

Faith and Reality

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The life of faith does not depend on the concrete, visible reality of this physical world, but has to do with the invisible God. We are living in a world of practical reality, so we have to deal with practical issues on this earth. However, the life of faith belongs to another real n, and we cannot apply the same standards or deal with the same issues.

In this world we all seek happiness and joy. We as individual beings can never find Happiness, but we need some other element with which to bring it about -- another person, material things, an intellectual goal. We can apply certain criteria to everything in the world. Unless we are finding other things or people that stimulate us and make us happy, we cannot make progress in life. In other words, we find happiness through something objective which stimulates us. In our academic life, we are happy as we pursue intellectual reality. But happiness comes over a period of time as we strive to reach a high goal or ideal. The problem always is, "How can I establish a relationship between myself and my object that will bring happiness?"

When I talk about the life of faith we experience in this world, there sometimes seems to us to be no evidence or scientific method to validate our faith. We are dealing with invisible and often impractical things to which we cannot apply the same kind of cognition as in the world of reality. The problem therefore is how can we find and relate concretely to a source of positive stimulus in our life of faith? How can we be happy in our life of faith?

Whenever the problem of the physical life of human beings comes up, we meet questions concerning material or substantial things. How can we make a connection between the life of faith and the life of this world through our knowledge? When we think only of the lives of other people, it is difficult to discover this stimulus. But there is no other way to set up a standard for ourselves but by observing and studying all of the central figures in God's providence from Adam on. We have to study closely how these people, God's dispensational figures, including the past saints and sages, lived in their interaction with human beings, and how they related to material things. Let us look at Noah, Abraham, Moses, John the Baptist, and other dispensational figures. We must be curious about their objectives and motives. This will be the issue.

A lonely life

All of these great men started their life of faith centered not on themselves, but on God. Why do we have to respect and sometimes even worship them? Simply because they were guided by God, not by themselves. Also, we should know what kind of life they lived for God in their age. We find that they all

had a conflict -- their life of faith versus the life of reality. We find further that they were not of one will when they faced these conflicts, but that they solved the problem when they brought themselves to center on God, not on their own desires. And we know that because of this conflict between God's side and the world's side, these people endured persecution and suffering. That is why they are great people.

Always we find that their life in this world was lonely because they suffered so much and were rejected by the world. They usually had no one to convey their thoughts and feelings to; they could go only to God. And when we look at their lives in the world, their material lives, we find that they were so limited in their material life that they naturally turned their hearts and lives toward God. When we imagine the consciousness they must have had, we can see that the scope of their thinking was narrowed down so that they saw everything centered on God. That was their life. They had to live their lives centering on oneness with God.

In every area -- relationships with people, knowledge, material things -- they plunged themselves into a relationship with God, because there was no one else to rely on except God. There was no way to have give and take horizontally, to seek an object of happiness in their surroundings, so they concentrated on finding their object in God -- more seriously than they had sought an object in this world. Because the foundation for their faith was so narrow, they had to rely on heaven to get through such a narrow channel to God. And thus they opened new realms by embracing God with hope and the desire for a higher ideal.

A narrow way

Even if only a narrow way was open to God, they were not discouraged. We should also be optimistic in the same situation. There is always a way to continue. We cannot be discontented. God created all things for the happiness and satisfaction and contentment of people. So even when we reach this narrow pass, we will not feel defeated, because from that narrow point a new relationship between ourselves and God will open up. There we will find true happiness and greater contentment. For example, St. Francis emphasized pure poverty, a nothingness in which he could find happiness, appreciation and satisfaction. From that point on, God could work with him and let him feel happy and joyful. Oneness with God could be created from that point.

We have to realize that we as fallen people are standing in between two lines representing God's side and the world's side. We have to recognize the narrowing down of those lines; then we will know when the new era of happiness and joy will begin. You know the life of Noah. When he met a deadlock -- 120 years of receiving persecution while he built his ark -- at that point he was forced into a narrow position, and a new life of faith began. You will have created a new realm of happiness and blessing when you are able to overcome the point of being narrowed down, when you prove you can open a new door to your relationship with God. For years Noah could only think of building the ark, and went to the mountain to work there.

Do you think there is a woman who can endure ten years with such a husband? In America wife sues for a divorce if her husband goes away for six months. Noah's work was not an ordinary task. Therefore this event must have been the greatest event after God created man. And if a wife starts to persecute her husband, the children will also do the same with her. How much pain Noah must have felt in his heart when his family could not understand him. Because of this he had great troubles. When he asked his family to get him something to eat, or something to wear, they treated him as if he were a beggar. Noah could stand the persecutions outside of his family- from the village or from the nation. But these sufferings and persecutions were coming from inside his own family, the most difficult for him to bear. In spite of that, he had to finish his work. He had great confidence, great faith in God. Noah's life was full of persecution and rejection -- he was entirely alone. But he couldn't cast off God, though he had to forget all others.

His wife and children might have felt sometimes that they would have liked to kill him. But the more he received persecution from his environment, the more whole his heart for God became. He became separated from his circumstances and his community. He became separated from the world, so he came into the position where he could receive God's love. If he had rejected those people who persecuted him, then God's will wouldn't have been fulfilled. But Noah sacrificed himself for those who persecuted him. Instead of causing them to suffer, Noah had a mind to forgive their sins for God. He was standing in the position of the unfallen brother asking God to forgive the fallen brother and sister and willingly bearing all the difficulties.

Noah had such a heart. Because of that heart God could proceed in His providence of restoration. The position of complete self-denial centered on God -- that was Noah's position.

This same principle can be applied elsewhere -- for example, in the case of Moses and John the Baptist. Moses went the same course. He spent his youth in the Pharaoh's palace. But when he saw his people suffering, he left the Pharaoh's palace. He killed an Egyptian who persecuted Israelites. Moses' position was to save Israel, in spite of the danger. But the people of Israel didn't receive Moses, who tried to save

them. They persecuted him, and expelled him to the wilderness of Midian. There for 40 years Moses longed for God, loved God, and made a resolution to save his people. Because of that intention, God chose him to free the Israel people from Egypt.

Let's look at John's life. At the time of his ministry as recorded in the Gospels, he was 30 years old, a young man eating nuts and honey in the wilderness. He came out of his home and left his relatives behind, thinking of the will of God. In the Bible we read that John ate locusts and wild honey. But his life must have been painful in the wilderness. Do you think he lived solely on locusts and wild honey? It can't be. If you have been to Israel, you know that it isn't a land which would yield much honey. Therefore, he acted like a beggar, going from home to home.

Many children followed him, jeering at him. But his mind was concentrating on the idea of the Messiah's coming, and he looked for God's love in the form of the Messiah. So his life was worthy of God's sympathy, and he could stand in the position of witnessing to the Messiah. Though he had been led by God to do this, he was in a position to complain about his situation if he had wanted to. We know he did not care about the problem of detour around material things, but instead he thought, "How can I open a new door?" That's the point where he was great.

Why struggle?

Perhaps some of you are thinking, "Why struggle to believe in God? If He exists, He will come down and make a connection with me." If God could do this, we would already be one with Him. That would be fine. But as fallen people, we have no automatic relationship with God. Still, God is the Subject; we are created to be His good objects, though we are not yet in that association. Subject and object should have some kind of close interaction. We don't have it between ourselves and God. Under these circumstances you cannot say, "Why believe in God?" We have at least a minimum standard of relationship we must endeavor to reach on our part. Let us take an analogy: In some university a certain professor may be knowledgeable in a certain subject area. But in order to have the opportunity to learn from him, you need to conform to an objective standard; you first must register for his course. Otherwise, the professor and student have no connection. Naturally certain subjects and objects fit together. They have similar angles, a meeting point, complementary natures, and so on. Otherwise it would not be possible for the professor and the student to relate to each other at all.

Nevertheless, their relationship is not automatic. Between the Subject and yourselves -- fallen people, the object -- if God decides something, because He is an absolute God, what He decides is eternal and unchanging. He sets the standard. Can you meet His standard if you change your mind a hundred times a day? God is eternal. He never alters His course in the middle. Even if you make a determined effort, how long will you continue? A month, a year, several years, ten years? Your determination also will change. Sometimes you say to yourself, "If I like it, then I will go and do it. If not, then I will not do it."

Truth is truth whether you live or die; it is eternal. Truth is beyond death, beyond changeability. In order to be a true person you have to be beyond death. You must have the quality of steadfastness. This means there will be a collision at some point between your changeability and unchangeability. Unchanging elements will overcome changing elements. Changing elements will vanish. Life and death will collide. When you overcome death you will have life. If you pass through this stage then you will have a connection with God. Then when will the moment of truth come for you? It will be the time when there appears an opportunity to be unchanging and changing at the same time. A life and death situation will appear. This is a time of confrontation and challenge. That is when the truth emerges.

Unfortunately, when we live in this world, we like to remain as we are. Also, we don't want to die, or we don't want to be defeated in the reality of this world. The secret to overcome this situation, to find the eternal truth, is to overcome death and come to life, to overcome changeability and become unchangeable. When a completely faithful person appears in this world, since God is Himself unchanging, then He will come down to dwell with him among the people on earth and help them. He will remain eternally with us when He sees the chaotic world beginning to center itself on the Source of life, the Source of eternity.

Passing a test

So because God's essence is this absolute standard, to be His object we have to copy that pattern, meet that standard. We have to ask ourselves if we qualify to meet His criteria. In order to find whether or not you are qualified, you must be tested through suffering and hardship. You may sometimes think a certain test is too hard for you, but when you look at it in a different way, this is the means through which God will give you the chance to prove your value. And when you pass the test with a perfect score, that means the teacher has given you one chance to promote yourself. Usually a teacher asks those questions which he thinks the students do not know. Why ask them what they already know? Usually questions any professor gives are designed to bring the most qualified person out. To do that he picks the toughest questions. When you have passed the test and are at the top, then you and the professor immediately have a certain relationship. The professor values you especially because you have made it through the test, and

he can bequeath all his legacy of knowledge and work to you. If after many years, he finds only one person who can pass the test, then naturally that person would become the heir of this professor.

God is doing the same things with us. He would not want us just to be businessmen or salesmen. He is not interested in that. He wants to find His loving children, to make you His true sons and daughters. When this relationship is really established it is inviolable. Nothing can invade that. God feels so sorrowful that this oneness of love was lost by the fall. He has been working through the restoration providence to find people on earth who understand this. So this God will lead you on earth to know Him to the ultimate point, where He can do something for you. He called Noah long ago, but in the middle of his course, Noah failed.

Abraham, Moses and John the Baptist all failed to fulfill God's entire hope for them. So He wants people on earth today, including yourselves, to be superior to those men of the past. God's desire is for you to quickly pass the test. Therefore, He must let you have intense suffering in a short period of time. It took Abraham many years just to establish faith in God. God must ask you quickly to pass the test of suffering and hardship to the same degree. He wants to have your time shortened. For the unchanging God to find the unchanging children, He must test you in a changing situation. God sometimes appears Himself as a capricious God, but this is from your point of view only.

Sometimes you are led in contradictory ways to what you had been taught before. It may look like God is changing, but He has a purpose behind this. In order to find unchanging children He must test you in a changing situation. So when the eternally living God comes to you, He will look like He is leading you into death. It is a test. So the God of life seems like a God of death, in order to restore His children. In the early ages of Christian history, we see this method: God appears to inspire only martyrdom.

Through this paradoxical way, He has been restoring people. So we can easily imagine that all the 2000 years of Christianity will be tested; all mankind will be tested in the Last Days.

What is God looking for in this age? He cannot work through the people who accept the world and adapt to it as it is. He looks for the people who never deviate from His standard in this deviated world. He is looking for the people whose faith is so strong that they believe, "Even if the world perishes, we will not." That is the kind of person God is looking for. They will create a new world. That is what God expects from His sons and daughters on earth.

If someone says, "Even without God's help we are going to complete our mission," then what will happen? When people with that attitude appear, then of course God must call these people to His side. There are two kinds of people in this respect -- those who do the right things without God's direction, and those who always need God to say, "Do this, do that." Bold people will automatically come out to awaken existing churches of this world to the new reality.

Making faith and reality one

Now the life of faith looks intangible and unreal, but it is in fact the eternal and substantial one. While the reality of this world is vivid and can be sensed, it cannot be trusted; it is ephemeral and inconstant. The life of faith in God has the quality of constancy. So this means the life of faith and the reality of the world are opposite. There are several aspects in which this is concretely true. For one thing, in the life of faith you have to be recognized first by God. Secondly, you must always surpass the spiritual standards of past saints and sages. Thirdly, even though saints in the historical dispensation courses may have failed in their mission, you must succeed in your course. Finally, in the past, God gave man help and direction; in this age He expects us to do things by ourselves.

Good sons and daughters will recover everything and return it to God without asking His help. Then you yourself will have liberated God. Restoration will be complete when these sons and daughters restore their heavenly Father's sorrow and bring Him joy. Then He will feel that genuine, pure love is possible again, like that which existed before the fall of man. He will be happy to receive His true sons and daughters. God will automatically welcome you to come to His bosom.

When you have trouble, don't ask Him to help you. Instead you should say, "Father, help the whole world," This kind of attitude of heart is similar to that where there are many brothers, and one brother says to their parents, "Instead of helping me, please take care of my brothers and sisters." That kind of attitude is so precious to the parents. It is quite proper in the ordinary family that such a son might get up early and talk to his parents while the other children are still in bed. That's also the way God's children make a good relationship with Him. The parents will take this child into their confidence. The same thing applies to God and His children. This son naturally will become the center, the heir, the object to his parents. They can speak with him even about secret things. This is the standard of intimacy we are striving for with God. When you do face suffering you yourself have to overcome it. You have to look at the overall situation and determine how to deal with it.

When you walk along the street, why don't you take God's point of view? You have to notice the evil things you would want to change, and then the good things you will multiply for your nation and for mankind. When you look at things this way, through God's eyes, you will be always growing. When you look at the weakness of the political situation, when you look at the changing elements from God's position, you should think, "I am going to reform this and that." If nobody else does it, think in your own mind, "I will do it."

When you maintain this kind of disposition, automatically angels and saints will come to you and help you even if you never ask for help from God. Wherever you go, you do not have to worry. You are perfectly all right even in the most dangerous of situations. With this confidence you can overcome any difficulties. Then God will reveal to you in many ways what is going to take place in the world, through dreams or visions or inspiration. This will be very comforting to you in this world of change.

We are at the frontier of the world of reality, so we must be prepared to suffer the most. In the past life in faith, a person came to believe in something. At this time your life in faith will come to have actual reality. Far beyond that world and far beyond the standard of past faith, anything is possible at this stage. Historical men of faith worked hard, but all the accumulated good did not belong to them; they gave everything to us. When we believe and bring their hope into reality by our work, their merit becomes ours. Now your spiritual accomplishments are your own. Therefore, a life of faith can be a life of reality. Very soon, the age of the four-dimensional world will appear. Many spiritual phenomena will take place on earth, and the whole world will be influenced by spiritual experience. The realm of faith and the world of reality will unite.