

FAITH

Paul N. Smith

"And Jesus answering saith unto them. Have faith in God (Have the faith of God - RV.). 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 that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith" - Mark 11:22, 23.

We are impressed with Jesus' words concerning faith. Faith connects us with God, and brings into reality the promises of God. Faith is life. By faith we begin, and by faith we finish. "The just shall live by faith" - Romans 1:17. There is power in believing God that perhaps we have not yet discovered to the degree which would be pleasing to God.

In the above quoted Scriptures, and also in the succeeding verses, we will note the authority that Jesus gives to faith. According to Mark's record we read that, if we would not doubt but believe, we could say to a mountain, "Move!" and it would. Matthew's record reads, in answer to the apostles' query as to why they could not cure the lunatic, "And Jesus said unto them. Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you. If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you" - Matthew 17:20. Luke's record reads, "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 17:5,6.

By these verses, we see that faith is authority. Faith does not beg nor plead, but commands. Faith does not "pray," but instead "says." Note Jesus' exact words, "Ye shall SAY," not pray. Thus, faith is not a supplicant; but it is a sovereign, even as God is Sovereign. Faith demands obedience and receives it. Faith takes the throne, and everything else becomes its subject. Every need, every situation, becomes subject to faith's command. To have the faith of God means to be like God in the matter of authority. Jesus did not tell the disciples to say to the mountain, "Please, move mountain, would you?" They were to command, "Move!"

Of course, we would point out that Jesus is not teaching us to promiscuously command unreasonable subjection - that is not real faith. He is teaching the principle of faith, and uses the mountain and the tree to illustrate His point. He had only the day before cursed the fig tree. The disciples marveled that it had dried so quickly from the roots upward. Faith has authority, and nothing can withstand its command. Prayer is the place of communion with God where we learn His will and receive strength to exercise faith. Faith is really the result of prayer.

What does faith do? Faith is always active. It Claims not only blessing upon the one who has faith, but it gives that one power to bless. We may seek a blessing from our Father, but faith goes further and demands blessing for others. We may hear of a needy saint, and immediately faith springs to action - "Bless him!" He is blessed, though hundreds of

miles may separate the two. Faith knows no distance. Faith knows no impossibility. "All things are possible to him that believeth" - Mark 9:23.

Faith unites us to God so that we pass beyond the wonderful privilege of asking Him for something to the power of demanding. Sometimes we cease to plead for God to intervene; and we rise to the place of equality and demand the thing to be done. Faith lifts us from cringing servitude to fearless sovereignty. We learn the mind of God through constant communion with Him, and then exercise faith by commanding His will be done. The sovereignty of faith is manifest in the moving of heaven and earth to perform God's edict.

In the beginning God said, "Let there be light!" Or, as the Hebrew says, "Be light, and light was!" He did not plead with the light to come and dispel the darkness. He did not bemoan the fact that there was darkness on the face of the earth. God used His sovereignty and said, "Let there be light!" It was a simple but powerful command, yet light appeared. Jesus said, "Have the faith of God." Moaning and groaning never brings the answer. Looking at the need never makes it disappear. Faith demands the answer.

Lest someone might misunderstand and think we were advocating a complete sovereignty within ourselves and independence of God, we say: FAITH BOWS TO THE WILL OF GOD. Faith is the execution of God's will. We could never exercise faith apart from what God desires. If there is a definite need, we have the blessed privilege and the authority to demand the answer

An example of this is found in Luke 8:22-25. Jesus and His disciples had boarded a ship and were crossing a lake. Jesus fell asleep; and when a storm arose, and they were in jeopardy of drowning, they wakened Jesus by fearfully exclaiming, "We perish! We perish!" Jesus arose and rebuked the winds and waves and there was a calm. Now note His words to them, "Where is YOUR FAITH?" Jesus did not still the waves by His power as God. This fact is illustrated in His sleeping, showing He was human as His disciples were. He rebuked the winds and waves by the Faith of God. He had to exercise the sovereignty of faith, not His sovereignty as God. Then He asks them, "Where is your faith?" In other words, "Why did you not exercise faith?" The disciples could have commanded the winds and waves to cease, even as Jesus did.

This occasion was a wonderful opportunity for the disciples to use their God-given faith. They did not know the power that lay within their hearts. Jesus had to fall asleep, the winds had to rise, to bring forth the faith. God used these things to illustrate the authority of faith. Then, if a torrent rises against us today and it seems as though Jesus is sleeping, that is the opportunity for us to exercise our faith - command the winds to cease. Let faith ascend the throne, and put all ills in subjection. They might have perished had not faith stepped on the scene in the Person of Jesus.

We have another illustration of active faith in the life of the Apostle Paul. Acts twenty-seven records Paul's voyage to Rome as a prisoner. According to verses ten and eleven, the captain did not heed Paul's warning against sailing. But who would listen to a

prisoner! Soon after departing, a tempest arose and the ship and the men's lives were in danger. After all hope was gone this prisoner, Paul, took command of the situation and gave instructions. Paul was not just a bold officious Jew; but faith arose in his heart, and he had to command.

Note Acts 27:22, "And now I exhort you to be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of any man's life among you, but of the ship." This was faith speaking. He did not command the winds to cease, because it was God's will for the ship to be destroyed; but faith demanded the safety of everyone aboard, and faith triumphed. But, in the midst of the turmoil, faith stilled men's hearts and gave them peace in spite of the still howling winds and dashing waves. Where did Paul receive this faith? Verses twenty-three and twenty four answer. God appeared to him and assured him that all would be saved. This brings us to the next thought:

How do we increase our faith? The answer is simple. "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God" - Romans 10:17. Paul heard the Word of the Lord, and faith sprang to action. He said, "Sirs, be of good cheer: FOR I BELIEVE GOD, THAT IT SHALL BE EVEN AS IT WAS TOLD ME" - Acts 27:25. So faith does not come simply by reading the Bible or hearing someone else read it. We must read the Word, of course; but the words we have read must be spoken to our hearts by God. In the time of need, the Holy Spirit will speak to us a word of Scripture which we have heard; and, by that Word, faith steps forward and commands the answer. So faith comes, not by seeing or simply reading, but by hearing the force of the Word by the Holy Ghost. With the Word we hear, we can command a mountain to be moved, a tree to be transplanted, the winds and waves to cease, the sick to be healed; or whatever the need calls for and the Word allows.

What is the culmination of our faith? Read Hebrews 12:2 - "Looking unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith ..." Jesus was the Originator of faith, and He is also the Completer or Perfecter of our faith. Our faith is constantly being strengthened and perfected through exercise. The stubborn mountains try the strength of our faith; the unfruitful tree proves the flexibility and resourcefulness of our faith; the winds and waves show the power and patience of faith.

In I Thessalonians 3:10,13 Paul wanted to visit these saints that he might perfect that which was lacking in their faith, so that they might be fully ready for the coming of the Lord. By faith Enoch was translated. His faith demanded his perfection. Perfect faith will demand our translation also. Thus, we look unto Jesus constantly, noting that He too endured and finished His course with joy. We learn by His example of faith. The word "Finisher," in Hebrews 12:2, means "the Perfecter (of our faith) who brings one through to the goal so as to win and receive the Prize."

So let us exercise "the faith of God" more and more. I want to. Faith comes through hearing the Voice of God, and we learn to converse with Him through prayer. Let us read, in closing, Mark 11:24 - "Therefore I say unto you. What things so ever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." Amen! "The thing I ask when God doth bid me pray, Begins in that same act to come my way."