

# The Habit of Believing God

by Dougan Clark

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*The habit of believing God is the outer life of holiness, and is formed and sustained by the will-power to accept God's promises and obey His commands, and is characterized by a life of continual surrender, trust, and faith.*

**Scripture:** Proverbs 3:5, Romans 12:1, Ephesians 2:8, James 1:6, 1 John 1:9

**Topics:** "Faith And Trust", "Sanctified Living"

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## Description

Dougan Clark preaches on the outer life of holiness, emphasizing the importance of habitually believing in God's promises and commands. He highlights the need to employ willpower to sustain a faith-habit, rejecting doubts and choosing to believe God regardless of circumstances. The sermon focuses on continual surrender, trust, and consecration as essential components of a sanctified believer's life, where faith is exhibited through a willingness to confess God's work in the heart and a humble reliance on Christ's grace for all goodness.

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## Transcript

The outer life of holiness is manifested by the habit of believing God. We all know that what is done repeatedly, or very frequently becomes easy by the mere fact of repetition. This is the law of habit. All the powers of the mind, as well as those of the body are influenced by this law. And what is true of memory, reasoning, walking, riding and all other mental and bodily operations, is also true of believing. There is such a thing as a faith-habit in which the individual who is possessed of it, naturally and easily, and as a matter of course, believes God's promises, and as a consequence naturally and easily obey His commands

To form this blessed habit and to sustain it, we must employ our will-power. We must accept the dictum of the poet, that:

"Our doubts are traitors,

And make us lose

The good we oft might win,

By fearing to attempt."

And so we must determine, and resolve, and act upon the determination and resolution that whomsoever or whatever else we may believe or not believe, we will believe God.

In his excellent work, "The Life of Faith" the late Thomas C. Upham, D.D. quotes, from "a pious person who is said to have died in the triumphs of faith," these expressions, viz.: "I have given God my undivided heart; believing that he does accept it, and believing that the blood of Christ cleanseth us from all sin. Like a stone which the builder takes, and puts on the foundation, so do I lie on Christ's blood and God's promises, giving God my soul and body, a living sacrifice, and covenanting with Him never to doubt more. My language is, I will believe, I will sooner die than doubt."

But here some one may interpose an objection. He may say belief is not a matter of will, it is a matter of evidence. Produce sufficient evidence and we cannot withhold our belief. Withhold the evidence and we cannot at all believe by mere force of will.

We admit the force of the objection, but it is no longer tenable, when we reply that the will-power we are recommending is not to be employed in the absence of evidence, nor contrary to evidence, nor independently of evidence, but strictly in accordance with evidence and for the purpose of giving to the evidence its just appreciation and acceptance.

It is not for want of evidence that any sinner is failing to believe that God is willing, as He is surely able to save him now. It is not for want of evidence that any Christian is failing to believe that God is able and willing to sanctify him now. It is because, on account of a long habit of doubting, and of the unbelief that is a part of inbred sin, he is failing to give the evidence its due weight, and to act upon it by actually believing. And in such a case the will must be brought to bear in aid of the enfeebled and paralyzed faith that it may act as it should do, not in the absence, but in the presence of sufficient evidence.

The outer life of holiness is shown by its possessor being careful not to judge unfavorably or uncharitably the feelings of others. If his fellow Christians do not walk uprightly according to his standard, his first inquiry is "Who makes me to differ?" and his first care is not to spread the story of their wrongdoings, nor to rebuke them with intemperate zeal, but to pray for them.

The holy man accounts everything that comes to him in his outward life as a manifestation of God. It may not come directly from Him, it may come from Satan, or from wicked men -- but God's hand is present in it, either to cause it or permit it, for what God sends or permits he can still be thankful, knowing that He doeth all things well. Therefore whether joy or sorrow be the portion of his cup; his first thought is of God, and whether He gives or whether He takes away, the holy man can say with Job, "Blessed be the name of the Lord."

As the holy man exhibits in his entire life a constant exercise of faith, so he exhibits also a continual consecration. It is only by surrender that we can come on to believing ground. "How can ye believe" said the blessed Saviour, "who seek the honor that cometh from man, and not the honor that cometh from God only?" And this question implies that while the heart is unsundered to God, while it is seeking for earthly honors and endowments, and not making the will of God its supreme choice, it is not in a condition to believe God. "If our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our heart," by which the beloved apostle seems to mean that in such a state of heart God will condemn us also. But "if our hearts condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God." In other words, when we become fully consecrated to the Lord -- and assume just the attitude towards Him which He desires and demands -- then we believe Him, and so the continual outward life of the sanctified believer is a life of continual surrender, and continual trust. His

desires are all merged in the one desire, God's will be done, and his faith constantly takes it for granted that while he maintains this position of heart, God's will, so far as he is concerned, is done.

The outer life of holiness is exhibited also by a want or absence of undue eagerness, or restlessness of spirit. The holy man is seldom heard exclaiming, I do so want this or that, at least in reference to worldly things, and the same is true to a large extent, even in reference to spiritual things. The reason is that he has learned to accept, and even to love all the arrangements of God, and to so prefer God's will to his own, that in everything he chooses God's will, and the expression of his own preference is guarded by the desire usually uttered, and always implied, if it be His will.

The outer life of the sanctified man or woman is manifested by his or her willingness to confess with the mouth what God has done within the heart. That the blood of atonement has been applied by faith for the forgiveness of past sins, that the same blood applied by the Holy Spirit now cleanseth from all sin. They are ever ready to confess their own weakness and unworthiness, and yet ready to confess also that Jesus by His Holy Spirit keeps them without condemnation All the glory is to Him. They are nothing Christ is all.

The sanctified believer is careful to guard against taking undue satisfaction or complacency in his own deeds. He walks, and works, and fights always behind the shield of faith. He trusts all to Christ. He attributes all that is good in his own character and life not to his unworthy self, not to his own righteousness, which he knows to be nothing but filthy rags -- but to the grace of God in the Lord Jesus Christ. Like Paul he acknowledges that it is by the grace of God that he is what he is. And so while he is far removed from boasting in or of himself, yet his soul does make her boast in the Lord. Hallelujah!

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