THE LAW OF FAITH BY NORMAN P. GRUBB

CHAPTER ONE
A PERSONAL EXPLANATION

The life of faith has had a fascination for me for over twenty-five years. So far as I remember, this interest was first quickened through the study of George Muller's life; then by the fact of a clear call from God to join a "faith" mission, which was at that time best known by its earlier name of heart of Africa Mission, but is now known by its enlarged, though clumsy title, of Worldwide Evangelization Crusade. Obedience to this call meant that fascinating theory must now be translated into action. Straight away the challenge came from the one who had toiled and sacrificed to give me a good start in life: Would I not be wiser to join some society, enter some denomination, in which, if ill health invalidated me from the mission field, I might find some guaranteed sphere of ministry and livelihood at home?

But the call had been so clear that adherence to it was not difficult, except for the momentary pain it caused to loved ones, and that was not of long duration, for when they saw that the decision was definite, they gladly and warmly commended me to the will of God.

Twelve years passed, spent partly in the Belgian Congo, partly on journeys oft as emissary from field to home end on mission matters, and partly in translation work. Not much opportunity was afforded for the practice of faith in any specialized sense, or rather it may be more correct to say that the secret of the application of Scriptural and achieving faith had not yet been seen, and therefore the many opportunities for applying it were not perceived. Personal needs were regularly supplied, mainly through the channel of the mission; and, as I have just said, the meaning and use of faith as God's instrument of deliverance in all the other problems of life, internal and external, had not yet dawned upon me. The pull of faith, however, its attraction and fascination, never left me. It had become a deep inner conviction. I had glimpsed and tasted. It is my belief that in each member of Christ's body, from the time of the new birth, the Holy Spirit begins to develop some special characteristic through which God may be glorified in a particular way, some aspect of His grace and truth through which the whole body may be edified and enlightened. Such are the gifts of the Spirit, about which more will be said later; and in one's own case I humbly believe that it was God who maintained in one this special thistl and attraction for the way of faith, this readiness to absorb all light concerning it, and to venture one's life in the exercise of it. Real opportunities were bound to come, as well as real enlightenment, at the right moment, and that moment was when I was ready to see and take them; for the real fact was that those intervening years had first to be spent in internal adjustments: the secrets of faith had to be discovered and applied in the solution of one's own inner problems, in the satisfaction of one's own soul-thirst, in the snapping of the chain of one's own self-centeredness, in the transference of oppressing heart burdens to the Cane who had given Himself to bear them. These experiences also will be woven later into our whole examination of the texture of faith, for that aspect of the life of faith is antecedent to all others. A faith that works first in our own lives can then, and only then, be applied to the problems around us.

There is a school of faith, and there is a life of faith. At school we are private individuals: we learn, we experiment, we try things out by ourselves and on ourselves we gradually grasp a technique. In life we take responsibility, we are in the public eye; other lives depend on us, we are supposed to know our job and apply our knowledge, the wheels of our particular industry are kept going by us. My years in the school of faith lasted till 1934, my thirteenth year as a missionary. As I now look back, I can see quite clearly when that transition took place in my experience; the school was left (although in a nother sense we are very much permanent pupils), the life of faith begun. With the key to my inner problems in my hand through the grace of God and illumination of the Spirit, a clear cut position of faith was taken in a certain matter, under pressure of the Spirit, involving my wife and myself to our financial limit. There is no need to go into details which were comparatively trivial. The duration of the test was six months. The day of crisis came in the middle when I almost succumbed and was only saved by walking to the post office and sending off a letter which once again staked everything on God's faithfulness. The deliverance actually began to come to me within ten minutes, on the pavement outside that post office, starting with a trickle and rising to a flood. It was all very mundane, but to me it was a landmark. School days were nearing an end. The master key which could open a very little and material door could just as easily be applied to great gateways of world-wide opportunity in the Kingdom of God.

Then followed three years of great illumination in the way of faith. It was as if that which had been seen dimly as a series of separate peaks of faith which might occasionally, with much effort, be scaled, was now seen to be a broad high road i
n the uplands, a route of the Spirit a way of life to be steadily traversed, and no range of rugged peaks at all. The Scriptu
res were marvelously opened up, Hebrews a l especially became alive, and faith was seen to be the permanent element in
which the men of God lived, men who themselves had first to pass through the school into the life of faith-Abraham, J
acob, Moses, Joshua, Gideon, David, and so through all the list into New Testament days. They were days of great reve
lation; it was like the thrill of a new discovery, the exaltation of the explorer whose eyes are resting for the first time in his
tory on some magnificent landscape. Experiments were made, feebly made, but the feet were not firm enough yet on the i
r new road to take one to the destination, and nothing came of it. But the light had truly dawned, Scriptural light, borne w
itness to by the inner assurance of the Spirit, the consummation without doubt of the gropings and inner preparations of
years. Failures could not quench those certainties. All that was needed was a firmer grasp of method, and, above all, tho
se special sorts of circumstances in which living faith through all history has thrived, those necessary conditions for its h
althy growth difficulties, frustrations, impossibilities, for "when I am weak, then am I strong:" "in hopeless circumstances
he hopefully believed."

And they came. There is no need to go into them in detail! Days of agony and darkness. Days when one's life's work see
med in ruin around one, when the mission one loved seemed collapsing, when the hand of practically all friends and fell
ow Christians seemed against a tiny remnant of us. And I myself, with my wife, was called to take a stand completely alo
ne, on behalf of the few on the field, surrounded by criticism and fierce opposition.

Then in the travail, I cannot tell how (indeed I have learned that one usually cannot trace the "how" of God's deepest dea
lings), what I had seen and rejoiced in theory became my own in practice. I saw how to walk the broad road of faith, how
to have and maintain that touch with God, that living fruitful union with Him which in infinite grace and condescension He
gives us as our inheritance in Christ; and we began to go that way.

Fifteen more years have now passed, years when, by God's grace these vital principles have been ever more strongly b
uilt into one's life. I Others, many others, have learned them, practiced them, and rejoice with us to see the marvelous tru
th of them in their concrete result. In the ranks of the Crusade, tremendous transformations have taken place: God's wor
k has forged ahead, increased and abounded: souls have been saved world-wide: tens of thousands have heard the Go
spel who had never before heard the blessed Name: Christians by the hundred have been revived and stirred into action :
Christ Himself has become increasingly the all in all; all fresh springs have been found in Him; all hunger and thirst sati
sfied according to His Word; desire increased beyond measure that He only should be glorified; His Word become the jo
y and rejoicing of the heart.

Details need not be given, for this is no place for them: but gradually this truth and that, concerning the inner life of abidi
ng in Christ, and the outer life of service in His Name, have fitted into place, have been tested, examined, adjusted. Much
has been learned by failures, and some things remain inexplicable: until the time seems to have come to try and put o
n paper something of what one has learned. "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it
is because there is no light in them." That is the touchstone. We believe that the Scriptures are God's final revelation to
man, the words that He speaks which are spirit and life: and all that we say here is only reliable in so far as it is an expos
ition of God's revealed truth. This is not autobiography. It is to be a humble examination of faith, what it is and how it wor
ks. It seemed necessary, however, to give this brief preliminary sketch of how and why such as I, who am not a trained t
heologian but a missionary secretary, should write on such a subject. It is just my contribution, I trust to God's glory, of o
ne ray of God's truth, which has steadily shone in my heart and on my pathway these twenty-five years.

Re: THE LAW OF FAITH BY NORMAN P. GRUBB , on: 2016/6/24 6:16
CHAPTER TWO
FAITH - A NATURAL FACULTY

WE will start at the beginning. One of the chief hindrances to the understanding and exercise of faith is the separation in
our thinking between the natural and spiritual, due to the fall. There is flesh and there is Spirit. Flesh draws upon one set
of energies, Spirit upon another. Faith, it is argued, belongs to the realm of the Spirit. It is a "gift of God", and therefore c
an only be exercised under divine stimulation. We must pray for it ("Lord, increase our faith"), wait for it, use it only accor
ding as God has dealt to us the measure of faith. When and where it is not thus given, we are helpless, becalmed, immo
ble.

A grave misapprehension lies at the root of this devitalizing outlook. How did God make man? A living soul, we are told, i
n His own image: that is to say, with all the attributes of personality. A man feels and desires: he thinks, he wills, he spea
ks, he acts. All these marvelous faculties combine to make a person; but the point to note is that in themselves they are
neutral powers. They are neither good nor evil: they are the raw material of human nature, the mighty forces directed to weal or woe by the spirit that is in man. To love, to hate; to admire, to despise; to boast, to be humble; to be angry, to be calm; to have fear, to have faith; to be stern, to be gentle; any of these can be right, any can be wrong. They are the ele
mental gifts of God in nature to His human offspring. By these men are made “after the similitude of God”, and by them t
hey walk the course of this world. What matters is: do they walk after the flesh, or after the Spirit?

It will be seen later that a proper grasp of the neutral condition of this raw material of human nature, and its relationship t
o the spirit that controls it, gives the key to the understanding of many problems concerning the walk and warfare of a C
hristian, the understanding, conquest and proper use of temptation, release from false condemnation, proper discernme
nt between flesh and Spirit, the solution to the vexed problems of sanctification. These we will examine later on. But at th
e moment we will concentrate on this one point. Amongst the major faculties with which human nature is basically endo
wed, is faith. The greatest faculty of all is love. God is love. The whole creation is God's love manifested in innumerable f
orms. All is love, or love in its reverse form, hate. Love is the consuming fire, which is God. Man is love likewise, pervert
ed or purified. Love of the world or love of the Father must dominate the human heart; he must love, for he is love. He lo
ves long before he is redeemed. He loves from the time he becomes a living soul. But what does he love?

Next to love in importance comes faith. Love is the driving force. Desire (love pure or perverted) controls, contrives, crea
tes all that ever comes to pass. Emotion, not reason, is at humanity's helm. Love motivates, but faith acts. Faith is action
. By faith alone can a man act. Faith carries out the urges of love. Faith works by love.

Consider the importance of faith. Consider its place in human behavior. Is there one single act that one single man has e
ver taken, from the trivial to the sublime, which has no love as its driving force, and faith as its method of performance?
A man eats. Why? Because he wants to. Love, desire, is the motive power. How then does he eat, and what? He sees s
ome food which is both pleasant and nutritious, he believes in its value; he takes, masticates, swallows, digests, every a
ction of which is pure faith and nothing but faith. At any moment in any of these actions, if his faith in the food were shak
en, if he were caused to change his faith into its reverse- believing that it was bad for him he would immediately and aut
omatically cease to take, masticate, swallow, or even digest (if he could!). Faith is human action. Faith is the God-implan
ted, natural and only way by which a man can go through all the processes of doing or obtaining the things he desires.

And by implication, if man is made in the image of God, and if man's fundamental God-given faculties are those of love a
nd faith, they are also God's ways of action, even of creation. The Scripture shows plain indication of this, and it has its i
mportance when we carry the examination of faith still further.

Apply this formula of faith to every single human action, from breathing right up the scale to great scientific discoveries,
and finally, across the gulf to the realm of the Spirit; and it will be seen that there is no other conceivable method of hum
an activity. A purchase in a shop, taking a seat on a chair, breathing a breath, picking up an article, all are sheer acts of f
aith. Likewise, historic achievements, such as the discovery of radium. Certain investigations, we read, drew Mme. Curie
's attention to the probability of another element, not yet known to science, in a material called pitchblende, a throw-out fr
om certain Austrian mines. The more she investigates, the more the conviction grows. Her fellow-scientists scoff, but sh
elieves. She feels sure that the evidence justifies such faith. But living faith is action, only dead faith has no works ac
companying it. So, quietly, secretly, she and her husband put all the money they can spare in buying truckloads of pitchb
lende and having them brought to the but at the back of their house. There they labor, one year, two years, until one eve
ning she calls her husband into their home-made laboratory, and there for the first time in history is seen the glowing tub
es of radium. Here is natural faith, inherent faith, inspired by the glimpse of a scientific truth, directed to a natural, so-calle
d secular objective; but it is a higher type of faith, or rather a higher form of the exercise of faith, than such simple acts a
s eating, breathing, sitting: for, in this case, the object of faith was by no means so self-evident; some indeed ridiculed it;
it took time and careful study to come to a conviction solid enough to justify the decisive action which is faith: and when t
he decision to act had been made, it took time, patience, self-denial, for the hypothesis of faith to be demonstrated as fa
cr. And equally, it will be seen, as we move on to things spiritual, that in the realm of the Spirit there are simpler, more ob
vious stimuli to faith; and more advanced, more exacting forms of its exercise.

That faith is an inherent capacity in all men is also made plain in the Scriptures. "Cursed is he that trusteth in man." "Put
not your trust in princes." "Trust not in uncertain riches." "Because thou has relied on the King of Syria, and not relied on
the Lord thy God..."

Sufficient, I hope, has now been said to bring home this first point of fundamental importance: that faith is a natural facult
y of man: that, next to love, it is the most important faculty that man possesses, for faith is the core of decisive action: th
at man, while he lives and breathes, can never cease exercising faith, and has never performed one single action in the
world's history which is not energized by faith: that to seek faith or ask for faith is as ridiculous as asking for lungs to breathe with, or mouth to eat with. Man is compounded of faith, and can do no other than exercise it in one direction or another.

CHAPTER THREE, on: 2016/6/24 13:49
CHAPTER THREE
FROM NATURAL TO SPIRITUAL FAITH

HERE now comes the connection or difference between natural and spiritual faith? There is no difference. I There are no two sorts of faith to be connected, for, in both realms, it is the exercise of the one and only God implanted faculty of faith. The difference is merely in the object of faith. But here there is a difference so radical that it might appear as if there were two altogether different types of faith.

It is obvious that man was created by God to be a spiritual being. God is spirit, Jesus Himself said; and He is "the Father of spirits." In other words, the things of the Spirit were meant to be natural to man, not supernatural. They were meant to be his normal environment. The pure "see" God. Had man remained pure, by the faculty of his spirit indwelt by God's Spirit he would have been as accustomed to the spiritual "sight" of God as his natural eyes are to the things of this world; a condition indeed which is fulfilled in varying measure by those who have been purified by the blood of Christ, who have been born of His Spirit, and thus "see" His kingdom.

Owing to the fall, however, spiritual sight became unnatural. Man became dead toward God, blind to His kingdom, and only the things of time and sense remained as his natural realm.

Now faith starts by seeing a thing, in which it thus can naturally and effortlessly believe. A man sees a book; it does not take him a split second, not the faintest conscious effort, to believe that it is a book and that he can pick it up and read it. Yet all those reactions are actually the first forms of faith. The book has stimulated his faithfully, and the man performs an act of living faith if he takes the book up and reads it.

Thus in the normal acts of life the process of living faith is so natural, so unnoticed, so continual, that no one dreams of calling it faith but it is.

Now, however, we have a gulf to cross, a chasm which man cannot bridge, from the natural to the spiritual, from the land of man's exile back into the paradise from which long ago the flaming sword barred him. How can faith leap that gulf? And, again, is the same quality of faith made effectual on both banks?

God, not man, has bridged that gulf, and bridged it for the one purpose of reclaiming, redeeming to Himself, back from the devil, back from the flesh, back from the world, man with his two dynamic faculties, productive of so much evil or so much good, those faculties of love and faith.

God Himself entered the human arena by the one act of matchless grace in sending His beloved Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as a sacrifice for sin. And in doing this, He took every possible means that could be taken to quicken love and stimulate faith in Himself. In order to act, faith must first see. Very well then, God will meet faith on its own ground. First, there remains in man, even at the fall, the moral sense, the conscience, the law written in the heart, the capacity of knowing right from wrong, of recognizing the highest, of thirsting after his lost perfection. These God then stimulates through history by revelations of truth, accompanied by mighty works of deliverance, by all His dealings with His chosen people, all rays and foreshadowings of the true light, which was to shine, all material for a truth-seeking faith. Then comes the moment, in the fullness of time, when the true light shines out in the darkness, the Word is made flesh and dwells among us, full of grace and truth. His incomparable words, His deeds, His symbolic acts of giving the bread and wine, His victorious redeeming death, His carefully attested resurrection, His appearances, His visible ascension, the coming of the Spirit, the transformed followers, their written records, peak on peak, form the mighty mountain range of visual testimony. And so God comes down to meet man's faith, with His Son, His Word, His Spirit. The gulf is bridged. Faith can operate in the realm of the Kingdom of Heaven as simply and naturally as in the things of earth.

Let us note in passing, however, lest we get things out of proportion, the relative importance of giver and recipient in this matter of faith. Faith, in itself, which is the capacity to receive, to use, to apply, is utterly useless unless the material is first provided upon which it can be exercised. What use are mouth and stomach, unless there be food? What use lungs, unless there be air? God's wondrous order in nature and spirit is very simple. He, the Giver, has provided all. In one ceas
eless river He pours His gifts upon us, all things natural and supernatural, whether it be sun and rain, food and the riches of the earth, or the grace in Christ Jesus. All in unending abundance for body and soul is ours. All things but one. He does not force acceptance on us. He does not compel us to live, whether in body or spirit. Love seeks for love, free, uncondtioned, love for love's sake. Therefore God made man in His image, free in will and choice, able to accept, able to reject; for God seeks the worship, love and service of willing hearts. He gives, He presses all upon us, His gifts, His Son, Himself. But we must take. Food He provides, but we must take and eat. Air, but we must breathe. Ninety-nine per cent of life consists of God's endless giving. One per cent consists of taking. Both are essential, but in that proportion. We are here stressing faith, for our object is to analyze and examine the way man receives and uses what he is given. That is not meant to give glory to faith or credit to faith, as if faith produced anything. Faith supplies the one per cent. That is all. God supplies the 99 per cent -- to Him is the glory, in Him is the grace, for Him is our love. (Indeed, properly speaking, the 1 per cent is His, for faith itself is a God-given, natural faculty.) Our consideration is only centered round the one per cent, yet that must be considered, just because experience shows that so many Christians flounder about, not because they do not know the grace of God revealed in Christ, but because they do not know how, steadily, consistently, to appropriate, use, and apply what they are given, according to the set laws of appropriation of faith.

And now let us watch this process of faith as it passes from its exercise in the natural to the supernatural. What happens when the Spirit of God brings conviction of sin? It is obvious. He penetrates the thick walls of our self-righteousness. Every man by nature has built around him some working philosophy of life. He is as good as other folk. He does not do his neighbor any harm. He believes in a Creator who is love, so hell is unthinkable, and all will be right. Or else he has a frankly materialistic and hedonistic, or agnostic, or even atheistic point of view. Anyhow, he has some basis to life, however flimsy, however unsatisfactory, or however self-satisfying.

And to that basis his faith is attached. He is a believer all right, in his particular outlook: it may be a false faith, a perverse faith, but it is his faith.

Now, conviction of sin knocks that flimsy prop from under him. It no longer satisfies, it is no longer reliable. He sees through it: all his righteousnesses are as filthy rags: his sins are ever before him: he has hewn him cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water. Now his faith is at sea, tossed hither and thither, with nothing left for it to take hold of. Where can it ground its anchor?

The Spirit points to Jesus. The Spirit and the Bride say, Come. The Word speaks its message, "Look unto Me and be ye saved": "Him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out": "He that believeth on me hath everlasting life." Here is faith's sure resting place. Here is its rock of ages, Jesus, the Son of God.

The decision is made, Christ for me: "Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to thy Cross I cling." Faith dares to take Him at His word: "The Lord is thy shepherd": "My Beloved is Mine and I am His." Not a new faculty of faith, mind you, but a new content for faith. That's all. The very same faith which was once centered in the man's own righteousness is now torn from that false embrace to rest itself upon "that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith". A natural faculty purified, redirected, possessed and controlled by the Spirit.

And let us note that the one per cent of human faith had to go out to meet the 99 per cent of God's grace. Without this, not all the conviction in the world, not all the sorrow for sin, the change of mind, the prayers and tears and resolutions, could bring the sinner to the enjoyment of that grace. The central faculty of faith had to be exercised, that faculty which is personality in action. The man who had chosen to believe in a false philosophy of life, who had acted out his faith by his self-pleasing, self-confident way of life, had now by an equally deliberate choice to reject that philosophy as a basis for his faith, and by that same faith to accept Jesus in all the fullness of His forgiveness, mercy and renewal. The faith could not save, only His abounding grace could do that, but the faith was the decisive action of a free person, seeing, believing, receiving, and opening his being to the control of Jesus Christ, his new-found Lord.

If the question is asked, what about such a text as Eph. 2:8: "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God"; or in 2 Peter 1:1 "To them that have obtained like precious faith with us"? The answer is that all have the capacity to believe; but actual faith is that capacity stimulated to action by a faith-producing object. In this sense Scriptural or spiritual faith-the act of believing in Christ-is a gift of God, for it could not exist without Christ as its all-satisfying object. But it remains equally true that the capacity to believe is inherent in all; otherwise God could not comm and us to believe, as He does.