

From The Pulpit

by Rev. Donald M. Clark

THE MIGHTY POWER OF FAITH

Text: "This is the Work of God, That You Believe in Him Whom He Has Sent." John 6:29.

You will never understand the nature of Christianity nor its strong and timeless appeal to people unless you realize that it is something more than a set of beliefs to accept or a set of moral principles to live by. It is very much more like the elemental force of electric or hydraulic or pneumatic power. It always conveys energy, and therefore it must consist largely of energy itself. This energy comes from the basic energy that is within the physical universe itself--the energy which created and sustains it. We call this God.



REV. D. M. CLARK

When we believe, and especially when we pray, we tap the resources of this primary and elementary Power, and receive from him an energizing strength for our own lives.

Faith the Channel, Grace the Force. The appearance is that this energy is there for the asking. Often when someone appealed to Jesus for help, he would say, "Great is thy faith, be it done unto you according to thy faith, be it done unto you according to thy faith," or some other such word of answering confidence.

When belief means living contact with a living God, you know where the source of energy lies. When this vast source of power has been known again and again to channel his power through Jesus Christ, naturally we look to Christ as the great outlet of the power of God.

This is what lies behind the prodigious creative energy of the saints.

Faith changes lives. I read about a man in New York, the child of deafmute parents, whom the underworld gang began using when he was thirteen to slip over transoms and unlock doors from within. For twenty-seven years that man was a drunkard and a sneak-thief. A wonderful character named Harry Hadley, who was in charge of Calvary Mission, kept in touch with him. He never would let him go. It is more than thirty years since this man left jail and went to the Mission where Hadley was, gave himself up to Christ, and has been a sober, God-fearing man more years than he was a drunkard and thief. Faith, your own and other people's, changes lives.

Faith gives direction. Faith gives people guidance. Sometimes it seems as if life is just one long series of decisions. None of us is wise enough to make good ones all the time, yet a bad one can change the course of life. God's people do not live by their own wisdom alone. Believing in God, we believe also that he has a plan which he will reveal to us step by step if we seek it.

Abraham Lincoln said that he found that when the Almighty wanted him to do or not to do a particular thing, he "has a way of letting me know it." Part of the whole adventure of genuine religion is to try to see how often we can find and do his will, instead of our own.

Faith puts meaning into life. Does so-called "civilization" by itself give meaning to life. It protects us against life's dangers, and provides for us the amelioration of beauty and knowledge and human society, but it does not yet tell us whether the whole thing means any-

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thing, and if so, what. This is, par excellence, the religious question.

If we were thrown upon this planet, like assorted refuse by a tide, and there is no purpose and meaning, only struggle and fear and aimlessness, and at the end nothingness again, it is a bad show and one can only sulk in a futile rebellion at fate. But if it took a God to make this universe, maybe he had something in mind when he did it, and maybe our lives can be footnotes to a great scheme, not all of which we take in, but enough of it to cooperate. Then life has meaning. And it is faith that says we came from God, we are here to serve and glorify God, and we go to him at the end. Then life makes sense.

What enables a young man to risk his very life in war? It is the knowledge that what he is doing has to be done, even if it costs his life. He has faith in his cause.

What keeps scientists in their laboratories for hours, months, years, seeking the cure for some human disease? Curiosity, yes, and maybe some chance of fame; but much more likely, I think, the fact that there is a cure, and the courage to go on seeking.

What keeps great and sacrificing servants of mankind all their lives at jobs which really have only the reward of knowing they have served? Such courage is, I believe, inseparable from faith, a faith that people are fundamentally worth serving, and that nothing else gives us in the end so much satisfaction.

Because faith is one of the greatest human blessings and because it is quite contagious, we can be carriers of it--all of us.

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