

29 FALTERING FAITH

Luke 22:32 But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren.

Mark 11:22 ...Have faith in God.

Romans 14:23 ...for whatever is not from faith is sin.

Hebrews 11:6 But without faith it is impossible to please Him...

Very often it is the fear of failing, rather than failing in itself, that is the real cause of failure. This pre-emptive fear triggers a process whereby faith is rapidly depleted and overtaken by fear until it results in actual failure. It is the proverbial 'self-fulfilling prophecy'. The fear of failure is really a failure of faith. It is so important that Jesus told Peter this was what He had prayed for, that Peter's faith should not fail at the crucial hour. Peter's subsequent denial of Christ revealed his folly. His faith did not fail, and through repentance it was strengthened. Our prayer is likewise for a faith that fails not.

Faith is taking God at His word. It is a most powerful and positive force. Once it says 'yes', it is as good as done. When fear says 'no', it is as good as gone. There are no barriers to faith except the lack of it. It is much easier to jump on the bandwagon of enthusiasm than to press on by faith. When faith is feeble, there is a great clamour to be realistic, reasonable, and rational. Faith does not ignore or overlook real issues or practical problems, but sees beyond them and supersedes them. Real faith springs spontaneously from understanding God's will and way. If we have to pump up faith, it is a sure sign that it is not the real or right thing. We are to have faith in God, not in our ability to have faith.

Vision is what we can see with the eye of faith. Spiritual vision cannot exist apart from faith. If you have no faith, there can be no vision. And once you lose faith, you would have lost the vision. A true vision does not get sidetracked by immediate or intermediate outcomes. A genuinely spiritual work must be a work of faith all the way through. "*Whatever is not from faith is sin*" (Romans 14:23) and therefore will be rejected by God. By the same token, whatever is done from faith will be pleasing to Him and accepted by Him. We walk and work by faith by taking each step as it comes in obedience to Him. In that day of reckoning for the reward of our work, what matters most is how much faith, not how much effort or resources we have put in. Faith's rewards are given to faith works.

In an ironical sense, it takes extraordinary faith for ordinary living, whereas ordinary faith will quite suffice to meet extraordinary circumstances. Faith in the face of a challenge rises to it spontaneously. But faith feels almost redundant in the mundane and the ordinary because one can seemingly get on without it. It is during times when there is no open vision, and nothing much seems to be happening, that faith faces its severest test. It is easy then to lapse from an active, living faith to simply going with the flow of daily drudgery. When we can be faithful in little things on the drab and dull days, we are being trained to be faithful in much.