

HAVE FAITH IN GOD

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SCRIPTURE: Mark 11:20-24

And in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots. And Peter calling to remembrance saith unto him, Master, behold, the fig tree which thou cursedst is withered away. And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God. For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith. Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.

Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.

No worth while human accomplishment can be achieved without faith. You would not have bothered to tune in this radio program if you had not had faith that it is possible to transmit the sound of my voice through the air. No man would point a telescope at the heavens or a microscope at minute living bodies unless he believed that by searching he could find them, and by study could know something about them. No man would lay the foundation of a building unless he believed that the building could be and would be built. No man would plant seed unless he had faith in the harvest. No man would ever try to devise a new machine or a new gadget, unless he had faith that some day he could complete his invention. No man could ever discover a new principle of science unless he first had faith that the principle was there waiting to be discovered. No man would ever marry a woman unless he had faith in her. No man would ever bother to pray unless he had faith in God's power to answer prayer.

Even in the scientific realm, where men are supposed to deal only with hard, cold, measurable facts, faith is a supremely important ingredient. Among scientific men who are searching for truth, it is commonplace for them to gather all the facts they can, arrange those facts in logical order, and then to formulate a hypothesis which will explain those facts and their relationship to each other and to the whole body of known scientific truth. Oftimes the scientist must go as far as he can, formulate a hypothesis, and then make a leap into darkness on faith. If he lands on a new truth which checks with the known facts, well and good. If he fails, he again checks his facts, and leaps into the dark again. When the trend of facts seems to point in a certain direction, it is often necessary for him to take the leap into darkness, to see where it will bring him; or in other words, it is necessary to set up a reasonable hypothesis on the basis of the available evidence, and then ACT AS IF THAT HYPOTHESIS WERE TRUE. Sir Oliver Lodge once said of Isaac Newton, for instance, that "he had an extraordinary faculty for guessing correctly."

Paul expresses this same thought in different language in giving his definition of faith in Hebrews 11:1: "Now faith is the substance (margin: assurance, ground, or confidence) of things hoped for; the evidence of things not seen." Moffat's translation of the same verse reads: "Now faith means that we are confident of what we hope for, convinced of what we do not see." Faith is not expecting the impossible, but a means of achieving the natural and reasonable. Faith is not overcoming God's reluctance, but adjusting ourselves to God's willingness. Faith does not give us sudden possession of some magical or miraculous power, but it does enable us to tap the vast reservoirs of power which flow to us through the operation of God's natural and spiritual laws.

Faith is not simple credulity or gullibility. It is based on reason, on facts, but it goes beyond known facts. And when the leap into the unknown is successful, when experience bears out the hypothesis upon which we have acted, our faith becomes knowledge, and faith is strengthened for another and a further venture. But unless

the venture is made, there is no vindication of faith. "Faith cometh not by signs, but signs follow the believer." Men who will not believe without a sign would not believe if they witnessed a hundred miracles, Pharaoh was unconvinced by all the miracles of Moses. But on the other hand, every day in countless lines of activity and research, men of faith who do not yet know act on their faith and achieve results which to their skeptical and unbelieving fellows are miraculous.

In our scripture reading we have read the words of Jesus to Peter: "Have faith in God." The object of our faith must be God -- the Creator, Sustainer, and Ruler of the universe in which we live, the Giver of all life. Paul says that "without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." We can expect no answer to our seeking, our asking, our knocking, unless we believe that there is Someone on the other side of the door who will open it and answer our petition. If we do not have faith in a Lawgiver, we have no faith in law; and unless we obey law, Nature casts us out and destroys us.

The man of faith places his faith in God because he has seen God and God's nature and power revealed through Jesus Christ, and in that revelation he has found a God who is worthy of man's faith. He is worthy of our faith because he is omniscient, a God who knows all, from beginning to end. He is a God of power, omnipotent in all the infinity of creation. He is just; we can always depend on him to do the right thing, to judge evil, to recompense the righteous, to make all things right, even though they have been topsy-turvey during our stay on this sin-cursed world.

We can have faith in him because he is not only just, but merciful, not dealing with us according to our sins, but according to his grace, if we manifest a willingness to receive his grace and mercy. We can have faith in him because he is a God of truth; we can depend upon his word. We can have faith in him because we see in Jesus Christ and his resurrection the power of God manifested to save men from death and hell.

The amount of faith is not important. Jesus said that he who had faith as a grain of mustard seed should be able to move mountains. It is not man's faith which moves the mountain, but God's power released by that faith. Faith is the simple but necessary ingredient which fits and prepares man to receive that which God has to give. It is the light which illumines the pathway and enables men to walk one step at a time, even though they cannot see the distant goal. It is the incentive which spurs men to work, confident that their work will ultimately have meaning and be crowned with success, even though they cannot immediately see how that success will come. It is the assurance that nothing which can happen to us in the universe can separate us from God's love and care. Faith is the principle which saves men from sin, from death, from despair, from frustration, from madness. Even if you have only a little, use it; and it will prove its worth by the results; it will grow brighter and brighter until the perfect day brings full realization of all your hopes.

If you are bewildered by the suffering and trials of life; if you are beset by some overwhelming temptation or besetting sin, if you are troubled by some problem which you cannot solve alone, or some task which is too big for you to accomplish in your own strength, hear the words of Jesus: "Have faith in God." If you have a deep, abiding, unassailable faith in him, you will be granted the strength and the wisdom you need for each day. It may be that in his wisdom he will require you to go on suffering, to go on fighting temptation, to go on bearing some burden of sorrow or perplexity, to go on working at your problem. But your faith will unlock the power, the love, the wisdom, the mercy, the salvation of God, who according to the experience of a multitude of witnesses in all ages can be trusted to the uttermost.