

## FEEDING OUR FAITH

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Inasmuch as faith is the condition of all the spiritual life, of the entrance into that life, and the steps to progress in that life, it behooves us to give it all the nourishment possible. Faith can be strengthened, and fed, and thus will grow; but the growth of faith is often very opposite to our notions concerning it. We often suppose that faith is made strong by receiving great encouragement, by having quick and abundant answers to prayer, by high states of joy, by lofty visions of divine things. But in reality these things do not strengthen our faith as much as we fancy.

Our faith is to be nourished on the promises of God. Those promises are contained in his written Word. They may be also promises communicated to the soul by the Holy Spirit, or through other souls who are in close fellowship with God, and who may speak to us great promises of what God has told them concerning us. When God first called Abraham, he inundated his soul with a sea of promises; he spoke to him from the starry heavens, and from the soil of Canaan on which he walked, and by the visits of angels, and by the Holy Ghost in the deep of his nature. Abraham saw great fields of light—great possibilities of things for himself and his posterity. His soul drank in these promises, until his faith became wide and powerful, even before any of them were fulfilled.

God deals with souls in a similar way; yet when he calls any one to great degrees of perfection or of usefulness, he begins by opening up to them the promises of his Word, and the possibilities which they may achieve, even before there are any outward symptoms of their fulfillment. The heart that anchors itself in the promises of God, until those promises become as real as God himself, will have strong faith.

Another nourishment to faith is the removing from the soul of natural and human props. Naturally we lean on a great many things in nature, and society, and the church, and friends, more than we are aware of. We think we depend on God alone, and never dream of how much we depend on other things, until they are taken from us, and if they were not removed, we should go on, self-deceived, thinking that we relied on God for all things. But God designs to concentrate our faith in him alone by removing all other foundations, and, one step after another, detaching us from all other supports.

There are many souls which can not endure this utter desolation of secondary supports, which would be more than they could bear, and they would react into open rebellion; so God allows them to have a junior faith, and to lean on other things more or less. But to those who are able to undergo the strain of faith, he allows all sorts of disappointments—the death of bright hopes, the removing of earthly friendships or destruction of property, the multiplied infirmities of the body and mind, the misunderstanding of religious life seems swept with a blizzard, to compel the soul to house itself in God alone.

At the time the soul is having all secondary support removed, it does not perceive what is taking place within itself, but afterwards it finds that faith has been growing and expanding with every wave that has beat against it. Faith grows when we least expect it; storms and difficulties, temptations and conflicts are its field of operation; like the stormy petrel on the ocean, faith as a supernatural glee in the howling of the storm and dash of the spray.

Faith not only is nourished by the removal of divine consolation. Our answer to prayer seems too long delayed, and faith is tested to its uttermost, when it seems as if the Lord has turned against us and all we can do is to continue holding on, with the pitiful cry of "Lord, help me!" Even then faith is expanding and growing beyond all we are

aware of, by the very extension of the delay of the answer. The longer the Lord delayed in answering the prayer of the woman of Syrophenicia, the more her faith became purified and intense. Long delays serve to purify our faith, till everything that is spasmodic and ephemeral and whimsical is purged out of it, and nothing is left to it except faith alone.

Another nourishment to faith is to get before the mind the great faith of other people—to read the lives of those who have been sorely tried, and who have believed God against all odds. Faith kindles faith; by understanding how God has dealt with other souls enables us to interpret his dealings with us. Our faith is inspired by reading the trials of the Bible saints more than by reading the pleasant and easy things.

Another nourishment to faith is that mode of dealing with us by which the Lord is constantly changing the providential channels through which he sends blessings to us. If God's blessings flow on us in a certain way, for any length of time, we unconsciously fix our trust on the way the benefactions come, more than on the invisible fountain. If the Lord gave the Jews water in the wilderness, sometimes it was from the rock, and sometimes it was from a well dug in the dry sand. (See Numbers 21:16-18).

When God sends us great spiritual refreshings, he will change the circumstances under which they come; when he sends temporal blessings in answer to prayer, he will change the channels through which they flow. He does not want us to become attached to any mode or phenomenon. He wants our faith perfectly united to himself, and not to his mode of doing things, and hence he will disappoint us on the old lines of expectation, and reveal his favors from a new quarter, in a new way, and surprise us with some great and sweet device of his infinite wisdom.

And thus our faith is strengthened by disappointment, until it reaches such perfect union with God that it never looks to any body, or any thing, or any custom, or any old channel, or any circumstances, or any frame of mind, or any meeting, or any set of feelings, or at any time or season; but keeps itself swung free from all these things, and dependent on God alone. This degree of faith never can be disappointed, never can be jostled, because it expects nothing except what God wills, and looks to nothing except infinite wisdom. Its expectation is from God only.

### SPUTNIK SAYS: "NO GOD" . . . From Page 2

have our being in God. We are what we are because of what God is. He has made us, not we ourselves. Nature and men show us a God. Yet there is a fuller revelation of God found only in a redeemed soul. A life transformed by power Divine, an outside influence reaching the inner-most springs of a man's heart, so real, radical, and revolutionary, that his whole tenor and outlook on life can be changed, is proof conclusive that there is a God. An ignorant Christian knows more about God than the most educated scientific master mind of this generation, or of any generation past or future, if that mind searches for God and in its search forgets that God has not made it possible to man that he can find Him by carnal reasoning, or scientific achievement. God must always be greater than the things He has made, therefore human knowledge or wisdom fails to locate Him.

A worldly-wise man said to a young boy one day, "If you can tell me where God is I'll give you an apple." The youngster replied, "If you can tell me where He is not, I'll give you a barrel full of apples." When Sputniks and all the rest of man's creation will have ceased to exist in outer space, God will still be as great as He ever has been, and "Eternity filled with His voice will re-echo the praise of the Lord!"