

When We Are Our Own Worst Enemy

From: Overcoming the Overwhelming:
A 40-Day Journey toward Rediscovering Faith in God

Day 35: Abbreviated Version
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This is an abridged version of this chapter.

There are many things we as Christians do that actually work against our own faith. We can't blame the devil, and of course, it is folly to see God as the culprit. In many situations, we are, as they say, our own worst enemies. This is not meant to condemn anyone, but to point out common ways of thinking that undermine our own success as we seek to overcome.

Faith is what comes when we hear of His grace—His benevolent character, His provisions, and His promises to us. However, faith isn't just something we are given; it is something that causes us to act. It is futile to act in order to produce faith. Don't think for one second that I am suggesting that if we say or do something enough, we will finally believe. What I am saying is that when we come to a place of faith, we should take hold of it and not let go.

Here are some common ways we work against our faith.

Dictating to God How He Will Work

Remember, God is the King of His kingdom. He is the One who sets up the principles that guide it. While He clearly gives us free will, wisdom teaches us that when it comes to how He chooses to run His kingdom, our wisest choice is to say, "Yes, Lord."

For example, if He says, "Ask believing, and it will be given to you," then our part is to ask believing, and His part is to give. Yet, sometimes we get it in our minds that we are the kings of His

kingdom. We think, “Well, if God wants to do a certain thing in my life, He will do it.” Yes, this sounds very noble and even as if we have faith, but if we have it in our minds that “because God is sovereign” we don’t need to ask, then we have set ourselves up for failure.

Faith causes us to act. As we discover God’s kingdom principles and live according to them, then we can have confidence that God will do what He’s promised.

Responding to Life Based Only on Our Five Senses

We can’t afford to let our faith to be weakened by focusing only on what we can perceive with our senses. When our bodies are screaming with pain, it is impossible to ignore, or if we are receiving threatening letters from creditors or a relationship is causing us too much grief, we will be tempted to get our eyes off of Jesus and put them on ourselves. Take a moment to refocus your heart on Jesus. He is with you, and He will not forsake you in your time of need.

Folding Instead of Having Faith When Sudden Storms Arise

We have a choice when sudden storms arise. Will we freak out, accusing God of being asleep, or will we choose to trust in Him? (See Day 22.) Remember, it pleases God when we choose to have faith in Him instead of panicking. The next time your ship is tossed, turn to your Father and see Him smiling back at you.

Ignoring the Power of Our Words

We have a choice of what comes out of our mouths, and one of the principles in God’s kingdom is that our words have power both to give life and to bring death.

Proverbs 18:21

Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit.

How do we speak to ourselves? How do we speak to our problems? There is no need here to get all tied in knots about this, but we still need to acknowledge that our words are powerful and use them to build and not tear down.

Sluggishness

Sometimes we just get lazy about believing God to do big things. I experienced this at first with my journey of speaking to my headaches to be removed and cast into the sea and the cause of them. Sometimes, it just seemed easier to take aspirin instead. Expressing our faith in Him is really so easy. He asks so little of us: “Believe in Me and speak your faith in Me,” but then we just don’t.

Sometimes it seems easier at the moment to just whine and complain or get mad or feel depressed about our situation than to express our trust, gratitude, and love toward Him, but really they both take about the same amount of time, and what a difference our tiny efforts make. Let us ponder the examples of those who boldly believed in their God and imitate their faith.

Hebrews 6:11-12

And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end,¹² that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

Doubting

Doubting is not the temptation not to believe. It isn’t the fears we face. It isn’t the emotions that swirl about us as a storm is raging. Doubt isn’t the reality we face when we are made aware of the facts about our situations. It isn’t the insecurities we feel when standing in faith. All of these things are normal human emotions. **God is not asking us not to feel or to ignore the facts of our circumstances. He’s asking us to choose to believe in Him in the midst of them.**

Doubting is much more sinister than our reasonable responses to trouble. It is a purposeful choice not to believe. The word for “doubt” in the Greek is **diakrino**. It means “to withdraw, to desert, to separate oneself in a hostile spirit, to oppose, strive with, dispute, contend, to be at variance with oneself”.¹ When we doubt God, we are deserting faith in Him. We are separating from Him in a hostile manner. We are opposing Him, striving against

¹ Thayer

Him, and disputing faith in Him. We are doing these things deliberately and knowingly.

Doubt says, "I won't believe."

Faith says, "I will believe."

Faith comes by hearing the good news of what God has provided and promised in Christ. After we hear the good news, faith will come to us, but we have the choice to embrace faith or to doubt. Doubt nullifies faith.

Giving Up Hope

When our struggles are long, lasting perhaps many years, we will be tempted to give up hope (joyful anticipation of good from God). We've heard everything. We've tried everything. We don't know what else we can do. We become unwilling to keep on fighting the good fight of faith.

When the doctors give someone a limited time to live, that person will be more inclined to prepare for death than to continue believing for life. Giving up seems the only rational option, and we might even have family and friends who will encourage us to let go, or who might even be "praying" that we pass away so we won't suffer any longer. In today's climate, there might be those who are inconvenienced by our illnesses who might try to coerce us to "go peacefully". These are very private moments indeed, but we have to ask ourselves: am I going to give up hope or continue believing?

This applies to every difficulty we face, not just to sickness or dying—and some of the circumstances we face, like divorce and financial ruin, feel like death, one that just goes on and on. It might seem like we can't afford to keep believing, but actually, we simply cannot afford to give up hope.

Romans 4:17-18

(As it is written, "I have made you a father of many nations") in the presence of Him whom he believed—God, who gives life to the dead and calls those things which do not exist as though they did; ¹⁸who, contrary to hope, in hope believed, so that he became the father of many nations, according to what was spoken, "So shall your descendants be."

How different the story would have been if Abraham had chosen to doubt. He had every possible reason to do so. His wife was too old to conceive. Period. His own body was dead. Maybe you are facing death, or maybe you are experiencing a living death due to your situation. Don't give up hope in God. He is deserving of our hope in Him.

Here and Now Perspective

Nothing we go through on earth comes anywhere near to being worthy to be compared with the glorious future we have in Christ. It's so easy to forget this and allow ourselves to feel burdened down. Our Blessed Hope could happen at any time. Being focused on His imminent return as we navigate through this life is a powerful weapon against the enemies of our faith.

Most of us have experienced many miracles in our lives. First of all, He saves us, making us new creations. He provides for "all things pertaining to life and godliness". For many, God has opened the door for a better job and place to live. We are blessed with family and friends. He heals us. He lifts us up when we are weak. He sends people along to encourage us. He does big things for us that bring us to our knees in gratitude and praise.

Then something goes wrong, and we somehow totally forget how faithful He has been to us, and instead, panic and fear. We focus only on the trouble at hand. **We forget about the loaves and the fish.**

Faith expresses itself in praise. We praise because we believe in HIM. We praise because we believe in His goodness. We give thanks because we know He will do what He promises. We express our gratitude to Him because we trust in His love. We remember all the wonderful things He has done, and lift our praise to Him for all He will do. He is worthy of this.

When God hears us praising Him, He sees our faith in Him. Our faith in Him pleases Him and makes nothing impossible for us.

