

Devotional Thoughts :: God's Keeping Power - By: Watchman Nee

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It is a distressing fact that some Christians believe in God's saving power, but they do not believe in His keeping power. They have received God's saving grace but have not yet received His keeping grace. They do not realize that He who is the Giver of grace is also the One who maintains us in His grace. Let us see from the Scriptures how we who have been saved by God can be kept by Him.

Joshua 14:11 says, "I am as strong this day as I was in the day that Moses sent me: as my strength was then, even so is my strength now, for war, both to go out, and to come in." This is Caleb's word. "To go out, and to come in" refers to everyday life; "for war" refers to life under exceptional circumstances. Caleb's strength was the same as it was in the day he spoke with Moses, in coping with the ordinary demands of daily life as well as with the demands of life under conditions of special stress. Though forty years had elapsed in the interval, he was as strong as he had been in his earlier days. Here we see God's keeping power. Caleb's strength was the same on that day as it was forty years earlier. He was as strong at this time as he was then. He was no less vigorous at eighty-five than he had been at forty. There is only one explanation for this; he had been kept by God. We are totally unable to keep ourselves in the grace of God. There is no guarantee that even five years after we have been saved we will be found in the measure of faith we had in our earlier Christian life. We cannot abide in the grace of God by our own effort; He alone can maintain us in His grace.

What was the condition for Caleb to experience God's keeping power? Let us consider this matter for a minute. Joshua 14:14 says, "He wholly followed the Lord God of Israel." And how did he wholly follow the Lord? We are told in Numbers 13 and 14. Numbers 13:30 says, "Caleb quieted the people before Moses, and said, Let us go up at once and possess it; for we are well able to prevail." "We are well able to prevail." A person who wholly follows the Lord is one who believes that the promises of God are trustworthy, that He is with His people, and that they are well able to overcome. Brothers and sisters, do you believe this? Many people believe, but their faith is a vacillating faith. They are very timid. They sing their song of praise, but though the words are right, there is something wrong with the tune. In Caleb's case it was not so; he sang the right words in the right tune. He said, "Let us go up at once." A person who wholly follows the Lord and reckons Him to be trustworthy is one who does the will of God and does it at once.

What about the ten spies? They looked at the inhabitants of the land and saw that they were "men of great size" and their cities were "fortified and very large." They looked at themselves too, and in their own sight they were "like grasshoppers." Their eyes were fixed on the difficulties before them. Herein lies the reason why so many Christians fail to experience God's keeping power—difficulties fill their vision. If one keeps looking at his difficulties, he will surely find no hope in the situation. God does not want us to set our eyes on the mountains obstructing our path; He wants us to say to the mountains: "Be taken up and cast into the sea" (Mark 11:23). It is useless to set our eyes on the mountains. The more we look at the mountains, the higher they become. Many people cannot overcome because their eyes are always set on their failures. Many people are prepared ahead of time for their failures. Defeat is certain if we are constantly contemplating defeat. Many experiences of failure come because we anticipate them. We may think that we can deal with other problems but that there is no way that we can deal with one particular problem. In so thinking, we have paved the way for defeat as soon as the problem comes to us. As soon as our eyes are set on ourselves, we will surely fail. If God is to save us, He must first save our eyes from looking at ourselves to looking at His promises. We are courageous only as long as we keep God's promises in view. Once we see His promises, we will see that we can overcome!

So many of God's people lack the faith that characterized Caleb; they concentrate their thoughts on the seriousness of their illnesses, the intensity of their scars, and the insurmountable nature of their difficulties. Yet how many are there whose eyes are set on God's promises? Those who do not fear "the children of Anak" are "well able to prevail." Caleb requested Joshua to appoint Hebron as his portion; Hebron was a great city among the Anakim, and the great man among the Anakim lived there (Josh. 14:12-15). He was not dismayed by the fact that the Anakim were "men of great size," nor by the fact that Hebron was "fortified and very large"; he overcame them. The whole question in relation to overcoming is: Are we trusting in ourselves, or are we trusting in the Lord? If we are relying on ourselves then of course we have to consider whether or not the Anakim are strong or weak and whether their cities are well fortified, but if our reliance is on God, then the question of human resources does not even arise. If we are trusting in God, there is no ground for fear, and victory is assured no matter how great the men and how high the city may be.

There is another noteworthy matter in connection with Caleb. In Numbers 14:9 he exhorted the whole congregation of the

the children of Israel, saying: "Do not rebel against Jehovah; and do not fear the people of the land, for they will be our bread." He told the Israelites that they could go up immediately, they could overcome, and they did not have to be afraid of them, because "they will be our bread." Bread is something to eat. Bread is something that brings increased strength, that makes one stronger after he eats it. The inhabitants of the land were admittedly "men of great size," but in Caleb's eyes, they were food for God's people. He not only honored God's promises, he despised all the difficulties. Everyone who has genuine faith honors God and lightly esteems all difficulties. But this leaves no room for pride, for only those who humble themselves before God will be able to stand upon His victory.

Every time you meet a difficulty, every time you find yourself in an impossible situation, ask yourself this question: Am I going to starve here, or am I going to eat? If you are relying on the Lord for victory and allow His overcoming life to be manifested in you, you will find fresh nourishment and increased vitality, and you will be fed once again. Bear in mind that people who do not eat well cannot grow into maturity. Our bread is not only the word of God, our meat is not only to do His will, our bread is also the Anakim—the difficulties that are in our way. Many people take the word of God as their bread and the doing of His will as their meat, but they have not eaten the Anakim. Many eat too little of the Anakim. The more we eat the Anakim, the stronger we will become. Caleb is a grand illustration of this. Because he accepted the Anakim as "bread," he was still full of vitality at the age of eighty-five. His strength was the same at eighty-five as it was at forty. So many Anakim had been assimilated by him over the years that he had developed a constitution which showed no trace of age. This is also true in the spiritual realm. Some brothers and sisters have met few difficulties, but it is obvious that there are many weaknesses in their lives. They are weak before the Lord because they have not consumed enough Anakim. However, there are those who have met and overcome difficulty after difficulty, temptation after temptation; they are full of vigor because they have fed well on Anakim. We have to eat our difficulties and our temptation. Every difficulty and every temptation Satan puts in our way is food for us. This is a God-appointed means of spiritual progress. The sight of any trouble strikes terror into the heart of those who do not have faith, but those who trust Him say, "Here comes my food!" Praise and thank the Lord, all our trials, without exception, are bread for us. Every trial brings in growth after we have eaten of it. As we accept one trial after another, we are more and more richly nourished.

Let us now look into the practical outworking of this. We must not forget that there is a condition attached to God's keeping power. If we do not trust Him, He is unable to keep us. In order to experience His salvation, and in order to have His keeping power, we must believe wholeheartedly in His promises. If after we have overcome, we doubt whether our overcoming experience can be sustained, we are discrediting His keeping power. We must believe in God's keeping power. Every morning when we rise we should say to Him, "God, I thank You for keeping me yesterday, and today You will still keep me. I do not know what temptations may befall me, and I do not know how I can overcome. I cannot do anything; but I believe You will keep me." First Peter 1:5 speaks of being "guarded by the power of God through faith." God guards those who have faith in Him. We do not have to grapple with temptations and try to overcome them; the keeping power of God will get us through, and we must believe in His ability to save us from giving way to sin. If we implicitly rely on Him, even when we are unexpectedly assailed by temptations, an amazing thing will happen. In a way we cannot account for, something will ward off all the fiery darts of the evil one. It is the shield of faith. It will come in between us and Satan, so that his fiery darts cannot reach us. Instead of hurting us they will beat upon the shield of faith and rebound on Satan himself.

Paul said, "I am persuaded that He is able to guard my deposit unto that day" (2 Tim. 1:12). Paul did something; he committed himself to the Lord. If you believe in Him, then you must commit yourself to Him. He can only keep those who have handed themselves over to Him. Many people fail to experience the blessedness of His keeping power because they have never put themselves into His care. They have never said to Him, "Lord, I hand myself over to you and commit to You the keeping of my life." Brothers and sisters, have you placed yourselves in His hands? If you truly have, then you will be able to say with Paul, "I am persuaded that He is able to guard my deposit unto that day."

If your life is truly in His hands, then the promise of Jude 24—"to guard you from stumbling and to set you before His glory without blemish in exultation"—will be fulfilled in you. To stumble is to slip and strike against something when we are unconscious of any obstruction in the way. Praise God, He will preserve us not only from falling but also from the slightest slippage. Thank and praise the Lord, His preserving grace operates beyond the realm of our consciousness. Brothers and sisters, if we commit ourselves unreservedly into His care, we will marvel at the way we are kept. When temptation suddenly assails and love is required, we will find love spontaneously welling up from within. When a sudden temptation demands patience, without giving it a moment's thought, our patience will rise up to meet the need. Praise God, as the life we received from Adam spontaneously expresses itself, so also does the life we receive from Christ. We inherited our bad temper from Adam, and we can become angry without the slightest effort of will. We inherited pride from Adam, and we can become proud without any deliberate decision. In the same way, those who have received the life of Christ and committed themselves into His keeping can be meek without making up their minds to be meek, and humble without any

effort to be humble. The same spontaneity of manifestation that characterizes the life we have received from Adam also characterizes the life we have received from Christ. To work out what the Lord Jesus has given us does not require any effort on our part. If we trust in His promises and commit ourselves utterly to Him, we will be kept from this day to the day of His return, and we will be kept without blemish. Thank God, we have a salvation which is worthy of our trust and which will withstand every trial.

Amen.

Re: God's Keeping Power - By: Watchman Nee - posted by narrowpath, on: 2020/7/7 15:10

Great article, you can only write such words when you are in the school of Christ.