

Are You Living By Faith? Really Living By Faith?

Please allow me to begin with a few questions. How much of our lives does God really want us to surrender to Him? Just the “spiritual” part of life, from sundown Friday to sundown Saturday? Or does He want us to give Him control of our “secular” lives - our work and our leisure time? If God wants us to surrender all our time to Him, how much control of that would he want to have? Ten percent, as He asks with tithe? Maybe fifty percent or as much as seventy-five percent, sharing control with us? How much control of my life does God actually want to have?

Ever since I started to comprehend what Jesus said in Matthew 6, specifically verses 24-34, I wanted to live that way. When I was young I was read the story of George Muller and I was very inspired by his life. I felt that his life was pleasing to God and I determined in my own little way, to live that kind of life someday – a life of faith. Later I read the Hudson Taylor story which built on that desire.

When I shared this desire with those close to me, I was told that the way they lived was not for everyone, and the way they lived was really presumptuous, but God overlooked it because of their ignorance about what Jesus **really** meant. I was told Jesus was only talking about spiritual things, not physical. Yielding spiritual blessings only, not physical ones. They reasoned that if we wanted physical blessings we would have to work for them, not trust God for them. They felt it was presumptuous for us to expect this type of physical blessing, at least not until the time of trouble when the faithful would find their privileges denied by a law prohibiting them from buying and selling. Then God would take care of their physical needs, but not until then.

But every time I would read those verses in Matthew 6 it was so clear to me that Jesus was talking about physical things as well. In fact, it sounded like it was a lot more physical than spiritual – referring to eating, drinking, and clothing.

“Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. ...and all these things shall be added (given) unto you.”

The only thing I read here that had to do with the spiritual was the condition to the promise - seek first God's kingdom and His righteousness. Pertaining to the physical things, Jesus said, *“for after all these things do the Gentiles seek:”*...as if to say that a faithful Christian who trusts in God would not be seeking what the Gentiles seek. Not that what they were seeking was wrong, but that God would give them those things.

So, who receives this blessing? The verse reads *“Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”* Clearly these blessings are promised to fall on those who seek first God's kingdom and His righteousness.

I concluded then that this promise is specifically for those who have surrendered everything to God and are withholding nothing. They are walking in obedience, having been truly born again. They continually dedicate their lives to promoting God's kingdom in every way they can. They follow the command Jesus gave to all His followers, “Go ye...” and they are allowing God to work out His righteousness in them.

I believe God calls everyone to live this way, but is living this way for everyone? No, it is only for those who choose to believe God means what He says. Only those who trust His reliable Word can live this way. This total faith and trust is also applicable in the spiritual life. We're told, *“He who has not sufficient faith in Christ to believe that He can keep him from sinning, has not the faith that will give him an entrance into the kingdom of God. --Manuscript 161, 1897.”* It is all tied together. We cannot enter into God's kingdom without the kind of faith that causes us to trust God in everything and for everything.

So, with my growing understanding of these facts, I decided that I would begin to live this way, not in my own strength, but through the strength that Jesus promised His followers. Since I was professing to be a born again Christian, I felt that I should begin to live like one, as well.

*“God's workers must gain a far deeper experience. If they will surrender all to Him, He will work mightily for them.” RH, September 17, 1903 “Consecrate yourself to God in the morning; make this your very first work. Let your prayer be, “Take me, O Lord, as wholly Thine. I lay **all my plans** at Thy feet. Use me today in Thy service. Abide with me, and let **all my work** be wrought in Thee.” This is a daily matter. Each morning consecrate yourself to God for that day. Surrender all your*

plans to Him, to be carried out or given up as His providence shall indicate. Thus day by day you may be giving your life into the hands of God, and thus your life will be molded more and more after the life of Christ.” SC 70

How many who profess to be Christians are living this way? Is this a surrender where I am still in control or is this surrender the kind where I give God 100% control, just like Jesus' relationship with His Father when He lived here on earth?

“So mightily can God work when men give themselves up to the control of His Spirit.” AA 49

Perhaps this kind of surrender is only for the clergy, Bible workers, church administrators, or the elected church officers? What about the simple employees who work for the church - secretaries, custodians, grounds workers? Is it expected of them? If so, what about those whose work is simply secular - plumbers, electricians, mechanics, tradesmen, etc.? Are they to be surrendered in their everyday lives and work since they are not employed as “God's workers” but simply doing secular work? Is it only when they engage in “spiritual work” that this is expected of them?

I believe, no matter what our profession, God wants me and you to yield 100% to His control.

If God makes it clear to us, through His Word, His voice, or providence, that He has something specific He wants us to do, would it not be sin to not do it? Like Jonah who purposely went off in another direction, doing something else instead? What if God asks us to wait for a while, for whatever reason, like Abraham and Sarah or David? Or the story Jesus told in Matthew 24:45-51.

What about hardship? Does God ask too much of us when he asks us to wait for a while and things get a little tough during the waiting time? Are we to go and find something else to do until God gets it together? Or would we only frustrate His plan and end up in a worse situation because of our impatience?

God told Abraham that He would give Sarah and him a son, and that He would make of him a great nation. But then nothing happened. No son and no land – they were just sojourning-camping. For years, nothing happened! Then God told him again that he would have a son, but still nothing happened. So, Sarah decided that obviously God must have meant something else as it wasn't happening as she had understood. Perhaps God needed some help? And instead of realizing that God was testing them to see if they really trusted Him as they professed, she began to reason and took things into her own hands. She persuaded Abraham that they needed to go in a certain direction, to “help” God. Anyone who has read the story of Abraham knows what happened and the pain and heartache that it caused them, at the time and to this very day.

The story of Jacob and the birthright is another good illustration of what happens when we think that God needs our help when things don't work out when and how we expect.

Then we have the stories of individuals who trusted in God 100% and how God worked things out. Again, the story of Abraham offering his son of promise, Isaac. He finally learned to trust God 100% and because of his faithfulness, God worked things out.

If we're fully committed to God, we won't be asked to wait without a reason. I don't believe God allows tests and trials without a reason. During the waiting times I believe He proves us, tests us. The committed use this time to draw nearer to Jesus and search out His will. Of course, God prays that we'll not lose heart during the wait. His love for us keeps drawing us, even when in our desperate circumstances we fret and try to remove the trial by coming up with our human solutions.

Abraham, Jacob, and David learned from the trials God allowed, whereas Saul did things his way and we all know the story of his end.

Sarah and Rebecca were well-meaning in what they did. But, meaning well does not make something right. What they did was wrong. Satan influenced them to mistrust God and their influence on their husbands caused them to sin as well. Their sin was the sin of unbelief. They did not believe that God could do what He said He would do without their help! What are we thinking when we try to “help” God? Do we realize what we are doing/saying? Do we think we are more competent than God is and know better than He does? How much more arrogant and self-deceived can we get?

While Sarah and Rebecca's sin was the sin of unbelief, Abraham and Jacob's fault was in listening to and allowing themselves to be persuaded by the counsel of man, knowing very well what God had said. They didn't want to do what they were counseled to do and knew it wasn't God's way, but they gave in to pressure and followed human reasoning.

When Abraham had his greatest test, the test of offering his son Isaac, he knew he dare not tell anyone, or confide with anyone, for fear that they would try to talk him out of what he knew was a command from God. Even though he was sorely tempted to doubt the source of the request and longed to seek human solace and counsel, he refused to seek human comfort or counsel. He dare not even tell his wife, knowing that she would be the hardest one to resist.

“We have done great dishonor to our Master in turning away from Christ to seek wisdom from finite human beings. Shall we

continue to cherish the sin of unbelief, which doth so easily beset us, or shall we cast away this weight of unbelief, and go to the Source of strength believing that we shall receive pity and compassion from the One who knows our frame, who loves us so well that He gave His own life for us, who bore in His own body the strokes which fell because of our transgression of the law of God. All this He did that we might become prisoners of hope.” Manuscript 144, 1901

“The greatest sin we can cherish is the sin of unbelief.” Signs of the Times, October 4, 1899

The stories of Daniel, Joseph and David are good examples of how one is to trust God to work things out. No matter how bad things get or how long we have to wait for things to work out, God will indeed work everything out.

David is an example of trusting as well as mistrusting. He was chosen to be the King of Israel and was anointed as such. He trusted that God knew what he was doing and refused to take things into his own hands, even when his friends tried to convince him he should. How long did He wait?

There were also times when David lost faith in God and took things into his own hands, like the time he lied to the High Priest when he was fleeing Saul, causing their deaths. Another illustration was one of the times when he was fleeing from Saul and went to Achish, looking to the King of Gath for refuge and had to feign insanity to get out of the bind he found himself in. We are aware of what happened to King Saul when he got tired of waiting on God and took things into his own hands. It never pays to get impatient with God. But we always reap great rewards if we wait on the Lord.

“Jesus invites us to come to Him and He will lift the weights from our weary shoulders and place upon us His yoke, which is easy, and His burden, which is light. The path in which He invites us to walk would never have cost us a pang had we always walked in it. It is when we stray from the path of duty that the way becomes difficult and thorny. The sacrifices which we must make in following Christ are only so many steps to return to the path of light, of peace and happiness. Doubts and fears grow by indulgence, and the more they are indulged, the harder they are to overcome. It is safe to let go every earthly support and take the hand of Him who lifted up and saved the sinking disciple on the stormy sea.” 4T 558

“David ought not to have distrusted God for one moment. Wherever the children of God make a failure, it is due to their lack of faith. When shadows encompass the soul, when we want light and guidance, we must look up; there is light beyond the darkness. We must learn to trust our heavenly Father, and not allow the soul to be defiled with the sin of unbelief. In trying to save ourselves, we do not commit the keeping of our souls to God, as unto a faithful Creator. We do not expect him to work for us, but frantically beat about in our own finite strength to break through some wall of difficulty which God alone can remove for us. Man is nothing without God. The example of the good and noble men of sacred history, is to be imitated by us only where they followed the footsteps of the Lord. When man relies implicitly upon God, he will be true to himself; and he can hope and rejoice in the God of his salvation, though every friend of earth becomes a foe.” ST, August 31, 1888

“In the last great conflict of the controversy with Satan those who are loyal to God will see every earthly support cut off. Because they refuse to break His law in obedience to earthly powers, they will be forbidden to buy or sell. It will finally be decreed that they shall be put to death. See Rev. 13:11-17. But to the obedient is given the promise, “He shall dwell on high: his place of defense shall be the munitions of rocks: bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure.” Isa. 33:16. By this promise the children of God will live. When the earth shall be wasted with famine, they shall be fed. “They shall not be ashamed in the evil time: and in the days of famine they shall be satisfied.” Ps. 37:19.” DA 121

So, what does God require of us before we can expect Him to carry out His promise to us in Matthew 6?

*It is not the length of time we labor but our willingness and fidelity in the work that makes it acceptable to God. **In all our service a full surrender of self is demanded.** The smallest duty done in sincerity and self-forgetfulness is more pleasing to God than the greatest work when marred with self-seeking. He looks to see how much of the spirit of Christ we cherish, and how much of the likeness of Christ our work reveals. He regards more the love and faithfulness with which we work than the amount we do. COL p. 402 par 3*

I believe Jesus wants us to have learned by experience to trust Him completely before the “time of trouble” comes because that will require complete trust in God. Now is our “time of probation” where we learn to walk by faith, not sight. Just like those who have gone before us, some lived by every Word that proceeded from the mouth of God and some chose not to, suffering the consequences.