

Devotional



Day Three

THE FAITH IN FAITH PROMISE

“But just as you excel in everything – in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in your love for us – see that you also excel in this grace of giving” - II Corinthians 8:7

This is a profound insight into the Christian life. You cannot expect to excel in one area if you are miserly in another. In God’s reality the sacred and the secular are woven into the same fabric. If we want to grow in giving, we must grow in faith; if we want to expand our faith, we must expand our giving. The one moves the other. We know that “faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.” (Hebrews 11:1) Our certainty is proven by our actions.

Brother Lawrence became famous in Europe for his piety and deep faith. Yet he was one monk who didn’t spend his days in solitary contemplation and prayer. He was the chief cook and bottle washer, the “lord of the pots and pans,” in his monastery. The “secret ingredient” of his piety was that everything was a matter of faith. “The time of business,” he wrote, “does not with me differ from the time of prayer; in the noise and clatter of my kitchen... I possess God in as great tranquility as if I were upon my knees.” Faith is important in prayer, but it is also important in meal preparation, automobile repair, gardening, shop keeping and a thousand other pursuits. It is as critical on Tuesday afternoon or Friday night as it is on Sunday morning.

This is one of the most important results of faith promise. We are challenged to exercise our faith in the very personal and practical area of our daily needs. Faith is expanded as we trust God for our income, bank account, savings and even our retirement plans. Faith can hardly become any more real or practical than in these most personal aspects of our lives.

Immediately we can see that the practice of making a faith promise encourages us to consider that God alone is our Provider. Paul writes, “And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work” (II Corinthians 9:8). God provides for us financially so that we can have money to give.

There has never been a country where the words “having all you need” are more fitting than they are in America today. We are, in fact, the richest people that have ever lived on the face of the earth. Faith helps us understand that God has been good to us, not so that we could spend money on ourselves, but rather so we can give to the “abounding of every good work.” By faith our stewardship becomes a concrete way in which we engage ourselves in God’s kingdom work. The Corinthians first gave themselves to God in faith (II Corinthians 8:5) and then in faith gave contributions

“beyond their ability.” You cannot do the first and not the second. The life of faith and the life of giving are the same life.

We must give everything we are and everything we have. In the words of Henry Wilson,

*My body, soul and spirit thus redeemed,
Sanctified and healed, I give, O Lord, to Thee,
A consecrated offering, Thine evermore to be,
That all my powers with all their might
Thy sole glory may unite.*

God wants to stretch your faith through your giving. Most of us have probably seen the famous picture of an old man praying before a simple meal of a little soup and a small loaf of bread. Our first response may be that such faith seems extraordinary when he has so little. Here is a truth that is important for us to understand: Such faith would be even more extraordinary if he had substantial wealth. Paul says, in essence, “I have learned how to live (by faith) whether I have much or little.” (Philippians 4:11). It is this quality of faith, not depending on what we have, but on the faithfulness of God, that brings great glory to our Creator. It is this kind of faith encouraged in the faith promise.

A farmer who was known for his generous giving was asked what his secret was. “It is no secret,” he replied. “I keep shoveling into God’s bin, and He keeps shoveling into mine. But God has a bigger shovel.”

PRAYER:

Father, use the faith promise to introduce me to a new level of faith in You. I want to be as fully dependent on You when I have more than I need as when I have little. By faith, I want to perceive that I have nothing that was not given to me by You. May the process of giving remove the idols of materialism from my life. Help me to glorify You through my stewardship . Amen.

QUESTIONS:

Think of all God has given you. Why do you think God has given you so much?
How are faith and stewardship connected in your life?
How can faith promise stretch your faith?

“Gratitude... is a response to grace. The compassionate life is a grateful life, and actions born out of gratefulness are not compulsive, but free, not somber but joyful, not fanatical but liberating.” - Henri Nouwen

“The only safe rule is to give more than one can spare. In other words, if our expenditures on comforts, luxuries and amusements, etc. are up to the standard common amount with those with the same income as our own, we are probably giving away too little. There ought to be things we should like to do but cannot because our charities’ expenditure excludes them.” -C.S. Lewis