

The Quality of Faith

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

GRACE PUBLICATIONS

P.O. BOX 18715

BALTIMORE, MD 21206

Printed in Baltimore, Maryland, U.S.A.

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INTRODUCTION

If there is one thing a Christian must implement in his daily life, it is faith. Faith responds to a spiritual muscle that must be exercised, and exercised often.

Unfortunately, many people mistakenly think that they must acquire a certain *quantity* of faith. Even Peter once asked Jesus to give him more faith. But God isn't asking us to stockpile faith. Instead, He desires that we have a certain *quality* of faith.

Quality faith will continue to grow and develop according to the capacity of the believer. This kind of faith knows no limits, and it triumphs in all situations. Quality faith cannot be defeated or discouraged.

This booklet will show that the quality of faith that God is looking for brings out the best in us and in others. And when we operate in that quality of faith, which is in fact the faith of Jesus Christ, the love of God is shed abroad in

our hearts and shared with the world.

Chapter One

TRAINED IN THE ETERNAL VALUE SYSTEM

“But this I say, brethren, the time is short...”
(1 Corinthians 7:29a).

“For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;

“While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal” (2 Corinthians 4:17-18).

“Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?

“Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Where-withal shall we be clothed?

“(For after all these things do the Gentiles

seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.

“But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

“Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof” (Matthew 6:30-34).

If, in his day, the apostle Paul wrote that the time is short, just imagine how much closer to the end of time we are today. Yes, the time is short. That is why it is so important to maintain an eternal purpose and avoid living under the world’s temporal value system.

Second John, verse 8, warns Christians to “look to yourselves that we lose not those things which we have wrought.” This verse refers to the eternal benefits we have accumulated through an eternal purpose and an eternal value system.

Many people are quick to judge God’s value system as impractical and uneconomical in this day and age. Even in Jesus’ time, many of those who were called to follow Him came up with very “practical” excuses for why they could not (Luke 14:18-20). In the end, however, though

they may enter the kingdom of heaven by grace through the faith that saved them, many will suffer loss of rewards and be ashamed because they did not continue to exercise that faith. *

An eternal value system counsels us to seek God's Kingdom and His righteousness first. In Matthew 6:30-34 and Luke 12:22-34, Jesus addressed the disciples because they had expressed anxiety about whether their practical needs would be met. They were fearful and they worried because they did not understand the scope of the Father's care. This is the world's way of thinking.

Many people lose everything they might have gained spiritually because they enter into the world's way of thinking, which is based on a temporal value system. They forget God's promise in Matthew 6:33, that when we put God first, He will be faithful to add unto us all that we need and much more. Chances are, they have never made a proper commitment to study the Word of God, and they never learned to trust God and to obey what He has said. That is why it is so vital for us to be knit in the Body of Christ, as members in particular, and to be established in a local church under a pastor-teacher who teaches the entire Bible, according to Isaiah 28:10

and 2 Timothy 2:15. That is where we receive our continuing instruction in the school of faith.

Seekers Rewarded

The one thing we must train ourselves in through the Word of God is the school of faith. Faith is the substantiation of things hoped for and evidence of things not yet seen. Without faith, it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:1, 6). He rewards those who diligently seek Him because He is constantly looking for a quality of faith that is exercised in the eternal value system of seeking His Kingdom.

For this reason, the New Testament is filled with passages about Jesus looking for evidence of faith. In Matthew 8:23-27, He was sailing across the sea with His disciples and He fell asleep. A terrible storm kicked up suddenly, and the waves began to swamp the boat. The disciples became so frightened that they had to wake Jesus up out of a sound sleep. To the storm, He said, "Peace, be still" (or, more accurately, "Hush, be muzzled!") and the storm ceased. To the disciples, He said, "O ye of little faith" (verse 26).

"Little" faith springs from a small soul that is dull of understanding and dull of hearing. It is

a faith that does not practice the action of faith. When we were saved by grace through faith, we didn't realize that it was our faith that caused God to impute His righteousness to us.

Abraham's Dilemma

Abraham, the father of our faith, had a problem. He and his wife Sarah were getting old—way beyond childbearing years—and they still had not produced the child God promised them. Oh, he had tried to do it on his own, but he ended up with a wild man, Ishmael, the son of Sarah's handmaid. Regretful and ashamed, he did not communicate with God for thirteen years. Yet, Abraham believed God.

“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 4:19-21).

Abraham's faith did not waver toward the promise God had given him (see Romans 9:9).

He was persuaded that God was able to perform what He promised.

Faith Is Developed

We need to train ourselves in the school of faith. We need to develop our faith in the Word, our faith in the Lord and Savior, and our faith obedience when faced with difficult situations. For example, I want to go forward in faith; therefore I must train myself to be a student of faith, a consistent faith responder, and a great faith initiator.

We have such a privilege because the righteousness of God is revealed in us as we go from faith to faith (Romans 1:17). His righteousness was given not only to Abraham, but also to us. Therefore, when we get on our knees and hear from God, we receive from His Word, which reveals His character. Then we can personally demonstrate objective faith in the plan and the Planner, because He has a history of always being faithful.

**To understand more about the Christian's gain or suffering loss of rewards in heaven, be sure to read The Bema Seat: Presented in Joy or Grief? by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 1996.*

Chapter Two

FULLNESS IN MAXIMUM FAITH

“For he was a good man, and full of the Holy [Spirit] and of faith: and much people was added unto the Lord” (Acts 11:24).

Acts 11:23-24 refers to Barnabas, an ambassador of God in the early Church, as one who was filled with joy and encouragement, having the fullness of faith. In 2 Thessalonians 1:3, Paul writes of brethren whose faith was growing “exceedingly” (*huperauxano* in the Greek), and it means that their faith increased beyond measure. Hebrews 10:22 describes a “full assurance of faith” (*plerophoria* in the Greek) that could be defined as “faith to the maximum.” God says we can operate in maximum faith, which speaks of quality, not quantity. As a result, we will experience the “riches of faith” (James 2:5) and enter into a superabundance of spiritual wealth as we go from faith to faith to faith.

As an individual believer, I am learning as a

student in the school of faith, developing my gift of faith. I want to have the maximum of faith for every subject, every need, every situation, and each person that I deal with.

“Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him.

“And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him.

“And the apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith.

“And the Lord said, If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you” (Luke 17:3-6).

Peter wanted a faith increase, but Jesus answered him, saying, “There you go again—always wanting more. You don’t need more faith; you just need the right quality of faith. The mustard seed grows into an amazingly large tree from just a very small seed.”

Persistence with Power

The story of the Syrophenician woman in Matthew 15 is one of the great faith stories in the

Bible. She came to Jesus, begging for deliverance for her demon-possessed daughter. The disciples told her not to bother Jesus, and He just kept silent, seeming to ignore her.

The woman was desperate, so she kept asking Him for help until He met her pleas with the statement that He didn't come to help Gentile dogs. The woman would not give up and said, "Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table. Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour" (Matthew 15:27-28).

Jesus kept challenging this woman's faith and she kept answering the challenge. Oh, how He longed to find faith like that among the children of Israel! The Syrophenician woman had developed a faith that would not be hindered by delays. She developed a faith that would not be squelched by silence. She developed a faith that could not be robbed of its fulfillment simply by the disciples' discouragement. As Abraham had faith without encouragement, so this woman had faith without encouragement, and I am sure that the Lord could hardly wait to answer her cries.

We all need to go to the school of faith. We need to develop the gift of faith that we all have received. Learn to have more than faith in salvation and faith in good messages. God wants you to have a personal and living faith in a personal, living God that will bring personal results in the moments of time you have, according to the precious will of God.

Chapter Three

REVEALING THE RADIANCE WITHIN

“Then touched he their eyes, saying, According to your faith be it unto you” (Matthew 9:29)

Faith is the one thing that receives what it needs from the hand of God. Furthermore, God honors the hand of faith as it stretches out and opens up to receive with expectation from Him.

In the school of faith, our hearts are developed in the life of faith as we grow in the Word of faith. The goal is to have maximum faith that operates without subjectivity, without presumption, and without becoming crystallized in a form of emotional, religious movements. Maximum faith is based on the reality and premise of God’s promises. Not one word of all His good promise has failed (1 Kings 8:56).

Seeing versus Seeing Clearly

“And he took the blind man by the hand,

and led him out of the town; and when he had spit on his eyes, and put his hands upon him, he asked him if he saw ought.

“And he looked up, and said, I see men as trees, walking.

“After that he put his hands again upon his eyes, and made him look up: and he was restored, and saw every man clearly” (Mark 8:23-25).

Jesus did three different things with this blind man that He didn’t do with anyone else He healed. First, He put His hands upon the blind man’s eyes and asked, “What do you see?” The man said he saw men as trees walking. In other words, the man’s vision was still blurred.

This man’s healing was not spontaneous. His healing came slowly.

Then, Jesus did something unique. He put His hands on the man’s eyes again. This time, he said he could see “clearly.” The literal definition of the compound word *telaugos*, translated as “clearly,” in Mark 8:25, is “far and with radiance”—to see even at a distance, with the clarity that comes with the brightness of the daylight.

Warming Up Faith

The thing I love about that account is the part about seeing men as trees. Trees without

their leaves have plenty of sap inside, but there is nothing to show that on the outside. They are dull and somewhat ugly looking. They are just waiting for the sunshine and warmth to bring out their radiance. So many Christians are in this state. They just need the warmth of the Son to help them become someone who operates in a faith that serves by love (Galatians 5:6). As a result, the radiance of the life they have within will show forth as their inner resources are tapped and they begin to pour out.

Lewis Sperry Chafer, a great theologian and former chancellor of Dallas Theological Seminary, was challenged by some of the evangelists of his day. He was a man who at that point had not actively engaged in winning souls outside of preaching salvation by grace through faith from the pulpit. So he responded to the challenge and made a trip to New York's Bowery. There he encountered a drunkard staggering around with his bottle, just outside of the neighborhood's mission.

Chafer began talking to the man, and confessed how poorly he had cared for men's souls, even as the president of a great Bible seminary. It turned out that the drunkard was a backslidden pastor who had been told by his denomination

that he was no longer fit for the ministry.

Within an hour, Chafer was embracing the man despite his filthy, unlovely condition. Chafer gave him a new suit of clothes and put him up in a nearby house. Later, he brought him to the seminary in Dallas, and soon the man was back in the pulpit. An hour's encounter restored this pastor. He was an ugly looking tree who just needed a bit of sunshine—a bit of warmth from a man of God.

This is how we need to view the people we see who are living in deep sin. Some of these folks may never repent, but some just need the warmth of the sunshine and to have their eyes opened, so they can see clearly. We are not called to judge them, but like Barnabas, we are called to bring them the Gospel, and to be filled with joy, hope, and encouragement.

Some marriages are like trees without leaves, trees without buds, trees frozen by winter's harsh conditions. These marriages are barren of faith. More problems occur when couples who profess to be saved enter into a temporal value system, which is measured by the things they achieve in this lifetime instead of the rewards they will gather in eternity. Sadly, in many marriages there are individuals who will not get

right no matter what they hear. They will not receive or become accountable stewards who reflect the gift of eternal life that God has unconditionally given to them forever. They could be so free if they would simply receive a gift of faith to operate in an eternal value system.

Ministry of Faith

I think of the various churches I have pastored over the years and all the folks who have been saved in those places. I would not trade any of those souls for all the money in the world. I just thank God that we, as a ministry, have played a part in going out and bringing the sunlight of God, the sunshine of love, and the rain of blessing to some barren looking trees in need.

In particular, I recall a truck driver—a big, rough looking guy, known for his cursing. He listened to our radio program, got saved, and became a man with such a sweet, tender confession and a sweet, tender life. He was just an ugly looking tree that needed someone to bring the love of God to him.

We have seen prostitutes and drug addicts get saved, come to church, and never carry the label of prostitute or addict again. Someone took

the time to go to them with the light and love of God, and to keep going back, loving the unlovely. Sometimes it didn't appear that they would ever change. But change they did.

We have a great ministry of faith—a faith that serves by love, a faith that operates by trusting God, a faith that will not look at self, a faith that will not let circumstances or people rob it of what God has promised and what He will do. We have a faith that will be pure until we meet God face to face. God's faith: this is what God's people need.

CONCLUSION

Enter into God's school of faith. Develop a personal faith in a personal Savior, for a personal provision, a personal power, a personal peace, a personal purity, and a personal protection. Learn to refrain from saying anything that doesn't have faith in it. Do not receive things that don't involve faith.

By faith, the righteousness of God Himself is revealed. The goodness of God, the greatness of God, and the kindness of God are revealed from faith to faith to faith. The glory of God's nature is reflected by this faith.

God offers us the quality of faith that allows a terminally ill person to overcome the accusations of the devil, though he may not be healed. It really doesn't matter how broke a person is if his faith in God is greater than his financial circumstances.

The school of faith can give us a quality of faith in a great, big, glorious God. This quality

of faith pleases Him, and by it He rewards all those who diligently seek Him.