

The Power of Faith

Written by David McNabb

Wednesday, 15 October 2008 18:00 -

The Power of Faith *By David M. McNabb*

As has been seen throughout this series, the word “faith” is overused, misused, and abused on a grand scale in today’s world. It is faith’s “power” that is given preeminence by “faith” preachers, gurus, writers and teachers of many spheres, both religious and secular. It often feels like we are encouraged to have faith because of faith’s inherent benefits, whether to our health, our relationships, or to enable us to achieve our goals.

I have placed this topic last in the series, because if we are ever to realize the power of faith, we must understand its meaning, source and importance. Adherents to the beliefs of false religions are often dedicated to go to great lengths for their gods. Like the ancient prophets of Baal, followers of Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and others willingly separate themselves by diet, clothing and other life customs. Some show their dedication through fasting, some through self-flagellation; some even kill themselves in “service” to their god. While they may believe that they do these acts through “faith,” faith – true faith – provides power that pagans and unbelievers can never know.

This is where you might expect to hear about the power to move mountains, walk on water, survive a cobra bite, or some other miraculous supernatural manifestation. While the word of God abounds with examples where God’s intervention in the affairs of men resulted in the confounding of man’s logic to explain the event, the power of the gift of faith is neither limited to, nor defined by, these overt, supernatural manifestations.

As we saw in *The Source of Faith*, the only true faith is in God through Christ Jesus our Lord, and that faith comes from hearing the Word of God. John declared, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John 1:1). The apostles Peter and Paul both explained that God’s word came in ancient times by the prophets as they were moved upon by the Holy Ghost, but that now He has sent unto us His Son, Jesus, for that purpose. John said it this way, “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). Whether spoken, written, or even in the flesh, God’s word is sure!

Jesus said that God’s word will come to pass, and no other result is possible. Faith’s power, then, is wholly rooted in God’s faithfulness. Now, when we consider the actions of the faithful of old, we can better understand their motivation.

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In Hebrews 11, we are given a list of several faithful men and women of old. "By faith Noah ... prepared an ark to the saving of his house ... By faith Sara ... received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age ... By faith [Moses and the children of Israel] passed through the Red sea as by dry land: which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned. By faith the walls of Jericho fell down ... By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not..." Paul then wraps up this list with an *et cetera*, "And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth." (Heb. 11:32-38).

What a wonderful picture of the power of faith is painted by Paul in this chapter! When you consider this passage, together with the truth of Hebrews 13:8, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, 84and forever," you can begin to rejoice in what can be accomplished still today by and for those whose faith is in the Almighty Jehovah! This is where "faith" preachers leap from the pulpits with eloquent descriptions of how you can stop the mouths of your lions and obtain your abundant harvest. (We are usually spared the promise of having the trial of mocking, scourging, imprisonment or death. The world was not worthy of those that endured such trials by faith. Is it worthy of us?)

The great power of the faith of these precious men and women was not in their **belief**, but in the **object** of their belief: the Almighty, unchangeable God. Three times, the New Testament writers refer to Abraham's greatest testimony, "Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness" (Rom. 4:3; Gal. 3:6; Jas. 2:23). So, by faith, Abraham became the father of many nations after more than 80 years without an heir. Why? Was it merely because he confessed it with his mouth and believed that God would perform it? No. It was because God had given him His word, and Abraham believed that God would do all that He had promised.

In each of these examples in Hebrews 11, as well as every example in the written word of God, God made promises, and the faithful rested on the blessed assurance that God is a keeper of His promises. Sarah conceived Isaac because God said she would, and she had faith in God. David "sent to flight the armies of the aliens," because God said that he would have the victory.

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Today, we are often encouraged to “believe God” for a better car, a better house, a better job, a bigger boat, etc. While God’s word speaks of the blessings of God on them that believe, is material prosperity the consummate intent of God’s promise? Jesus surely said, “And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive” (Matt. 21:22). James agreed, saying, “Ye have not because ye ask not,” but he also added, “Ye have not because ye ask amiss” (Jas. 4:1-3).

Who is serving whom? Has God somehow submitted Himself to us, that He might do our bidding? Is this idea not 180 degrees out of phase with the will of God? Nay, we must seek His will, and set our heart’s desire on what God wants for our lives, and for His people in our day. If we align our will with His, and ask Him to do His will (as Jesus taught us to say, “Thy will be done”), then He cannot but do it.

So what is the key to unlock the power of faith to receive the things for which we ask of God? Jesus said it plainly, “If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you ... Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, He may give it you” (John 15:7,16). It was never about whether we asked of Him, it was about what He said He would do. If we abide in His word, and ask according to His will, it shall be done.

What about believers who have a chronic, even terminal illness? What about when the healing never comes? This has certainly happened many times since the beginning of the Grace Age. Perhaps you find yourself troubled, knowing a friend or relative that was wholly devoted to the Lord, yet suffered and ultimately died of cancer, diabetes, or some other dreadful malady. The many prayers brought before the throne of God, both by the infirm believer himself, and by many other believing saints, sometimes seem ineffectual. Is the lack of healing a reflection on the lack of faith? Is the “prayer chain” only as strong as its weakest link? “Faith healers” would often have us believe that to be true.

This question, however, is also answered in the “faith chapter” of Hebrews. “These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for He hath prepared for them a city” (Heb. 11:13-16). Although the faithful of old often died, having not received the fulfillment of the promises in their

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lifetime, yet they walked before the Lord in righteousness and integrity all the days of their life, knowing that God was faithful. What God had promised, they knew He would certainly perform, and the truly faithful did not limit God to their lifetime, or to their interpretation of the promise.

So, too, are our dear loved ones. Even if they were not made whole in this life, having put their trust in God, they shall surely receive the promise in the world to come, when Jesus shall raise them to life everlasting. Hallelujah! If they died paupers in this life, they will still be princes in the kingdom of our Lord.

The Power of Faith rests solely in the promises of God's word! When God says He is going to bring you over to the promise land, it matters not that there is a river, a mountain or a valley in your path. The river will divide asunder, the mountain will be brought low or removed and cast into the sea, and the valley will be filled in – all in obedience to the word of God! Not simply because you asked, but because you asked according to His will.

Solomon beautifully declared the truth that there is a time for everything in Ecclesiastes 3. This teaches us that, not only does God's word tell us what He will do, but He has a time when He will do it. This, too, requires that we trust the Lord, and follow His guidance. We must trust that He will do His pleasure in the proper season.

By faith, we have access to every benefit in Christ Jesus. The Word of God cannot fail. Hope deferred makes the heart sick (Prov. 13:12), but faith cannot be deferred, as it is backed by the full faith and credit of the Almighty.

In conclusion, faith is the gift of God (Eph. 2:8), given to us through the hearing of the Word of God (Rom. 10:17). Faith substantiates our hope (Heb. 11:1), and without it, it is impossible to please God (Heb. 11:6). Because faith is rooted in the word of the immutable God, things beyond our human comprehension are able to be achieved – not by our faith, but by the faithfulness of Him who spoke the word (Titus 1:1-3; Heb. 6:17-19).

You need not wonder at the things God can do for the faithful followers of His word. Seek righteousness and meekness; do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly before God; do all things in the name of the Lord Jesus; have faith in God. For if you continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which

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was preached to every creature which is under heaven, even though you were once alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, you are now reconciled in the body of Jesus' flesh through death, that He might present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in His sight (Col. 1:21-23).

Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and heirs of the blessings. For as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God (John 1:12-13). Praise be to His holy name! Amen.