

The Higher Faith

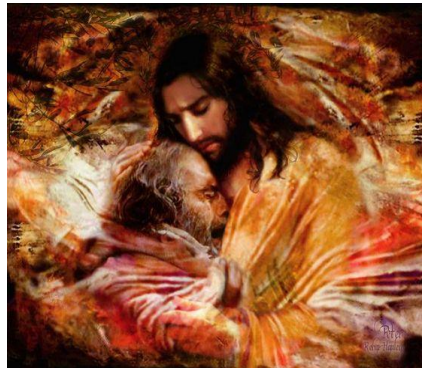
First Series – Sermon Three

Original by George MacDonald

Paraphrase by Dale R. Howie

MacDonald places faith squarely within his relational context. The Scriptures tell us, “. . . *what matters is faith that works by love.*” (Galatians 5:6 GNT) What we have seen **“is that God is Love, all love, and nothing other than love!”**

as an “it,” something that can be achieved. In *The Higher Faith*, developed over time, through Faith is not the spiritual vending machine to get what the intimacy of two walking will, and purpose!



Faith has been defined in our day be worked for, worked, and it is the language of trust. Trust is experience, within a relationship. coinage we place in the heavenly we want or think we need, but together as one in mind, heart,

Outline

MacDonald – I believe this is an autobiographical sketch of MacDonald himself.

The Bible – It nowhere claims to be the "Word." It leads us to Jesus!

The Holy Spirit – The Spirit that knows and reveals the heart of God.

Real Hope – The real danger here is placing faith in something rather than risk trusting in Someone!

Our God is Too Small – Will we not find You more than our faith can believe?

God Himself – Faith comes by believing in HIM! Can we not believe in God Himself?

Faith in the Earth – Higher faith is so far beyond what we can know, but not beyond, Who we can know!

John 20:29 NLT

Then Jesus told him, "You believe because you have seen me. Blessed are those who believe without seeing me."

The unimaginative disciple who learned his lessons imperfectly, never moving beyond his school books, will always hinder the aspiring child. These books are filled with disconnected and fragmented rules that he has misunderstood both in their purpose and principles.

MacDonald

The child has a wonderful imagination that goes beyond his circle of religious training into the world of nature and the wider world of humanity. He comes to his teacher excited, with a flash of light, an insight, filled with life and hope. **For in this revelation, he sees the Father filling everything. You see, he has not yet closed his heart and imagination. He has not yet learned to divide, divide between God and nature, providence and grace, love, and benevolence.** The child comes with his heart full of wonder and union, only to receive the dull disciple's answer of, "God has nothing to say about that in his word. Therefore, we cannot believe anything about it. It is better not to speculate on such thoughts, however beautiful they may be. We can have nothing to do with them because they remain unrevealed." This disciple is incapable of suspecting the possibility of that which has remained hidden from him could be revealed to the child. Drawing on his authority, years of experience, and ignorance of the insights tries to dishearten and stop the child. He believes in no insights beyond the Bible and the words of it alone. **For him, all revelation has ceased, the Truth now buried in the Bible, being only unearthed with difficulty. The examination of its decayed form is re-united into a ridged skeleton of mental and legal creation. God's love is limited then by His other so-called "perfections" of Being.**

Children who are not limited to just one broken corner of God's kingdom but live in the Divine Being's fullness will leave behind those who live in the desert. To him, a thousand questions arise to which the Bible does not allude. Has he nothing to do with them? Do they lie beyond his limited universe?

"Leave them alone," says the dull disciple.

"I can't," says the child! "I must find the peace of mind and heart without which actions are impossible. Those actions that depend upon answers, of which my actions must correspond."

"Then leave them at least until God chooses to explain if he ever will?"

"No! Questions imply answers. God put the questions in my heart; He holds the answers in His. I will seek them from Him. I will wait, but only after I have knocked. I will be patient, but not until I have asked. I will seek until I find. I know He has something for me! My prayers will go up unto the God of my life."

The Bible

Sad, indeed, would this whole life be if the Bible had told us everything God meant for us to believe. In this has the Bible been significantly wronged. It nowhere claims to be the "Word," "...the Way, the Truth, and the Life." It leads us to Jesus! Jesus the inexhaustible ever-unfolding, Revelation of God the Father!

It is in Christ, "...in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." Not in the Bible, other than leading us to Him. Why are these treasures hidden in Him? He who is the Revelation of God! Is it so

that we will become discouraged and stop seeking and finding them? Is not their hiding in Him, as our mediator, the place of their revealing to us? Is He not The Truth? - The Truth to us? Is He not the High Priest among His brothers and sisters, always available to answer all the troubling questions that arise in our unenlightened minds? His heart contains all that is good, wise, and just. He is the perfect man! Thomas says, "No doubt, what we know not now, we shall one day know."

Yes, there are things that our continued maturity will illuminate.

However, we must now ask the questions that we have. If not answered, then pursued until they are. There is more hidden in Christ than we will ever learn, here or there, but those who ask will soon receive revelation. With them, He is pleased, but the dull disciples have always troubled Him.

The Holy Spirit

To imply that we must wait for the other world to come to know the mind of Him who came here to reveal Himself seems foolish. This view appears to me to be of a lazy and worldly spirit. Jesus is our Teacher, giving us of His Spirit. **The Spirit that knows and reveals the deep things of God, giving us Their very mind. The great heresy of the church today is unbelief in this Spirit.** Most of the church does not believe that the Spirit has an individual, personal revelation for every man, an awareness in you that is different from the proclamations of the Bible. Just as the nutrition received in nerves and tissues differs from ordinary bread and meat eaten at the moment. **So, if we have ever received and experienced the mind of Christ, we know that the Bible has done its work and completed its task.** Therefore, we move on and live in the "Word" that abides in us forever! **The sole purpose of the Bible is to reveal Jesus in us! That through Him, we would come to know His Father and our Father, His God and our God, until we know Him as our Father!** Let us hold the Bible as dear as the moon is in our darkness and the light by which we travel towards the presence of God. Yet not as precious as the sun, whose light it reflects and towards which we journey. When walking in the sunlight, we no longer rely upon the mirror that reflects its seemingly absent brightness.

This truth about the Spirit is not my ultimate point. But was it not true, all our religion would produce nothing. God is pleased with us when our believing is rooted in Him, not confining faith only to those things that He has said. Still, but rather that present communication arousing in us a truth-seeking ability, spiritual desire, and prayer for the good things God gives those that ask.

But is this not dangerous teaching? Would this not lead to embracing only the parts we like or praying only for what we want? Would we not become arrogant in our confidence? If it is true that the Spirit struggles with our spirit and that God's Spirit teaches us, then we can safely leave all this to Them. If we are Their disciples, we are safer with Them than those afraid and unwilling to take a risk. If we get out of bounds, God will let us know. If we ask amiss for anything that is not good for us, He will not give it. His answer will come in the flames of the consuming fire. God will bring us back to our spiritual senses. It would be better for us to be sharply corrected than to go on slowly and in fear on the journey of our spiritual life. As for arrogance, I have seen nothing that produces it faster or as offensively as the worship of the Letter!

So, to whom will we turn? To whom but God, the one who made us for what is best? If we have awakened to know that God is our Father, as Jesus taught us, then let us build upon that truth and understand that God is far more than just our Father. **His Fatherhood is but a step towards the Life of**

the Trinity for those who can receive it. What we like may be God's will for us and could be the voice of the Spirit struggling with our spirit, not against it. As we have discussed before – if the thing asked for is not His will – then there is always the consuming fire.

The real danger lies not in asking or hoping to receive that which is not good, but in not asking, not communicating with Him at all. Nor will not asking keep us from not acting in ways that we call unrevealed. Neither will the Bible help us in this state of mind find answers. We must safely leave all these matters to God.

Real Hope

But it is hope rather than prayer that I wish to discuss. **What would I think of my child if I discovered that he limited his faith and hope in Me to just a few promises he heard Me say? A theology that confines itself to the revealed promises of God. This faith seems to me insufficient both in character and trust found in My child.** Perhaps good enough for a Pagan, but in a Christian, a miserable and unfortunate faith. Those who trust in such a faith would feel more comfortable if they had God's bond, a legal agreement, instead of His word. An agreement not based on His character but the security of a contract, a pledge, placed upon His honor. **They try to believe based only on the truth of His word as a contract. But the nature of His being they do not understand. In His promise, they persuade themselves they put faith. But In Himself alone, they do not trust, for they do not know Him!** Therefore, it is little wonder that they distrust the swelling of their hearts, which is the drawing of us to Himself. Just like the sun and moon swell the tides of the oceans heavenwards. If such is your faith, you must not stop there. **You must come out of the legal, contractual bondage, to which you give the name grace, for there is little that is gracious in it.** You can still know the majesty of your high calling and the love of God that surpasses knowledge!

Our God is Too Small

He is not put off by our presumptuous approaches to Him. It is we who are afraid to come close. He has no concern for His dignity. It is we who fear rejection, such as when the disciples turned away the little children. The ones Jesus received! It is we who are so self-conscious and afraid of losing control. So fearful that we dare not draw near to the life of Life, lest it should consume us. Oh God, will we not trust You? **Will, we not find You more than our faith can believe? One day, we will laugh at ourselves, that we looked so little to You. Thank God that our hope does not limit Your giving.** "O thou of little faith!" "In everything!" I am quoting from your own Bible now, quoting a soul, Paul, who knew his master, Jesus. One who opposed apostles, not just Christians, to their faces because they believed so little in You. Those who had faith only for themselves and the Jews of the chosen nation but could not believe for the multitudes of nations, for the millions of hearts that God created to seek and find Him.

"In everything," Paul says, "by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God." For in this "everything," nothing is too small. That it should trouble us is enough. There is a principal here worthy of even God's notice. Did He not make us so that things would bother us? Surely, in this "everything," nothing could be too big? If the Son of man comes and finds too much faith, ha-ha, may God in His mercy slay us! Meanwhile, we will hope and trust.

God Himself

Do you count it as a great faith to believe what God has said? It seems to me, I repeat, of little faith and even that, worthy of disapproval. To believe what He has not said, now that is faith and blessing. **Faith comes by believing in HIM! Can we not believe in God Himself?** When asked why, would our answer be, "Because we are not sure that He promised it?" If we believed in God Himself, we would find it easy to trust in His word. You would not even need to ask whether He said it or not. You would know! Know that it was like Him. Let us dare to believe. Let us not be unbelieving children.

Remember, Jesus received those who saw before they believed. He also blesses those who have not seen yet believe. Those who trust Him even more because they believed without seeing with their eyes or hearing with their ears. Blessed are those to whom wonder is no fable, mystery is no story, and glory is not imaginary, but who are content to ask, "Is it like Him?"

Faith in the Earth

It is the dull of heart, the unchildlike, who are always reminding God of His promises. His promises can help reveal who He is, but if they think of them only as binding Him to His word, then let them receive them as such, but only because of the hardness of their hearts. If they prefer the word to the Spirit: let it be so. These people we leave to the ordinary channels of grace and mercy. Although we desire no less, we hope for no more. These are the mercies beyond our height, our depth, our reach.

We know in Whom we have believed and look for more in our hearts than our imaginations can conceive. Will God's thoughts be less than our thoughts? His giving only by our asking? His creation limited by our imaginations? No! Let us climb to the height of our Alpine desires. Then leave them behind us to ascend to the spear-pointed Himalayans of our aspirations, and still, we will find God's abundance above us. The heavens will be higher than the earth. His thoughts and ways higher than ours. O Lord, fill our very beings, not just on Sunday mornings, but always in our heart of hearts.

Let us not think that You, oh Lord, cannot or care not! That there are things, You should not see or questions that should not be asked. Are we not wholly Yours? What we would not say to others, we can share with you. Lord, care for us, for you have made us this way! We cannot escape our history by running into the wilderness or by burying our heads in the sands of forgetfulness. Nor hiding from the pain of repentance or the weariness of our hopelessness. We embrace all this as part of our very life and bring it all to you. Victory is the answer given to all our doubts. It may be that we cannot understand, no matter how you express it. But you will, O Lord, find faith on the earth when you look for it. **The faith of ignorant but hopeful children. The children who know they do not know, but that you do!** And all our brothers and sisters who hold on to what they call your word, hoping to please you. They, too, are held safe in your hands. Was it not Jesus that taught us that whoever speaks a word against the Son of man will be forgiven, but to him who speaks against the Holy Spirit, this will not be forgiven?

CLIFFNOTES WITH ORIGINAL MACDONALD QUOTES

MACDONALD

For to the child the doings of the Father fill the spaces; he has not yet learned to divide between God and nature, between Providence and grace, between love and benevolence.

For him all revelation has ceased with and been buried in the Bible, to be with difficulty exhumed, and, with much questioning of the decayed form, re-united into a rigid skeleton of metaphysical and legal contrivance for letting the love of God have its way unchecked by the other perfections of his being.

THE BIBLE

Sad, indeed, would the whole matter be, if the Bible had told us everything God meant us to believe. But herein is the Bible itself greatly wronged. It nowhere lays claim to be regarded as the Word, the Way, the Truth. The Bible leads us to Jesus, the inexhaustible, the ever-unfolding Revelation of God.

THE HOLY SPIRIT

That Spirit which manifests the deep things of God, being to a man the mind of Christ. The great heresy of the Church of the present day is unbelief in this Spirit.

If we were once filled with the mind of Christ, we should know that the Bible had done its work.

The one use of the Bible is to make us look at Jesus, that through him we might know his Father and our Father, his God and our God.

REAL HOPE

That the fatherhood of God is but a step towards the Godhood for them that can receive it.

What should I think of my child, if I found that he limited his faith in me and hope from me to the few promises he had heard me utter! The faith that limits itself to the promises of God, seems to me to partake of the paltry character of such a faith in my child.

You must come out of this bondage of the law to which you give the name of grace, for there is little that is gracious in it.

OUR GOD IS TOO SMALL

Shall we not find thee equal to our faith? One day, we shall laugh ourselves to scorn that we looked for so little from thee; for thy giving will not be limited by our hoping.

GOD HIMSELF

For that comes of believing in HIM. Can you not believe in God himself?

FAITH ON THE EARTH

We know in whom we have believed, and we look for that which it hath not entered into the heart of man to conceive. Shall God's thoughts be surpassed by man's thoughts? God's giving by man's asking? God's creation by man's imagination? No.

The faith of ignorant but hoping children, who know that they do not know, and believe that thou knowest.