

Believing

Galatians 2:20b That life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God.

Hebrews 11:1 Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, a conviction of things not seen.

Ephesians 1:13-14 In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.

Believe unto Victory

We have seen that the life that wins is none other than Christ himself. It is not my improvement nor my progress. It is not working with my own strength to be like Christ. **Victory is Christ living in me and overcoming for me.** As He died on the cross for me that I might be saved, so today He lives in me that I may overcome. We have also seen the conditions for victory: one, yielding; and two, believing. We believe that the Son of God lives in us, and we also believe that He lives out his victory through us. In our last discussion we looked more closely than before into the subject of *yielding*. We shall now look more closely than before at this matter of *believing*. Many people have yielded, yet they have no victory. This is because they do not believe. Yielding without believing will not bring in victory, since yielding is the negative side, while believing is the positive side. Only when both of these sides are implemented can victory be assured. And this positive side is what we now wish to look into more thoroughly.

One brother in Chefoo went home after a church meeting and declared that though he had yielded, he experienced no victory. He remained the same the next day. In fact, he even lost his temper in the store on that very day. So I told him that yielding alone would not guarantee victory, since that was but the negative. What was essential for him to do was to believe with a singleness of heart following his yielding. He accepted the truth and obtained the victory. At the last assembly meeting he stood up and praised God, declaring that this was the first time he had ever praised God for having nothing to boast of and was also the first time he had ever praised God for His having done everything.

What was the experience of the apostle Paul? How did he enter into victory? The first step he took was to yield: "I have been crucified with Christ," he testified. He had already had the experience of "no longer I that live." He then continued by declaring: "That life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God." What he meant here was: I believe the Son of God lives in me; I believe He loved me and gave himself for me.

Let us now inquire as to what faith is, especially the relationship between faith and victory.

Believe in God's Fact

All the things in the Bible are done by God for us. At a conference held in January of 1934, we mentioned that God has given us three things: (1) the covenant He gave us, (2) the fact He accomplished for us, and (3) the promise He bestowed on us. All the things which God did for us were included in these three gifts of covenant, accomplished fact, and promise. When earlier we gave the messages on "the Better Covenant," we talked at

great length about this first gift of covenant.” Accordingly, we will not treat of that subject here. As to God’s promise and God’s fact, however, we would like to discuss these in some detail. *Promise* is that which God will do for us *in the future*, whereas *fact* is that which God has *already* accomplished in us.

Many people do not know what God’s fact is. The Lord Jesus died on the cross **for all the world**—this is God’s fact. **But how many have been saved? Only those who have believed.** Hence a problem arises, which is to say, that since Christ died for the whole world—and this is God’s fact unaffected by men’s attitude—**why is the whole world not saved? It is because not all in the world receive God’s fact by faith.** Similarly, however, many Christians fail to accept by faith God’s fact that Christ lives in them. Christ is the head, and all believers are the body. Just as the head in the physical body feels, manages, controls and responds, so shall it be for the Christian if he allows his spiritual head, even Christ, to feel, manage, control and respond for him. In the face of God’s fact, how many Christians really see the Lord Jesus as their head? Today does Christ feel or do they feel? Does Christ manage or do they manage? Does Christ control or do they control? Does Christ respond or do they respond? Where lies the difficulty? In nothing else but a lack of faith.

Perhaps some brothers and sisters will reply that they do believe in Christ as head, yet they cannot believe that the head is responsible for everything. They just cannot believe; they do not understand what faith truly is. The Scripture says that the Lord is the vine and we are the branches. It does not say He will *be* our vine and we will *be* His branches. Whether we believe or not, He nonetheless *is* the vine and we nonetheless *are* the branches. Yet only to those who believe will the spiritual sap flow through them; with the result that they bear fruit. But for those who do not believe, the life of the Lord *cannot* flow through them; therefore, they must themselves labor for any fruit.

Faith Substantiates God’s Fact

Hebrews 11:1 speaks of the significance of faith. It is the only verse in the entire Bible which gives us a definition of faith: “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, a conviction of things not seen.” In other Bible versions there are a number of other renderings that have been given for the word translated here as “assurance,” since this is a most difficult word to translate from the original Greek into English. To be probably the most accurate, this word should be translated as “the giving of substance to” or “substantiation,” which thus means that faith is the ability to substantiate a thing as factual. For example, in this hall where we are meeting, we have before us the shape of the lamp, the color of the wall, and the sound of the organ. How do we substantiate the shape and color and sound to make them real to us? That which can substantiate the existence of color is none other than our two eyes. Suppose there were a picture here also with beautiful colors such as green and red and yellow. These beautiful colors would need the eyes to make them real. If there were no eye, then however beautiful these colors are, nothing could make them real in our own personal experience. By the same token, though the sound of the organ is pleasant, it takes ears to show forth its reality. To one who is deaf, there is no way to substantiate the realness of the music. Neither the eyes nor the touch of the hand can substantiate the sound; only the ears can substantiate the sound and make it enjoyable. Then, too, the shape of a thing may be square, round, plane, triangular or curved; its fact is only to be known either by the touch of the hand or by the sight of the eye. So that the existence of a thing is one matter while the substantiating of it is quite another. There are numerous things in the physical world, but every one of them needs some ability to prove its reality. **In the spiritual realm, this ability is what faith is.**

Here is a painting with a beautiful scenery of hill, water, flowers and trees. With your eyes you can make real the beauty as well as the existence of that painting. Suppose a man is born blind and he has never seen any color. You try to tell him of the red in the painting, and he will ask what is red color? You say there is green color also, but he says what is green? All you can say to him is that what is red is red color and what is green is green color. Though the painting exists, the blind man cannot enjoy its beauty.

Here is a sister who plays the piano well. Whoever has ears and knows music can appreciate what this sister plays. But he who is deaf and is a stranger to music will not be able to prove the sweetness of the music. Now our faith is just like that. All the facts of God are real and true, but faith alone can verify them. For “faith is the substantiating of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1 Darby).

The blind person cannot see the beautiful scenery in a painting. Nevertheless, his inability to see can in no way disprove the existence of the painting. **For its existence is a fact, whether a person sees it or not. Its beautiful colors remain unchanged.** The question is, can the person be benefited by the painting? He who has eyes is pleased with the painting and is benefited by it. It is the same in the spiritual realm. That the Lord shed His blood and died on the cross for mankind is a fact. Nevertheless, only those who have faith are able to prove this fact and be benefited by it. To those who do not believe, the death of the Lord on the cross may indeed be factual, yet they will not be able to experience it and benefit by it.

Have you now seen the significance of faith? We need faith to prove a spiritual matter just as we need eyes, ears and hands to prove physical matters. In all spiritual affairs, it takes the element of faith to substantiate them. For instance, the Lord is head and we are the members of His body. The union is a fact which cannot be torn asunder. So is the fact of the Lord being the vine and we being the branches. By believing it, we will be benefited by it. Some may say the Lord *is* the vine and they *are* the branches, but they have no experience of spiritual sap nor life nor fruit-bearing. This is because they do not have faith.

What is faith? **Faith is not mental apprehension.** It is seeing the fact and proving it. You have heard that Christ died on the cross and shed His blood for the remission of sins; and so you say that Christ died on the cross and shed his blood for the remission of sins. You have heard that the Lord is the vine and we are the branches; therefore, you too say that the Lord is the vine and we are the branches. You have heard that the Lord Jesus is your life and He lives in you; whereupon, you too say that the Lord Jesus is your life and lives in you. Nevertheless, you are not able to prove these facts and make them real in experience **because you lack faith.** In just the same way, you may have let go of yourself because you realize your inability and uselessness. Yet this is but the negative side of victory. You need positively to prove Christ by an act of faith—by believing. Is it not most wonderful that in one minute, nay, in one *second*, all the facts which Christ has accomplished can be proven and demonstrated in your life? Such is the substantiating by faith.

How do you know a painting is beautiful? Because you have seen it with your physical eyes. How do you know the riches of Christ? Because you have seen with your spiritual eyes. In the letter to the Colossians, God declares that “in him (Christ) ye are made full” (2:9). But how do you know you are made full in Christ? Because you have seen it with the eye of faith. As you look at yourself, you know you are not complete at all. Even so, are you nonetheless able to declare you are complete in Christ? With the eye of *faith* you *can*. The Lord has given you His riches, grace upon grace. Do you have them? It is not whether you have them in your mind, but whether you *believe* them in your heart.

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ” (Ephesians 1:3). We indeed profess to believe that God has blessed us with every

spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus; nonetheless, where are these blessings? The entire question revolves around the matter of faith, believing that the word of God is true.

The great failure of a Christian is unbelief. Believe, and the fact is proven. See with faith and the fact is substantiated in experience.

There was in England a man of God by the name of H. W. Webb-Peploe. Listen to what he testified: Four days afterward, my little child that was with us at the seashore was taken sick and died. I had to carry the little coffin in my arms all the way home, where I buried my little one with my own hands. I returned from the burial and said to myself, "Now you have lost your holiday, have come home in trouble, and you must speak to your people instead of letting your curate speak; you would better tell them about God and his love." I looked to see what lesson was assigned for the Sunday, and found it was the twelfth chapter of Second Corinthians. I read the ninth verse, "My grace is sufficient for thee," and thought, "There is the verse to speak on." I sat down to prepare my notes, but soon found myself murmuring in my tent against God for all he called upon me to bear. I flung down my pen, threw myself on my knees, and said to God, "It is not sufficient, it is not sufficient! Lord, let thy grace be sufficient, O Lord, do!"

The day before I had left home, my mother had given me a beautiful illuminated text, and I had asked the servant to hang it on the wall over my table, that I might find it there when I came back. As I opened my eyes I was saying, "O God, let thy grace be sufficient for me," and there on the wall I saw, MY GRACE IS SUFFICIENT FOR THEE. The word *is* was in bright green, *My* was in black, and *thee* in black, "MY grace *is* sufficient for THEE." I heard a voice that seemed to say to me, "You fool, how *dare* you ask God to make what is! Get up and take, and you will find it true. When God says '*is*,' it is for you to believe Him, and you will find it true at every moment." That *is* turned my life; from that moment I could say, "O God, whatever thou dost say in thy Word I believe, and please God, I will step out upon it."

This servant of God was so full of joy and thankfulness that he would ask no more of God in this way. The next day he stood in the pulpit and delivered the best message of his life. When people asked him when he had first experienced the enduement of power from heaven, his answer was, after he had returned from burying his little girl. What made the difference was that he had learned to believe.

One brother told me later that after having heard me speak at length, he had gotten nothing out of it. I said to him that this was because he merely listened to me; he should in addition have asked God to speak to him. Accordingly, in the evening he prayed, "O God, cause me to overcome. O God, my temper is very bad, enable me to overcome it." As he prayed, he remembered the prayer of the leper who said to Jesus, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean" (Matthew 8:2b). So he too prayed: "O Lord, if You will, You can make my bad temper leave me." At this point he realized that the Lord was already willing; for in the story, Jesus had said "I will" in response to the leper. Why, then, should he pray this at all? The Lord has accomplished everything and the Lord was willing; therefore all was well.

All *is* well if you can believe 2 Corinthians 12:9 or Luke 18:27. By believing the "I will" of the Lord Jesus, your problem is solved. Faith is not *asking* for what God has already promised. Faith is *believing* the promise of God.

Once a brother spoke on how to cross the threshold to victory. After he finished speaking, he opened the time for questions and answers. In the audience I saw a young sister with tears running down her cheeks, but she did not stand up and ask a question. However, an elderly sister nearby stood up and asked, "In these years I have always prayed for victory, yet I have never gotten the victory. What is the problem?" "**Your problem is none other than praying too much,**" replied that brother. "**All is well if you change your prayer to praise.**"

As soon as the word was spoken, a brother stood up and said, “I have asked for victory for eleven years with no result. Now I have gotten it through listening to the question and answer between this elderly sister and you.” The ministering brother then went over to the young sister and inquired how she was. “I too have gotten the victory after listening to the question and answer,” responded the young sister. And such is faith.

Let us not take for granted that letting go, by itself, is victory. Without faith, you are still unable to substantiate God’s fact. Just as the color in a painting needs to be substantiated by the eye, the sound of the organ by the ear, and the shape of a substance by the hand, so the promise and the word of God must be substantiated by faith. We do not pray, “O God, be my victory gradually, be my life gradually, or be my holiness gradually.” No, we pray, “O God, You *are* my victory; I praise and thank You! O God, You *are* my holiness!”

I want you to know that I have encountered many temptations in my life. Many difficult problems have come my way; and many hard words have fallen upon my ears. Do I ask God to give me strength that I may overcome? On the contrary, I say, “O Lord, I praise and thank You, for You are my victory! O Lord, You overcome for me, and I praise and thank You. You resist for me, and I praise and thank You! O Lord, You are my head, I am Your member. You are the trunk, and I am a branch. You supply me with all I need.” And I have found that He is already supplying all my needs according to His own word.

We each are perhaps saved by one verse out of the thousands to be found in God’s word. Some are saved through John 3:16; others, through John 5:24; and still others, from Romans 10:10. Just one word of God and a person is saved! This is also true with respect to victory. One out of the many words of God will bring a believer victory—even as that brother received the victory through the word of Jesus, “I will” (Matthew 8:3a). Many have entered into victory through 2 Corinthians 12:9, Romans 6:14, or 1 Corinthians 1:30.

Faith Is Not Hoping

All who are merely hoping may not have believed. If you ask a person whether he has overcome, and his answer is that he *hopes* to overcome, you know for sure that he does not have faith, even as you know a person does not have faith if he says he *hopes* to be saved. Some here are expecting all the time that the Lord will deliver them and cause them to overcome. Some here are praying continuously to the Lord asking for victory. Some are waiting a long while for the Lord to give them victory. Some may even claim that they have yielded and believed, but they are waiting to see if it works. It will never work if people wait to see whether or not it is effective, for faith is not hoping.

A brother once asked me if, after one has experienced victory, he must always remember that the Lord Jesus was his victory. Now it so happened that he supervised the jobs of over twenty employees in the factory where he himself was employed. And such supervision, he told me, occupied him from early morning till eight o’clock at night. How, then, he asked, could he possibly remember this matter all the time when he had to take care of so many things? Could he still overcome? I asked him in reply whether he continually remembered while at the factory that he had two eyes? Of course not, he answered. Did he need to touch his eyes with his hand after work to make sure they were still there? Certainly not, he replied. Therefore, I said to him, whether he remembered or not was unimportant because what was really essential was that the eyes were there. Praise and thank God, the victorious life in us does not depend on our remembrance of the Lord; rather, it depends on the Lord remembering us. How hard for us to always remember Him, but thank God, it is He who remembers us!

Faith Is Not Feeling

Some may not be hoping, praying or waiting; they may instead be on the lookout for feeling. One sister told me that although she had already yielded and had believed that the Lord was living in her, she dared not say she had overcome, because from the day she had accepted the victory of the Lord right up to the present moment, she had not felt anything. Let me emphasize the truth that faith is purely believing: it has no regard for feeling. Feeling may be useful in certain other things, but in knowing the Lord it is absolutely useless and untrustworthy. The hand can only touch and feel cold or hot, but it cannot see a painting. In spiritual matters, faith, and not feeling, is what is required to prove them. Victory is based on believing God's word. Because God has said so, so it is—and not because during these days you feel especially strong or joyful. Victory rests on one word of God.

One morning a brother came to tell me his problem. He had already yielded and believed, but he dared not say he had victory. Satan was accusing him all the time. Something had happened the other day, he told me, which made him doubt that his victory was real. It was clear to me he was trusting his feelings. So I spoke to him by means of a parable: I had a garden behind my house which I sold to you one day and gave you the deed to the property. As you went to the garden, a man suddenly appeared and said to you that one place of the garden belonged to him. What were you to do? There were two alternatives available: either you would believe the deed I gave you which specified the extent of the entire garden, or you would believe that man's word. If my deed were true, then that man lied. Whom would you believe? Were you to believe the stranger's word, you would have to let him stay in the garden. But if you believed my word, you could order him to remove himself from your property.

Now the promise and the word of God are wholly dependable. But were you to trust in your feelings and say that your temper and pride were insoluble problems, then would not God's word become untrustworthy? Yet if you believe in God's word, all these problems you have would be solved.

God gives you a covenant specifying that gentleness, patience, humility, love, self-control and whatever else is in Christ are all yours. Nevertheless, you lose your temper, you become proud and unclean, and you are defeated. What should you do? If you believe God's word, you will say, "O God, I thank and praise You, I am able to be gentle, patient, humble, loving, and in control of myself because Christ lives in me." By laying hold of God's word, all the things you are afraid of will go away.

Unbelief Is the Greatest Sin

Today the greatest problem among the children of God is the failure to believe His word. It may not be too difficult for them to let go, and after letting go, believing ought to be fairly easy too. Yet this is not the case.

I asked a sister who had let go and handed over everything to the Lord if she had victory. Her reply was that she dared not say she had. And why? Because she had not seen any result. So I spoke to her directly: "You have committed the greatest sin of mankind, which is unbelief. Your unbelief reflects on God as though He were lying. For He has said that you are the branch, and that if you let go, His life will live out from you. Yet you are now saying that though you have let go, God has still not delivered you. In short, you are saying *you* have done your duty, but *God* has not fulfilled His responsibility." She denied that she had had such intention.

I therefore told her, “You should say, ‘O God, I thank and praise You, for You have already given me the victory’.”

You who believe that the Lord is head and that He is your life must observe *this* word from the Bible: “Believe that ye *received* them, and ye shall have them” (Mark 11:24b mg., Greek original). Believe, and the hardest shall pass away. Believe, then nothing can stand in your way to victory. This is salvation! Today our faith is not work; it is a substantiating God’s fact. Believe that the Lord is head, believe that He lives in you, believe that He is your life, believe He is the trunk and you are the branch, and believe that He overcomes for you. Believe, and all temptations will fall away. Believe that all is done by the Lord. Praise and thank Him, for everything is done by Him!

What God has spoken is most trustworthy. We do not believe or trust in our experiences or feelings, but we do believe in the word of God. God says that the Lord Jesus not only died on the cross to be our righteousness but He now lives in us to be our sanctification. Therefore, we may not only say Christ is our righteousness but also say Christ is our sanctification. It is not that we *feel* that Christ is our life and sanctification, but that we believe He *is* our life and sanctification. God says Christ is our life, so we too say Christ is our life. God declares that Christ is our sanctification, therefore we also declare that Christ is our sanctification. God asserts that Christ is our victory, and hence we too assert that Christ is our victory. God says it, so we believe it.

I asked another sister in Chefoo if she had yielded. She replied that she *had* let go of herself, because God had said, “I have been crucified with Christ.” I asked further if she knew victory, to which she answered that she dared not say so, because she had no assurance. I therefore spoke to her quite frankly: “Sister, God says that Christ is your life, but you say Christ may or may not be your life. God says Jesus Christ is your sanctification, yet you say He may or may not be your sanctification. God says His grace is sufficient for you, nevertheless you say God’s grace may or may not be sufficient for you. Most surely one of you is lying. If God is right, you must be wrong; or vice versa. Now do you dare to say that God is a liar? Judging by what you have already said, are you not suggesting that God’s word is untrustworthy?” Immediately her face changed color. She denied that she had made any such insinuation, for she *did* believe in God’s word. She finally saw my point.

I would ask this of you: do you think it is a small matter if you continue to waver and hesitate about knowing Christ as your life and sanctification? Let me seriously warn you that you will be accusing God of lying.

I briefly asked still another sister in Chefoo if she had let go. Her answer was that she had. But did she have victory? She knew she lacked the victory because she still had some insignificant problems in her life. As I was pressed for time, I asked God to give me utterance to answer her. This was what I said to her: You say you have no faith, but in God’s sight you have committed a great sin, the sin of not believing in His word. God has said to you that Christ is your life, your sanctification, and your victory. He has also told you that His grace is sufficient for you. But you do not believe, and you dismiss it with a smile as though it were of little consequence. Sister, let me tell you, you have committed a grave sin! You should go and pray: “O God, I do not believe in Your word. I have sinned against You . O God, forgive me, and take away my wicked heart of unbelief. Rid me of this my sin.”

Someone may be unbelieving; yet, sad to say, he may deem it to be a trivial matter. In truth he has committed a great sin. This sin of unbelief is greater than the sin of adultery or murder. He should therefore pray, “O God, please forgive me, for I have sinned against You. Please take away from me this wicked heart of unbelief.” If anyone considers his not believing in God’s word to be sin, he will quickly cross over the threshold to victory. Faith is based on God’s word, such a word as “My grace is sufficient for thee” (2

Corinthians 12:9a) or that “Christ Jesus . . . was made unto us wisdom from God, both righteousness and sanctification and redemption (1 Corinthians 1:30 mg.) or “Christ, who is our life” (Colossians 3:4a). Lay hold of God’s word, and all is well!

The Life That Wins by Watchman Nee