well, that's all I need, just the word of God. I'll plant my feet on the word of God, believe it, and leave the consequences with him. He prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world.

And really, the life of faith does condemn the world. It really does. The world doesn't like it, doesn't understand it, doesn't understand it, and doesn't like it either.

But there is that about faith which condemns the world. And he became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith. In other words, he was justified, he was reckoned righteous because of his faith in the Lord.

Now, I should pause here to say, faith is not meritorious. I think you've probably been over this. Maybe we've been over it before.

But this is a good place to start saying, faith is not a meritorious work. And I say that because, you know, we say to the unsaved, you don't have to do anything to be saved. All you have to do is believe.

And they look at you as if you've lost your marbles because you've just stated a contradiction to them. You don't have to do anything to be saved. All you have to do is believe.

What we mean by the second portion of that paradox is that believing is not a meritorious work. You don't earn or deserve your salvation. You simply believe the Lord.

And you can't pat yourself on the back because you believe the Lord. You'd be a fool not to. That's why it says in Romans 3 that faith excludes boasting.

Nobody will boast in heaven. Well, nice going, McDonald's. You got here by your faith.

I'm crazy not to put my faith in the Lord. Anybody else is crazy not to. Because his word is absolutely sure.

He became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith. Then it says, by faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would afterward receive as an inheritance. And he went out not knowing where he went.

Here is Abraham. You might call him a pagan, a heathen, you know, living in darkest Mesopotamia, Ur of the Chaldeans. God appears to him and says, Abraham, I'm calling you.

I want you to leave your country, leave your kindred. I'm not going to tell you where I'm going to take you, but I'm going to lead you. Great, Abraham.

We should ponder positively that God has spoken and I'll trust his eyesight rather than my own. I'd rather walk in the dark with God than walk alone in the light. Then he went out not knowing where he was going.

That was pretty good. Pretty good. He had the word of God.

If you have the word of God, you don't have to worry. God has the map. You don't have to have it.

And I think there are times in life when God leads us this way too. This was a crucial verse in my life at a crossroad and I had to do that. I had to step out not knowing what lay ahead and when I did, God showed me the way he wanted me to go.

There's no risk in believing God, in obeying the call of God. By faith he sojourned in the land of promises in a foreign country. This is Canaan.

You know, it's wonderful. This verse is beautiful to me because God brought him into Canaan and said, look, it's all yours. Yet Abraham came into that country and he really never settled.

He never settled. He lived in tents all the time. He lived as a pilgrim in a land that belonged to him.

Always going through his mind, God has something better than this. God has something better than this for me. Now just be content to live in tents here.

You know, I think that is a voice for us today. There's a sense in which all this world belongs to us. Did you know that? Did you know when you go down through the San Joaquin Valley that it all belongs to you? I mean, the farmers are keeping it for you.

Someday you're going to come into possession of it when the Lord Jesus comes back to reign. He says, all things are yours. And ye are Christ's and Christ is God's.

And there's a sense in which the United Airlines operates for the children of God and which the garbage collection takes place for the children of God. A lot of other people benefit by it, but the wheel turns for God's people. This world is ours.

And it really pleases God when he sees Christians say, well, thank you very much, Lord. I'll just be content to live in a pilgrim here. But that's what this is.

Dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs of hymns of the same promise. I tell you, that's faith. That's faith.

You know, we used to sing a lot of hymns about pilgrimage, and they're largely gone from our hymn books. They've been dropped. They've been purposely dropped, my dear, because we don't listen to them anymore.

Call from above and heavenly men by birth, who once were but the citizens of earth. One of those hymns. We would not seek a home on earth which gave him but a grave.

Thy cross has severed ties which bind us here. Thyself our treasure in a brighter sphere. This is the language of faith.

World is a wilderness wide. I've nothing to choose or to hate. I've no thought in this waste to abide, Darby wrote.

This is the treasure I found in his love that has made me a pilgrim below. Now, that was what Abraham was saying, and I think that's wonderful. It all belonged to him, and yet it says, by faith he sojourned in the land of promises as in a foreign country, an alien country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs of him of the same promise.

Everywhere he went, he lived in a tent himself that built an altar for God. Boy, some of us live in pretty fancy tents, don't we? Why? It says he looked for the city. If it doesn't say that in your Bible, it should.

In the King James, in the old King James, it says he looked for a city. But it really should say he looked for THE city. Why? Because there's only one city that has foundation.

That's why. He looked for THE city which has foundation. The builder and maker is God.

Dear friends, how much would you give for the foundations of San Francisco today? Frankly, I wouldn't give a nickel. I wouldn't be surprised if God would send a storm or an earthquake someday and drop it into the ocean. I really wouldn't.

I wouldn't give very much for the foundations of Chicago or New York today, or Washington D.C. either. There is a city, THE city, which has foundation. That's the only city worth having your eyes on.

I like that. THE city which has foundation. Then it says whose builder and maker is God.

That's a bit confusing. Builder and maker say the same thing to us in English. It really is whose architect and builder is God.

Whose architect is the architect of creation. Creation existed in the mind of God before it ever existed in fact. I think that's wonderful.

That's true of any of our modern buildings, isn't it? You know, the architect sees it before it ever exists. And he designs it. And then it comes into being.

This is true of God. He's the architect. I think that's what it means in Colossians 1 when it says all things were created.

There were three different prepositions there. I might have gone over this before. It says in him were all things created.

They were created through him. And they were created for him. And I think when it says that in him, in the Lord Jesus, all things were created, that means he was the architect.

They were created through him or by him. He was the active agent. And they were created for him.

He was the object of their creation. Beautiful. He waited for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God.

Then it says, By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she was half the age, because she judged him faithful to his promise. Now, when you come to Sarah, we've got to admit, and it's true with every one of us, faith has its lapses. It does.

Faith has lapses, and it lapses in Sarah's life, and in Abraham's life, too. These people weren't perfect any more than we're perfect. But, true faith continues to the end, just the same, in spite of lapses.

True faith has the quality of permanence. And God comes to Abraham and to Sarah, and promises that she is going to bear a child. She's half the time.

It's impossible. But I tell you, it must have really created a stir in that village, when dear Sarah went out, and people saw her. She was obviously the child.

Ninety-year-old woman was the child. That's why I said before, faith deals in the realm of the impossible. God says it, and makes it possible.

Doesn't it? She received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she was past the age. Of course, he was a child of miracle birth, that's all. I think that's why she's called Abraham's only son, either.

Unique son, either. She bore a child when she was past the age, because she judged him faithful to her promise. Therefore, from one man, and him as good as dead, were born as many as the stars of the sky in multitude, innumerable as the sand which is by the sea shore.

In other words, Abraham and Sarah believed, God gave them child, and through that child, a vast progeny. These all died in faith. This is beautiful.

They all died believing. Not having received the promises. When it says, not having received the promises, it means not having received the fulfillment of the promises.

They received the promises, but what it really means is they didn't see the promises fulfilled. You have to supply that. Of course, they received the promises, but they didn't see the fulfillment of all the promises.

For instance, God made a promise to Abraham of the land stretching from the Mediterranean to the Euphrates, but Abraham didn't see the fulfillment of that promise. He died in faith. To him, it was just as sure as if he had already received it.

That's what it means, he died in faith. Not having received the promises, but having seen them afar, were assured of them, embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on earth. And in some versions, this is very beautiful, it makes me think of people standing on a pier, and a great ocean liner is coming in, you know, and they're peering to see their relatives on the deck, and they're waving to them.

And it seems to me that these people who died in faith, they didn't see the fulfillment of the promises, but they waved at them. They were so real to them, that they embraced them. They greeted them from afar.

And you know, it's especially good at the time of death, because sometimes at the time of death, you know, your physical and mental abilities wane, but their faith didn't swing. They were assured of them, they embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. That's really beautiful.

For those who say such things, declare plainly that they seek a homeland. In other words, the Old Testament saints did have a heavenly hope. There's no question about it.

The main promises of the Old Testament were earthly promises, material blessings in earthly places. The main promises. But they did have a heavenly hope.

And this brings it out very clearly. They declare plainly that they seek a homeland. They could have gone back to the country they came from.

Nothing to stop them. But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.

Mark it down. Wherefore God is not ashamed to be called the God of people who take him at his word. Take him at his word, God is not ashamed to be called your God.

I guess there's plenty of reasons why he could be ashamed to be called one God. Plenty of reasons. But he's not.

He's pleased by people who take him at his word, who believe it, because he says it. And again I say, there's no risk. It's sensible.

Believe God. He says it. Believe it.

Launch out on full surrender time. This is absolutely basic in the life of discipleship. Faith.

You can hardly go on and grow as a disciple of the Lord Jesus without having a faith that's growing too. Claiming new territory for God is a life of faith.

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