

The Fruit of Faith

“Now faith is the substance of things, hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1).

“By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast” (Ephesians 2:8,9).

Faith is one of the most often used words in the English language, but, like love, it is one of the most misunderstood. But again, like the word “love,” it has come to mean everything and nothing. The most basic concept of faith by Christian and non-Christian alike is that it is some feeling of confidence. The use that the unbeliever makes of the word is almost entirely unjustified. One frequently hears the expressions—“keep the faith”; “have faith in yourself”; “if you’ll just have faith, things have a way of working out,” etc. The fallacy of these thoughts is, of course, that nothing in this temporal world is certain—not people, not circumstances, and certainly not oneself, as much as we may like to think that humans are invincible, “if only they think positively,”—(a nice philosophy for the affluent society). Faith must have an object—that is, someone or something that is certain not to let one down. The use by an unbeliever of the phrase—“keep the faith”—is almost silly. Faith in what? A stable universe? Other people? Circumstances? Self? There is no certainty in any of these things—especially for those who have no identity with God who is the stable basis of the universe. It is understandable to have confidence in people or circumstances that have been proven to be stable, but even they can, without warning, come to grief or fall apart for any number of reasons. The airline with the perfect safety record goes down. Friends are fickle. And a failure or two can shatter one’s self confidence.

But even for the believer, if faith is a feeling of confidence based on human perceptions—upon certain patterns of thought in the brain whose nerve paths are so affected by heredity and environment, there is much uncertainty there. A good deal of so-called “faith in God” is really based upon “trumped” up feelings of confidence, which may or may not be justified in the situation, and, of course, human confidence—a product of the natural mind—vacillates and puts one on an emotional roller coaster.

Again the human feelings of confidence that many people mistake for faith, may vary for a great number of reasons. One’s attitude toward God, toward life, toward the world, toward oneself, toward others, often vacillates with one’s physical and mental condition. One’s attitude can be affected by nutrition—what one had for breakfast; or stress on the job or in the home. Heredity and biochemical imbalances account for much of our mental attitudes. Unfortunately these attitudes are often translated into indicators of religious experience and express themselves in doubts and discouragements and depression.

True faith is resident within our spirits and not our human minds. In that respect the mind may not reflect what is in our spirits. The reality of faith lies in what God thinks. The presence of the Spirit of Christ within our spirits forever shields them from the unsound and often irrational doubts and discouragements within our minds. The faith of Christ within us remains

steadfast in spite of our surface attitudes, and that faith is stable. Faith as feeling is totally unreliable, and fluctuates with the human condition.

It is essential that we examine this word in terms of its original meaning and general usage. The word itself—*pistis*—originally had in it the idea of “commitment.” Jesus used it in a situation as recorded by John (2:24) “*Jesus did not commit Himself unto them for He knew all men.*” The word “commit” has the same root as the word “faith.” Basically it means the commitment of the mind to the truth of an idea. It may be said that we have faith or that we believe, when the mind has fully accepted the truth of an idea and then committed itself to it. The mind cannot be pressed to believe what it does not believe. It will only believe what it truly accepts. The mind might be deceived, and believe something that is false, but even so it has been convinced by one means or another, enough to be committed to it. Faith falters when we try to convince the mind of something it is not certain of. One may try to fool oneself into accepting something the mind does not accept, but there will be doubt and uncertainty about it.

There is a point at which the mind shifts from uncertainty to certainty. That is the point at which it “turns the corner of commitment.” For instance, one sees an object approaching from the distance. It is not certain whether that object is a vehicle or a human. As the object approaches, it becomes clearer that it is human and then that it is someone that we know—a neighbor perhaps. Uncertainty about the idea decreases until at a given point we might even go to court and give sworn testimony. That is the point at which the mind turns the corner of commitment. The mind will not accept anything as certain, unless it is convinced of its certainty. Therefore, when we place faith on a human confidence basis, we are involved in the problem of trying to work up a conviction that the mind may not share.

Therefore, in order to be stable and dependable, faith must go beyond the mind to the spirit. God gives us the faith, but He gives it to our spirits. The plain statement of Scripture is “*faith is a gift of God.*” The spirit possesses the faith of Christ within, but the mind does not always participate with confidence. Doubts may assail the faith in the spirit, but it does not prevail. The faith of Christ is resident within us as Christ is within us and He has said, “*I will never leave thee nor forsake thee*” (Hebrews 13:5).

So now we must ask what is faith? Hebrews 11:1 is a key passage. In the first place, it says, “Faith is substance.” The Greek word—*hupostasis*—means that which stands under or is the essence of the object. The facade of a building may be glass or tile, but the substance of the building is concrete and steel. So when we say that faith is the substance of something, we mean that it is the essential element of that thing. In another figure electric current is the true substance of essence of electrical wiring, when it is in use. The substance is the energy, and the wire is merely the vehicle that carries it. All human thought processes are a form of energy. Impulses, very much a part of electromagnetism, flow through the neurons or nerve cells of the body and are the effectual energy that produces thoughts and feelings. Faith as a gift of God is an energy process from God, Himself, that is the substance of all the things we hope for. As such, faith is more real than the things we hope for, as energy is more real than the objects affected by it. The things for which we pray are often as transient as the world we live in, but faith is as eternal as God.

The effectual flow of that energy of faith within us is a vital part of our daily existence and is the essential connection between ourselves and God. The electric current flowing through the circuitry of a house, for example, is the potential energy basis for every switch or outlet. In today's world we don't have to go out and turn a crank to generate current. We merely flick a switch. In our communication with God it is not necessary to "generate" confidence in order to get a response from Him, but merely to flick the switch. In a refrigerator, we don't even flick the switch—the current flows continuously when it has been plugged in. It is an automatic process. Many books on prayer would be needless if we would only understand that communicating with God requires no special instruction—just speaking to Him. In modern dictaphones, there is a feature called "voice activating." The sound of the voice causes the instrument to function, without even using the switch. Our very thought of God brings His response, without the audible voice.

So then, where is the energy functioning? It is in the spirit. God energizes our spirits with His power and activates the potential energy so that our spirits are in constant communion with His Spirit, just as throwing the power switch activates the electrical circuitry of a house and gives instant access to its energy.

So if God's faith is a constant energy flow in the believer, why then do we have doubts? We have doubts because the brain is a limited instrument and cannot always express what is in the spirit. Confidence that is only in the human mind is an emotional process quite different from the energy of faith which functions in our spirit.

The energy of the spirit flows from God in failure of the brain, just as the energy in the electrical circuitry of the house flows continuously, in spite of the failure of given appliances. That flow of energy in the spirit is essential to our connection with God. If it were not constant, our salvation would not be constant.

But how do we know it is constant? How do we know the energy of God is flowing through us? There is a certain indicator. In the case of a food freezer, it is essential that we know that energy is flowing in it, but there are no external evidences as in a refrigerator. So we attach a small light. As long as the light is on we know that the energy is flowing through the unit. By the same token we know that the energy of God is in our spirits by the fact that we are sensitive to Christ—that we want Him in our lives. It is like the glow of the light. All efforts to demonstrate the presence of Christ by standards of conduct or emotional feelings or acquiring benefits are unreliable and misleading.

The fact of the matter is that since faith is a gift of God, if we have genuine faith for a certain request, it is likely that God has given us that faith. If we have to work it up, it may be that He has not given us faith. Prayer is a cyclical thing. The Holy Spirit initiates the prayer within us, and God responds to that prayer. Jesus said, *"If you ask anything in My name I will do it"* (John 14:14). Asking in the name of Christ does not mean simply attaching His name to a prayer. That might be a forgery. Prayer in the name of Christ means offering a prayer that He Himself has initiated within us. Of course, we cannot always tell whether a prayer is initiated by Christ or by our own flesh. However, when we

pray with a certain inner sense of faith it is quite likely that such a prayer is indeed in the name of Christ. It is not wrong to pray for things that we may not have faith to receive; it is only that we may lack the faith for it and so may be uncertain of the outcome.

So then faith is a gift of God and not an exercise of the flesh. We receive it when we receive Christ into our spirits. It is as much a part of our spirits as Christ is a part of our spirits. It is, in fact, His own faith within us. It would be impossible to have Christ within us and not have faith. The confusion comes when we mistake human feelings of confidence for the faith of Christ.

Human confidence is vacillating and unreliable; the faith of Christ is constant and unfailing.

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