

THE ORIGINS OF FAITH

by Charles S. Price

CHAPTER IV, FROM "THE REAL FAITH" ©1940

I HAVE A very decided dislike for negative preaching and writing. It is not sufficient for a speaker or author to discuss the disease, but to satisfy my soul and mind, he must give me the cure. It is easy to point out what is wrong, but I want to know what is right. Sometimes that is a little more difficult than one would suppose. However, when at last honest mistakes have been rectified, and we are back on the paths of truth, it may be that in the providence of God the wrong trail will have left us a heritage of blessing.

Many years ago I was on one of my periodic visits to the mountain ranges which border on the rocky coasts of Alaska. A visitor to this land of the Great White Silence had been lost, and I had told him of the trail which would take him back to a valley where he could get his bearings. After a lapse of two hours he was back at my camp. He told me he was confused and completely turned around; and asked me if I would kindly travel with him until he was sure of his direction. I did, for it is a dangerous place in which to wander alone, unless one has a knowledge of the country and its trails. Weeks later I received a letter from the grateful fellow, in which he said among other things, "To know you are on the right road is a fine thing; but to return to it, after being on the wrong one, multiplies its blessing."

How true! It is after the rain that we appreciate the bursting buds and delicate greens of the early spring. After the storm clouds we appreciate the calm of a sky blue day. If through these pages I can lead those dear children of God, who have not seen the full fruit of the victory of faith, back to the clear teaching of the Book and to ultimate victory, then this heart of mine will be happy and these pages, written in prayer, will not fail in their mission.

The thing above all else I want you to see is that you cannot generate it; you cannot work it up; you cannot manufacture it. It is imparted and infused by God Himself. You cannot sit in your homes and struggle to have faith, and affirm that something *is*; nor can you turn your hope and desire into faith by your own power. The only place you can get it is from the Lord, for the Word clearly and distinctly states that faith is one of two things. It is either a gift of God, or it is a fruit of the Spirit.

We are told in Paul's Epistle to the Corinthians, "Now abideth faith, hope, and love; but the greatest of these is love." While love might be the greatest, it certainly is not the first. It must be preceded by faith. Look out of your window at yonder tree. What a thing of symmetry and loveliness it is! Only God can make a tree. There is beauty in its twisted branches. There is loveliness in its trembling leaves. Every leaf is a little world unto itself, with its tiny veins carrying the life that God supplies, which gives it all it possesses in its native realm. Yet there is something back of the tree. Beneath the surface of the ground there is a great system of roots hidden away. You never behold them; yet without them the tree would die. It would have no life at all.

FAITH IS THE LIFE

The roots are ugly and hard in comparison to the beautiful greenery above the ground. Yet the greenery is there partly because of those roots. Now, let us call the top of the tree "Love." You can see it. You can contact it. You can enjoy its fragrance. You behold its beauty. It is there because of something which is back of it something hidden away that causes it. That something is the roots. Now you expect me to say that those roots are the roots of faith. No! Faith is the life that flows into the roots. It is that mystical quality that only God can produce and give. There are roots you could plant which will never, never grow.

You, yourself, and your inner nature are those roots. Your senses, your avenues of approach to the expressions of life itself are buried below the surface where people cannot see them. All the world beholds is what you produce and not you yourself. What did Jesus mean when He said, "By their fruit ye shall know them?" Ye shall know them. The fruit produced is an index to what the tree really is.

Let me repeat. The roots of the tree are not faith. The roots do not produce the life, but the life produces the roots. It is the life that is faith. It is that wonderful and glorious quality which is a gift of the divine heart, and which sustains us. This life, or faith, will be manifest to the world by the fruit we bear; by the arms of love outstretched; by the things of grace and beauty which through God are manifested day by day on the tree of our lives.

How foolish it would be for that tree to struggle in an attempt to create the life which flows into it. It need not struggle. All it needs to do is to function in obedience to the laws divine. As the life is there, it simply manifests that life in the fruit it bears, and the beauty with which it endows the world.

So it is with faith. Love may be the greatest thing in the world, but faith must of necessity be the first. Without faith it is impossible to please God. But you tell me that you have faith. I ask you where you got it. I pick a rosy apple from a tree. I hear it testify from the core of its little apple heart. It tells me it has rosy cheeks. It whispers in my ear that it is so very good to the taste. It invites me to taste its flavor. It testifies that it has so many noble and beautiful qualities. Then I ask it where it got them all.

From the branch? The shelter of the leaves, the rain and the sun? Yes, all true; but I knew that way down in the hidden system, which you cannot see, the roots were receiving something from God that no tree on the face of the earth has ever been able to produce of itself.

THE ATHEIST AND GOD

Some time ago an atheist sat in a meeting I was conducting. He was extremely hard and cynical. He lived alone in the room of a hotel, and his solitude had only added to his hard, critical, unbelieving nature. I preached that night on the subject "Comprehending the Incomprehensible." I declared that it was possible to believe the unbelievable; to know the love of God that passeth knowledge. The following morning he came to my room and asked for an interview. He was rather argumentative and I told him, while I did not have time for argument, I would be glad to answer any sincere, honest question which he might put before me.

He said, "I have no faith whatever. I do not believe the Bible, and I do not know if there be a God. I do see a law of order in nature and the universe, but what causes it, or where it came from, I do not know. Now, Dr. Price, your sermon last night was a challenge to my thinking. What I want to know is this: How can a man spend a dollar when he does not have one? How can you drive a car when you do not possess one? How can you believe when you have no belief? How can God expect a man to exercise faith when he does not have any (assuming there is a God)? Where is there any justice in a set up like that?"

"Are you an honest man, and do you want to know the truth?"

"What is truth?" was the reply. "What brand of it do you mean? I have never been able to find it, although I have spent a lifetime in search of it."

On the wall of my apartment was hanging a picture of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. His hands were clasped and His eyes were raised toward heaven in prayer. I walked over to that picture and looked at it for a moment or two without speaking. I intuitively knew he would be looking at that picture too. When at last I turned to face him, I said, "He is Truth. He is the Way. He is your Life and Faith. He has in abundance what you say you do not have. You have been trying to get it out of mind, thought, and intellect. He can put it there, as the river of His grace flows through your heart. That is why He came. He came to make men free ... free from doubts like yours...free from fears and misgivings...free from unbelief and free from sin ..."

"Sounds like a fairy story to me," he interrupted "Fine if you can believe it, but how can man or God expect a man to believe what he cannot believe?"

He went away. A week later he came to me and offered his hand. When I looked at his face, I knew the miracle had happened. Into his heart there had come not only the conscious knowledge of sins forgiven, but a manifestation of the sweetness and love of God which had made him a new creation in Christ Jesus. As in the Millennium, instead of the briar shall come up the myrtle tree, so in this man's life there had sprung up the evidence of the Indwelling Presence of God.

"Do you know what happened?" he said. "I told the Lord to manifest Himself, *if He was there*. I asked Him to do something which would reveal His presence, *if He was there at all*. I became conscious that He was near me. I realized *there was a God—that there was a soul to save*. I did not understand it with my mind, but I knew it in my heart. Then I told Him I had no faith to believe, so *He gave me His faith*, and I believed. The work was done."

Why not? That is God's way of salvation. "As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the Sons of God, even to them that believe on His name." When I give an altar call, I invite *every man*, and *every woman*, to surrender his heart and life to Christ. If we are saved by Faith, how do I know that all can have the faith to receive? How do I know that *everyone* whom I invite can find eternal life? Some might have faith, and others be entirely devoid of it. The fact that people *believe what you say* does not mean that they have the faith to translate that belief, or even heart hunger, into an experimental knowledge of sins forgiven.

Nevertheless, I cry "Whosoever will may come," because I know that *He will impart the faith which is needful* to every sincere heart. I have quoted the twelfth verse of the first chapter of John: "But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the Sons of God, even to them that believe on His name." Let me quote the next one. Thus does it read: "Who were born (that is, born again) not of blood, nor of the *will of the flesh, nor of the will of man*, but of God."

The same Holy Ghost who convicts the sinner of his sin will see to it that as the sinner was given enough conviction to convince him of his sin, so he will now be given faith enough to convince him of his salvation. But no man *in himself* possesses that faith. Are we not told "By grace are ye saved, through *faith*; and *that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God*." Poor, wretched, miserable, ignorant, unbelieving humanity could *never* grow or develop in such corrupt hearts of unbelief faith enough to believe in a Saviour, let alone receive Him. So the Holy Spirit not only imparts the conviction of the need of a Saviour, but also imparts the faith to receive Him.

Never think it was *your* faith that received Christ as your Saviour. Never say that any act of yours was the basis of your redemption. It is Jesus who imparts the water of which He spoke to the woman by Samaria's wayside well. It is Jesus who puts His arms of love beneath the burden on your back and lifts it from your tired, weary body. It is Jesus who pours into the lacerated, broken heart the oil of heaven's joy. It is Jesus who smoothes the wrinkles of care with the gentle touch of a mother's hand, and it is Jesus who brings you out of the darkness of the night into the light of His own glorious and wonderful day.

"Oh, it is Jesus; yes, it is Jesus;

Yes, it is Jesus in my soul;

For I have touched the hem of His garment,

And His blood has made me whole!"

Sing it and shout it. Proclaim it and herald it near and far. His blood—His grace—His power—His pardon—His *faith!*

A LIVING FAITH

When will we stop our foolish and needless struggles and begin to believe? When will we put an end to our unscriptural mental and intellectual gyrations in our attempt to find a faith we do not possess; for unless we get it from God, never will we possess that Faith! We are capable of belief and at the same time absolutely incapable of the exercise of Bible faith. Thousands have wandered into the error of thinking that belief is faith. *It is not*. There is belief in faith, without a doubt; but *"the devils also believe."* Belief is cold intellectual. It operates as far as the human goes in the realms of intellect. Many sinful men *believe the Bible*, but *such belief does not save them*.

Faith is living. It moves and operates, and sweeps the enemies of the soul before its irresistible march. All the faith in the world? No! You need only as much as a grain of mustard seed, if it is God's faith! Then mountains will be removed. Your sin sick soul will behold the glory of the Lord. But it must be God's faith. It must come from Him. He must impart it. And He *will*. That is the Gospel of Grace which I believe.

