

FAITH

Simple Trusting Faith (Minucius Felix)

Minucius Felix was originally a Roman orator and rhetorician. When he was converted to the Christian faith he directed all of his talents toward the defense of that which he once hated. The following quotation is from a treatise which he published about 210 A.D. Following the best style of the day it was in the form of a dialogue between Caecilius, a heathen, and Octavius, a Christian, with Minucius sitting as moderator between them.

After a lengthy harangue by Caecilius the unbeliever, Octavius begins his remarks by admitting that Christians held in contempt the gods of the heathen. Here are some of his words:

The mice, the swallows, and the bats, gnaw, insult, and sit upon your gods; and unless you drive them away, they build their nests in their mouths; the spiders weave their webs over their faces. You first make them, then clean, wipe and protect them, that you may fear and worship them. Should we view all of your rites, there are many things which justly deserve to be laughed at — others that call for pity and compassion.

When you lift up your eyes to heaven and survey the works of creation around you, what is so clear and undeniable, as that there is a God, supremely excellent in understanding, who inspires, moves, supports and governs all nature. Consider the vast expanse of heaven, and the rapidity of its motion, either when studded with stars by night, or enlightened with the sun by day; contemplate the almighty hand which poises them in their orbs, and balances them in their movement. Behold how the sun regulates the year by its annual circuit, and how the moon measures round a month by its increase, its decay, and its total disappearance. Why need I mention the constant vicissitudes of light and darkness, for the alternate reparation of rest and labour? Does not the standing variety of seasons, proceeding in goodly order, bear witness to its divine author? The spring with her flowers, the summer with her harvests, the ripening autumn with her grateful fruits, and the moist and unctuous winter, are all especially necessary. What an argument for providence is this, which interposes and moderates the extremes of winter and summer with the alloys of spring and autumn — thus enabling us to pass the year about with security and comfort, between the extremes of parching heat and of cold? Observe the sea and you will find it bounded with a shore, a law which it cannot transgress. Look into the vegetable world, and see how all of the trees draw their life from the bowels of the earth. View the ocean, in constant ebb and flow; and the fountains running in full veins; with the rivers perpetually gliding in their wonted channels. Why should I take time in showing how providentially this spot of earth is cantoned into hills, dales and plains? What need I speak of the various artillery for the defence of every animal — some armed with horns and hedged about with teeth or fortified with hoofs and claws, or speared with stings, while others are swift of foot or of wing? But, above all, the beautiful structure of man most plainly speaks of God. Man, of stature straight, and countenance erect, with eyes placed above like sentinels, watching over the other senses with the tower?

That the most of us are poor, is not to our dishonor but to our glory. The mind, as it is dissipated by luxury, so it is strengthened by frugality. But how can a man be poor, who wants nothing, who covets not what is another's, who is rich towards God? That man is rather poor, who, when he has much, desires more. No man can be so poor as when he was born. The birds live without

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any patrimony; the beasts find pasture every day, and we feed upon them. Indeed they are created for our use, which, while we do not covet, we enjoy. That man goes happier to heaven, who is not burdened with an unnecessary load of riches. Did we think estates to be useful to us, we would beg them of God, who, being Lord of all, would afford us what is necessary. But we chose rather to condemn riches than to possess them, preferring innocency and patience to them, and desiring rather to be good than prodigal. Our courage is increased by infirmities, and affliction is often the school of virtue.

Adapted From *Simple Trusting Faith* by W. Carl Ketcherside

Sir William Ramsay

The name of this man is unique among the skeptics of the world. He did not believe the Bible was the inspired word of God. He was confident that it was the product of some ambitious monks, that it was shot through with error and was totally unreliable. Yet, he did not content himself to sit upon some bar-stool or in some school of higher education and make his blasphemous assertions — he determined to head an expedition and scientifically prove that the Bible was wrong.

The year was 1881. Ramsay was a young man of sterling integrity and unimpeachable character. His years of education had all been in an atmosphere of doubt. He regarded the weakest part of the New Testament the story of Paul's travels. Because those journeys had never been carefully investigated, Ramsay announced that he was going to use the book of Acts as a guide, retrace those missionary journeys, and thus prove that they could not have occurred as the Bible described them.

Equipped as no other man had been, Ramsay went to the Bible Lands and spent fifteen long years digging out the evidence. Skeptics confidently expected that all of their allegations and assertions would be substantiated. In 1896 Ramsay published a large volume entitled *St. Paul, the Traveler and the Roman Citizen*. Instead of attacking the Bible, however, the book expressed confidence in the accuracy of the Bible account.

The chagrin and confusion of the skeptics increased as Ramsay for the next twenty years wrote book after book with nothing but praise for the accuracy and truthfulness of the Bible. These books contain such statements as:

“The narrative never makes a false step. . . .”

“Every minute fact stated in Acts has its own significance”

“. . . the New Testament is unique in the compactness, the luci-

dity, the pregnancy, and the vivid truthfulness of its expression.”

“ . . . Luke is a safe guide”

“whenever the present writer followed Luke’s authority absolutely, . . . he was right down to the last detail.”

Thus, we have before us a unique story indeed. The story of a skeptic who was willing to do more than talk. Many unbelievers have never even seriously studied the Bible — Ramsay was willing to investigate every detail. Thus, a man who was determined to destroy the Bible is today recognized as one of its greatest friends. The man whom the skeptics trusted to be their strongest ally has strangely become their most formidable opponent. It is to be regretted that the world has not been blessed with more skeptics as honest as Sir William Ramsay.

A Minimum And A Maximum

(Dr. Garland Bare)

Dr. Garland Bare has observed that the examples of faith recorded in Hebrews 11 reflect a minimum of planning and a maximum of risk. "My training" he continued, "has recommended exactly the reverse." Most of us probably would concur. Human wisdom argues for a maximum of planning and a minimum of risk. Consequently, we would have recommended that Abram make an extensive analysis of where he was going before he started the trip. If Moses had made even a cursory survey of the route where he was to lead a nation of refugees, he probably would never have left Egypt. Joseph did not have a crystal ball to keep him informed about the details of tomorrow's activities. He didn't need one. When you know who holds tomorrow it does not matter what tomorrow holds.

This seems to be the genius of a life of faith. When you feel the call of God you take His hand and start on a great adventure. He can part the Red Sea if He wants to. He can bring water from the rock and manna from the skies if He so chooses. Human logic notwithstanding, we serve a God of superhuman power and wisdom. When all the committees have met and made their recommendations it is altogether possible that the God of the universe may elect to reserve the final word of instruction for himself.

Dr. Bare exemplifies in his own life the thrilling concept of an adventure in faith. Take, for example, the decision to become a medical doctor at the age of 33. In ten years on the mission field he had treated some 7,000 medical patients with virtually no formal medical training. After exhausting every other possibility of getting a doctor to come to his area he dared to consider the possibility that he may be called upon to answer his own prayers. There were at least four facts which seemed to make this impossible.

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1. Garland was 33 and no one was accepted into medical school who was over 25.
2. Garland was married and no married students are allowed in Thai Universities. If a student gets married he is expelled.
3. Garland was not a Thai citizen and this made him ineligible.
4. He had no pre-medical training.

If you don't want doors to be opened, however, you had better not knock. Once Garland Bare began knocking, God opened so many doors in what seemed to be impossible situations that Dr. Bare now refers to knocking on stone walls and watching God open a way.

Of course, faith without works is dead. Even Abraham from this perspective was not justified by faith only. The book of James reminds us that he was also justified by works. Our venture of faith with God will certainly involve an adequate expenditure of elbow grease and midnight oil.

Perhaps the secret of success involves a matter of emphasis. When the thrust of our dependence is upon ourselves we feel the need for a maximum of planning and a minimum of risk. When the thrust of our dependence is upon God we are audacious and bold. This leads us to have a minimum of planning and a maximum of risk.

Abraham Saw (John 8:56)

Abraham is mentioned by name 88 times in the New Covenant Scriptures. His amazing life is used by God to illustrate a wide variety of spiritual truths. Abraham is used to illustrate:

Justification by faith — Rom. 4: Heb. 11: etc.

Justification by works — James 2:21

The superiority of Christ's priesthood — Heb. 7:

The relationship of husbands and wives — I Pet. 3:

The covenants — Gal. 4:

The resurrection — Mark 12:26, Heb. 11:19

Christians are designated as Abraham's seed — Gal. 3:7,29

Paradise is pictured as Abraham's bosom — Luke 16:22-23 etc.

Abraham was the recipient of three great promises from God.

1. "I will make of thee a great nation" — Gen. 12:2. His children were to be as numerous as the dust — Gen. 12:2, and as the stars — Gen. 15:5

2. He was to inherit Palestine — "And the Lord said unto Abram . . . Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art . . . for all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed forever. . . ." Gen. 13:14-15

3. The family of Abraham was ultimately to bless all the families of the earth — Gen. 12:3

It is significant to note that Abraham died before any of these promises became reality. At the time of his death he had only a handful of direct descendants. He did not receive an inheritance of land — "no, not so much as to set his foot on" (Acts 7:5) and he had been unable to bless even the country where he dwelt, to say nothing of "all the families of the earth." Illustrative of this fact is the journey of Isaac to Padan Aram for a wife — undoubtedly

to avoid the corrupting influence of the Canaanites.

Though Abraham did not receive the promises, however, he saw them afar off (Heb. 11:13). He shared the ability of God to call things that are not as though they were (Rom. 4:17). He was "fully persuaded that what God had promised, he was able also to perform, AND THEREFORE IT WAS IMPUTED UNTO HIM FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS" (Rom. 4:21-22). The promises of God were counted as solid evidence for things which were not yet seen (Heb. 11:1). Spiritual perception was considered as valid a proof of reality as physical perception and thus Jesus testified: ". . . Abraham rejoiced to see my day: AND HE SAW IT, and was glad" (John 8:56).

History has vindicated this father of the faithful. It was some 500 years before the family of Abraham inherited the land that God had promised . . . but they did receive it. It was many generations before the family of this believing nomad multiplied into a great nation . . . but the promise did come true. Almost two millenia of time transpired before the "seed" appeared to bless all the families of the earth . . . but Jesus was born . . . and Abraham with eyes of faith saw that day almost 2,000 years before it came to pass.

It is therefore highly appropriate that Abraham be delineated to mankind as a proper example for all believers. The faithful remnant need never be discouraged by statistics of gloom and prophets of catastrophe. The Christian views the panorama of history from the mountaintop of faith. Our vision transcends the storm clouds of turmoil and despair, and over the horizon we discern that city whose builder and maker is God. Beyond the veil of suffering and death we see the jubilant throng. Above the roll of the drums and the rumble of war we hear the happy voices of the redeemed of earth.

Abraham saw the day of Jesus and rejoiced . . . and if you belong to Jesus you are thereby Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Dreamers (Joseph)

No one seems to like a dreamer. "And Joseph dreamed a dream, and he told it to his brethren: and they hated him yet the more" (Gen. 37:5).

"And they said one to another, Behold, this dreamer cometh. Come now therefore, and let us slay him, and cast him into some pit, and we shall see what will become of his dreams. . . ." (Gen. 37:19-20).

But for all the criticism of Joseph he stands unique in the midst of his nation. As a stripling lad enslaved to Potiphar his crisp imagination and reliability made him ruler of the house (Gen. 39:5-6). Unjustly imprisoned his indomitable will could not be smothered by a dreary dungeon and once again he rose to prominence and was given authority over all the other prisoners (Gen. 39:21-23). In spite of every obstacle and injustice by the time that Joseph was 30 years of age he had risen to the position of the second most powerful man in all the world (Gen. 41:40).

God seems to bless men with wild imaginations. Moses dreamed of liberating Israel forty years before it came to pass (Acts 7:25). Caleb and Joshua dreamed of victory in Canaan when virtually everyone said it could not be done (Num. 14:6ff). David dared to dream of victory with only a sling in his youthful hand. The unlettered Apostles of Jesus stood on Olivet with world wide ambitions.

There is something to be said for the man who bets on a sure thing. There are certain virtues associated with caution and deliberation. There may be times when it is just and proper to turn back to some Egypt rather than hazard the dangers of an unmap-ped wilderness.

But there are also times when men of faith and vision cannot look back without being condemned. Too long we have "played it safe" and buried our dreamers in pits of criticism. When we

grow weary of their wild ideas we barter them away and return to our mediocrity undisturbed. The world that crucified Jesus and allowed Christopher Columbus to die in chains is very much alive.

Napoleon Hill relates in his book on the Law of Success, that a young preacher named Gunsaulus announced in the newspapers of Chicago his sermon topic for the following Sunday, "WHAT I WOULD DO IF I HAD A MILLION DOLLARS."

It is difficult to imagine a subject with less practical significance for the average church. Yet this strange topic caught the eye of Philip D. Armour, the wealthy packing house king. When Gunsaulus delivered his message, Mr. Armour was present, listening attentively to every word. The preacher dreamed of a new concept in education. A school where students would learn to think in practical rather than theoretical terms. When the sermon was over Mr. Armour stepped down the aisle and announced that a million dollars would be made available to the preacher the very next morning . . . and thus the Armour Institute of Technology became a reality.

Few men have ever attained success by accident. Invariably it is the result of dreams that came true. Years of planning and creative meditation shaping and molding lives and destiny. Earl Nightengale said recently on one of his daily broadcasts that Neil Armstrong dreamed of being the first man on the moon since he was five years old. He must have disgusted his playmates and amused his parents . . . but history will forever remember that his dream came true.

Too long the church has been characterized by spiritual zombies. The hour has arrived for men of vision and creativity to dream the impossible . . . and live to make it come to pass. Such men are dangerous to the status quo and sometimes even enemies of the establishment . . . but these heretics of the present hour are often the heroes of the future. They are the men who dare to dream.

What Simeon Saw **(A Christmas Meditation)**

Simeon was a just and devout man who was waiting for the consolation of Israel. He is mentioned in connection with the Christmas story in Luke 2:25-35. The Scriptures teach that he came by the Spirit into the temple and began to rejoice because he had seen God's salvation . . . but what did he see? The answer is quite simple, he saw the baby Jesus. The sight of the infant Christ so excited him that he blessed God and declared that he was ready to die in peace. It is a beautiful story, but much more profound when viewed through the eyes of Simeon. Today, we have almost 2,000 years of history which tells us how wonderful Jesus is. It was much different for Simeon.

The Jewish temple was at that time under the course of construction and would not be completed for some sixty years. When Jesus cleansed the temple some thirty years later it had been under construction for 46 years (John 2:20) and was not completed until A.D. 64. It was, of course, completely destroyed in A.D. 70. At the time Simeon went into the temple it must have been quite crude.

Adjacent to the temple was a Roman fortress called the "Tower of Antonia." It was named by Herod the Great for his old army associate and patron, Mark Antony. Since Roman soldiers were garrisoned there it was called in Scripture "the barracks" (Acts 21:34). It was in all probability the place where Jesus would be tried before Pilate some thirty years later.

Now let's try to see this sight through the eyes of Simeon. It had been revealed unto him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ (Luke 2:26). We are not told how long he had to wait but it may have been for many days, or even many years.

Apparently Simeon was not informed where or when he would see Christ, only that it would happen during his lifetime.

Thus he must have developed a totally different way of looking at things than other people did.

Seth Wilson used to talk about the buzzard that would fly over beautiful scenery and fragrant flowers looking for a dead rabbit . . . Simeon was exactly the reverse. He would walk through the garbage of life looking for something that was pure, sweet, and good.

At Christmas time he found it. Just a little child in the arms of his mother. They were peasants who were so poor that they couldn't even afford a lamb for a sacrifice (Luke 2:24). There was no pomp, or ceremony or heralds to sound the trumpet and announce his arrival. Simeon saw him just the same. Like someone probing for a diamond in a field of dust he saw the Christ in a building under construction in the shadow of a Roman fortress and a city filled with shame.

Times haven't really changed a lot. Today you can see almost anything you want to see. If you want to see crime and violence there is plenty of it available. The Christian, however, has promises similar to those of Simeon. We know that all things work together for good to them that love God and are the called according to His purpose. We know that we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. We know that we will never be tempted beyond that which we are able to bear. These things which we know inevitably influence the way we look at life.

Simeon found what he was looking for . . . and in a sense so do we. If you will look at life with eyes of Christian faith the Scriptures promise that you will find something good. There are diamonds in the dust . . . and the eyes of Simeon will help you to find them. Merry Christmas!

George Mueller

(An Experiment In Faith)

George Mueller was born in Prussia, at Kroppenstaedt, near Halberstadt, on Sept. 27, 1805. His father was a collector of excise taxes and George seemed to inherit his father's preoccupation with figures. This adding machine mind and astute business sense were destined to become an integral part of a great experiment in faith.

When Mueller was converted to Christ he was impressed by the many recurring statements of our Lord for us to "ask." Jesus reasoned that if an earthly father would give and provide for his child who "asked," how much more would our Father in Heaven give to them that asked Him. Yet England was swept up in the industrial revolution. It was "every man for himself" and no one seemed ready or willing to "seek first the Kingdom of God."

At this juncture George Mueller and his wife launched into a daring experiment. First of all they secretly gave away all of their household goods. The next stop was even more daring . . . he refused all regular salary from the small mission he had been serving. He then set about to found an Orphan Home to care for the homeless children of England.

The first Home was dedicated in a rented building on April 21, 1836. Within a matter of days 43 orphans were being cared for. Mueller and his co-workers decided that their controlled experiment should be set up along these lines:

1. No fund would ever be solicited. The workers in the orphanage were never to reveal facts and figures concerning their needs to anyone but God.
2. No debts were ever to be incurred. The burden of this experiment was not to be born by the local shopkeepers.
3. No money contributed for a specific purpose could ever be used for any other purpose.

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4. All accounts would be audited annually by professional auditors.

5. No ego-pandering by publication of donor's names with the amount of their gifts; each donor would be thanked privately.

6. No "names" of prominent or titled persons would be sought for the board or to advertise the institution.

7. The success of the institution would be measured not by the numbers served or by the amounts of money taken in, but by God's blessings upon the work, which Mueller expected to be in direct proportion to the time spent in prayer.

When the first building was constructed, Mueller and his friends remained true to their convictions. The public was amazed when a second building was opened six months after the first. They kept concentrating on prayer and eventually there were five new buildings, 110 workers, and 2,050 orphans being cared for.

George Mueller not only counted on God to provide, but he believed that God would provide bountifully. He insisted that each child have three pair of shoes. Each boy was to have three suits, and each girl five dresses. The homes were constructed with built in cupboards and sunny play rooms. Behind the scenes were the latest labor saving devices available — like one of the first American washing machines and an early type of centrifugal dryer. The experiment was to be considered a failure if there was ever one day when the children went without food — they never did.

The results of this amazing orphanage experiment have been published in detail in the four volumes of George Mueller's Journals. For over 60 years he recorded every specific prayer request . . . and the results. His mathematical mind kept track of every penny received and all the money expended.

Interest in this experiment was so great that at the age of 70 Mueller lectured in forty-two countries and traveled over 200,000 miles telling the amazing story of the power of faith.

“. . . this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith" (I John 5:4).

Adapted from *Beyond Ourselves* by Catherine Marshall

Advice From George Mueller

As a sequel to the article last week I thought you might be interested in these words of advice. Of course, it needs to be stressed that Mr. Mueller was not inspired. Yet, his sterling example of faith has earned the appreciation and confidence of millions of people.

Advice to a Businessman Threatened With Bankruptcy

1. Each day you and your wife are to spread your business difficulties before the Lord.
2. You are then to watch for answer to prayer and expect them.
3. Absolute honesty necessary; avoid all business trickeries.
4. Beginning immediately, a certain proportion of your income must be given to God.
5. Keep a record — month by month — how the Lord is dealing with you, what is happening. (Within a year the business was out of the red and up 3,000 pounds above the previous year.)

Advice on Prayer

1. Entire dependence upon the merits and meditation of the Lord Jesus Christ, as the only ground of any claim for blessing (John 14:13,14; 15:16 etc.).
2. Separation from all known sin. If we regard iniquity in our hearts the Lord will not hear us, for it would be sanctioning sin (Psa. 66:18).
3. Faith in God's word of promise as confirmed by His oath. Not to believe Him is to make Him both a liar and a perjurer (Heb. 11:6, 6:13-20).
4. Asking in accordance with His will. Our motives must be

godly; we must not seek any gift of God to consume it upon our lusts (I John 5:14, James 4:3).

5. Importunity in supplication. There must be waiting on God, and waiting for God, as the husbandman has long patience to wait for the harvest (James 5:7; Luke 18:1-8 etc.).

Mr. Mueller was responsible for the care of 9,500 orphans during his life. They never went without a meal. Mueller never asked for help from anyone but God. \$7,500,000 came to him over the course of his long life, and he vows it was all in answer to believer prayer.

Advice On The Careful and Consecutive Reading of the Holy Scriptures

Mueller discovered that there is no substitute for the word of God. Religious books and books about the Bible can never substitute for a systematic study of the Bible itself. He therefore advises: (Due to lack of space I have condensed his words)

1. Read the Bible in conjunction with prayer — believing that God will instruct you.

2. Recognize the Holy Spirit as a good and sufficient teacher — realizing that the understanding of many passages will not come immediately.

3. Read each day a portion of the Old Testament and also the New . . . going on where we previously left off. (a) If you don't have consecutive reading you will miss some parts of the Bible; (b) Reading the whole Bible will provide variety; (c) It is not good to say that some scriptures are better than others; (d) Reading the whole Bible will keep us from erroneous views; (e) The scriptures contain the whole revealed will of God.

4. It is of greater importance to meditate upon what we read. Commentaries affect the head, but the Bible affects the heart.

Advice on How to Ascertain The Will of God

1. I seek at the beginning to get my heart into such a state

that it has no will of its own in regard to a given matter. Nine-tenths of the trouble with people is right here. Nine-tenths of the difficulties are overcome when our hearts are ready to do the Lord's will whatever it may be.

2. Having done this I do not leave the result to feeling of simple impression. If I do so, I make myself liable to great delusions.

3. I seek the will of the spirit of God through, or in connection with the word of God. . . . If the Holy Ghost guides us at all, He will do it according to the Scriptures and never contrary to them.

4. Next I take into account providential circumstances. These often plainly indicate God's will in connection with His word and Spirit.

5. I ask God in prayer to reveal His will to me aright.

6. Through prayer and study of the Word a deliberate judgment is reached according to the best of my ability and knowledge. If my mind is at peace and continues so after two or three more petitions I proceed accordingly.