

FACT, FAITH, AND FEELING



“While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.” -2 Corinthians 4:18

*“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”
-Hebrews 11:1*

You will notice, in both of these verses, natural sight is contrasted with faith. A natural gift is given for use in the natural, but the spiritual gift is for an altogether different purpose. Nor can a natural gift replace a spiritual gift. God gave us physical eyes to see and appreciate the sunlight. But, He gave us faith to believe, admire, and follow His Son. Let us acknowledge that these are two completely different functions.

1 Cor. 2:9 ...eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.

This being true, why do we so often rely upon what we can see, hear, and feel? God never gave us our natural senses to discern spirit.

1 Cor. 2:14 But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

Hence, this spiritual journey must be approached by faith.

2 Cor. 5:7 For we walk by faith, not by sight...

And it is only by faith that we are able to comprehend the spiritual realm.

Hebrews 11:3 Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God...

God calls us to a walk of faith, out from the security of trusting in the natural senses. He commands us to believe and obey His Word. As we know, God's Word will often conflict with what we see, hear, and feel. This is why the divine order of this life is always: first fact, then faith, and finally, feeling. But man's tendency is to go at it backwards, to reverse the order to: feeling, faith, and then fact. Yes, it's true, we want to feel and then we'll be convinced, then

we'll believe, and finally we'll declare it as fact. In this article, we will discuss this divine order of fact, faith, and feeling in more detail. If we fail to establish this order in our spiritual walk we will be left helpless in the spiritual battle before the enemy.

FIRST, THERE IS *FACT*

Genesis 1:1 In the beginning God...

By *fact*, we mean the unchanging, infallible person and Word of God.

John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word...

Always, at the beginning, the origin of spiritual life, progress, and blessing, is God and His Word. We must start here, if not, we violate the most basic premise of Scripture: "*In the beginning God...*" As we know, God and His Word, are one and the same. And by God's very nature, He and His Word are immutable, unchanging, and eternally fixed.

Hebrews 13:8 Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.

In the end, everything will be brought under subjection to this one, eternal, unrelenting truth: *God Is*. That is fact, how you feel about it is not. If we refuse to believe, it won't change the facts. Here, in a phrase, our basic lesson is expressed: *God's Word, above everything else, must define our reality*. What we think, what we see, and what we feel must be set aside.

Hebrews 10:38 Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.

And the object of faith is God Himself.

"God is the great object of faith; for faith rests its whole weight on His Word. Faith is not an aimless act of the soul, but a looking to God and resting upon His promises. Just as love and hope have always an objective so, also, has faith. Faith is not believing just anything; it is believing God, resting in Him, trusting His Word."
-E.M. Bounds

Thus, it can be said, the just shall live by fact, not by feeling. Spiritual warfare, is a continual test of my attitude toward fact, the fact of God's Word. Everything we experience in life tests our attitudes towards the person of God, the promises of God, and the provision of God. This lesson is seen in the children of Israel as they wandered in the wilderness: *they had a bad attitude toward the facts*. But they most confidently trusted in what they saw and felt: *they refused to bring their theology in line with fact, but rather, bowed to feeling*.

Hebrews 3:19 So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief...but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.

It doesn't matter the need: whether it's salvation, sanctification, the baptism of the Holy Ghost, etc. We must be committed to what God said about it, that's fact. To walk by faith, we must deny ourselves by refusing to consult our feelings and perceptions. However, the human tendency is to, whether consciously or unconsciously, rely upon feelings. We are such creatures of feeling, we tend to always refer to what we can feel and sense.

“All temptation is primarily to look within; to take our eyes off the Lord and to take account of appearances. Faith is always meeting a mountain, a mountain of evidence that seems to contradict God's Word...either faith or the mountain has to go. They cannot both stand. But the trouble is that many times the mountain stays and faith goes. This must not be. If we resort to our senses to discover the truth, we shall find Satan's lies are often enough true to our experience; but if we refuse to accept as binding anything that contradicts God's Word and maintain an attitude of faith in Him alone, we shall find instead that Satan's lies begin to dissolve and that our experience is coming progressively to tally with the Word.” -Watchman Nee

Feeling will often contradict fact. Incidentally, the word *feel*, in any form, is only found in the N.T. five times. Of the five, only one, Mark 5:29, eludes to discerning the Spirit or the work of God.

Mark 5:29 And straightway the fountain of her blood was dried up; and she felt in her body that she was healed of that plague.

However, this verse demonstrates, rather than undermines the pattern of fact, faith, feeling: notice, feeling came after she displayed faith in fact.

“Well, preacher, I don't feel sanctified, dead, delivered, healed”. The faith that brings the victory and apprehends the promises of God doesn't rely on feeling, but stands confidently on fact.

AFTER FACT, THEN THERE IS *FAITH*

Romans 10:17 So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

First the Word, or the fact, and then, the fact inspires faith. Faith based on fact produces freedom, so-called faith built on feelings brings bondage. Now, the problem often lies in our concept and practical definition of faith. We must see that faith is more than understanding the truth with conviction. Faith is the action of the will in agreement with the conviction.

"Faith is an action based on a belief supported by a confidence of continued action that if God said it, God Almighty will do it." -B.H. Clendennen

To believe is conduct in accord with fact. Unbelief is conduct in accord with feeling but contrary to fact.

"The modern church ardently believes everything while obeying nothing at all." -A.W. Tozer

Faith is not a spiritual summit to attain, it is merely believing, regardless of what you see or feel, based solely on fact, or the Word of God.

Suppose I were to ask you, *"Do you believe Leviticus 2:10?"*

Some may ask, *"What does it say?"*

Others may turn in their Bibles to the reference to read the verse. And thus, both are exposed as succumbing to doubt.

What difference does it make? No matter how it reads, it's God's Word, thus it must be true, right? As sight is seeing, so faith is believing. To question the Word of God, in any way, in any subtle fashion, is to entertain unbelief.

Romans 3:4 ...let God be true, but every man a liar

That includes you, why do you trust yourself so much? God and His Word are the only things we can truly trust.

Numbers 23:19 God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?

A man one time gave me a card that said: *"...there are two foundational facts of life: [1] There is a God, [2] You are not Him."* If we are truly to stand firm on God's Word, this is a lesson we must quickly learn. This is the ground of true faith: *I will allow nothing, whether from within or without, to cast a shadow on God's Word.*

AND FINALLY, THERE COMES *FEELING*

Mark 16:17 And these signs shall follow them that believe...

Experience always follows faith, not experience then faith.

Mark 16:20 And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.

First there is the fact, then there is faith, and finally comes the feeling (if any). I'm so glad God didn't altogether eliminate feeling, just because it's unreliable. It's a wonderful thing to have feelings, to be conscious of God's presence and favor, to be overwhelmed, to see, to hear, and to experience the promises of God tangibly manifest in the realm of time. However, what we experience is not what we rely on to believe. Signs are to follow the Word, not the other way around.

John 14:12 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.

God is grieved when we hold His promises and His provision under the scrutiny of a finite mind or fleshly, sensual feelings. In fact, if we walk by sight instead of faith, Jesus warned we shall be blinded.

John 9:39 ...for judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind.

We must be surrendered to God's divine order: *fact, faith, and feeling.*

“Do you know the illustration of Fact, Faith, and Experience walking along the top of a wall? Fact walked steadily on, turning neither right nor left and never looking behind. Faith followed and all went well so long as he kept his eyes focused upon Fact; but as soon as he became concerned about Experience and turned to see how he was getting on, he lost his balance and tumbled off the wall, and poor old Experience fell down after him.”
-Watchman Nee

May we ever keep our eyes on Him...

—B.W.

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