Devotional Thoughts :: Faith without Expectation Is Dead - Tozer

Faith without Expectation Is Dead - Tozer - posted by freedbyjc (), on: 2006/4/27 8:48

True faith is tough, practical, and realistic.
by A. W. Tozer Issue #94 July/August 1996

Expectation and faith, though alike, are not identical. An instructed Christian will not confuse the two.

True faith is never found alone; it is always accompanied by expectation. The man who believes the promises of God expects to see them fulfilled. Where there is no expectation there is no faith.

It is, however, quite possible for expectation to be present where no faith is. The mind is quite capable of mistaking strong desire for faith. Indeed faith, as commonly understood, is little more than desire compounded with cheerful optimism. Certain writers make a comfortable living promoting that kind of so-called faith which is supposed to create the "positive" as opposed to the negative mind. Their effusions are dear to the hearts of those in the population who are afflicted with a psychological compulsion to believe, and who manage to live with facts only by the simple expedient of ignoring them.

Real faith is not the stuff dreams are made of; rather it is tough, practical, and altogether realistic. Faith sees the invisible but it does not see the nonexistent. Faith engages God, the one great Reality, who gave and gives existence to all things. God's promises conform to reality, and whoever trusts them enters a world not of fiction but of fact.

In common experience we arrive at truth by observation. Whatever can be verified by experiment is accepted as true. Men believe the reports of their senses. If it walks like a duck, looks like a duck, and quacks like a duck, it is probably a duck. And if its eggs hatch into little ducks the test is about complete.

Probability gives way to certainty; it is a duck. This is a valid way to deal with our environment. No one dare complain about it for everyone does it. It is the way we manage to get on in this world.

But faith introduces another and radically different element into our lives. "By faith we know" is the word that lifts our Knowing onto a higher level. Faith engages facts that have been revealed from heaven and by their nature they do not respond to scientific tests. The Christian knows a thing to be true, not because he has verified it in experience but because God has said it. His expectations spring from his confidence in the character of God.

Expectation has always been present in the church in the times of her greatest power. When she believed, she expected, and her Lord never disappointed her. "And blessed is she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord" (Lk. 1:45, KJV).

Every great movement of God in history, every unusual advance in the Church, every revival, has been preceded by a sense of keen anticipation. Expectation accompanied the operations of the Spirit always. His bestowals hardly surprised His people because they were gazing expectantly toward the risen Lord and looking confidently for His word to be fulfilled. His blessings accorded with their expectations.

One characteristic that marks the average church today is lack of anticipation. Christians when they meet do not expect anything unusual to happen; consequently only the usual happens, and that usual is as predictable as the setting of the sun. A psychology of nonexpectation pervades the assembly, a mood of quiet ennui which the minister by various means tries to dispel, the means depending upon the cultural level of the congregation and particularly of the minister.

One will resort to humor, another will latch on to some topic currently dividing the public, such as fluoridation, capital punishment, or Sunday sports. Another who may have a modest opinion of his gifts as a humorist and who is not sure which side of a controversy he may safely support will seek to arouse expectation by outlining enthusiastically the shape of things to come: the Men's Banquet to be held at the Chicken-in-a-Basket Tea Room next Thursday evening; or the picnic with its thrilling game to be played between the Married Men and the Single Men, the outcome of which the jocunar minister coyly refuses to predict; or the coming premier of the new religious film, full of sex, violence, and false philosophy but candied over with vapid moralizings and gentle suggestions that the enraptured viewers should be born again.
Devotional Thoughts :: Faith without Expectation Is Dead - Tozer

The activities of the saints are thus laid out for them by those who are supposed to know what they need better than they do. And this planned play is made acceptable to the more pious-minded by tagging on a few words of devotion at the close. This is called "fellowship," though it bears scant resemblance to the activities of those Christians to which the word was first applied.

Christian expectation in the average church follows the program, not the promises. Prevailing spiritual conditions, however low, are accepted as inevitable. What will be is what has been. The weary slaves of the dull routine find it impossible to hope for anything better.

We need today a fresh spirit of anticipation that springs out of the promises of God. We must declare war on the mood of nonexpectation, and come together with childlike faith. Only then can we know again the beauty and wonder of the Lord's presence among us.

This article was taken from God Tells the Man Who Cares, a collection of editorials that originally appeared in Alliance Witness magazine, which Tozer edited. God Tells the Man Who Cares ©1970 by Christian Publications. Used by permission.

About the author: A.W. Tozer (1897–1963) was a pastor, magazine editor, and popular author who was known for his prophetic bite. Currently, over 40 of Tozer's books (many of them compilations of his sermons or editorials) remain in print. His two most popular titles are The Pursuit of God (Christian Publications), and The Knowledge of the Holy (HarperCollins).

Copyright © 2006, The Navigators, Discipleship Journal. All rights reserved.