

**For Which Cause We Faint Not**  
**by Dr. Shelton Smith**

"For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day."—II Cor. 4:16.

Please pay attention to that first little phrase in this verse: "For which cause we faint not." There is a cause so dear, so precious, so worthwhile that we have given ourselves to it. We are committed to it with devoted and undying commitment. It is our cause, and it keeps us from fainting.

Fainting is a familiar phenomenon, I think, to most of you. Some of you, maybe all of you, will remember some time when you did faint. I remember a couple such times in my life. I felt kind of foolish, but nonetheless, faint I did.

At first, everything is just fine. You're going along, doing really well. Then suddenly you get this rush of blood to your head and a strange feeling. Maybe the objects out in the distance aren't in focus quite as clearly. When you raise your arm or hand, it does not feel like it's attached. You see it, but it feels different.

The first thing you know, you pass into semi-consciousness or unconsciousness. And if you're standing up, you fall. And when you fall, you may actually hurt yourself. It is a strange thing that happens when fainting occurs. There's a faltering and fading, then comes the fainting and the falling.

As I travel the highways, especially in the summertime, I see lots of cars on the road, sometimes at 3:00 or 4:00 in the morning. I ask myself, Why are they not home asleep? Of course, they're wondering the same about me!

Among all these cars on the road, every little bit will be a car stopped alongside the road. Sometimes a person will be pacing around the car with a frustrated look because his car has quit on him. Sometimes he'll have the hood up, and steam will be seeping out of the engine. Other times one of the spherical objects that causes the car to be propelled along easily has lost its rotundity. (That's a flat tire!)

Here's a perfectly good automobile, but for some reason the thing has fainted and failed.

Sometimes when a plane is taxiing out from the tarmac to the runway, it will pass by one of the hangars where other planes are stored. When the big doors are open, you can see inside. A mechanic or two will be up in the body of a plane taking things out or putting things in.

What are they doing? They are fixing the plane. I'm always saying to myself, I hope, if it decides not to work, it will decide when on the ground. Sometimes the mechanics roll the planes out and say, "They are ready to fly," but one

plane may say, "I don't feel like flying today." Something doesn't work, so the mechanics park it over in the hangar and continue to work on it.

I say to the man who supervises the fleet of planes, "I'll bet you would like for that plane to fly today."

He answers, "I wish it would. It doesn't make us money when it doesn't." The airplane ought to fly every day, but for some reason today it has fainted.

The car sits to one side. For one reason or another, it has failed to work. It's a good automobile and cost a lot of money, but it fainted.

## **CHRISTIANS SOMETIMES FAINT**

In the Christian life there are a lot of things just like that. When I'm preaching in a church where I've been several times, I may ask, "Where is So-and-so?" (You get to know people after you've been there several times.) Then I will hear some sad story.

They were going along great. Everything was operating normally. Then for some reason that person fainted in the process of his Christian life. He didn't die; he just fainted. He stopped soul winning. He quit his bus route. He stopped tithing. He quit coming to church. He lost his sweet spirit. He fainted, and because he fainted, the dry rot of failure set in.

I believe this passage says to us that if we faint not, we fail not; but if we faint, we fail. It also makes clear that there is a cause so important that we must not faint—"for which cause we faint not."

I point out to you a particular verse—John "6-6-6." That is a verse with pathos dripping from it on every letter, on every word: "From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him."

The disciples went along for awhile. They liked what they saw. They enjoyed everything. Then they fainted. There came a day when they said, "It doesn't suit me." Because that life didn't suit them, they faltered. Having faltered, they fainted; and having fainted, they fell by the wayside.

I read in II Timothy 4:10, where Paul is reporting to his young protégé, Timothy, about Demas: "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world." Along the way Demas had been doing very well; he had been doing a good work; but there came a time when he fainted in the process. His agenda and God's agenda did not match. Demas began to salivate for the things of the present world more than for the things of the eternal world.

The same passage goes further to talk about Alexander the coppersmith: "Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil" (vs. 14). I always thought all Smiths were good Smiths! I read in the Bible about goldsmiths, blacksmiths, and, in this case, a coppersmith. But I've discovered that this smith was not a good smith. He did a fellow-Christian harm. He could do good, but he didn't. Instead of bearing fruit, he fainted.

Was Alexander the coppersmith a Christian? I think he probably was, but he came to a place where he did Paul much damage; and Paul warned Timothy, "Of whom be thou ware also." In other words, "Timothy, be wary of him, because he may hurt you too."

What happened to Alexander? He went along quite well for awhile. Everything operated normally. But then a carnality grew up in his heart, and he fainted in the way.

In that same passage Paul also says, "At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me" (vs. 16). He said, "Certain issues were raised; and when I gave my answer, not a single person would vote with me. Not a single person would stand by me. No one believed what I believed. Not one person would do what I wanted him to do. Instead, when it came time to do the will of God, to do right, to serve God, all men forsook me. It was soul-winning time, but they forsook me. It was church time, but they forsook me. It was time to stand for truth and right, but they forsook me. I was there to lift the load, but not a single person was there to help me when I needed him. I was there standing alone."

What's the Bible teaching us here? It's illustrating for us, one by one, the distressful stories of good Christian folks who fainted in their Christian lives. They did not die; they just fainted. And in fainting, they failed. Notice now what this key verse—my text—says to us: "For which cause we faint not"—meaning we have a cause to which we are committed. We have convictions about it, and we are so committed that we will not faint. We will go on, press on, stay at it; and we will not faint.

The greater context of II Cor-inthians 4 gives us a number of reasons why we must not yield to fainting, why we must not give in, why we must not fail. Even if we faint, it must be only momentary. We must not even contemplate the possibility of fainting. This passage gives us some things to go on.

## **I. THE SOURCE OF OUR RESOURCES IS THE LORD**

"Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not."—II Cor. 4:1.

(1) We have mercy. Our resource is from the Lord. We are getting a full measure of God's mercy. Getting mercy, we get blessings, and with blessings we get power. Having mercy and blessings and power, we have everything we need. God very mercifully bestows all of that upon us.

Having His resources fully delivered to us, we are then able to thrive in the ministry because we enjoy the blessing of God.

*[For Which Cause We Faint Not](#) by Dr. Shelton Smith*

(2) We have light. Our hearts are strong because the light of God is the light that is shined in our hearts in the midst of the darkness of this world (vs. 6).

True, we live in a world of darkness, and sometimes in the darkness we trip and fall. Often in the darkness we stumble on things that bruise. Invariably we lose our way in the dark, thinking we are on the right path when we are not. But the light of God has shined in the dark, and this light never goes out. There is never a time when our batteries are low. There is never a time when we can say, "I can't get the light to work," because God's light is shining in our hearts. We never have an excuse for fumbling in the dark because the light of God is shining in us. With God's resources—so rich, so full, so powerful, so sufficient—we are kept from fainting.

(3) We have power. God gives His mercy. God gives His light. God gives His power (vs. 7). The reason we're able to operate is that "we have this treasure in earthen vessels"—the great treasure of the Gospel, the great treasure of all eternal things. In this body we can have a full supply of eternal helps. This body lives today, but one day, it will die. The earthen dam may get so much pressure upon it that it bursts and does not hold. Little earthenware vessels that sit on the shelves may get broken. Somebody may knock them to the solid floor, and they may be shattered into a thousand pieces. But note that the treasure of God's great things has been entrusted to these earthen vessels. He has put it in these human hands. We are mere human vessels, but God's resources within make us able.

We ask, "But is it of us? Is the task so dependent upon us?"

The Bible says, 'The excellency of the power is of God and not of us.' We are the earthen vessels, but the power is not in the vessel itself. These earthen vessels often fail, often break and cannot do the job. So we must look to God for power.

We faint not because we receive our resources from the Lord. We get mercy from the Lord; we get light from the Lord; we get power from the Lord (vss. 1,6,7). So we are getting from the Lord every resource we need, and we have every reason to believe that we will not, should not, must not fail because the resources of God are there to meet our every need.

## **II. THE STEWARDSHIP OF GOD'S WORD IS THE FOUNDATION OF OUR STRENGTH**

"But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God."—II Cor. 4:2.

We faint not because we are handling the Word of God. The Bible says we renounce

*[For Which Cause We Faint Not](#) by Dr. Shelton Smith*

dishonesty, we renounce craftiness, and we refrain from handling the Word deceitfully. We are sustained by manifesting the truth and "commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God."

One major reason we do not fail is the Word we handle. The messages we have in the Bible guide us and govern us. The promises upon which we build our lives are the wonderful, eternal words of the living God. In them we have something secure. It is not the word of mortals. It is not the word of some man or any man or all men, but the very Word of God.

We contemplate, Why do we go on? Why do we press on? Why do we stay at it? Why do we live for God? Why do we serve God? Why do we go out to do the work of God every single day? Why do we do it? It is because we have the Word of God upon which we build, the Word of God with truth unstained and without error. Do we simply believe that man lives like a dog until he dies, and then there is nothing more? Or do we believe that man lives and dies and goes into a great eternity in Heaven and lives with God? Why do we believe that some golden daybreak Jesus will come? Because we have the Word of God.

We do not twist or distort the Word of God. We simply hear it and believe it, and we handle it carefully. Based upon the fact that this Book which I have in my hand is God's inspired, inerrant, infallible and inexhaustible Word, we know we have something solid upon which we can build, so we don't faint. You may say, "I've been slapped and kicked and bruised." But, dear friend, you have the Word of God; and because you do, you can bury your face in the Book; you can feed and be nourished and strengthened. And because we handle the Word of God conscientiously, carefully, correctly and compassionately, we faint not. Always be a good steward of the blessed Book, the Bible.

### **III. THE SITUATION AROUND US IS NEVER EASY**

The Devil is hard at work, but still we faint not. "The god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not" (vs. 4). That's god with a little g. It's not a god who is God, but it's the god of this world, the Devil. The Devil is hard at work to blind the minds of those who will not trust the Saviour and those who will not believe the Word of God. He works to keep their minds blinded so they will not hear and receive.

The Devil is hard at work—no question about it—to deceive, to defile, to defame, to decimate, to dismember, to desecrate, to defeat and to destroy. He'll do all of that and more, but you and I must not be influenced. You and I must not faint, must not yield one moment to the powers of darkness or to the god of this world. The Devil will have to work hard because we are building on the Word of God and on the resources of God, and we have every reason to believe that we must not give in or yield one single inch. We will not be intimidated by the Devil, not even one moment, so we faint not. The great God of Heaven is greater,

far greater, than the little god of this world.

"But it's such a hard world in which we work. So many things go awry. So many things don't go right," you say. I know, but we must not faint. With God's help we will overcome Satan's every effort.

#### **IV. THE SCOPE OF OUR SERVICE IS TWOFOLD**

The text says, "For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake" (vs. 5). And so we faint not in serving the Lord.

Let me ask you: Whose agenda is it—my agenda, your agenda, or the Lord's agenda? If we only serve ourselves, then when things do not serve us well, we can toss in the towel, and we can say, "No more!" But when we remember that it is the Lord whom we serve, we do not become cynical or bitter; we do not turn aside onto some other path or track; we stay on the agenda divinely set, and we do not faint nor do we fail. It is Christ Jesus the Lord whom we preach, and it is He whom we serve. We are simply His servants, and we present ourselves as servants for Jesus' sake.

We present ourselves not only in service to God, but "ourselves [as] your servants." The toughest part of Christian service is not in dealing with the world and darkness, but in dealing with other brothers who are standing in the light.

How do we do this? Why are we to present "ourselves [as] your servants"? The Scripture says, "For Jesus' sake." Surely this is a concept barely afloat today! Serve God? Yes! Serve those who serve God? Yes, indeed!

We present ourselves as the servants of God and as servants to others because the Lord has given us the commission to do so. It is His agenda we serve. We preach Christ Jesus the Lord and "ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake." We faint not because we are not serving our own plan. We are not working for self's sake. We faint not because we remember whom we are serving! We stand with the Lord and with other believers of like precious faith. The scope of our service then is twofold. Because we understand what we are about, we faint not in serving the Lord.

When he says, "For which cause we faint not," he is talking about the service of the Lord which includes service to our brethren.

#### **V. THE STRIKES AGAINST US ARE FREQUENT**

We faint not even in the time of adversity. Sometimes I think affluence is as great an adversity as is the normal context of adversity. But in this passage Paul says:

*[For Which Cause We Faint Not](#) by Dr. Shelton Smith*

"We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus...."—Vss. 8–10.

So often the way we talk and live is like this: "We are troubled on every side, we are perplexed, we are persecuted, we are cast down. We are always bearing about in our bodies the death of the Lord Jesus. We are about to die. We can hardly help ourselves."

But what does this Bible say? "We are troubled...yet not distressed." Paul says, "Listen! All kinds of crazy things are going on, but I'm not going to let them bother me. Sure, all kinds of things are coming down upon me, but I'm not distressed." Paul means, "I'm still sleeping well at night. I'll not lie here and worry, fret and stew; I'll press right on; I'll go forward. I will not faint even though I have all kinds of trouble, and no exit from it is yet in sight. I am not distressed."

Then he says, "We are perplexed, but not in despair." Perplexed? "This time I know not the answer nor where to go nor what to do next. I know not how to tell you the way out. But I am not in despair. I haven't lost hope, haven't thrown in the towel, haven't cashed in—not yet! There may not be a ready answer, but I'm going forward."

"Persecuted, but not forsaken." A friend like Alexander the coppersmith, a friend like Demas makes life hard. All kinds of darts and arrows may be hurled at you.

You look around and wonder, Don't I have any friends? Oh, yes, I do; but where are they? I don't see any of them. Friends! I know they are here somewhere. Well, I'll declare, I don't see any. I guess I don't have any after all. You look around, and everybody has deserted you, and several have turned on you. You are having all kinds of persecution.

You can say, "But I'm not forsaken. No matter about others; I'm never alone because He is always with me."

Yes, cast down—walked on, stepped on, tromped on—but you are never destroyed. You may come down; you may be hit so hard that you will die; but even in death you will win. "...but not destroyed"!

So we faint not, even in the time of adversity.

When I was growing up in Kentucky, some neighbors had a special breed of fainting goats. In many ways they were regular goats. Ordinarily a goat is a goat is a goat. If you've seen a goat, you've seen a goat. Amen? But these fainting goats were very pretty animals, and they behaved like goats except for one thing: Go up within twelve or fifteen feet of them and say, "Boo!" and their feet would fall from under them. They would fall over on their sides and lie there for five or ten seconds, then jump up and run off.

You know, I believe a lot of Christians are just like that. Those little goats would faint when they were suddenly scared. They ought to have been called "fearful goats"—scared at every little thing that said "Boo!" at them. They weren't dead goats, just fainting goats.

We go along until some little something happens, then we fall over in a little faint or a swoon. We're not dead, but we're not any good for the moment. We're lying there in a faint. We'll wake up one of these days.

O God, help us that somewhere down the pike we won't wake up with five or ten years gone and say, "What did I do? What happened during the time of my faint?"

You say, "But I have been living in the lions' den. I have been living in the fiery furnace. I have had all kinds of trouble in my life."

Listen now: "Troubled...not distressed;...perplexed...not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed."

We must not faint even in the time of adversity.

## **VI. THE SEASON OF OUR LIFE IS SHORT**

We are born, we live, we die. As Christians we serve God every day knowing that one day we will die. In fact, verse 11 says, "We...are...delivered unto death for Jesus' sake."

We die a bit every day. The Bible says we "die daily." The whole concept we have studied from this passage in II Corinthians 4 says, "We faint not," even though we know death is working in us. "We faint not," even as we approach the place where we too will die.

Dwight L. Moody served God. He did not faint, yet he died. Jonathan Edwards served God faithfully and was greatly used of God. He fainted not, yet he died. Charles Haddon Spurgeon, the great English preacher, served God for many years. He won tens of thousands of people to Christ in the United Kingdom. He fainted not, but he died.

I could mention Lester Roloff, John Rice and many others who lived, who served God and fainted not, but they died.

We bear "in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus" (vs. 10). Paul says, "We...are...delivered unto death for Jesus' sake" (vs. 11). Verse 12 says, "So then death worketh in us, but life in you."

It is life that comes in us because death has been worked in us. We work ourselves until death comes in order that life may come in a few others.

We faint not because of that.

Others will live because we die to self, die to hurt, die to personal ambition, die to criticism, die to whatever. We give up ourselves so that sinners will hear the Gospel and be saved.

## **VII. THE STANDARDS THAT MOTIVATE US ARE THREE**

*[For Which Cause We Faint Not](#) by Dr. Shelton Smith*

(1) We faint not, knowing that one day we will be presented by the Lord Jesus when He comes.

"Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you."—Vs. 14.

It is that same presentation that Jude 24 gives: "Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy."

Oh, to know that one day we too will be presented by the Lord Jesus before the throne of God! Then He will say, "I have known you. I have blessed you. We have had fellowship through the years!"

Will you be able to say that day when your name is called, "I fainted not"? In fainting not, you mean you failed not but stayed at it.

Oh, how wonderful to be presented before the throne of the glory of our Saviour and be able to say, "I fainted not"!

We faint not, knowing that eternity is looming before us.

(2) We faint not, for the glory of God. We say, "Oh, for God to be glorified, I will not faint!" (vs. 15). Let it redound to the glory of God that we faint not; that we stay in the saddle; that we work on, press on, never quit. For the glory of God we will faint not, even with pain, with sorrow, with suffering.

"For which cause we faint not" (vs. 16). We are committed to Christ, committed to the church, committed for souls, committed for eternity's sake; and because we have a cause to which we are committed, we serve, we press on, and we faint not.

(3) We faint not, for eternity's sake.

"For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal."—Vss. 17,18.

Paul is saying that whatever pain we have is light compared to what it might be and is but for a moment compared to eternity. The far more exceeding weight—the greater, heavier, weightier matter here—is not the little pain we have today but the great issue of eternity. We look not at what we see but at what is not seen. We look not at what is temporal but at what is eternal; and for eternity's sake, we press on and stay at the task. We are to keep on doing what we know to do, fainting not, failing not, but saying, "By God's grace I will be His servant, and I'll be what I ought to be. I'll stand where I ought to stand. I'll do what I ought to do, and I'll serve my wonderful Saviour day by day by day for eternity's sake."

I believe, for eternity's sake, for the sake of the cause we serve, and for the glory of God, we have every reason to faint not!

*For Which Cause We Faint Not by Dr. Shelton Smith*