

# LIVING BY FAITH

By

Curtis Dickinson

“Without faith it is impossible to be well pleasing unto (God).”<sup>1</sup> We cannot see Him nor feel Him nor hear his voice. Yet we can have a mind-to-mind relationship with Him **by faith**.

According to John, faith is the basis and strength for living. “For whatsoever is begotten of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. And who is he that overcomes the world, but he that believes that Jesus is the Son of God.”<sup>2</sup> Faith that Jesus is the Son of God and that He died for our redemption is generally called “saving faith.” But that’s only the foundation. To live by faith and “overcome the world” means that we are convinced that God will do everything He has promised. If we believe that God spoke the truth regarding Jesus, His death and resurrection, then we should never doubt that He is equally true in all else He has spoken.

In the first century — before there were any denominational organizations, before any council of bishops had written a creed, and even before there was a collection of 27 gospels and letters which we call the New Testament — when there was just the good news of Jesus, people believed that good news and had such faith that they were able to stand against tyrants like Caligula and Nero, to defy the whole Roman government, to endure horrible persecution, and yet stand fast in the faith and find peace, joy and victory to “overcome the world.”

**FOCUS ON SELF.** Today such faith is considered a rare commodity, even in the Christian community. And no wonder, when one of the most popular fads in the churches is the promotion of self-esteem, to encourage pride in one’s own ability and worth. The argument is that if we are to love our neighbor as ourselves, we must first love ourselves. This emphasis on self-love generates a feeling of self-sufficiency and puts faith in the background.

The public schools are also placing the accent on self and “self-fulfillment,” as students are taught to arrive at their own values through self-introspection and discussions with other children. This not only negates parental values but bypasses dependency upon God.

Self-confidence is the world’s philosophy, the boast of humanism, but it is never encouraged by Jesus and the apostles. Rather than preaching self-esteem and self-love, they preached repentance, righteousness, self-control, and judgment.<sup>3</sup> Who would say that the modern “possibility thinking” approach has developed more Christ-like believers than the old fashioned doctrine?

When I hear of all the self-improvement” programs in the churches, I think of some of the great saints of past years who never heard of things such as “self-esteem” and “self-image.” How did they develop such strong Christian personalities? The answer is: **By faith**. They never concentrated on themselves but on God, what He has done through Christ, what He is doing, and what He promised to do. It is not confidence in self but confidence in God that gives strength and boldness for one to serve Him in the face of the world’s opposition.

**FOCUS ON THE STATE.** Where we place our faith is demonstrated by that upon which we depend. For salvation most would agree that we depend upon God to save us through Christ's death on the cross. But in His teaching Jesus went much farther than this. We are to depend upon our Heavenly Father for our daily bread, as well as deliverance from the pervasive evil which would destroy us.<sup>4</sup> If the birds depend on Him, so can we, as we are of much more value than they, contrary to the idea of many environmentalists.<sup>5</sup>

With the enormous growth of bureaucratic government, there has also been a significant shift from dependency upon God to dependency upon the state. Government officials are far more concerned about our faith in the state than they are about our faith in God. We have come to depend on the state for solving all problems and providing all things, including food, clothing and shelter. As people depend more on the state, the state assumes more power, eventually forgetting God's laws and forging its own. In fact, we have gone so far down this road that God's laws are denied any place in deciding questions between the individual and the state. Instead of living by faith in God, the populace lives by fear of the state. Instead of seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, that He might provide as He promised,<sup>6</sup> people seek the approval of the state, that it might provide all things.

One bright and encouraging light is the home schooling movement. For over a century we have depended on the state to educate our children, resulting in the present demoralized society. Many Christians are resisting the state, with faith to teach and train their children according to God's precepts.

**FAITH IS TRUST.** Surely something is wrong when 90% of the people profess to believe in God and yet our nation is overrun with crime, corruption, greed and violence. There is a gross misunderstanding of what it means to have faith in God. Many claim to have such faith when all they mean is that they believe some kind of God exists. Biblical faith embraces not only God's existence, but His purpose, His design for our lives, His promises and warnings.

This means that we believe that everything God has commanded is good,<sup>7</sup> and "His commandments are not grievous."<sup>8</sup> Yet His commands, in our time, are considered unreasonable, as if He were only trying to see how difficult He could make it for us. Youth are told that it is too hard for them to remain chaste. Apparently the command against fornication must not have been a good command and is "grievous" to man. But the fact is no one ever grieved for having kept God's commands. No one ever wept tears of remorse for having followed His will. Faith is to trust Him, to believe that His commandments are good, and that obeying Him will result in the greatest blessings.

Abraham is our example of faith.<sup>9</sup> When commanded to sacrifice his only son, the one through whom the great promise was to be brought, he readily obeyed, confident that the promise still would be kept, trusting that God could raise Isaac from the dead, if necessary.<sup>10</sup> Abraham had confidence that God is to be trusted, even in such a totally unbelievable command. How much more should we walk by faith in the simple commands He has given.

This is not to suggest that we are saved by how well we keep the commandments. No one is able to perform perfectly. Our standing before God is not based on our works. We are justified by faith, faith that Christ died for our sins, and we continue in God's grace through this same faith.<sup>11</sup>

**SIZE OF FAITH.** It is common for us to excuse ourselves with the complaint that we just don't have enough faith. But it is not the quantity of faith but the object of faith that makes the difference.

The apostles once begged, "Lord, increase our faith." Instead of commending them for such a desire, Jesus told them that if they had any faith at all, even as small as a grain of mustard seed, they would see wondrous results.<sup>12</sup> When they had witnessed Jesus risen from the dead, they finally believed and trusted Him to the point of challenging the world and all its forces with the truth of the gospel.

We are not to confuse faith with our self-doubts. To doubt one's self is not a sign of a lack of faith. In fact, scripture emphasizes that we cannot trust in ourselves, for we are weak and fallible, and our hearts may deceive us.<sup>13</sup> But trusting God removes the need for self-trust and consequently makes self-doubt irrelevant.

The lack of faith may mean that we do not want to deny ourselves and be committed fully to God's direction. This is what James called being "double-minded", asking of God, then doubting what He gives.<sup>14</sup> If we trust God, we trust Him in everything. That's faith, regardless of whether much or little.

Fear roams the earth today, screamed to us day and night by the media. We are threatened with heart disease, cancer, AIDS, unemployment, and financial collapse, and told that we may drop dead from polluted water, polluted air, lack of ozone, an ice age, or a greenhouse effect, overpopulation or too much noise. The answer to all of this is **faith**.<sup>15</sup> My own answer to such fears is that I trust God and am committed to Him. If any or all of these bad scenarios develop, God will still complete His purpose, and that can only be good. At last He will raise me up with immortality in His image and in a glorious new creation.

Faith that God keeps His word makes the difference between living with fear and uncertainty or living with peace, security, and a blessed and marvelous hope.

### References

1. Hebrews 11:6
2. I John 5:4-5
3. Acts 3:19; 24:25
4. Matthew 6:10-13
5. Matthew 6:26
6. Matthew 6:35
7. Romans 7:12
8. I John 5:3
9. Galatians 3:6-9 Hebrews 11:17
10. Hebrews 11:19
11. Ephesians 2:8; Romans 3:24;  
I John 1:7-9
12. Matthew 17:20
13. II Corinthians 1:9; Jeremiah 17:9
14. James 1:5-8
15. Ephesians 6:13-17

.....  
Copyright © Curtis Dickinson. Formatted and Posted by Ken Fortier Ministries.  
Permission is hereby granted by Mrs. Regina Dickinson to reproduce and distribute  
Curtis' articles to as many as possible. This statement is to remain attached to this article  
for permission to be valid. Vol. XXXI, Number 10.  
.....