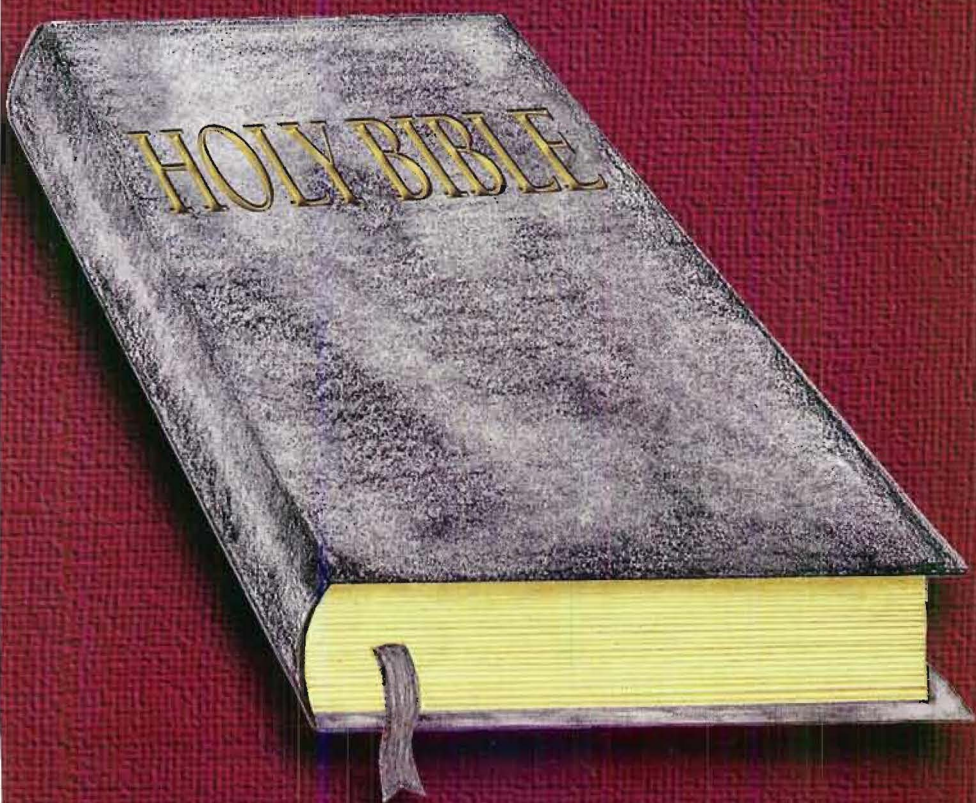


THE SIXTEENTH ANNUAL
GARFIELD HEIGHTS CHURCH OF CHRIST
LECTURESHIP

Faith



The Garfield Heights Church of Christ

Presents

THE SIXTEENTH ANNUAL LECTURESHIP

The ONE FAITH

Charles Blair
Lectureship Director

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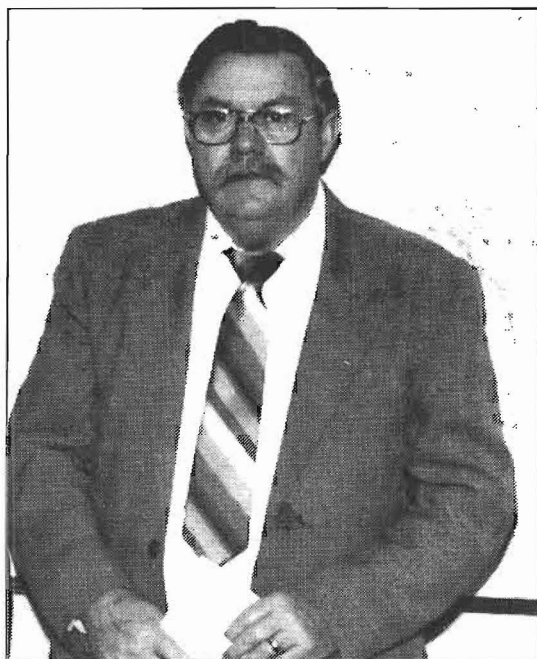
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We dedicate this volume of the 16th annual lectureship at Garfield Heights on the great subject of "Faith" to the loving memory of A. C. (Jack) Fox.



A. C. (Jack) Fox

REFLECTIONS OF A GOOD MAN

On December the 14th, 1996, Jack Fox passed from this life to his reward with God. He served this congregation as a faithful elder. I had the privilege of sitting in on meetings with him, and the other elders, in which the business of the church was discussed. He was a kind man with firm resolve to do the Lord's will and take care of the Lord's church.

He and I shared many a cup of coffee at the start of the day here at my office. I was always lifted up by his sense of humor and the smile which lit up all of our lives. Many a day got off to the right start because he came by and shared a little of himself.

To Melba and the children (Deborah, Mark, Julie, Alison and Todd); thanks for sharing him with us. He led us and we loved him and you. This lectureship theme of "Faith" is fitting to be dedicated to a man whose life was about faith.

—Charles Blair

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Chapter 1

Faith Based On Evidence

Hebrews 11:1

Alan Adams

The following two episodes define a common problem, thereby setting forth the burden of our topic:

During a roundtable religious discussion—the participants being a Christian and his family members of diverse denominational backgrounds—the question of instrumental music in worship was broached. At some point one relative retorted, “I know what I believe.” This clipped remark begs analysis as it reveals much of what people in general think about the act of “believing” in something; that is, having “faith” in something. For people to say they “know” what they “believe” begs the question as to whether that which they believe is true; which is to say, it corresponds with reality. It shall be our purpose in this chapter to show that from the biblical perspective, people ought rather to *believe what they know*.

Then again, in a similar family setting, a sibling described what he “believed” to be his having crossed paths with extra-terrestrials (a big bright light that he couldn’t explain). To his younger brother (a Christian) he said, “I believe there is life on other planets. Don’t you?” The brother replied, “I have no reason to believe that there is.” The elder brother’s rejoinder ran something like, “If God could do this, and God could do that, then don’t you believe that such and such is possible? For you to deny the existence of ET, you would have to visit every planet in the universe. Have you done that?”

Not one to easily succumb to apparent futility, the younger brother tried to explain that in the biblical sense of the term one “believes” on the basis of what God has revealed, not what one imagines that He could do. He pointed out the utter irrationality of basing one’s “belief” in something on the concession that he could not affirm a universal negative based on universal induction. By way of illustration, he pointed out, “Suppose I said, ‘I had read in a tabloid that someone had raised a chicken which can speak German and Chinese. Would you believe it?’” The elder brother said, “Of course not.” To which, the younger inquired something along the order of, “Have you visited every coop in the world and talked to every chicken?”—The conversation ended. Though “alien” in meaning and usage to, perhaps, most people—and, not a few Christians—*Biblical* “faith” in something or someone; faith in the rightness of a tenet, a cause; or, faith in a course of action, exists only when evidence has been brought to the fore: Evidence, that is, which warrants the conclusion that that in which one has faith—which one believes—is real, true, or correct.

Ambiguity

“There are many obstacles in the path of successful communication, but ambiguity is undoubtedly the worst offender. An ambiguous word is one that may be understood in more than one sense.”¹ “Faith” is such a word [“faith,” “belief,” and “believe” shall throughout be used interchangeably]. Consider its diversity of meaning found in one dictionary²—

Believe: 1,...conviction or acceptance that certain things are true or real; 2, ... religious faith; 3, trust or confidence; 4, anything believed or accepted as true...; 5, an opinion; expectation; judgment...to suppose, or think. *Belief*: the

term of broadest application in this comparison, implies mental acceptance of something as true, even though absolute certainty may be absent. *Faith*: implies complete, unquestioning acceptance of something even in the absence of proof and, esp., of something not supported by reason. *Trust*: implies assurance, often apparently intuitive, in the reliability of someone or something.

Further muddying the water, we note that under the heading, *evidence*, another dictionary says, “ground for belief;”³ thus, conversely saying that belief is a response to, or result of, evidence; which is precisely the meaning of “faith” as it is used in Scripture.

Then consider the broad range of usage in daily speech—

I don't just believe it, I know it.

I don't care what baptism means, I still believe that God saved me.

I'm not sure that's the way it goes, but I believe it does.

I believe in my children.

I believe that black cows eat green grass and produce white milk.

I believe that the ratio of the circumference of a circle to its diameter is the same for all circles (approximately, 3.1416; called π).

I believe that Jesus of Nazareth is the only begotten Son of God.

Thus, running the definition/usage gamut of the word “faith,” one travels all the way from a response based on evidence and reason, to a determination to accept something as true in the absence—even, in spite—of evidence or reason, with a variety of nuances in between. Hence, any study, discussion, or tenet

involving “faith,” must be preceded by precise stipulation of what is meant by the word. Certainly this is true where the Bible is concerned, because not all modern senses of “faith” are biblically justified. Since, however, 1, the Bible is a limited universe of discourse; and 2, it—the New Testament in particular—has been preserved for us in a non-living language (*koine* Greek); students, therefore, have the advantage of objectively and narrowly defining and using its terms.

We must ever resist the all-too-common habit of defining biblical terms according to modern English usage. Words, written or spoken, mean what they mean as they are used by their authors, not what they are assumed, or even perceived, to mean by readers or auditors. Of the three verities—“faith, hope, and love” (1 Cor. 13:13)—faith is number one on the list. This, together with the fact that *every* biblically significant goal—“all things that pertain unto life and godliness” (2 Peter 1:3)—is connected with, or accomplished by, “faith,” should drive us to understand and correctly use this potent word.

Arbitrary—Inaccurate—Usage Of “Faith”

It is indeed unfortunate that many Bible students have not dealt with the problem of ambiguity, and have therefore arbitrarily *chosen* from the morass of modern senses of “faith” the idea that “faith” means to proceed, react, respond, in the absence of warrantable reason or evidence. *Bringing to the Bible* such a weak and faulty definition of as fundamental a concept as faith will cause one to ultimately stray far afield from the Truth in many areas. No doubt this is why so many have attached nobility to the *act* of believing regardless of *what* is believed; hence, such meaningless quips as, “I know what I believe.” No doubt also, this is why scores of Christians and churches across our land have lost the sense of militancy and aggressiveness that ought to

characterize God's people (Jude 3; Eph 6:13-17; 2 Tim. 2:2). Why press upon someone a claim for which I, myself, am not absolutely certain?

Consider the following statements gleaned from the works of some Christian preachers and teachers:⁴

[The man of faith behaves] as if [he knows].

There is no way to *prove* that God exists. We are compelled to accept the existence of God by "faith."

These arguments take you down to this point...but from there on you have to proceed on the basis of "faith."

...there is not enough evidence anywhere to absolutely prove God, but there is adequate evidence to justify the assumption or the faith that God exists.

This choice or commitment is into the realm of the subjective, to be sure, since it transcends the objective and what can be clearly proved, and thus it is a "leap of faith."

...it is more reasonable to take the short leap of faith required in Christian belief than it is to take the long leap of faith that is required in atheism. Absolute, dogmatic, unequivocal [sic], complete evidence is often not possible, but a strong presumption is demonstrable.

The evolutionist has a faith and I have a faith. I happen to believe that my faith is the more reasonable faith.

For many, "faith" is a totally visceral thing, a gut feeling. As with the above quote regarding the evolutionist, it should be noted that many proponents of evolution commonly admit that there is no evidence for it. "A decade ago, Colin Patterson of the British Museum of Natural History said he knew of none at all."⁵ What then? The Christian "believes" without

proof; the evolutionist “believes” without proof. Are they equally noble? It seems that, for many, the greater the commitment to an unwarranted unproved proposition, the greater the nobility of such a venture. The Bible, however, describes as “noble,” the “Bereans”: who, with regard to the claims being pressed upon them, were “with all readiness of mind examining the scriptures” to see “whether these things were so” (Acts 17:11).

Ascertaining The Meaning Of “Faith” As Used In The Bible Particularly The New Testament

At the head of a family of Greek words is the word *peitho* which has as its basic meaning, “to convince” or “persuade.”⁶ Akin to this word is the noun *pistis*, “faith,” along with its word family: *pisteuo*, “believe”; *pistos*, “trustworthy, faithful, trusting, believing”; *pistoo*, “rely, convince”; *apistia*, “unbelief”; *apisteo*, “disbelieve”; *apistos*, “unbelievable, faithless, unbelieving.”⁷ Out of this emerges a distinct theme: The idea of one party convincing or persuading another that he ought to believe, trust, commit to, or rely on the first party and thereby act accordingly.

That by which the first party seeks to convince or persuade the second, we shall loosely call “reason” or “evidence.” Such reason or evidence takes various forms: Demonstration—as in, “show me”—, testimony, deduction—as in, “if this, then that”—, and so on. As to whether said reason or evidence 1, accords with reality, or 2, is sufficient to warrant trust—that is another question. Lenski says it well,

Faith is never its own basis. “Faith,” “confidence,” “conviction” are correlative terms; faith rests on somebody or on something

outside of me and *not* on itself. Somebody, something outside of me inspires faith or trust in me, otherwise I have no faith. It is this outside ground that shows whether faith is true, i.e., justified or false, i.e. unjustified.⁸

Faith—being an act of personal will—like all acts of will may, or may not, accord with reality. Reality is what it is regardless of whether I care about it; what I think about it; or, how I react to it. For example, Jacob concluded, “Joseph is without doubt torn in pieces.” He believed the spurious “testimony” and “evidence” presented by Joseph’s brothers, and concluded his precious son had been killed by an “evil beast” (Gen. 37:20,31-33). What he believed was contrary to the reality of the case. Ironically, all those years later when Divine providence brought Joseph and his brothers back together, the brothers went to their father and said, “Joseph is yet alive.” This time Jacob “believed them not” (45:26). In both cases, what Jacob “believed” was wrong.

Nevertheless, aside from the fact that belief where mere mortals are involved can be a tricky business, these incidents serve to show that belief—in whatever, or whomever—in its purest sense inherently involves reason or evidence. Thus, our thesis is established.

In the arena of human relations, love is to compel us to “believe...all things” (1 Cor. 13:7): that is, take people at their word, consider their motives pure, unless there is compelling reason to do otherwise. Whereas, this can lead to unfounded trust where humans are concerned, such is not the case where God is concerned. Just as we do—and should—believe in people and things of the temporal realm, so are we to “believe in God,” and as Jesus said, “believe also in me” (John 14:1). But, now we move into the arena of Divine perfection, and this belief on the basis of reason takes on a different light.

Since, as seen, “faith” inherently involves reason or evidence; to claim as do some that there does not exist “absolute” or “unequivocal” evidence as to God’s being, and as to His will for man, calls into question both His power and His benevolence. To view “faith” in God and His word as a gamble or a leap in the dark has some very unsavory implications indeed. It’s one thing to say that Jacob, in the absence of unequivocal proof, “believed”; there were forces at work beyond his control: that is, the imperfections; yea, the deceit of man. But, “God is not a man” (Num. 23:19).

Every aspect of faith in God involves evidence. God demands that we be concerned about evidence. Evidence is that which warrants a conclusion. We are to “prove” (1 Thess. 5:21); “know” (John 8:32); “give answer [*apologia*: make defense for]” to those who ask us “a reason [*logon*: accounting] of the hope” (1 Peter 3:15); and, “contend” for what we believe (Jude 3). As pertains to the realm of “life and godliness” (2 Peter 1:3), the notion of any aspect of that life involving faith without compelling evidence flies in the face of clear Bible teaching.

As to the being and nature of God: We are to “see... perceive...know...” (Rom. 1:20-21) and “believe” (Heb. 11:6). At least part of the evidence is “the things that are made” (Rom. 1:20; cf. Psalm 19:1; 139:14; Heb. 2:4). Through the fact of moral oughtness, we likewise are brought face-to-face with its Author (Rom. 1:32; 2:14; Eph. 6:1). The existence of real objective evil and malevolence presupposes the fact of the ultimate good, God (Matt. 19:17). Through the Bible and through the person, death and resurrection of Jesus, we also have evidence through which we “know” (John 17:3; 2 Thess. 1:8; John 3:2), “see” (John 14:9), and consequently “believe.”

As to the Bible being God’s Word: We are to “take knowledge” of the fact that it is the “commandment of the Lord” (1 Cor. 14:36; cf. 13:9-12) and we are to

“accept” and “believe” that it is “the Word of God” [1 Thess. 2:13]. Evidence which leads to this knowledge, and consequently faith, comes through many avenues. There is the Bible’s accurate description of the One who “made all things” [Heb. 2:4]. The Bible describes Him as such a “maker” must self-evidently be: “eternal” [Rom. 1:20]; “omnipotent” (ibid.); “omniscient” [Acts 2:23]; the First Cause of all but Himself [Gen. 1-2; Heb. 11:3].

Other evidence warranting knowledge and faith in the Bible as God’s Word, includes: It’s all-sufficient response to the nature and needs of man—man’s origin, purpose, and destiny [Acts 17:22-31]; life and death [1 Cor. 15:35-58]; human deeds and judgment [Rom. 2:2-11]; origin and nature of sin [Gen. 3:22; Rom. 5:12]; human suffering [Job; James 1:2]; and man’s every moral, philosophical, religious, psychological, aesthetic, spiritual, and emotional need [2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:3; James 1:27; Phil. 4:8; Gen. 2:9, 15-16; 3:22; 1 Cor. 7:1ff; et.al]. In addition there is the fact of the Bible’s historical accuracy [Luke 1:1-4]; it’s record of supernatural events [John 20:31]; it’s record of fulfilled prophecy [Matt. 1:17; et al]; it’s record of the life, deeds, death and resurrection of Jesus.

As to the “truth”—the “word,” “the faith,” “the doctrine,” “the gospel”—we are both to “know” and “believe” it [1 Tim. 4:3]. There is not one proposition, tenet, doctrine, or action relative to salvation, Christian living, the church, or worship for which there is not biblical evidence; thus, the Scripture says, “belief cometh of hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ” [Rom. 10:17]. It is the height of folly for one to speak of what he “believes” when he cannot demonstrate that the Bible so says.

Assumptions And Assertions About Faith, Evidence, And Knowledge

Much of the misunderstanding about “faith” stems from common assumptions that have been asserted so often that they are accepted:

First, there is the notion that “faith” and “sight” are mutually antagonistic—that is, where one is the other cannot be. This assumption cannot be sustained by the Bible. The Lord said to Thomas, “Because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed” (John 20:29). The Samaritans who definitely *saw* Jesus, yet “believed because of his word” (John 4:41). There can also be faith in the absence of sight, because Jesus went on to say to Thomas, “blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed. There are, of course, things which cannot be empirically seen: God (Heb. 11:27); things said to be so by God though not as yet seen by man (11:7,8; Rom. 4:20-21); things that relate to the “life... which is to come” (1 Tim. 4:8; Heb. 11:10, 13-16; 2 Cor. 5:1-7); and, Jesus (1 Peter 1:8).

Second, there is the common assertion that matters of “faith” relate to non-empirical things, and only empirical things can really be known for sure. This assertion is false because:

1. The Bible says that knowledge, perception, understanding, even mental “sight,” can come by way of reason (Rom. 1:20; Heb. 11:19). Is the Bible accurate in these explicit affirmations? Yes.

2. Logically prior to empirical knowledge is the fact of non-empirical knowledge. For example, I come to the world of sense-perception with the non-empirical knowledge that a logical contradiction cannot exist. If I see John right before my eyes, I know that he cannot be elsewhere at the same time. Up cannot be down; in cannot be out; etc. For a person to even attempt to refute the fact of this non-empirical knowledge would involve him in using it. It’s the same kind of nonsense

in which people involve themselves when they claim to know that knowledge is unattainable, or give reasons as to why logic is fallible.

3. Closely akin to #2 is the assertion that “anything that is the result of reason must be opinion.”⁹ How would a person making such an assertion go about proving it? He cannot demonstrate it empirically, nor can he produce an explicit statement from the Bible which so says. Paul clearly says that people who fail to reason *correctly* from the universe of “made” things to the “everlasting power and divinity” of God are “without excuse” [Rom. 1:20]. Abraham “offered up Isaac... accounting [*logidzomai*, by reckoning up all the reasons to gather or infer] that God is able to raise up, even from the dead...” [Heb. 11:17-19]. Based on *what* God had told Abraham; the fact that God always does what he says (Rom. 3:3); the fact that what God does is “right” (Gen. 18:25); and that man must trust God and do what He says, Abraham deduced, reasoned, concluded that though he must kill Isaac to comply with God’s command, God would raise him from the dead. We, like Abraham, must also learn to infer from God’s explicit statements that which He implies. What God implies is as much a matter of knowledge and faith as that which He explicitly states.

Appreciating Hebrews 11:1

Consider the passage and its context:

Now faith is assurance of *things* hoped for, a conviction of things not seen. For therein the elders had witness borne to them. By faith we understand that the worlds have been framed by the word of God, so that what is seen hath not been made out of things which appear (vs. 1-3).

Though often described as a “definition” of faith, a more accurate assessment of this marvelous passage would be that of a description of the nature and function of faith. As already noted, “faith” means “trust, reliance, commitment, and so on.” To refer to “faith” as “assurance” and “conviction” is along the order of saying, “Love is the bond of perfectness” (Col. 3:14). In both cases, neither “faith” nor “love” are being defined in the technical sense.

Chapter 10 ends on the somber note of “them that shrink back unto perdition” (v.39). The writer admonishes faltering brethren to think back to the “former days” (v.32) when they had first obeyed the gospel. Then, they “endured” suffering, ridicule, loss of property, “knowing” that they had for themselves “a better possession and an abiding one” (v.34). He cheers them on to maintain that once held “faith [which is] unto the saving of the soul” (v.39).

Thus, it is out of this background that the Holy Spirit begins His great discourse on “faith.” On what basis does one: acquiesce in the loss of possessions with view toward a future and better possession; leave his country and kindred for a place unknown; live life as a sojourner expecting to one day move into an other-worldly “city” and “country”? By way of analogy, we might ask, on what basis does one board the plane, train, or bus expecting to be taken somewhere? In the latter case, it’s because he has a ticket in his pocket. In the former case, it’s because he has in his possession what the Greeks called an *hupostasis* [“assurance,” ASV; “substance,” KJV]. Archaeologist, Clifford Wilson, has some interesting comments on this word:

Another well-known Bible verse illustrated from the papyri is Hebrews 11:1...The Greek word used here for “substance” is *hupostasis*, and it is used in the “Petition of Dionysia,” a widow who makes a property claim to the Prefect of

Egypt. The petition is part of a collection of papers bearing on the possession of the property, and this word has a meaning similar to our modern “title-deeds.”

...Various papyri make it clear that the word involves the idea of a written undertaking as regards property. The word distinctly relates to the documents which bear on the ownership of property, such documents having been properly drawn up and deposited with the legal authorities...

A helpful comment comes from Drs. Moulton and Milligan:

...in all cases there is the same central idea of something that *underlies* visible conditions and guarantees a future possession. And as this is the essential meaning in Hebrews 11:1, we venture to suggest the translation “Faith is the title-deed of things hoped for...”

Thus in this verse we are reminded that though we cannot physically or materially handle all our spiritual possessions, they are guaranteed by faith—faith is the “title-deed.”

We take God at His word—that is faith. It is as though He has put His signature to our spiritual inheritance rights, and though we cannot see [empirically] our inheritance, by faith we claim it. The title-deed is ours!¹⁰

Following the King James Version, “faith,” which as seen, is based on evidence, is itself “evidence of things not seen.” “Evidence” comes from *elegchos*, which viewed objectively means “that by which invisible things are proved [and we are convinced of their reality]” [Thayer, p. 202]. Viewed subjectively, it means “conviction,” and is so rendered in the American

Standard Version (cf. 2 Tim. 3:16). One writer thinks that the objective rendering “clearly lends itself to the ‘theology of faith’ in Calvinism.”¹¹ This is neither clear nor demanded. One of the senses of the English “evidence” is “actually present, prominent, conspicuous.”¹² Inasmuch as the whole point of the “faith” discussion in Hebrews 10:32-11:40 emphasizes Christians living their lives as though their future possession is “actually present, prominent, conspicuous,” the translation, “evidence” fits quite nicely. That people pervert the meaning of this term no more negates its use than does their perversion of the ASV rendering “conviction.” Either word, “evidence,” or “conviction” comports beautifully with the last two verses of Hebrews chapter eleven:

³⁹And these all, having had witness borne to them through their faith, received not the promise, ⁴⁰God having provided some better thing concerning us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect [vs.39-40].

Note how “faith,” which itself is based on evidence, yet is able to bear “witness” to its possessor that he should persevere in his course and cause.

We have seen that every aspect of man and his relationship to God through Christ is permeated by, motivated by, compelled by “faith”: The simple, yet sublime act of man taking God at His word; relying on and trusting the being and nature of God; a willingness to go and do whatever He says, simply because He says it. This “faith” cannot but be evidential in origin and manifestation. God has not required anyone to believe anything for which there is not sufficient evidence. Truly, we must *believe what we know*. When using and applying Biblical terms, we must be sure that we “speak as the oracles of God” [1 Peter 4:11]. God help us to use “faith” as the Holy Spirit intended it.

ENDNOTES

¹Ruby, Lionel, (*Logic: An Introduction*, [Chicago: Lippincott, 1960], p. 45.

²*Webster's New World Dictionary*, Second College Edition, (New York, World Publishing Col., 1972), p. 129.

³*The Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary*, (New York, Oxford University Press, 1982), Vol. I, p. 909.

⁴Taken from: Deaver, Roy, *Biblical Notes*, "The Meaning of Faith," Vol. VIII, Sept. 1974.

⁵Bethell, Tom, *The American Spectator*, July '94, p. 16.

⁶*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Vol. VI, pp. 1-2.

⁷*Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, Vol. I, pp. 593-4.

⁸Lenski, R.C.H., [commentary on] *Hebrews and... James*, (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1966), p. 375.

⁹From notes taken in a class taught by Thomas Warren. Quote attributed to Roy Osborne, from an article entitled "Faith and Opinion."

¹⁰Wilson, Clifford A., *New Light on New Testament Letters*, (Liverpool: Lakeland, 1971), pp. 97-8.

¹¹Lusk, Maurice W., *The Southeastern Evangelist*, "The Meaning of Biblical Faith and Hebrews 11:1," (Doraville: Southeastern Biblical Institute, 1981), Vol. 11, No. 3, p. 1.

¹²...*Oxford English Dictionary*, p. 909

Chapter 2

Faith A Must **Hebrews 11:6**

Kenneth Burleson

The writer of Hebrews 11:6 said, *“But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”* Faith is based on evidence as we have studied in the preceding lesson by brother Adams. Therefore, there is not an element of doubt in the word faith or the word believe.

Faith comes by the hearing of God’s word. *“So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God”* [Rom. 10:17]. To say that I have faith in the existence of God is to say I know that God exists. The fool says, *“...there is no God.”* *“The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God. They are corrupt they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good”* [Psa. 14:1]. Psalm 53:1 says basically the same thing.

To the individual that does not have faith in the existence of God, there is nothing else he can do that will be profitable toward eternal life for him.

The faith that is a must is an obedient faith. In order for it to be a saving faith it must be an obedient faith.

Now let us study the lesson that is before us, **“FAITH A MUST.”**

Exposition Of Hebrews 11:6

“But without faith it is impossible to please him....” Paul said “...*whatsoever is not of faith is sin*” (Rom. 14:23).

God expects us to have confidence in Him. This requires confidence in His commands, warnings, promises, wisdom and fidelity. We expect our children, wives, friends, and our partners in business to have confidence in us. If they do not have confidence, faith or trust in us, there is no way they will be able to please us. We cannot be pleased with one who does not believe our declarations and promises. The same is true with God. He will not be pleased with one who does not have confidence in Him. The person who doubts the truth of God’s word regarding His commandments, warnings and promises cannot expect to please God. The writer declares that it is impossible to please God without faith. “Impossible” — “It is not capable of being, being done, or happening.” [Webster’s New World Dictionary, Second College Edition. p.706]

“...For he that cometh to God....” One cannot become a Christian without faith. A doubter cannot worship God in a pleasing manner. One cannot live the Christian life without faith in God. There are some things to add to our faith, and if we do not have faith there is nothing to which those things can be added. The apostle Peter made the following declaration in 2 Peter 1:5-7.

*⁵And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge;
⁶And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness;
⁷And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.*

Therefore, coming to God in any way involves faith. This is true in becoming a Christian, worshipping God and living the Christian life.

“...Must believe that he is....” No man can be in harmony with God’s will unless he believes in God the giver of the will. The individuals, who are known as heroes of faith, in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews were believers. Their faith led them to obey God’s will. God was well-pleased with them because they believed and obeyed Him. One can please God if he will believe and obey. One must believe that God exists. One cannot come to God unless he believes in the existence of God. This belief must be exercised in drawing near to God.

“...and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.” God’s promises are true, but conditional. He will reward those who, “diligently seek him.” “Diligently” means, “hardworking; industrious; steady efforts; painstaking.” (Webster’s New World Dictionary, Second College Edition. Page 395.) Seeking the Lord is not something to be done in a haphazard manner. It is not by mere chance or accident but by hard work, planned and steady painstaking effort.

Faith Is A Must In God, The Father

The term God is for Deity. The Father is Deity, the Son is Deity and the Holy Spirit is Deity. There are three in the Godhead, God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

There is one Father. *“One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all”* [Eph. 4:6]. *“And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven”* [Matt. 23:9].

It is to Him that our prayers must be addressed. *“After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name”*

(Matt. 6:9). Prayer must be offered through Christ unto the Father.

The Father sent His Son into the world.

¹⁶For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. ¹⁷For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved (John 3:16,17).

God truly loves us.

Without faith in God, there is no hope. “*But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear*” (1 Peter 3:15). The reason we have this hope is summed up in God. God exists, therefore, we have hope because our faith is in Him.

Atheism is truly foolishness as the Psalmist said, “*The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God...*” (Psa. 14:1). Atheism leaves a man hopeless.

**Faith Is A Must In God,
The Son**

There is but one Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. “*One Lord, one faith, one baptism*” (Eph. 4:5).

He was with the Father in the beginning. “*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God*” (John 1:1,2). “*In the beginning God created the heaven and earth*” (Gen. 1:1). The term “God” is translated from the Hebrew word “Elohim” which is plural.

And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion

over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth (Gen. 1:26).

In this verse the plural pronoun “us” is used signifying more than one. So more than the Father at the beginning.

He created all things. *“All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made” (John 1:3). “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds” (Heb. 1:1,2).*

¹⁶For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in the earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him.

¹⁷And he is before all things, and by him all things consist (Col. 1:16,17).

He was born of the virgin Mary. The prophecy was given in Isaiah 7:14, *“Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Emmanuel.”* This was fulfilled in Matthew 1:18-25.

Jesus came to seek and save the lost. *“For the son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10).*

He died for the sins of man. *“But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8).*

He purchased us with His blood. *“Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the*

which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood” (Acts 20:28). We are bought with a price and that price is the blood of Christ.

¹⁹What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? ²⁰For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and your spirit, which are God’s (1 Cor. 6:19,20).

We have been redeemed. *“In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace” (Eph. 1:7).*

The Father acknowledged Christ as His Son. At His baptism.

¹⁶And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: ¹⁷And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased (Matt. 3:16,17).

At the transfiguration. *“While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him” (Matt. 17:5).* The apostle Peter confirms this in 2 Peter 1:16-18.

¹⁶For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty. ¹⁷For he received from God the Father honor and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the

excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. ¹⁸And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount.

The honor that is due Christ was begun two thousand years ago and continues now and must continue as long as the world stands.

The Lord's Supper is a memorial of His death.

²⁶And as they were eating Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take eat; this is my body. ²⁷And took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; ²⁸for this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. ²⁹But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom [Matt. 26:26-29].

The early Christians kept this memorial and the day it was kept, by them, was the first day of the week. This must be continued until the end of time. *“And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread and in prayers” [Acts 2:42]. “And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight” [Acts 20:7].*

Baptism stands as a living monument to His death, burial and resurrection.

³Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? ⁴Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was

raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. ⁵For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection [Rom. 6:3-5].

The first day of the week, the Lord's day, is a monument to His resurrection (Mark 9:16). *"I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as a trumpet"* (Rev. 1:10).

We have faith in the miracles performed by our Lord. Miracles of bodily healings. Peter's mother-in-law healed (Matt. 8:14-18), a leper cleansed (Luke 5:12-14), blind eyes opened (Matt. 9:27-31), deaf and dumb healed (Mark 7:31-37). Miracles over the elements of nature. Turning water to wine (John 2:1-11), stilling the storm (Matt. 8:23-27), walking on water (John 6:15-31). He raised the dead. The son of the widow of Nain (Luke 7:11-18), the daughter of Jairus (Luke 8:40-42, 49-56), and Lazarus (John 1). Many more miracles could be listed but space will not permit.

Messianic prophecies and their fulfillment must be believed. The seed of Woman. *"And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel"* (Gen. 3:15). *"But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law"* (Gal. 4:4). His crucifixion (Isa. 53; Mark 8:31; Matt. 27). Intercession on behalf of those who murdered him.

Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many,

and made intercession for the transgressors
(Isa. 53:12).

“Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them: for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment and cast lots” (Luke 23:34). His grave would be with a rich man. *“And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth”* (Isa. 53:9). Fulfilled in Matthew 27:57-60. Darkness at noon the day of His crucifixion. *“And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord God, that I will cause the sun to go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in the clear day”* (Amos 8:9). *“And it was about the sixth hour, and there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour”* (Luke 23:44). He would be numbered with the transgressors.

Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death; and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors
(Isa. 53:12).

“And there were also two other, malefactors, led with him to be put to death” (Luke 23:32). *“Then were there two thieves crucified with him, one on the right hand, and another on the left”* (Matt. 27:38). Also Luke 23:39-43. Space will not permit the printing of all the prophecies. However, these should cause one to believe that He is the Christ and that God’s word is true.

Faith Is A Must In God, The Holy Spirit

There is one Spirit. *“There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling”* (Eph. 4:4).

He was promised to the apostles. *“But the comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you”* (John 14:26). *“But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me”* (John 15:26). *“Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come”* (John 16:13).

The apostles received the baptism of the Holy Spirit on the Pentecost after the ascension of Christ.

¹And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. ²And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. ⁴And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. ⁴And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance (Acts 2:1-4).

The apostles had the power to lay their hands on people and impart to them spiritual gifts (Acts 8:14-17; Acts 19:1-6).

The Holy Spirit gave the apostles and others the word of God for them to write. *“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works”* (2 Tim. 3:16,17). The word is the perfect law of liberty. *“But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed”* (James 1:25).

Faith Is A Must In God’s Word

The word of God is truth. *“Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth”* (John 17:17). *“And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free”* (John 8:32).

The Bible claims inspiration for itself. *“Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost”* (2 Peter 1:20,21). *“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness”* (2 Tim. 3:16). *“The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my tongue”* (2 Sam. 23:2). *“Men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus”* (Acts 1:16).

The Bible was written that we might believe.

³⁰And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: ³¹But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son

of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name [John 20:30,31].

Faith is produced by hearing God's word. "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" [Rom. 10:17].

God's word will stand forever. "But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you" [1 Peter 1:25]. "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" [Matt. 24:35].

We will be judged by the Bible.

And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works [Rev. 20:12].

"He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him; the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day" [John 12:48].

God's word gives light. Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" [Psa. 119:105]. "The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple" [Psa. 119:130].

The word of God purifies. "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently" [1 Peter 1:22].

His word cleanses. "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you" [John 15:3].

The word of God saves. "Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive

with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls” (James 1:21).

There are those who believe the Bible and there are those who do not believe the Bible. Some say there are contradictions and errors in the Bible. Many believe parts of the Bible but do not believe other parts of God’s word. Do you believe the Bible? One cannot be saved if he doesn’t believe the Bible is God’s word to mankind.

Faith Is A Must In The Church Of Christ

Prophecies of the kingdom or church in the Old Testament.

²And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. ³And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem (Isa. 2:2,3).

And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever (Dan. 2:44).

Jesus promised that he would build His church. *“And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and*

the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” [Matt. 16:18].

The time of the establishment of the church can be pin-pointed. The kingdom or church was to come with power. *“And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power” [Mark 9:1].* The power would be received after the Holy Ghost came upon them. *“But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth” [Acts 1:8].* The kingdom was to come with power and the power was to come after the apostles received the Holy Ghost. If it can be established when the Holy Ghost came upon the apostles then it can be determined when the power came. Therefore, it can be determined when the power came and since the kingdom was to come with power it can be determined when the kingdom came.

¹And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. ²And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. ³And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. ⁴And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance [Acts 2:1-4].

It is established in these verses, that the Holy Ghost came upon the apostles on the first Pentecost following the ascension of the Lord. The Holy Ghost came and the power came, therefore, the kingdom came.

The saved are added to the church. *“Praising God, and having favor with all the people, And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved”* (Acts 2:47).

Christ died for the church and in so doing became the Saviour and head of His church. *“Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood”* (Acts 20:28). *“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it”* (Eph. 5:25). *“For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church; and he is the Saviour of the body”* (Eph. 5:23). *“And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the pre-eminence”* (Col. 1:18).

There is one church. *“There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism”* (Eph. 4:4,5). This passage teaches that there is but one body. According to Ephesians 1:22, 23 the body is the church. There is one body and the body is the church, therefore, there is one church. *“And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body the fulness of him that filleth all in all”* (Eph. 1:22, 23).

The church wears the name of Christ. *“Salute one another with an holy kiss. The churches of Christ salute you”* (Rom. 1:16).

Faith Is A Must In God's Plan Of Salvation

God's plan is easy to be understood. One must open his mind to hear and receive the word. Hearing is

not sufficient, one must also be a doer of the word. *“But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves”* (James 1:22).

One must hear the gospel. *“So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God”* (Rom. 10:17).

The gospel must be believed. *“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek”* (Rom. 1:16). *“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned”* (Mark 16:16). One must have faith in the Godhead.

One must Repent. *“I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish”* (Luke 13:3).

One’s faith in the deity of Jesus Christ must be confessed. *“And Philip said, if thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God”* (Acts 8:37).

One must be baptized for the remission of sins. *“Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost”* (Acts 2:38).

Faith Is A Must In God’s Pattern For Worship

God gave the pattern for worship that must be followed today. Man must not add to that pattern nor subtract from it. God ordained five items of worship. These items can be found in Acts 2:42. *“And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.”*

The Lord’s Supper. It is to be observed upon the first day of the week. *“And upon the first day of the*

week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight" [Acts 20:7]. The Lord's body is to be discerned. "For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body" (1 Cor. 11:29). The Lord's Supper is to be observed till He comes again. "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come" (1 Cor. 11:26). One must examine self. "But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup" (1 Cor. 11:28).

Singing. This item is as important as the others. However, many do not participate. One's worship is not acceptable if he leaves out one item. There may be a justifiable reason for one not to sing at times because of illness. The "I am not a good singer" excuse is not acceptable in the sight of God. Singing is a part of worship. "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord" (Eph. 5:19). "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord" (Col. 3:16). It is to be congregational singing; not soloist nor choirs.

Giving. Individuals must give as they have been prospered.

¹Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. ²Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come (1 Cor. 16:1,2).

The congregations of the church of Christ in Macedonia were very liberal in their giving.

¹Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia; ²How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality. ³For to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves; ⁴Praying us with much intreaty that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints. ⁵And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God. ⁶Insomuch that we desired Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also finish in you the same grace also [2 Cor. 8:1-6].

Preaching or teaching. This is stated in Acts 2:42. *“And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayer.”* “The apostles doctrine” — teaching. An example is found in Acts 20:7 Paul preached unto them. *“And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight.”*

Prayers. *“And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers”* (Acts 2:42). *“Pray without ceasing”* (1 Thess. 5:17).

Faith Is A Must In The Resurrection And The Final Judgment

The resurrection is sure. Christ was raised.

¹Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; ²By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. ³For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; ⁴And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures (1 Cor. 15:1-4).

“But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept” (1 Cor. 15:20). Paul declares that since Christ was raised we shall be raised.

²¹For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. ²²For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. ²³But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ’s at his coming (1 Cor. 15:21-23).

Paul said, *“If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable” (1 Cor. 15:19). Jesus said that all will be raised.*

²⁸Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, ²⁹And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation (John 5:28,29).

Yes, all shall be raised and judged as we shall see in the next point.

The final judgment. Judgment is sure. *“And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment”* (Heb. 9:27). God hath appointed a day.

“Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead” [Acts 17:31].

All will be judged. *“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad”* [2 Cor. 5:10].

“And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works” [Rev. 20:13].

Jesus described the judgment day as a day of separation [Matt. 25:31-46]. This should encourage every one to prepare for that day.

⁷And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, ⁸In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: ⁹Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power [2 Thess. 1:7-9].

If you have not begun to make preparation for that day, now is the time to do so. *"[For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time: behold, now is the day of salvation]"* [2 Cor. 6:2].

Conclusion

From this lesson we have learned that, "Faith is a must." We must also understand that faith is not the only thing necessary for salvation from past sins and eternal salvation (James 2:26). But, without faith all else we may do is vain. Now we will close with the passage with which we introduced the lesson. *"But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him"* [Heb. 11:6].

Chapter 3

Contend For The Faith

Jude 3

Guy F. Hester

“Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” [Jude 3].

There are many things that a Christian should do. He should attend all services of the church [Heb. 10:25]. He should *“live soberly, righteously, and godly”* [Titus 2:12]. He should eat the Lord’s supper on the first day [Acts 20:7]. He should give of his means [1 Cor. 16:1-2]. One may do all of these things faithfully and yet fail to contend for the faith. Cowardice on the part of church members will result in many losing their souls in eternity. Those who are Christians have enlisted in the Lord’s army and must be will to fight *“as a good soldier of Jesus Christ”* [2 Tim. 2:3]. *“Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses”* [1 Tim. 6:12]. One may as well attempt to live the Christian life without faithfulness in worship as to try to live it without a willingness to contend earnestly for the faith against its enemies. There are many enemies of the faith that too many Christians have tried to make an alliance with instead

of fighting “the good fight of faith” as a good soldier of Christ.

Must Contend Against Denominationalism

There is one church. “And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” [Matt. 16:18]. “There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling” [Eph. 4:4].

¹²For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. ¹³For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit...²⁰But now are they many members, yet but one body [1 Cor. 12:12-13,20].

“For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another” (Rom. 12:4-5). “And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful” (Col. 3:15). Denominationalism divides but Christ prayed for unity [John 17].

Must Contend Against Materialism

We are living in a materialistic age. Most people are pleasure and money mad. They think more of money and ease than heaven. Even the church has become materialistic. Our materialistic society is deceiving and undermining our brethren.

The Lord's people MUST by all means contend against materialism. Notice the teaching of our Savior on this subject.

¹⁹Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: ²⁰But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. ... ²⁴No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. ... ³³But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you (Matt. 6:19-21,24,33).

“For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul” (Matt. 16:26)?

Must Contend Against Indifference

The Lord condemned the church at Laodicea because they were indifferent. He said, *“I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth”* (Rev. 3:15-16). Why did he spew them out? *“Because thou sayest, I am rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing”* (v.17). Many members of the church say, “I’m not bad. I don’t curse, lie, steal, murder, etc. I’m doing alright; I don’t need to attend all the services, study, help the needy, give of my means, do personal work, etc.” The Lord says to

such: *“Because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth.”* How sad it will be for them in the judgment to hear him say, *“Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire”* [Matt. 25:41-46].

Indifference is one of the great things that the Lord’s people must contend against.

Must Contend Against Worldliness

One of the greatest problems in the church today is worldliness. Divorce, once a rarity among our brethren, is now a major problem. The Bible still teaches that there is one and only one Scriptural ground for divorce and remarriage. We read in Matthew 19:3-9,

³The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? ⁴And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, ⁵And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? ⁶Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. ⁷They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorce-ment, and to put her away? ⁸He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so. ⁹And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.

Fornication is the only ground for divorce and remarriage, and only the innocent party may remarry and this is applicable to both Christians and non-Christians. Drinking is common among some church members. Some preachers and elders are saying that the Bible does not condemn social drinking. But the Bible teaches that drinking is a sin whether social or otherwise. *“Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise”* (Prov. 20:1). *“Woe unto him that giveth his neighbour drink, that putteth thy bottle to him, and makest him drunken also, that thou mayest look on their nakedness”* (Habakkuk 2:15)!

Homosexuality is referred to as “an alternate life style.” Some say that God made the homosexual that way and that there is nothing he can do about it. He blames his sin on God. Paul wrote:

⁹Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, ¹⁰Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. ¹¹And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God [1 Cor. 6:9-11].

A Christian cannot love the world nor the things of the world.

¹⁵Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not

of the Father, but is of the world. ¹⁷And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever (1 John 2:15-17).

Worldliness most certainly must be contended against by the Lord's people.

Must Contend Against Liberalism

In my opinion, liberalism is the greatest single threat to the church today. Liberalism is hard to define because it takes on so many faces. About the best simple definition of liberalism is: "The undermining of the authority of the Scriptures." What are the Liberals teaching?

1. That there are saved people in the denominations.
2. That one can be saved by denominational baptism.
3. That it is not a sin to use mechanical instruments of music in worship.
4. That hand clapping is acceptable in worship.
5. That women may preach, teach, lead prayer, lead singing, etc. with men present in the assembly.
6. That modern versions of the Bible such as the NIV — RSV — NAS — and others are more readable and understandable, when in reality they teach damnable error.

The Lord's people **MUST** earnestly contend for the faith against liberalism in the church.

Must Contend Against The Enemy Of Self

Often times we are our own worst enemy. Living the Christian life is not always easy. Jesus said that if one would follow him that he must "deny himself"

[Luke 9:23]. We must present our bodies as a “living sacrifice” [Rom. 12:1-2]. There are times when all of us become discouraged. Jesus said, “*No man having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God*” [Luke 9:53].

Perhaps it is harder to contend against self than any other thing because we are too much in love with self — Romans 12:3, “*For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.*” Sometimes it is extremely difficult for man “not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think.” It is not easy to put self on the cross and Christ on the throne in our lives. We become prejudiced in favor of our own ways and beliefs. Our ways are right in our own eyes — Proverbs 21:2, “*Every way of a man is right in his own eyes: but the LORD pondereth the hearts.*” Proverbs 12:15, “*The way of a fool is right in his own eyes: but he that hearkeneth unto counsel is wise.*” It takes a lot of spiritual strength and courage to contend for the faith against self.

Conclusion

The Bible is right. It has, does, and will stand the tests of the ages. It will stand when this old world is engulfed with flames. All the world, including church members, will be judged by it. By the standards of the Bible we will be justified or condemned. May we all persevere in living right and in *contending earnestly for the faith* until we are overtaken by death.

Chapter 4

Rejection Of Faith

Romans 1:20-21

Charles Blair

¹⁸For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; ¹⁹Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. ²⁰For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse. ²¹Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish-heart was darkened (Rom. 1:18-21).

We begin in verse 18 with the wrath of God and finish up in verse 21 with a darkened heart. Between these two points is the rejection of faith. God is seen as One that reveals in verse 18. There is no mystery any longer with God and His will to mankind. It has been revealed. *“Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit”* (Eph. 3:5). The message from God is that He will hold all souls accountable. The evidence has been provided by God and mankind is without excuse. *“Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who*

are under the law; that every mouth be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God” (Rom. 3:19).

The area in which the wrath of God will be revealed is ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. The use of these words shows us a God that clearly expects man to live by the standard which God has laid down. When a person lives an ungodly life, they live as though there is no God. When one is unrighteous they act as if there is no code by which man is to live.

At no time has God left man without the guiding force of truth. At times it was the verbal Word of God spoken to the fathers and at other times it was the written code given by God to the Jews. Even when there was no written code, there was a code stamped on man within his soul. *“For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves” (Rom. 2:14).* What is the origin of this moral code which is found in man but not in the animals? Are we to believe that this moral code just evolved over thousands of years to where it is today? God’s Word tells us of the origin of this code.

And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth (Gen. 1:26).

What animal shows regret for his actions? What creature however small or large shows mercy because of the content of the heart? It is the existence of this code which should tell anyone that there is a God. Where did we learn that stealing is wrong? Where did mankind develop the idea that it is wrong to kill your fellow human beings?

Rejection of faith has as its origin the rejection of what God has said. *“For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry, Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, he hath also rejected thee from being king”* [1 Sam. 15:23]. The downfall of Eve and later Adam was in rejecting what God had told them to do regarding the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. They both rejected the evidence of what God said, God meant. *“He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him, the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day”* (John 12:48). Our very salvation hinges on our ability to trust what God has said and not reject it. *“In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise”* [Eph. 1:13].

Those who held the truth in unrighteousness were those that by the lives they were living hindered the spread of truth. Whether it was the violent people of Noah’s day or men like Korah under the law of Moses, unrighteous conduct prohibits people from coming to God. *“But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in”* [Matt. 23:13]. *“For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you, as it is written”* [Rom. 2:24].

Our lives should serve as examples to lead men to the Saviour. Our purpose in this life is to bring glory to God [Eph. 3:21]. When we reject the Word of God and choose a life which is unrighteous we hinder the opportunities to spread the gospel. Paul shows us that the Word of God should have free course and hence not be hindered by things which we do. *“Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you”*

[2 Thess. 3:1]. The unrighteous ones of Romans 1:18 were keeping others from coming to understand God and hence have the opportunity to obey God.

In verse 19 of our text Paul speaks about “...*that which may be known of God...*” God wants us to know Him. The physical world declares His power and existence. God wants us to know more of Him than just the evidence which the physical world provides. How can one know the things about God which is beyond the physical evidence of the universe? Only one way. That is through a search of God’s Word with the resulting knowledge from that search.

John records for us a meeting which Jesus had with the apostles. Jesus was speaking about His coming death. They were confused and very much on the apprehensive side of things. Jesus sought to allay their fears by calling on them to trust Him as they trusted the Father [John 14:1]. He tells them He is going to the Father. How can they know the way was the question on their minds.

No one can come to the Father except through Jesus [John 14:6]. Jesus tells them if they had known Him they would have known the Father. Whereupon Philip said to Jesus, “...*show us the Father, and it sufficeth us...*” (v.8). This is what Jesus came to do, to show us the Father. The Father wants us to know Him. Hence His Son came and died for us [John 3:16]. This gift forever settling the question of whether or not God loves us.

What possible difference could it make to God if we know that or not? My friend, it makes all the difference in the world. It tells us that God chose to reveal Himself to mankind in order that man may know Who God is.

¹God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, ²Hath in these last days

spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds [Heb. 1:1-2].

That there are secret things which belong unto God, there can be no doubt [Deut. 29:29]. However, the things which are revealed can be taught. The teaching of those things shows us God and His nature. Think of Christ in His giving of the great commission. *“Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen”* [Matt. 28:20].

What was to be taught was that which God had commanded. The teaching of those things leads to conversion and future growth in the life of the Christian. Why? Because it brings to our hearts the truth about God. We began by searching the scriptures to learn of God. *“Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls”* [Matt. 11:29]. Do we ever tire of the investigation of truth? The Word of God is such a wonderful product that we can spend all of our lives at this fountain and never reach the bottom. God wants us to know Him.

What does it mean in verse 19 that it is manifest in them? The word “manifest” as we often say means to make known. There was something about God which was made known and hence all men should know something about God. When men bow to an idol and offer prayers or service to that idol, they expect certain things to happen. It may be the growth of their crops or personal prosperity. In order to reach those kinds of conclusions, one must “guess” that it is their idol doing it.

However with the God of heaven, He reveals Himself as the One who truly blesses all mankind. Those who are His children are the recipients of spiritual blessings. God affirms through His Word the things

which He does for all mankind and then shows what He does for those who are His children. Man may argue against the existence of God but his physical life is still dependent on the God of heaven. *“For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are his offspring”* [Acts 17:28].

An idol has no voice but God does. His voice is in the Written Word which we have before us. God tells us what we need to know while keeping some things back from us which does not deal with our salvation. Whatever we need to know, God provides.

What if an individual chooses to not search the scripture but ignores the way of God. He may never know about all the wonderful attributes about God but in his heart there is a code which he cannot deny. God has manifested Himself to mankind through nature but it is through His Word that He has revealed Himself for us to know Him. Paul states in verse 19 [of our text] that God has showed it to them.

There are even some Christians who fail to search the scriptures as they should. There are things about which they could learn by looking at what God has revealed about Himself. Paul speaks about some who had not grown as they should have. *“Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations”* [Rom. 14:1]. Why were some “weak in the faith?” If faith has as its origin the Word of God, then we know why some are weak. The issue is not that God’s will on any issue cannot be understood but rather that these Christians had not done enough study to find the answers.

Paul sums it up in this manner. ⁵*“One man esteemeth one day above another; another esteemeth every day alike, Let every man be **fully persuaded in his own mind.**”* These issues are not matters of faith. They were things which were disturbing some Christians. The answer to these dilemmas was to be

found by a deeper search of God's Word and therefore a better understanding of His will.

The unrighteous man chooses not to know about God while the weak Christian does not make proper application of his existing knowledge. The end result is God manifests Himself, but both groups fail to come to know Him because they choose ignorance rather than effort.

Paul then moves in our text (v.20) to speak about the invisible things of God from the creation of the world. We know from the Word of God that God is a Spirit. *"God is a Spirit; and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth"* (John 4:24). The invisible things therefore are the attributes of God which have been evident to man since creation. Man has not been some creature which has been evolving over thousands of years. Rather from the very beginning of creation, man was a being with a mind to take facts into his mind.

Adam and Eve lived at peace with the animal world. There was no threat. They knew the origin of such came from God. There was an ideal climate in as much as there was a "cool of the day." Again they knew the origin of such was from God. When they chose to rebel it was not because they did not understand about what God had provided.

What appeal did Satan make to them in the garden? Look carefully now at verse 5 of Genesis 3, *"For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil."* What Satan offered them was to be elevated up to God. Did they know about the goodness of God and His concern for them? Yes. Satan planted the idea that God did not have their best interest at heart. That is, somehow God was being dishonest with them. God was, according to Satan, holding them back.

We could spend so much time talking about the sunshine, rain, climate, planets, stars, health and come away knowing that God has been good to mankind. Our world continues to exist by the power of God.

⁵For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water. ⁶Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished; ⁷But the heavens and the earth which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men (2 Peter 3:5-7).

It is a benevolent God which bestows upon man the fruits of the earth and the mind with which to accept it.

Recently there was the two year anniversary of the Oklahoma bombing. Why were so many people angry at what had happened? Because on our television sets we were able to see injustice at its peak. Innocent little children killed by thoughtless men. Where do we learn about injustice? Or better still where does our sense of justice arise from? The Bible declares that God is just. Men may never study the Bible, but men understand about justice and what is fair.

There was a plane crash Years ago in Washington D.C. People were thrown from the plane into the icy waters. One man jumped in to save people. I believe he was able to save either 4 or 5 before he became exhausted and drowned. Where in the animal world does one creature die for another? Where does man learn to care about other humans as this man did? *"For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. ⁸But God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us"* (Rom. 5:7-8). An individual may spend their entire lifetime

and never study the Bible and hence find the God that is revealed. There is something in man which is different than the whole of the animal world.

The conclusion which Paul reaches is the unrighteous are without excuse. An individual may claim they did not have time to study the Bible. They may likewise claim they could not understand the Bible. However Paul states, "...*they are without excuse.*" Why? Because the evidence of the physical world and the code within us shouts volumes about the existence of God. How can we say I did not know there was a God?

Everyday our minds can sort things out in such a way as to drive us to the conclusion about the existence of God. "*For every house is builded by some man but he that built all things is God*" [Heb. 3:4]. I may not take the time to think about the house but it is there none the less. I may not chose to investigate how the earth rotates and revolves around the sun, but it takes place whether I know it or not. God is, whether I accept Him or not. If I choose to ignore the evidence, God declares that I am without excuse.

When the unrighteous man knew God, he refused to glorify Him as God (v.21 of our text). The unrighteous man knows but he chooses to ignore or deny. What is the result of this denial? The unrighteous man becomes unthankful. The connection is then made. A righteous man knows he needs God and gives thanks continually. "*In every thing give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you*" [1 Thess. 5:18]. The unrighteous man, on the other hand, believes he can do it without God. He is able to chart his own course and does not need God to instruct him. "*The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good*" [Psalm 14:1].

What happens then when man looks to himself? He sees nothing other than the physical world. He accord-

ing to scriptures becomes vain in his imaginations. His mind has no place for God nor thoughts about God. He has rejected faith as a way to live.

Every soul which reaches the age of accountability must make the choice. *"For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, the just shall live by faith"* (Rom. 1:17). If I choose to ignore the evidence and turn my mind away from God, then there awaits for me, destruction. *"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord"* (Rom. 6:23).

When the mind turns away from God into imaginations, there is a direction which we must talk about. B. W. Johnson's notes on the New Testament has this to say about verse 24 of this chapter.

"Their false religion was no check upon their lusts." They would go as far as their imagination would take them. The Bible says, their foolish heart was darkened.

Here is how God describes those who have come to His Son. *"Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son"* (Col. 1:13). From a heart that is dark in sin to a heart that comes to light, the light of the gospel of Jesus Christ. One is translated or added to the body or kingdom of Christ. How are we to live as Christians? *"But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin"* (1 John 1:7). The rest of our lives is spent walking in a certain manner. *"For we walk by faith, not by sight"* (2 Cor. 5:7).

Which shall we choose? A darkened heart with a dread of death or a heart filled with the knowledge of God with heaven on our minds? *"For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ"* (2 Peter 1:8). Rejection of faith

is an all out assault on our reasoning. It is a rejection of evidence which is so clear.

Jesus taught it so forcefully in many different ways. Let us consider these two briefly. *“I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins; for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins”* (John 8:24). *“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned”* (Mark 16:16). Will you reject faith in Jesus Christ? Think now on what faith is really all about and make your decision. *“But without faith it is impossible to please him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is. and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him”* (Heb. 11:6).

Chapter 5

Origin Of Faith

Romans 10:17

Ferrell Hester

We are reading from Romans 10:13-17,

¹³For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. ¹⁴How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? ¹⁵And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! ¹⁶But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? ¹⁷So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

As we discuss “The Origin of Faith” we have under consideration the faith that will save us. There are different kinds of faith. The Bible talks about dead faith. James said, “*For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also*” [James 2:26]. But let us consider the question, “What is the Origin of the faith that will save us from our sins and eventually enable us to have an eternal home in heaven when this life is over?” For an answer to this question we resort to the Scriptures. The apostle Paul gives us the answer in our text in terms that are easy to under-

stand. *“So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God”* (Rom. 10:17). This passage tells us that the Origin of the faith that saves is “the Word of God.” That simply means that regardless of how honest and sincere you might be. Regardless of how much faith you might have in some doctrine or system of religion. If there is no foundation for your faith in the Word of God, then your faith is vain. Jesus said, *“This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honour-eth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men”* (Matt. 15:8-9). Then again he said,

21Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. 22Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? 23And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity (Matt. 7:21-23).

One could not doubt that these of whom Jesus spoke believed on Him. They had faith that they had prophesied, cast out devils and done many wonderful works in His name, but they were still lost. James tell us that even the devils believed and trembled. *“Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.”*

Some one will say, *“But you can prove anything that you want to by the Bible.”* This is a mistaken idea. You can only prove that which is true by the Bible. The Word of God does not prove nor approve anything that is not true. Now you can take passages out of context or twist the Scriptures to make it appear that they teach or

prove something which they do not. Peter spoke of some who were guilty of this in 2 Peter 3:16. in this passage he talks about "*which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.*" Now while one may wrest, twist or pervert the Scriptures, he will only do so to his own destruction. The apostle Paul warned,

⁶I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: ⁷Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. ⁸But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, ⁹If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed [Gal. 1:6-9].

One cannot prove just anything by the Bible and the Origin of our "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

The Bible is complete in guiding and instructing mankind in the work of salvation. Paul wrote in 2 Timothy 3:16-17, "*All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.*" Then the inspired Peter said in 2 Peter 1:3, "*According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue.*" Since God's word gives us "all things that pertain to life and godliness," and completely instructs and furnishes us to "every good work," if our faith is based upon some humanly devised creed or doctrine of man; it is all in vain.

Christ has all authority in every matter that pertains to our spiritual welfare. He said, *"All power [authority] is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost"* (Matt. 28:18-19). What authority does that leave for the Pope, the pastor or any other man or group of men. None whatsoever! Jesus said in John 14:6, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."* Then we read from the pen of the Apostle Peter, *"Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him"* (1 Peter 3:22). Notice that powers and authorities are subject to him. He has all authority! Then we read,

²²For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. ²³And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people [Acts 3:22-23].

"So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

Salvation comes through the obedience of the faith that has its Origin in God's Word. Look carefully at these passages of Scripture: *"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven"* (Matt. 7:21). *"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast"* (Eph. 2:8-9). *"Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal*

salvation unto all them that obey him” (Heb. 5:8-9). *“But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him”* (Heb. 11:6).

24Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only. 25Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way? 26For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also (James 2:24-26).

Our faith in the necessity of baptism to the salvation of our souls has its Origin in the Word of God. Jesus said in giving the great commission, *“Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned”* (Mark 16:15-16). On the day of Pentecost when the people were pricked in their hearts at the preaching of the apostles and cried out, *“Men and brethren, what must we do to be saved?”* Peter answered them by saying, *“Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins”* (Acts 2:36-38). Again it was Peter who said, *“The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ”* (1 Peter 3:21).

To have the word of God as the Origin of our faith, we must believe in the one church that Jesus came to establish. *“And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it”* (Matt. 16:18). *“For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be*

bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit” (1 Cor. 12:13). “There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling” (Eph. 4:4). “And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the pre-eminence” (Col. 1:18).

To have “faith” in a plurality of churches and that one is as good as another or that the church has nothing to do with the salvation of one’s soul, that “faith” must come from a source other than the Word of God. Nothing is more clearly taught in the Bible than the fact that God adds the saved to “the church” (Acts 2:47).

Salvation is only in Jesus’ name or by his authority and as we pointed out earlier in our lesson, this is only through the Word of God.

³⁰And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: ³¹But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name (John 20:30-31).

“Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).

⁴²And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead. ⁴³To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins (Acts 10:42-43).

“The Faith” which has its Origin in the Word of God most certainly teaches us that salvation is in the name of Jesus and that there is only one way to heaven and that is through Him. In the sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, *“Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it”* [Matt. 7:13-14]. Look now at the parable of the sheep fold.

¹Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. ²But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. ³To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. ⁴And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice. ⁵And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers. ⁶This parable spake Jesus unto them: but they understood not what things they were which he spake unto them. ⁷Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep. ⁸All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them. ⁹I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture. ¹⁰The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly [John 10:1-10].

Notice what he said in verse 9: “I am **the door**: **by me** if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.” Then he went on to say, “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6). He did not say “I am one of the ways, any which will get you to heaven.” But he said, “I am **the way**, no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”

Again, the Origin of faith is in God’s Word. “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” In view of this, let us “Study to show ourselves approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15). “Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me” (John 5:39).

Chapter 6

Little Faith **Matthew 14:23**

Danny Butler

The following reading is from Matthew 14:22-32.

²²And straightway Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship, and to go before him unto the other side, while he sent the multitudes away. ²³And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone. ²⁴But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary. ²⁵And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea. ²⁶And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear. ²⁷But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid. ²⁸And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water. ²⁹And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus. ³⁰But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me. ³¹And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore

didst thou doubt? ³²And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased.

The text assigned is rich in lessons applicable to Christians today. The actions of the disciples are typical of humanity in all their emotions, frailties and accomplishments. The phrase “*O ye of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt*” is designed to cause examination of motive and teach the need of complete and total trust. Our Lord struck at the very heart of Peter’s soul with this question. Peter’s track record shows him to be one who speaks without giving thought. Did Peter love the Lord, and know Jesus could save him? Of course he did. This is not the issue in this text. This was to be a lesson on total dependence in time of difficulty! The disciples were to learn that their Master was never far from them! They needed to learn complete surrender to Jesus if they were to be successful in the commission they were to receive after a while. Our existence as New Testament Christians is evidence that they learned this vital lesson. Their learning as recorded in the assigned text is for our instruction and guidance [2 Tim. 3:16,17] that we may follow their example. A thought worth considering is, “Times have changed, but human nature has not.”

The Background Of Matthew 14:22-32

The sending away of the disciples by our Lord followed the feeding of more than five thousand souls [Matt. 14:14-21]. This event caused no small stir among the multitude that thronged Him. Jesus observed the excitement and was well aware of the possible problems that could occur. John, the beloved disciple reveals Jesus’ reason. He says:

¹⁴Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth,

that prophet, that should come into the world.
¹⁵*When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone (John 6:14-15).*

To what extent this great surge of popularity would influence the disciples is mere speculation on our part. Jesus knew them and therefore removed them from the scene. Because of the mind set of the population, the events could result in revolt. The disciples, because of their thinking Jesus was to establish an earthly power, may have only complicated the situation.

Jesus, then retired to the mountain to pray (v.23). What he said to the multitude, we do not know. It is certain that he commented on their intentions. His going up into the mountain apart to pray was according to His custom. Jesus had often separated himself from men to commune with His father. Before the selecting of the apostles He spent the entire night in prayer. (Luke 6:12). Before His trial and crucifixion He told the disciples to "*sit ye here while I go and pray yonder*" (Matt. 26:36).

The Disciples Upon The Sea Of Galilee

The disciples meanwhile are making their way across the Sea of Galilee. Storms that arise suddenly and without warning are common even today in this region. These storms are often violent and terrifying. The disciples have completed about half their journey when the storm occurs. Verse twenty-four tells us the boat was now in the midst of the sea, distressed by the waves. The Sea of Galilee is twelve and one-half miles long, and seven and one-half miles wide at its greatest breath. Knowing this, we can get some idea of the disciple's dilemma. John records that they had traveled about twenty-five or thirty furlongs (John 6:19) which

would be about three and one-half or four miles. (A furlong is about an eighth of a mile). These facts confirm Matthew's statement; "*But the boat was now in the midst of the sea.*" The disciples are now in an unenviable circumstance. Their location would be life threatening if they lost their small craft. Yes, they were terrified to say the least. They are soon to be taught a lesson of dependance upon God.

²⁵And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea, ²⁶and when the disciples saw him walking on the sea they were troubled saying, it is a spirit; and they cried out for fear [Matt. 14:25,26].

The "fourth watch" would correspond to our 3:00-6:00am. It was in the early morning hours. While they are struggling to maintain control of their vessel, Jesus appears walking upon the waves. It is no doubt that they were weary and terrified that they were about to lose their lives. The reaction of the disciples mirrors the beliefs of the Jews in the period we are studying. It was the belief of many that they were surrounded by ghosts, or spirits that would on occasion make themselves known to human eyes [Matt. 14:26; Mark 6:49; Luke 24:37].

Tom L. Bright, in his thesis on Matthew chapter 14, in the Getwell Lectureship book dated October, 1988, has a quotation from brother Boles on the Jewish belief in ghosts and superstition. He states:

The Jews believed in spiritual apparitions (1 Samuel 28:15). They supposed the spirit of a dead man in form like a person was manifested. Their belief was similar to the superstition of some today who believe in "ghosts." To see one was an omen of evil; no wonder the disciples "cried out with fear." They were

already in a great danger of being destroyed by the storm and had been battling against the waves nearly all night. To see someone walking on the water was enough to frighten them. They had been brought to the end of human protection and were ready to despair.

According to Mark's account they "*considered not the miracle of the loaves: for their heart was hardened*" (Mark 6:52). The American Standard Version renders this verse: "*For they understood not the loaves, but their heart was hardened.*" Right here, a thought must be viewed closely. The word "understood" according to Thayer is: 1) Prop. Set or bring together. 2) To put (as it were) the perception with the thing perceived; to set or join together in the mind, ie, to understand. Thus, inspiration tells us that they had not yet fully perceived the full impact of the feeding of the five thousand, witnessed only a few hours ago. The word "hardened" must be considered. This word is the same as in Romans 11:7, and II Corinthians 3:14. The KJV has, "blinded" in both these passages. Thayer, says of this word; Pass, to grow hard or callous, become dull, lose the power of perception. The perfect tense of this verb suggest a present result of a past action, thus Mark views this as a continuing lack of perception. This continuing lack of perception was present immediately before the Lord's ascension (Acts 1:6).

The disciples entertained the idea of a physical, mundane, earthly kingdom as their fathers before them had for centuries. We find it hard, reviewing the life of Christ through inspiration to understand how those of whom John says: "*We have seen with our eyes, which we have handled...*" (John 1:1). They could not perceive what was taking place. We must temper our judgement on these matters with grace, for we do likewise!

“But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid” (v.27). Jesus, seeing their terror seeks to calm them. Surely, His voice, recognizable to the disciples, would put their hearts at ease.

The words *“It is I, be not afraid”* would eliminate the thoughts of ghosts or evil apparitions. Peter said, *“bid me to come unto thee on the water”* (v.28). Peter’s response deserves some examination. His words, *“Lord if it be thou,”* could be interpreted as a means of confirming Jesus’ words *“It is I; be not afraid.”* It appears, at least on the surface that Peter wants proof, both for himself and the others. A show of courage is in his words; *“Bid me to come unto thee.”* If the voice they heard was really Jesus, then in Peter’s mind all would be well. Jesus answered Peter with *“come.”* This one word was not a command but a recognition to continue at will. Peter would be on his own. His success would depend upon his courage and faith. Had Jesus commanded him to come, then Jesus would have been obligated to give specific instructions and means in which to obey the command. Observe: with every command of God there are provisions to carry out that command. This precept is prevalent throughout the Bible.

Peter’s Walk On The Sea

Peter, leaves the ship entering the boisterous waves. In a sense this shows Peter’s confidence in Jesus’ acknowledgement of his request. He was sure if Jesus said it he could do it. He was soon to learn that he carried a certain responsibility. Notice the text.

29And he said come and when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus. 30But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to

sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me (vs.29, 30).

Upon the Lord's response, Peter immediately climbed out of the ship. He walked on the water to go to Jesus. How far Peter walked, inspiration does not tell us. The distance was far enough that he was out of reach of the ship. He was far enough that the waves were all around him. His fear came when he observed his predicament. *"But when he saw the wind was boisterous, he was afraid"* (v.30). Peter's attention now centered on the wind and waves. His attention was moved away from his original goal, which was, "to go to Jesus." A good question here is, if he had not let his circumstances cause him to forget his goal, would he have begun to sink? William Barclay in his commentary on Matthew, Volume 2, pages 106-107, has some excellent thoughts on this passage. I refer to these briefly in part, with personal thoughts. Barclay says that this event reveals three things about Peter. 1) Peter was given to acting upon impulse and without thinking of what he was doing. It was his mistake that he repeatedly acted without facing the situation and without counting the cost. 2) Because Peter acted on impulse, he often failed and came to grief. 3) Peter never completely failed, for always in the moment of his failure he clutched at Christ.

How often do we embark upon a gallant endeavor only to find ourselves at the brink of failure and crying for help? We must understand that Jesus insisted men examine and count the cost in following him. Much of our failure is due to acting upon an emotional moment without counting the cost.

Jesus' Response

"And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand and caught him and said unto him, O thou of little

faith, wherefore didst thou doubt" (v.31)? It appears that when Peter began to sink he was within reach of the Lord's hand. If we can picture this scene in our mind's eye, it makes the lesson even more meaningful. When Jesus heard Peter's cry, there was an immediate response from Jesus, showing His nearness to the apostle. Peter almost made it! He let the surrounding waves and sounds of the storm detract him.

"O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" This rebuke must have pricked the heart of the apostle. As Jesus pulled him up, he knew the words were directed at him. In these words, "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" Jesus gets to the root of Peter's problem. It was "Little Faith," not "Faithless," not "Weak Faith," but "Little Faith," that caused Peter to fail in what he had set out to do. The phrase "little faith" is from the Greek *oligopistos*. Vines Dictionary defines this word as: little, small (of amount, number time). Thayer says: of little faith; trusting to little, littleness of faith. Peter's, trusting to little caused doubt, resulting in his sinking. "Doubt" is from *Distazo*, to stand in two ways, implying uncertainty, which way to take. Peter, seeing the boisterous waves, and realizing where he was became uncertain about what to do. Should he go on or return to the ship. In this uncertain, and confused state he probably looked back and seeing the ship out of reach, panicked! The point is, had Peter, had more faith he would have maintained composure and continued toward Jesus as he had intended. Let us be very careful how we judge Peter on these matters. Jesus' hand was available in time of need. Despite his little faith, and doubt, Peter could grasp the saving hand of Jesus.

The Storm Ceases

"And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased" (v.32).

The meaning of this verse needs no great mind to understand. When Peter and Jesus had made their way into the ship all was calm. It was not a gradual cessation of the violent storm but a complete dissipation of the wind. We see a profound truth at this point. Where Jesus is, the most violent storm becomes a calm. How could those present fail to see the divinity of the one present? A story is told of St. Francis of Sales. He had observed for some time a young farm girl drawing water. He noticed that she always put a stick into the bucket before letting it into the well. One day he asks her why she did this. Her reply was, "to keep it steady." St. Francis later told a friend, "When your heart is distressed and agitated, put the cross into its center to keep it steady." This is a great lesson for us as children of God.

The Testing Of Faith

The testing of our faith is essential to our spiritual growth. A great and profound lesson for the apostle Peter was this test of his faith. Peter, in a state of emotional excitement wanted to go to Jesus. Jesus' gentle acknowledgment of that request set in motion a test of Peter's faith. Peter's faith was not as strong as he thought and he needed to understand his own weakness. He learned this and it was evident in his labors. A brief reading of his epistles makes this point obvious. He spoke to those scattered by persecution on the trying of their faith.

⁶Wherein ye greatly rejoice though now for a season, if need be ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: ⁷That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and

glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ (1 Peter 1:6-7).

Why is the trying of our faith more precious than gold? James answers the question in this way

²My brethren count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; ³Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. ⁴But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing (James 1:2-4).

The trying of Peter's faith and exposing his weakness, strengthened him and prepared him to meet the trials he so masterfully endured throughout his service as an apostle. Our endurance of trials will strengthen us, and we will grow stronger day by day. If we were not tried, we will become weak and eventually fall by the wayside.

The experience of the disciples in the storm can be an encouragement to us when we go through the storms of life. There will be two kinds of storms a Christian will face. They are the storms of correction, when God disciplines us; and storms of perfection when God helps us to grow. An example of a storm of correction is the prophet Jonah. Jonah was in a storm because he disobeyed God and had to be corrected. The disciples were in a storm because they obeyed Christ and had to be perfected. They had been tested in a storm before, when he was in the boat with them (Matt. 8:23-27). But now he tested them by not being in the boat. A precept to remember concerning the trials we face is... Christ said, "*In the world ye shall have tribulation*" (John 16:33). To be in the world or worldly minded will certainly bring trials and tribulation upon us. But, when we find ourselves in the storm because we obeyed the Lord, we must remember that He

brought us here and He will care for us. Our Lord never taught that following Him would be easy. Saying that the Christian life is easy is incorrect, for nothing could be farther from the truth. Our Lord will allow us to be tested. Did God not allow Job to be tested? Job was tried far more than you or I will ever be. Job was successful because he understood that God was with him though all had gone wrong. He said, *"For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth"* [Job 19:25]. What wonderfully strong faith. What complete trust Job showed in his dealings with discouragement, which would cause most of us to give up.

Lessons From The Text

There are many great lessons gleaned from the text. The first could be stated like this: Christ never gives a command and then deserts those who strive to obey that command. This is made clear in Matthew 28:20. After giving the Great Commission, Jesus says, *"...and lo, I am with you alway even unto the end of the world."* Jesus had compelled the disciples to cross to the other side of the Sea of Galilee. In their desperation of the moment, they failed to recognize Him as He approached them in their hour of trial. Often we may be in the midst of a trial and fail to see our Savior's approach. To us, He may approach through an unexpected opportunity to engage in some activity that could greatly improve our circumstances. He may approach us through a brother or sister. But, like Peter, thinking Jesus was something evil, we may not see the approach of a Christian brother or sister as Jesus way of helping us but, as evil. In our despair, we may break the heart of one who only wanted to help. We forget that Jesus said he would never leave us or forsake us. Paul understood this from his words found in II Corinthians 4:9. Here Paul states: *"Persecuted, but not for-*

saken; cast down, but not destroyed....” Though we may, like Peter and Paul, feel that all is lost, our Lord has not and will not forsake us. Our ever pressing need is to learn to recognize His providential care and welcome His outstretched hand.

Another lesson seen in the events under discussion is, Christ is ready and willing to come to our aid when invited. The text says, *“And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them walking on the sea”* [v.25]. Notice, Jesus went unto them, at the very moment they were terrified and about to despair. Mark tells us he would have passed them by [Mark 6:48]. Why? Because He wanted them to see and invite Him into their distress. They needed to learn to call upon Him in time of need. His divine comfort comes only by in the awakening to see mother coming to my bedside, after hearing my cries of fear. The comforting received and the peaceful return to sleep. The point is Jesus came to them, they did not recognize Him and were yet afraid [John 6:19]. He would not enter the ship until later. Peter could have just as well said, “Lord if it be thou, come quickly.” The disciples willingly received Him into the ship [John 6:21] after Peter’s ordeal in the water. They then recognized Jesus and welcomed Him aboard.

We also should consider the instantaneous reaching of their destination. According to Matthew 14:32 when Jesus entered the ship the wind ceased. But, in the same context of events John 6:21 tells us they were immediately at the land whither they went. There are two great lessons taught here. First, when we allow Jesus to enter our lives during trial there is an immediate calm. Is this not what Paul meant in Philipians 4:6-7? Here Paul tells us to

6Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your request be made known unto God. 7And

the peace of God which passeth all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Literally, we are not to worry about anything, but pray and God will be with us giving a peace beyond understanding. Brother Jack Exum once said that, Jesus said, "come apart and pray" but most of us just come apart. How true this is when we agonize over trials and weaknesses, failing to invite our Lord to join us. Secondly, when Jesus is with us that which we seek to accomplish seems almost effortless. After Jesus entered the ship and the sea calmed, they arrived immediately at their destination. There is no reason to doubt this was part of the miracle. The lesson for us is, our struggles against all the troubles in life are much easier and will seem as mere inconvenience if Jesus is with us. We arrive at our goal and with a great deal of joy and peace.

These two lessons need to be learned first by the leaders of the church. Elders often agonize over problems longer than they should. Because of human frailty, they do not recognize Jesus nearness through a supportive brother or sister. Also, because they are human, they neglect to pray, therefore missing the peace and near immediate solution to their problem. Preachers, likewise should learn well to depend upon Jesus for wisdom in the proclamation of the gospel.

Final Comments

It should be our deepest desire to be the best servant of Jesus we can possibly be. To do this we should do two things. 1) Strive to follow the Lord's commands as he gave them without alteration [2 Tim. 2:5]. 2) Expect and welcome trials, using them as tools to strengthen our faith and learn from the experience. It is a known fact that the more one does a thing the

better he becomes at it. Paul was applying this principle in Hebrews 5:13,14. He said,

¹³For everyone that useth milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness; for he is a babe.

¹⁴But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

Those who study and apply the word are those who by use and experience have become masters of it.

We, as Christians are in the sea of life. We face the tumult of society and all kinds of sin around us. Our Lord is walking upon the waves. He is the master of all. At his word the waves will calm and we can reach our destination. The question is, do we see him as the Christ or some apparition? What will it take to get us to trust him completely? If he were to speak to us would we hear, like Peter: “*Be of good cheer; It is I be not afraid*” or “*O Ye of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?*” Trials test us and temper us for greater service. If we are successful we will one day enter a place where we need no trials. Learn well the lessons that have been set forth in Matthew 14:22-32 and be prepared for the day when you see Jesus in the clouds, and he bids you “come.”

Chapter 7

Justified By Faith

Romans 5:1

Glenn I. Hitchcock

Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ (Rom 5:1).

The Meaning Of Justification

I am deeply appreciative of the honor of participating on this lectureship program. I have always enjoyed reading the fine lecture book from this great work. The outline for much of my lesson originated from brother Winfred Clark. I have always appreciated ways in which the audience or reader could remember with simplicity the various points of a lesson.

One is justified when he is rendered or declared to be right/innocent before God. Positively, one is approved, acceptable, counted just, (just as if he had not sinned) and righteous. Negatively, one is declared guiltless, acquitted of a charge or a reproach. God justifying man is considered a judicial act where man is pronounced free from guilt and punishment for his sins. This judicial act implies a process and formula (Rom. 3:21-31). Justification is positioned in contrast with condemnation (Deut. 25:1; Job 9:20; Prov. 17:15; Rom. 8:1, 30; 33-34). Paul expounds that process of justification by faith and relates it to God's grace, the blood of the Savior and man's faithful obedience [Rom. 3:24; 5:9; 5:1-2].

It was God's purpose to save man by faith even before the day of the patriarch Abraham. "And the Scripture foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached the gospel to Abraham" (Gal. 3:8). The writing of the Holy Spirit through Paul to the Jews was largely to show that this was true of the Gentiles as well as the Jews —that God would justify both through a system of faith based upon love,

6For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. 7For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. 8But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. 9Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him (Rom. 5:6-9).

The Must Of Justification

Because of man's guilt and inability to save himself apart from the Creator, justification was deemed a must. Note the consequences for the accountable person who sins according to Paul in Romans:

The man who sins:

- 1:32 ...is worthy of death
- 2:1 ...is without excuse
- 2:2 ...judgment of God is against him
- 2:5 ...faces wrath
- 2:8-9 ...faces indignation, wrath, tribulation, anguish
- 2:12 ...shall perish
- 3:9 ...is under sin
- 3:10 ...is not righteous
- 3:11 ...does not properly seek God
- 3:12 ...has gone out of the way

3:12 ...has become altogether unprofitable
3:13-14 ...his words are wicked
3:15-16 ...his ways are wicked
3:19 ...guilty before God

Until man understands that his “*sin will find him out*” [Num. 32:23], he will never concern himself with justification. Recall the lessons from the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican in Luke 18:9-14:

⁹And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: ¹⁰Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. ¹¹The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. ¹²I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. ¹³And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. ¹⁴I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

The Pharisee trusted in himself (self-justification) and his ability to merit righteousness (meritorious works). He would not allow himself to admit guilt in any degree. He bragged of his piety. The Publican (sinner-seeking-relief) viewed justification as a must. He pled his guilt without trying to excuse or rationalize his sins. What a contrast! Jesus viewed the Pharisee (self-justifier) with condemnation and the Publican (sinner-needing-justification) with justification.

Since all accountable men are sinners (Rom. 3:23), There is none righteous, no, not one (Rom. 10:3). Man's dependency for justification *must* direct him outside himself to the Genuine Justifier (Rom. 8:33). For the man who will "*walk by faith and not by sight*," justification is always visualized as a "must."

The Medium Of Justification

The inspired record teaches that it is God who justifies (Rom. 3:26; 4:5; 8:33). It is significant to know that it is not man that justifies, it is not the Council of Churches which justifies, it is not an association with the restoration movement, or any other movement which justifies! God the Father declares the medium of justification. It is His plan and there can be absolutely no boasting of a medium of justification on the part of man (Rom. 3:27).

But how can the Perfect God extend His mercy to imperfect man (Rom. 3:23)? Paul gives an answer in Romans 3:24-26:

²⁴Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

²⁵Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; ²⁶To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.

Justification by the cross of Jesus was God's medium for justifying sinful and imperfect humanity. God exhibited the sinless blood of His Son to be a propitiatory sacrifice that would justify His pardoning sinners. J. W. McGarvey states: "And God thus set him forth as a bloody sacrifice, that he might in him,

show his righteousness (i.e., his retributive justice, his hatred for sin, and firmness in punishing it), for this retributive justice of God had for a long time been obscured by his conduct towards sinners, for he had passed over, or left only partially punished, the sins done aforetime (i.e., all sins committed before Christ's death), for he had neither fully forgiven nor fully punished them, but had passed them over, reserving the full punishment of them to inflict it upon Jesus when suffering upon the cross (Isa. 53:4-6); that full forgiveness also might flow from the cross (John 1:29; 1 John 1:7; Rev. 1:5; 7:14), God forbearing to punish man because he anticipated this method of pardoning him."¹

God could not ignore sin and His justice is upheld through the medium of the cross:

⁶For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. ⁸But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. ⁹Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him (Rom 5:6-9).

The grace of the Father and the willing sacrifice of Jesus are forever merged in the cross

¹⁶And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification. ¹⁷For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.) ¹⁸Therefore as by the

offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life [Rom 5:16-18].

The Method Of Justification

This has reference to the “how” of justification. From a negative prospective, it is not:

- 1) By one’s own reasoning. Israel attempted this “And the Lord said unto me, The backsliding Israel hath justified herself more than treacherous Judah.” [Jer. 3:11]. The lawyer who sought to tempt Jesus; “But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour” [Luke 10:29]?
- 2) By works of the law; “*By the works of the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight*” (Rom. 3:20). Other passages on this subject: [Rom. 3:28; Gal. 2:16; 3:11].

From a positive prospective, the Bible teaches we are saved by grace through faith [Eph. 2:8-9; Rom. 5:1]. Grace includes all that God does and has done for us. Faith includes every action that man does and must do. Saving faith is not dead, but living and working [James 2:14-26; Rom. 1:5; 16:25; Gal. 5:6; Heb. 11]. Faith expresses itself in complete obedience to every command of God [Matt. 7:21]. It is not negative, legalistic, or guilt-trip preaching to teach that there is something man must do in order to be saved and to continue to be saved — it is Bible preaching [Mat. 7:21; Acts 2:37-38; 9:6; 13:43; 22:16; Rom. 6:4; 2 Cor. 6:1; Gal. 2:21; 5:4; 2 Thess. 1:8; Heb. 5:8-9; 12:15; 1 John 1:7; Jude 4; Rev. 2:10]²

All action on the part of man in carrying out an active faith is expressly directed through the gospel of Jesus Christ [Rom. 1:16-17; Gal. 3:22-29]. The gospel is that system of faith [Acts 6:7] which enables justification. Man is required to believe the testimony which is

declared within the gospel plan of salvation (John 20:30-31; Rom. 5:1; 10:17; Heb. 10:9-10). Inspiration states: *“And by him all that believe are justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses”* (Acts 13:39). No other code or system of faith can justify - only the gospel (John 12:48; Rom. 10:17).

Obedience (on man's part) to the gospel commands has often been misinterpreted as works of merit. While man is justified by works (James 2:20-24), these are works that express our faith in Him to save.

⁸For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: ⁹Not of works, lest any man should boast. ¹⁰For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them (Eph. 2:8-10).

Note the subject of this statement is “ye are saved.” Salvation is admitted to be what grace and faith modifies. How are we saved? By grace through faith. The little function word that modifies the term saved in the preceding verse. That salvation is not of yourself, Paul wrote. It [the salvation is the gift of God's grace].³

In Hebrews 11:4, we learn that *“By faith Abel offered a more excellent sacrifice.”* Question: Was Abel's faith active or passive? The Bible tells us that his was an active faith which included works of righteousness (1 John 3:12).

“By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith” (Heb. 11:7). Noah built the ark by faith. This required hard work and a great deal of it, yet the single word “faith” colors the entire ground. As is said of

Abraham, (James 2:22) *“Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?”* Works and faith do not contradict, but they complement each other.

Note: the two methods in contrast on the chart below:

By Works of Law	<i>Versus</i>	By Faith in Christ
is		is
1. Meritorious (4:4) as of...		1. Gratuitous (3:24) as of...
2. The sinless (Gal. 3:10) Hence is...		2. The sinful (4:5). Hence is...
3. Without pardon (3:20),		3. Through pardon (4:6-8).
4. Without grace (4:4),		4. By grace (3:24).
5. Without Christ (Gal. 3:21),		5. Through Christ (3:24).
6. Without faith (4:14).		6. By faith (3:28).
7. Without the obedience of faith (4:14). Resulting in...		7. Through the obedience of faith (4:12). Resulting in...
8. Occasion for boasting (4:2),		8. Exclusion of boasting (3:27).
9. Reward as a debt (4:4),		9. Reward as a gift (Eph. 2:8). ⁴

The Manifestation Of Justification

Complete gospel obedience (hearing, Rom. 10:17; believing, John 8:24; repenting, Luke 13:3; confessing Christ, Rom. 10:9-10; baptism, Mark 16:16) are works of faith by which we demonstrate our faith (trust, reliance) in Christ and His blood shed for our sins. T. W. Brents wrote, “Faith induces the performance of every act of acceptable obedience to God — every one. We are lost in attempting to find anything done in a hearty obedience to God that is not, either directly or indirectly, the result of faith.”⁵

Those who were once lost in sin obeyed (by faith) from the heart the “form” of doctrine (gospel) (Rom. 6:17). Their obedience led to their justification (Rom.

6:18). *“Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.”* Paul, in speaking to the saints at Corinth recognized this “before” and “after” conversion process (1 Cor. 6:11). “And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are **justified** in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God” (Emphasis mine).

It is a sad truth that so many Christians conduct their lives as if they were never justified. This fact is evidenced by the worldliness and immorality that seem to permeate the lives of many professed Christians. Someone has said: “If you were on trial for being a Christian would there be enough evidence to convict you?” What a haunting thought for every cold and lukewarm member of the Lord’s church (Rom. 12:1-2; Rev. 3:15-17).

The Menace To Justification By Faith

The greatest menace to justification is the presence of false teachers within and without the church of our Lord. We are reminded to *“beware of false prophets which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves”* (Matt. 7:15). From the pens and pulpits among some of brethren one might conclude that nothing is required (on man’s part) to our justification.

For years our brethren have successfully debated the Calvinists and denominations on the points of justification by faith. Sadly, we are now hearing voices from within the body of Christ that are foreign to the New Testament teachings regarding this subject. Robert G. Dodson, Jr. In an excellent lecture cited many of these false pretenders to truth:⁶ Consider these quotes from well-known preachers in the church: “You are saved by grace alone,”⁷ “There is no human part of salvation!”⁸ “We do not contribute one whit to our salvation.”⁹ “Our salvation arises entirely and only from

grace ... not by one act of duty, not by one deed of obedience, not by one righteous thing we do."¹⁰ "My salvation is based on grace alone ... I'm not saved because I believe or because I repented or because I was baptized ... there is only one 'because of' in the plan of salvation."¹¹ "We are saved by grace plus nothing ... God does it all"¹² "We keep trying to place conditions on our receiving it."¹³ "[Grace is] the only thing that does save you."¹⁴ "Our works have nothing to do with our salvation."¹⁵ "I want to show man the real reason for doing anything the Lord would have him do. The motivation is not in order to be saved' but rather 'because we are saved."¹⁶ "I had absolutely nothing to do with my own salvation!"¹⁷ "Nobody has any right to preach anything other than the Gospel of pure grace. We are saved by grace plus nothing. You are saved by faith period. There is nothing you can do to be saved."¹⁸

Suffice it to state that these men are not speaking for God! Justification does not eventuate by grace alone. Grace involves God's part (Eph. 2:8), but grace demands action on the part of man that leads to his justification (Eph. 2:8-11; Heb. 11:6; Titus 2:11-12). Let's not confuse God's part (Grace) in justification with man's part (obedient faith). If the notion of grace alone were true, Paul was mistaken in Romans 6:1-4:

¹What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. ²How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? ³Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? ⁴Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

Grace alone affords opportunity on man's part to continue to sin that grace might continue, but Paul ends the confusion with a "*God forbid*" Why? Because it simply is not God's method for justification. When the term "only" is inserted in the statement it precludes all else from being associated with justification. It would eliminate faith, repentance, the blood of Jesus, obedience of man and all else that is connected with justification/redemption.

False teachers in the church of our Lord are now advocating a "justification because of ignorance" in regards to baptism for the remission of sins. More evidence from those who would divert others from the simplicity that is in Christ: "I see no reason to think one has to understand for remission of sins in order to be baptized scripturally, for I do not think there is one right reason for being baptized. I would that one must be baptized for a right reason in order for his baptism to be acceptable."¹⁹ "Lately I have been bothered by two false teachings about baptism...Unless one expressly understands that baptism is "for [i.e., unto] remission of sins, "he has not been baptized for the right reason, is still in his sins, and needs to be baptized again."²⁰

Complete gospel obedience demands that the subject understands the inspired evidence that is before him [Rom 10:17] "So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." The evidence of the Scriptures is plain. "*And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free*" (John 8:32). One can know the **truth** regarding salvation. It is not some mystery that has not been revealed (Eph. 3:8-11; Acts 2:38; 3:19). Before I married it was important for me to examine the evidence BEFORE committing my life. Is not this true of those who would be married to Christ [Rom. 7:4]? The evidence is sure and it is certain! The testimony of evidence regarding obedience and salvation is not vague or hidden:

¹Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not; ²But 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. ³But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: ⁴In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them [2 Cor. 4:1-4].

May God help us to always appreciate the truth regarding the great doctrine of justification by faith. Every faithful Christian must arise against those who would pervert the gospel of God. False teachers, regardless of their education, are a menace to the body of Christ and to the justification of the lost. Far too many are content to be **saved in their sins** rather than *from their sins*.

ENDNOTES

¹J. W. McGarvey and Philip Y. Pendleton: *Thessalonians, Corinthians, Galatians and Romans*, Gospel Light Publishing Co. p.322

²Robert Dodson. *"The Pattern of our Justification by Faith in Christ,"* Denton Lectures, Studies in Romans, Valid Publications.

³Charles A. Pledge, *"Can Salvation Be a Gift and Demand Obedience at the Same Time?"* Gospel Truth Article, p.1

⁴I. B. Grubbs: *"The Doctrine of Justification by Faith,"* The Remedial System, College Press.

⁵T. W. Brents, *The Gospel Plan of Salvation*, p.221

⁶Robert G. Dodson, Jr. "The Pattern of our Justification by Faith in Christ," Denton Lectures, Studies in Romans, Valid Publications.

⁷Randy Mayeux, as quoted by Goebel Music in Behold the Pattern (Colleyville, TX: Goebel Music Pub., 1991), p.231.

⁸Ibid., p.256

⁹Rubel Shelly, *ibid.* p.325.

¹⁰Ibid., pp.611-612

¹¹Ibid., p.616

¹²Jim Hackney, tape of sermon Midtown Church of Christ (Jan. 6, 1991).

¹³Ibid., (Jan. 27, 1991).

¹⁴Randy Fenter, tape of sermon Midtown Church of Christ (March, 1991).

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Jim Hackney, *The Grapevine*, p.2.

¹⁷Quoted by Tommy J. Hicks in *The Handley Herald*, p.1.

¹⁸Glen Owen, tapes of sermon delivered Midtown Church of Christ (1982).

¹⁹Rubel Shelly, as quoted in Behold the Pattern, p.277.

²⁰Ibid., p.278

Chapter 8

Walking By Faith

2 Corinthians 5:7

Ronnie Whittemore

Lectureships present unique opportunities for serious studies of God's Word on specific themes and topics. The theme selected for this year's lectureship is "FAITH." Every lesson within the study of this theme will increase our *faith* and motivate each one of us to live faithfully for the Master. Lectureships also provide gospel preachers with unique challenges. How fortunate we are, as learners, to be able to dig deeply into God's Word and extract so many truths about *faith* and specifically, for this study, that "*we walk by faith, not by sight.*" I, personally, thank brother Charles Blair for his selection of this year's study and his hard work in preparing for this lectureship. I also am grateful to the elders of the Garfield Heights church for their invitation to participate in this year's lectureship.

The English word "faith" is found 247 times in 231 verses in the King James Version of the Bible; however, there are only two occurrences of the word "faith" in the Old Testament (Deut. 32:20; Habakkuk 2:4). The English word "belief" is found only one time in the KJV (2 Thess. 2:13). The word "believe" occurs 143 times in 131 verses in the KJV. The prominence of these words points to the importance which God has placed upon FAITH. The Hebrew writer described *faith* as: "...*the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen*" [Heb. 11:1]. The apostle Paul also wrote concerning the source of *faith*: "*So then faith cometh*

by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). Upon one occasion, Jesus' apostles made this request of the Master, "...Lord, Increase our faith" (Luke 17:5). Surely every right thinking person understands the necessity of faith (Heb. 11:6). Yet, have we attributed the right characteristics to the *faith* described in the Bible? Faith is not a "leap in the dark" as some claim. Faith is based upon evidence; its foundation is established upon the faithfulness of God and His Son. During the course of this lesson, we want to examine specifically Paul's phrase in 2 Corinthians 5:7: "For we walk by faith, not by sight."

WHAT IS FAITH?

Definitions From The Dictionary

Before one can properly understand what faith is, he must make a distinction among the subjects of faith, opinion and knowledge. *The American Heritage Dictionary* defines the following words:

- [1] Faith.** "n. 1. Confident belief in the truth, value, or trustworthiness of a person, an idea, or a thing. 2. Belief that does not rest on logical proof or material evidence. 3. Loyalty to a person or thing; allegiance. 4. Often Faith. Theology. The theological virtue defined as secure belief in God and a trusting acceptance of God's will. 5. The body of dogma of a religion. 6. A set of principles or beliefs. — idiom. in faith. Indeed; truly." **[2] Opinion.** "n. 1. A belief or conclusion held with confidence but not substantiated by positive knowledge or proof. 2. A judgment based on special knowledge and given by an expert. 3. A judgment or an estimation of the merit of a person or thing. 4. The prevailing view. 5. Law. A formal state-

ment by a court or other adjudicative body of the legal reasons and principles for the conclusions of the court.” **[3] Knowledge.** “n. 1. The state or fact of knowing. 2. Familiarity, awareness, or understanding gained through experience or study. 3. The sum or range of what has been perceived, discovered, or learned. 4. Learning; erudition. 5. Specific information about something. 6. Carnal knowledge.”

Illustration For Distinction

Suppose that a preacher, standing in the pulpit, holds out a clinched hand, concealing an object from the view of his audience. He then asks, “What do you think that I am holding in my hand?” Each person in the audience has an opinion or guess as to the object in his hand. Some may think that he is holding a quarter; others may think that he is holding a car key, etc. *How many people would be willing to risk their salvation on their opinion as to what is in the preacher’s hand?* Next, the preacher tells the audience that he is holding a paper clip in his hand. Then he shows them the paper clip. Therefore, everyone had an opinion as to what the object was, but most, if not all, were wrong. Many people believed the preacher when he said that he was holding a paper clip. This simple illustration defines our terms. (1) Opinion is what a person thinks. (2) Faith is believing what one says. (3) Knowledge is obtained through the five external and five internal senses.

Example From The Bible

A similar illustration is found in the Old Testament concerning God’s commandment to Abraham to offer his only son of promise, Isaac, upon the altar. “*And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom*

thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of” (Gen. 22:2). Abraham believed what God said to him. In the absence of any statement from God on the subject, Abraham thought that God would raise Isaac from the dead.

¹⁷By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son.

¹⁸Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: ¹⁹Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure (Heb. 11:17-19).

When Abraham’s attention was directed to the ram, he knew that it was there.

¹²And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me. ¹³And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son (Gen. 22:12-13).

Passages Of Scriptures As Proof

Christianity is not a matter of opinion or of mere human knowledge, but is a matter of faith, that is, believing what God says. Therefore, let us test this definition by considering several passages of scripture where the word *faith* is found. Hebrews 11:1 reads,

"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." The words "substance" (KJV) or "assurance" (ASV) comes from the Greek word, *hupostasis*, (hoop-os'tas-is) and according to Strong's Dictionary literally means "a setting under [support], i.e. (fig.) concr. essence, or abstr. assurance [obj. or subj.]:—confidence, confident, person, substance relates to *things hoped for*." The word "hope" comes from the Greek word *elpizo* (el-pid'-zo) and literally means, "to expect or confide:—[have, thing] hope [-d] [for], trust." We often define *hope* as "desire and expectation." One of the things "hoped for" is *eternal life* according to Titus 1:2. The word "evidence" (KJV) or "conviction" (ASV) in the text comes from the Greek word *elegchos* (el'-eng-khos) and literally means, "proof, conviction:—evidence, reproof" and relates to "things not seen." God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, angels, heaven, hell, etc. are unseen to human eyes, yet the believer is sure that they exist because the Word of God says that they do. Romans 4:3, referring again to Abraham, reads, "*For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.*" In Genesis 15:1-6, the Lord promised Abram a son and countless heirs of promise.

¹After these things the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward. ²And Abram said, Lord GOD, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus? ³And Abram said, Behold, to me thou hast given no seed: and, lo, one born in my house is mine heir. ⁴And, behold, the word of the LORD came unto him, saying, This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir. ⁵And he brought him forth abroad,

and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be. ⁶And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.

Despite Abraham's effort to help God along in His plan by accepting the offer of his wife, Sarah, to have a son, Ishmael, by the handmaid Hagar, Abraham believed that God would grant him a son, though he did not understand how. When God opened the womb of Sarah who was 90 years old at the time and she bore a son, Isaac, God's promise was fulfilled and Abraham's faith was realized. Abraham believed the Word of the Lord.

HOW DO WE OBTAIN FAITH?

Misconceptions About Faith

It would accomplish little for the good of the soul if one knows what faith is, yet he does not know how to obtain faith. There are many misconceptions concerning how one obtains faith. [1] Some people think that God gives them faith without any effort on their part. The apostle Paul wrote, "*For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God*" (Eph. 2:8). The pronoun, it, in this verse refers to salvation, not faith. God bestows *salvation*, not faith as a gift to all penitent, baptized believers. Faith is granted to men upon the same basis that man is granted his daily bread (Matt. 6:11). God has His part and man has his part. [2] Others think that God will grant them faith through prayer. Nowhere do we read that faith is granted through prayer. Men are told to pray for wisdom *in* faith.

⁵If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. ⁶But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed [James 1:5-6].

Faith Is Obtained Through Evidence

The Scriptures serve as God's communication to man; therefore, faith (believing what God says) comes through His Word.

Romans 10:17, "*So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*" John 17:20, "*Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word.*" John 20:30-31, "*And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: ³¹But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.*" Acts 14:1, "*And it came to pass in Iconium, that they went both together into the synagogue of the Jews, and so spake, that a great multitude both of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed.*" Luke 8:12, "*Those by the way side are they that hear; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved.*"

Throughout the Bible, faith and the Word are constant companions. In the book of Acts, for example, the word *faith* is found in 24 verses (Acts 3:16; 6:5,7,8; 11:24; 13:8; 14:9,22,27; 15:9; 16:5; 20:21; 24:24; 26:18). Please note that some of the uses of the word, "faith" in these verses are referring to "the faith" which is the gospel or system of faith. In Acts 3:16, Peter said, "*And his name through faith in his name hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know: yea, the faith which is by him hath given him this perfect*

soundness in the presence of you all." In verse 18, Peter made reference to the messages spoken by the prophets. In Acts 13:8, the apostle Paul and Barnabas were on the island of Paphos and encountered a deputy of the country, named, Sergius Paulus, who desired to "hear the word of God" (Acts 13:7). In verse 8, Elymas, the sorcerer, attempted to turn Sergius Paulus "from the faith." Paul, in turn, struck Elymas blind. In verse 12, the text reads, "*Then the deputy, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord*" (Acts 13:12). In Acts 14 we read about the lame man whom Paul healed and notice the connection between his faith and hearing the Word. "*The same heard Paul speak: who stedfastly beholding him, and perceiving that he had faith to be healed*" (Acts 14:9). In Acts 15, Paul commented upon the faith of the Gentiles who by Paul's mouth heard "*the word of the gospel, and believe*" (v.7). In his speech to the elders of Ephesus at Miletus, the text records Paul's comments about the faith of his public preaching to both Jews and Gentiles who repented and believed toward God (Acts 20:20-21).

In the epistles, numerous other proofs exist of the link between faith and the Word (Rom. 3:21-31; 10:6-17; 1 Cor. 2:1-5; 2 Cor. 10:14-16; Gal. 3:1-9; Eph. 4:11-15). Therefore, we conclude that "faith must be predicated upon certain testimony and evidence, resulting in certain convictions and expressing itself in definite actions" (Heb. 11:1; Rom. 10:17).

How Do We Walk By Faith And Not By Sight?

The Bible teaches in both the Old Testament and New Testament that "the faith that saves is the faith that obeys." An earnest study of Hebrews 11 demonstrates the trust and confidence that the faithful men and women of the Old Testament possessed *and* their

willingness to express their faith in God's Word by obeying His instructions. Each example in Hebrews 11 (1) states a person's name or position (such as, prophet, judge, etc.); (2) testifies specifically to his or her *faith* (by use of the phrase "by faith" or "through faith"); and (3) emphasizes the action taken by faith. (1) "*By faith Abel offered unto God...*" (Heb. 11:4). (2) "*By faith Enoch...pleased God...*" (Heb. 11:5). (3) "*By faith Noah...moved with fear...prepared an ark...*" (Heb. 11:7). (4) "*By faith Abraham...obeyed; and went out...*" (Heb. 11:8). Once again, these Old Testament patriarchs prove that "the faith that saves is the faith that obeys."

In the New Testament, examples of conversion demonstrate that a saving faith is a working faith. 1) The faith of the Philippian jailer moved him to be baptized for his salvation (Acts 16:30-32). 2) The faith of the eunuch prompted him to confess Christ and be immersed in water for the remission of his sins (Acts 8:35-39). 3) The faith of Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue in Corinth as well as the faith of many of the Corinthians motivated them to be baptized (Acts 18:8; 1 Cor. 4:14).

James argued the difference between a vain, empty faith that does nothing versus a faith that works and accomplishes things. He pointed out the weak faith of the demons who were convicted that Jesus is the Son of God, but did not obey the Lord (James 2:19). He contested that a do-nothing faith is vain and dead (James 2:14-18). He also underscored that a saving faith is the kind of faith that both Abraham and Rahab possessed in which they obeyed the instructions of the Lord (James 2:20-24). James' conclusion was simple. "*Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only...For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also*" (James 2:24, 26).

So faith is trust in God, based upon evidence and results in obedient action. But what does Paul mean by the statement: *“For we walk by faith, not by sight?”* A person’s faith in God (believing what God says) is obtained through the insurmountable evidence of God’s truthfulness (in every promise and every statement) and in the fact that it is impossible for God to lie. *“In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began”* (Titus 1:2).

Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation... [Heb. 6:18].

With that faith established, a person does not need to understand nor know all of the details or tangible things necessary for the Will of God to be realized. In Hebrews 11:1, the inspired author wrote, *“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”* Note the use of the phrase: “things not seen.” How many people witnessed (with their own eyes) the creation of the sun, moon and stars? None. Yet, we believe that God created these things by faith based upon other evidence. How many people today have seen Christ, the Son of God, with their own eyes? None. Yet, we believe that He lives by faith based upon historical and Biblical evidence. How many people today have seen the angels, the hadean realms, heaven or hell? None. Yet, we believe that these things exist based upon testimony from God who cannot lie and the truth of His Word.

This logic leads us to ask the following: How do we walk by faith and not by sight in our everyday Christian living? How many of us know the exact details of the way in which God will bless us? Is it not true that God

has made promises to us which have yet to be fulfilled in which we are certain of His faithfulness, but we are unaware of the circumstances that will lead to blessings? If you lose your job, you know that God has made a promise to His people (which is tied directly to their faith), saying,

³¹Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? ³²(For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. ³³But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you (Matt. 6:31-33).

If you pray for patience and wisdom (James 1:2-5), God has promised to answer our petition. But do you know the circumstances by which that patience and wisdom will be obtained? We will gain those attributes; yet, it may be by circumstances beyond our expectations. Therefore, we walk by faith (placing our trust in God who will deliver, comfort, strength, etc.) and not by sight (unaware of the environment or circumstances by which He will fulfill His Will).

Consider these Bible characters who “walked by faith and not by sight.”

John The Baptist

In Luke 7:19-20, John the Baptist sent his disciples to ask Jesus this question: “*Art thou he that should come? or look we for another?*” Some argue that on this occasion John, while in prison for rebuking Herod, doubted the Deity of Christ. However, it is this writer’s conviction that John’s doubt did not arise from a lack of faith in Jesus as the Lamb of God because John

announced Him to be the Savior of the world in the wilderness (John 1:29). No, it seems that John questioned Jesus' willingness to allow John, a prophet and mouthpiece of God, to remain in prison. How often it is that we may very well question God's purpose for us! Man often tries to out think and out maneuver God (Isaiah 55:8-9; 2 Kings 5:11). In his own arrogance, man sometimes questions God's wisdom. This may have been the case with John. Would it be according to God's plan that John should perish in prison while so many needed to hear the message of the kingdom (Matt. 3:1-2; 4:17)? John thought not. Yet John understood his role as the forerunner of Christ, saying, "*He must increase, but I must decrease*" (John 3:30). However, imprisonment at the decree of Herod did not seem like the best use of John's talents, at least to John and his disciples. But notice the evidence which Jesus sent back with John's disciples as they observed, "*And in that same hour he cured many of their infirmities and plagues, and of evil spirits; and unto many that were blind he gave sight*" (Luke 7:21). Then Jesus responded,

22...Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached. 23And blessed is he, who-soever shall not be offended in me (Luke 7:22-23).

John's "doubt" could now be eased based upon the evidence which Jesus presented. The gospel was being preached by the Lamb of God. The afflicted were being healed. Even the dead were being raised. And Jesus cautioned and comforted John and his disciples by pronouncing a blessing upon those who would not be offended in Christ. Faith could now occupy the heart of

John based upon the knowledge and evidence which he obtained in Christ. Is this not the key to man's lack of faith, even today? Though John may not have understood nor may he have agreed to God's end for him, was he not able, by virtue of the evidence presented to his disciples by Christ, to place his trust in God that He would do right?

Thomas, The Apostle

A second example of faith based on evidence is the incident involving Thomas and his so-called "doubt" concerning Jesus' resurrection from the dead. READ TEXT: John 20:19-29. In John 20:19-20, Jesus appeared to His apostles in the midst of a room with the door shut and said, "*Peace be unto you.*" Then Jesus "*showed unto them his hands and his side.*" The disciples reacted with gladness "*when they saw the Lord.*" Many scholars and Bible students are critical of Thomas and have ascribed to him the name "doubting Thomas." Yet a careful reading of the text reveals that Jesus appeared unto His disciples showing them his hands and his side. Therefore, Jesus offered them *evidence*. When Thomas was informed of the Lord's visit, what did he request, but *evidence*? "*Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe*" [John 20:25]. Then notice the immediate response of Thomas when presented with the *same* evidence that was shown to the other apostles, "*My Lord and my God*" [John 20:28]. Did Thomas possess an unbelieving spirit? Yes, but, like the other apostles, once he was presented with the evidence, he believed. But the key is Jesus' response to Thomas. "*Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed*" [John 20:29]. Thomas believed in the resurrection of Christ because

he saw Him with his own eyes. We believe in a risen Savior, not because we have seen him with our own physical eyes, but through the eyes of faith, knowing that the evidence is insurmountable of His victory over the tomb. For that reason, we believe what Christ said about our own resurrection from the dead (John 5:28-29).

Abraham, Friend Of God

A third example is Abraham. In Romans 4:3, Paul wrote, *“For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.”* We established previously that Abraham’s faith was an obedient faith (Heb. 11:7). We also pointed out that *“the faith that saves is the faith that obeys.”*

Now consider our earlier definition of faith—*“believing what God says.”* Abraham acted (went; obeyed) upon his firm belief in the promises of God (Gen. 12:1-3). His faith was so strong that *“...he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise. For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God”* (Heb. 11:9-10). In the letter to the churches of Galatia, Paul wrote concerning the faith of God’s children in Christ Jesus.

²⁶For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. ²⁷For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. ²⁸There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise (Gal. 3:26-29).

Peter referred to the promise of Abraham as related to salvation on Pentecost. *“For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call”* (Acts 2:39). Abraham is a supreme example of one who “walked by faith, not by sight.” The promise of God was enough for him. He focused his attention upon obeying the Lord based upon the truthfulness and faithfulness of God. We are commanded to have the same kind of faith today.

Naaman, The Leper

A fourth example is Naaman, the leper (2 Kings 5). Naaman was a man of great authority, but he had leprosy, a terrible, life threatening disease. Naaman received word through his wife’s maid of the possibility of his being cured of his leprosy. Naaman, misunderstanding the proper source to consult, sent a letter to the King of Israel and offered money in exchange for being cured. After the King rent his clothes and rejected the request, Naaman was corrected and went to the right source, the prophet of God, Elisha. Elisha did not even come out to see Naaman. He sent word to Naaman through a messenger and instructed him to dip seven times in the Jordan River and he would be cleansed. Naaman balked at these instructions. He was angry. He thought that the rivers of Damascus were better. He thought that Elisha should, at least, *“come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the LORD his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper”* [2 Kings 5:11]. Fortunately for Naaman, his servant reasoned with him, saying, *“My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? how much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean”* (2 Kings 5:13)? Naaman then obeyed the words

of Elisha and dipped seven times in the Jordan River and he was cleansed of his leprosy. Naaman

...returned to the man of God, he and all his company, and came, and stood before him: and he said, Behold, now I know that there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel: now therefore, I pray thee, take a blessing of thy servant (2 Kings 5:15).

Naaman “walked by faith and not by sight.” To our knowledge, Naaman had little or no previous proof of God’s power except by testimony of others, including his wife’s maid. He was instructed by the prophet of God and persuaded by his own servant. He simply believed what God said, dipped seven times in the Jordan and was cleansed. The “faith that saves is the faith that obeys.” He “walked by faith” (believing what God said) without any physical, visible evidence of his cleansing until he was cleansed by God.

Conclusion

Friends, do you walk by faith and not by sight? Do you have the kind of confidence in God that you believe what He says, even though you may not see with your own eyes that place called heaven? Do you have the type of faith in God in which you believe in His promises although you may not understand the circumstances by which He may fulfill those promises?

Faithful men, like, John, Abraham and Naaman, were not always able to see with their eyes nor comprehend the circumstances by which God would fulfill His promises to them, but they believed! John died an horrible death for the Lord’s sake; yet, he fulfilled his role as forerunner of Christ and lived a faithful life that was worthy of commendation by the Lord (Matt. 11:11). Abraham dwelt in the land of Canaan as a pilgrim, but

he never possessed the land. That privilege was reserved for his descendants. But Abraham looked for a place far greater, “...a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (Heb. 11:10). In Luke 16, we read of Lazarus dwelling in a place of rest called “Abraham’s bosom” in paradise. Abraham obtained his inheritance and was commended by God as His friend (James 2:23). Naaman was cleansed of his leprosy because he believed what God said and dipped in the Jordan River.

Have you lost a job? Do you suffer from disease? Are you in the midst of trials and tribulations? Have you lost a spouse? Do you want to go to heaven? Though one may not see how God will fulfill His promises and answer his prayers, through the eye of faith, we know that He will be faithful to every promise and grant us eternal life.

“For we walk by faith, not by sight.”

Chapter 9

Limitation Of Faith

Raymond Allen Hagood

Introduction

To say that a thing has limitations is not an attempt in any way to relegate its importance nor to diminish its efficacy. To acknowledge limitations is, rather, a completely positive action designed to recognize what a thing is designed to do, thus preventing a misuse of a thing which could result in disastrous consequences.

An automobile, for example, is an extraordinary machine. Its creation has resulted not only in amazing mobility, but also a fierce independence as it relates to matters of transportation. A car allows its passengers to travel hundreds of miles in a relatively short period of time. As amazing as a car is, however, it still has its limitations. A vehicle can certainly convey a person from point A to point B on earth, but it cannot transport a person from earth to the moon. Neither can that car take a human being from New York City to London, England.

To point out that a car cannot take one to the moon or cross the oceans is not to diminish it in any way. Rather, it is an important and vital attempt to qualify exactly what a car is designed to do, so that folks won't try to require the impossible from it. If a person accelerates his vehicle to a speed of 100 mph and drives it off a mountain road en route to the moon, he has made a serious, if not fatal, demand upon that automobile.

In truth, an automobile is a truly remarkable machine when used according to its designed purpose.

Faith, also, is one of the most extraordinary things that the world has ever known. Faith has led vast armies against nearly impossible odds and resulted in victory. It has created in the human heart direction and meaning that transforms the souls of men. In fact, this entire book could be spent in a discussion of the attributes of faith, and that would certainly be a wonderful study. Faith, however, like automobiles, has limitations. God designed faith to accomplish certain things, and within the parameters of these things faith is irreplaceable. An automobile cannot take one to the moon, and there are certain things that faith cannot do, either.

To point out these limitations of faith, however, is not an attempt to diminish what faith is nor what it can do. It is simply to qualify and make clear its functions and actions and thus prevent a misuse of faith which could result in irrevocable spiritual loss.

This article, therefore, is designed to point out the limitations of faith by making it clear exactly what it is that God designed faith to do.

Faith's Essence And Function

The English word "faith" is translated from the Greek noun *pistis*. According to Thayer, this word generally means "conviction of the truth of anything." When the word is applied to God, it means, "the conviction that God exists and is the creator and ruler of all things, the provider and bestower of eternal salvation through Christ."

Faith involves certainty, not doubt. It is a matter of conviction, not of probability.

Belief And Faith

“Believe” (*pisteuo*) and “faith” (*pistis*) are basically the same word and are used interchangeably in the Bible. “Believe” is the verb form of the word, and “faith” is the noun form. “Faith” is always used as a noun and never as a verb. We would not say in Romans 4:3 that “Abraham faithed God.” Rather, the Bible correctly uses the verb form and says that “Abraham believed God.” Romans 4:9 makes it clear that the result of Abram’s belief was faith. Because one believes [verb form], he is able to have this strong conviction in his mind concerning this matter. This strong conviction is faith [noun form]. One involved the action; the other involves the result. The action and result are fundamentally the same, except that the word forms are different.

The words, therefore, can be used interchangeably and are, in fact, used that way in the Bible. For example, in Matthew 8:10 when the Lord saw that the centurion believed, he said, *“Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.”* Yet in verse 13 Jesus said, *“Go thy way; and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee.”*

Believing God

We have seen that faith is a firm conviction or persuasion that something is true. Faith in God means that we believe God’s word. A simple definition of faith is that faith is simply taking God at his word.

In fact, this is exactly what Hebrews 11:6 teaches. *“But without faith it is impossible to please him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”*

This passage clearly shows that there are two essential elements involved in real Bible faith, not just one concept. Faith requires that we accept without

doubt the existence of God. To many folks this is where they stop in their definition of faith. Their entire concept of faith is limited to the idea that one must believe that God exists.

Hebrews 11:6, however, makes it clear that it is not enough merely to believe that God is, for one must also believe that God is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. How can we know that God is a rewarder of those who faithfully seek him? Through His word — the Bible.

The implication is obvious in this passage. A person must believe in God's existence and also believe in the integrity of His word. Real Bible faith, therefore, involves belief in God's existence and a determination to take God at His word. When one really believes in God, he must be convinced that God's word must be true and, therefore, must be obeyed.

The Function Of Faith

The essence of faith and the function of faith are one and the same. The essence of faith is not only a belief in the existence of God, but also confidence in the integrity of God's word.

The function of faith is to create this reliance and trust in God and in God's word. This is the primary function of faith.

Faith's Limitations

First, is the conviction that God exists and that God is to be taken at his word the only things necessary for salvation? If it is, then one could be saved by faith only. If this is the case, then faith would be unlimited in its efficacy, as it relates to salvation.

James makes it unmistakably clear in James 2:24 that no man is justified by faith alone. "*Ye see then*

how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only."

We know that while faith is a vital and essential step in the gospel plan of salvation, it is not the sum and total of what one must do to be saved. Faith, repentance and baptism are all limited to function and cannot do more or less than what God designed them to do.

Faith, therefore, is limited to its primary and important function of creating conviction in the heart of a person. It cannot eliminate the need for works, nor can it take the place of works.

Faith And Obedience

True biblical obedience is one of the products of real faith. One hears the word of God, and this knowledge produces faith in the good and honest heart. "*So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*" (Rom. 10:17).

Faith, however, is not obedience. Faith cannot make a person obey, nor can it take the place of obedience. Neither does faith preclude obedience or the need for obedience.

Hebrews, chapter eleven, repeatedly discusses actions that occurred "by faith." The expression "by faith," however, does not mean "at the point of faith," as many people teach.

We learn in Hebrews 11:30 that the walls of Jericho fell down by faith. This verse does not say that the walls of Jericho fell down at the point of faith. In fact, the Israelites believed, but their belief alone did not cast down one stone. Faith motivated the children of Israel to obey God and march around Jericho thirteen times, blow the trumpets and shout. Fifteen acts of obedience were necessary before they received the promised blessing. The walls did not fall when they first

believed, nor did they fall the first time they marched around the city.

Faith is essential to salvation, but obedience is also essential to salvation. Obedience is not faith, and faith is not obedience. A person cannot truly obey God without faith, but a person could have faith and still not obey God.

Again, faith is limited to what it is and what it does, and faith is not obedience, nor can it take the place of obedience.

Faith And Repentance

Knowledge of the word of God coupled with faith convicts the human heart of sin and compels humanity to seek salvation from sin. This is what occurred on the day of Pentecost. When many of those Jews heard the word of God, as preached by Peter and the rest of the apostles, they were convicted in their hearts and cried out, *“Men and brethren, what shall we do?”*

They heard the word of God, because it was preached with power, and they obviously believed it and thus were convicted of sin in their heart and sought diligently for remedy.

Faith is not repentance, nor can it take the place of repentance. If faith alone were the only thing necessary for salvation, then there would be no need for repentance. Yet in spite of the fact that many of those Jews believed on the day of Pentecost, Peter instructed them to repent and be baptized. They needed to repent, because faith did not and could not preclude repentance: rather, it demanded repentance.

Repentance is a change of mind and heart that produces a change of life. Faith does not change a person's life, nor can it. This is what repentance does, and faith cannot take the place of repentance.

Faith And Baptism

Baptism is absolutely essential for salvation. Peter affirms that baptism saves.

The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ [1 Peter 3:21].

Baptism is for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38), and only baptism can remit an alien sinner's sins.

Faith and baptism are distinct from one another. Faith must precede baptism, and both faith and baptism are essential to salvation. Faith is not baptism and cannot do what baptism does. Faith cannot remit even one sin. The doctrine which teaches that one is saved by faith only actually teaches that one can be saved without having his sins forgiven because faith cannot remit sins. God never designed faith to remit sins. This is not the function of faith.

Faith, Hope And Love

Faith, hope and love are three of the greatest things the world has ever known. While all three of these royal concepts are closely tied together, they still exist separate and apart from one another. Faith is not love, and love is not hope. Hope is not faith, and love is not faith. In fact, one could have great faith and still not have love. Paul affirms this in 1 Corinthians 13:2 when he said, "*And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.*"

Hope is a soul's longing and desire for heaven coupled with the expectation of someday receiving that

which God has promised. We have hope in this life, but hope is not realized until the next life. Paul makes this very clear in Romans 8:24,25, *“For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? ²⁵But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.”*

Our hope is based upon God’s promises to us, and we know without doubt that if we remain faithful, God will keep his promises to us. *“In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began”* [Titus 1:2].

Faith is the foundation of hope. A person who has deficient faith will have deficient hope. One cannot have hope without faith, though one could have faith and yet not have the right kind of hope. Faith is not hope, and faith cannot take the place of hope. When one has faith, he must allow that faith to grow and produce in him the kind of hope that God expects of his children. It is wrong to assume that just because one has faith, he will automatically have hope. Remember, faith is what it is, and it is not something else.

In 1 Corinthians 13 Paul emphasizes the supremacy of love. Paul says, *“And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity”* [1 Cor. 13:13]. Love of God, of our fellowman, of our brethren, our families and even our enemies is essential to salvation. True love is not easy, but it is absolutely essential.

Faith is not love, and faith cannot take the place of love. One must not assume that just because he has faith, this means he also has love. This is not necessarily the case, as Paul well points out in 1 Corinthians 13:2.

Real love is one of the most difficult things that a person can possibly seek. To develop true love requires diligence on our part. Though we may do many great

things for God, we must be careful that all these things are motivated by genuine love.

Faith is a great thing, but it has limits. Faith can only do what it was designed by God to do. God never designed faith to take the place of love. A Christian needs faith, hope and love. Simply having faith alone is not enough.

Faith, Miracles And Providence

I remember when I was a child the "holiness" people coming into town and setting up a tent which housed their propaganda efforts for a couple of weeks each year. Back then they were called Holy Rollers; most folks didn't pay much attention to them, and this was a big mistake.

Now, however, Neopentecostalism has influenced almost every religion on the earth. Their teachings have had great influence upon the church also in a negative way.

There are, however, no modern-day miracles. In spite of Oral Roberts' decree that humanity should expect a miracle, the truth is that in our day and age there is no such thing as a miracle on any level in any way.

When our Lord walked on the earth incarnate in flesh, there were miracles. When the church was in its infancy in the first century, there were miracles. Prior to coming in the unity of the faith, there were miracles. Now all of these miracles have ceased.

In Ephesians 4:11-15 we read,

¹¹And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; ¹²for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: ¹³till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge

of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: ¹⁴that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; ¹⁵but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ.

This passage teaches that God gave some to be apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. All of these brethren were supernaturally endowed. Macknight in commenting on this passage says,

Paul's meaning is that the different orders of inspired teachers which he mentions were appointed, and supernaturally endowed by God, for the purpose of giving the believing Jews and Gentiles such a complete knowledge of the gospel, as would qualify them for preaching it to unbelievers, and for the building of the body of Christ, by converting them. (James Mac-Knight, *Macknight on the Epistles*, p.335)

How long were these inspired, miraculously endowed individuals to be around? Paul says till (*mechri* — preposition of time) we come in the unity of the faith.

Have we come to the unity of the faith? The inspired writer Jude says that we have come to the unity of the faith in Jude 3. "*Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.*"

Literally, the Greek is "*once for all delivered.*"

Since the faith has been delivered once for all and since Paul is teaching in this passage that supernaturally endowed people would be extant until the unity of the faith came, then it is obvious that miracles have ended.

Additionally, in 1 Corinthians 13:8 Paul declares, *“Charity never faileth; but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; where there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.”* According to Paul prophecies shall fail, tongues shall cease and knowledge shall vanish away.

When will the miraculous things end? Paul answers that question in 1 Corinthians 13:10, *“But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.”*

What is “that which is perfect?” Some have said that this refers to the second coming of Christ, but never is the word *“telios”* ever used to refer to the second coming. Some have thought that it refers to Christ himself, but this cannot be the case, because the word is neuter. It cannot refer to Christ or any other being. It is referring to a thing, not a person.

What then is “that which is perfect?” Paul explains what it is in 2 Timothy 3:16,17, *“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; ¹⁷that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.”*

Paul was referring to the completed New Testament. When that New Testament came, then the miracles would end, because they would no longer be needed. The completed New Testament precluded the need for miracles.

We have demonstrated that miracles have ended. There is no such thing as a modern-day miracle. Yet the Pentecostals say that if you have enough faith, then you can expect a miracle.

The teaching that miracles were designed for believers alone is not in harmony with the scriptures. In fact, Paul says this in 1 Corinthians 14:22: *“Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not.”* One of the primary purposes of miracles was to help folks to believe the word of God.

In truth, a person in our day and time could have the greatest faith the world has ever known, and yet that faith could not accomplish even one miracle, because miracles no longer exist.

Every faithful Christian knows that there are no miracles today. Yet sometimes Christians during times of serious illness or other problems may somehow turn to God with the idea that maybe God will work a miracle for them.

Faithful Christians know that God does not work miraculously today, but God does work providentially. God’s providence has always been superior to miracles anyway with regard to its all-encompassing scope throughout the history of mankind. Great faith cannot produce a miracle, but it can put us in touch with God’s providential care.

God’s providence involves God using natural law to provide for humanity in general and his people in specific ways. A miracle is a violation of natural law, while providential care involves working within the framework of natural law.

Even the greatest faith cannot accomplish a modern-day miracle. As Christians, we should never expect or ask God to do that which is a violation of His own laws. He will not do it and we should not expect it.

Chapter 10

Great Faith

Matthew 8:5-10

Philip Davis

Prologue

Life without faith is no real life at all. The God who made us knew from eternity that man without faith's trust and belief in God would drift and destroy himself on the reefs and rocks of life's perilous sea. What a bleak outlook—no real hope or lasting happiness, no anticipation of enjoying for eternity the value of a life lived in such way that God can bless it. If our only hope is in this life and its accomplishments and temporal significance existence has little meaning. The cynic would be right in asking, "Why am I here?" "What does it matter?" "Why don't we all commit suicide?" Should life's meaning end with our heartbeat then living is not ultimately worth the effort (1 Cor. 15:12-20, 32-58). "If there is no God then everything is permitted" — and maybe even worth a try.

Man without faith continually wonders at his purpose and wanders to find his place in history. He turns to the enigmas of the universe, to profane philosophy or to mystery religions and superstitions attempting to fulfill his longing for meaning [Acts 17:22-34; Rom. 1:19-32; 1 Cor. 1:22-23; 3:18-20; etc.]. He may sample various traditional faiths or he may embrace the contemporary form of sensual idolatry known as philosophical materialism. Some people less given to thinking than to acting simply live out the implications

of such confusion and error in days and years of immorality, addiction and greed.¹ Whether disguised with a mask of ideological respectability or candidly painted as a behavioral mire-pit these amount to about the same thing. Perhaps this is a major motivation for many of the seeming insanities and atrocities of a world sickened by an evolutionary outlook and an ungodly mind. Thank Heaven that we have an alternative—the life of faith.

The final, single telling difference between Christians successful at their calling and those who fail at their discipleship or who are outside the Lord is in the strength, depth and endurance of their faith. Truly, Christianity is the life of faith. Such a life leads us to accept the revelation of the will of God given us in the pages of the Bible. There God traces our origin and projects our destiny. He defines our meaning and develops our potential. The Lord gives life sense and purposefulness and provides the means to live it (Rom. 6-12; 2 Peter 1:3). We crave God in our lives! We need an awareness of His nearness (Acts 17:27-28; James 4:8a; 2 Cor. 13:11; etc.) and the faith that such nearness makes a difference. Godless man can ignore, deny or reject the need of God and the God of that need. Still his human weaknesses and mankind's overall corruption prove that he too is inadequate without God. Man needs Biblical faith—tough faith for tough times (Heb. 12).

Our God will not fail us nor forsake us (Psalm 118:6). By faith we rely on this. Through His Word, He gives us great encouragement to persevere, to keep on keeping on, to remain faithful. He promises us that He will provide for us and sustain us during our earthly sojourn. He assures us that our eternal reward will be great! He expects us to grow in faith and its manifestation, faithfulness (1 Cor. 4:2; 2 Peter 1:5ff). One must have great faith to believe and act upon these things. *"...I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded*

that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day" (2 Tim. 1:12).

Faith And Faithfulness (Faith Is...)

Man finds difficult the task of adequately defining faith's full meaning. The Gospel accounts and Acts emphasize the producing of initial saving faith. Most of the New Testament epistles devote a major part of their message to keeping the saints saved: faithfulness. "*Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen*" (Heb. 11:1). Faith is the belief; faithfulness is living up to that belief, (Eph. 4:1; 5:1-8). Faith is knowledge based upon revelation (Heb. 11:1; 2 Peter 1:19). Faithfulness is living based upon faith (Gal. 5:25). "The faith" is objective and transcendent of man's wishes (Rom. 3:4; Jude 3). Individual faith is subjective—that is, one must arrive at it by using his own faculties with integrity (Eph. 1:15; 1 Thess. 5:21; Rom. 1:16-17). "The faith" is that objective body of information which, with its implied teachings, comprises all that we are to believe and obey concerning the Lord's will.

Our faith is not the same as trust though they work hand in hand (2 Tim. 1:12). John R. W. Stott wrote,

Faith and sight are set in opposition to each other in Scripture, but not faith and reason. True faith is essentially reasonable because it trusts in the character and the promises of God. A believing Christian is one whose mind reflects and rests on these certitudes.

Faith is a word sometimes used to describe all of Christian endeavor. Seen from one perspective all that we do, believe and are reflects faith, great or small. Faith relates to trust, submission, understanding of the Lord's will (Eph. 5:17), and many other matters. Faith

is necessary to our being well-pleasing to God (Heb. 11:6). Faith arises not from miracles but from the Word of God (Rom. 10:17). Faith is knowledge based on revelation (Heb. 11:1; 2 Peter 1:19-21). Our faithfulness will be no greater than our faith (John 8:24). Though one can have an outward form of false fidelity strong “true” faith cannot exist without genuine faithfulness (Matt. 15:18; Mark 7:6; James 2:18). Faith is both a matter of strength or might to match the challenge and endurance to finish the course (2 Tim. 4:7).

Our faith, whether strong or weak, defines or limits the depth, scope, range and duration of our trust. Our trust is that which gives life to our faithfulness. Sincere, heart-felt Bible-obeying faithfulness is the apt description of true discipleship or spirituality. One might say, “Spirituality is as spirituality does.” The greater our faith the more pleasing we are to the Lord.

Why Bother?

The disciples (in Luke 17:5) asked the Lord to increase their faith and, thus, their faithfulness—but why? There are three basic reasons to develop great faith.

Duty (“the right,” example, encouragement of others, commitment to the cause of Christ).

Consequences (reward and punishment; Deut. 30:1; Rom. 11:22).

Love (of God, of fellow man, of self, of truth and integrity, etc.)

One might expand them in at least the following ways. “We must have great faith and faithfulness...”

To go to Heaven (Rev. 2:10-11; 2 Cor. 4:16-18; 5:1-8; John 14:1-3);

To glorify God (Matt. 5:13-16);

To lead others to Christ (2 Tim. 2:2; Gal. 6:1-2);

To enjoy the fellowship of the saints (2 Cor. 13:13; Eph. 5:11);

To do our duty (Eccl. 12:13-14);

To honor our debt (1 Cor. 6:20; 7:23; Rom. 12:1-2);

To vindicate God's trust in us (Heb. 11:16);

To be in position for God's grace to save us (Acts 13:43; Titus 2:11-14);

To enjoy the hundred-fold life (Matt. 6:33; Mark 10:30);

To live with ourselves (our consciences) in light of what we know (1 Peter 3:18-21; 2 Peter 2:20-21);

To honor the heritage we have in the heroes of the faith (Heb. 11);

To own the crown of life (Rev. 2:10-11) and survive the rightful sentence of second death meted out to all who are not covered by the blood of the Christ (Rev. 14:10);

To defeat the powers of spiritual darkness in high places (Eph. 6:12);

To defy the false accusations of Satan (Job 2:4; Rev. 12:10);

To have the joy that comes through these (Phil. 4:4);

To make real the power of prayer in our lives (Phil. 4:6-8,13,19);

To be reasonable (Rom. 12:1-2 — Says that considering the saving mercies of God through Christ mentioned in chapters 1-6 our only rational response is to live lives of faith in a full sacrifice to the service of Him who saved us by His death.)

To enjoy the ultimate in earthly relations between God and man (The book of Hebrews elaborates the theme that in all ways Christ and Christianity are matchless in contrast to any rival life.);

To avoid Hell (Gal. 6:7-9; Rev. 21:8);

Because there is no acceptable alternative (John 6:66-68);

To fulfill our potential [Eph. 4:13-15; Heb. 12:23; Phil. 2:7-15].

Perhaps the most poignant plea for great faith and faithfulness found in the New Testament is that which the Holy Spirit voiced to the Hebrews Christians. Their faith was weakening. They still believed in Jesus Christ, but they were ready to go back to Judaism seeking their relationship to God. There they would again try to find justification although it was not to be found. Pouring out his soul in the attempt to dissuade these discouraged and faltering saints from apostasy the penman pleads:²

*And we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope **unto the end**: That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and **patience** inherit the promises [Heb. 5:11-12; and cf. 5:14; 6:1-6; 9-12; emphasis added — p.d.).*

*²³Let us **hold fast** the profession of our faith without wavering; [for he is faithful that promised;] ²⁴And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: ²⁵Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching. ³⁵...Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward. ³⁶For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. ³⁷For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. ³⁸Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. ³⁹But we are not of **them***

who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul (Heb. 10:23-25; 35-39, Emphasis added).

The context requires ‘believe’ in the sense of “go on believing” — pd).

Just as our Lord kept faith and stayed faithful by remaining “at his post” no matter those factors that tried to turn him away so we, to be faithful, must also fulfill our responsibilities in the kingdom.

¹Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus; ²Who was faithful to him that appointed him, ⁶...as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end (Heb. 3:1-2a, 6).

We must have the attitude of Esther when she determined to enter the king’s throne-room unbidden: “*If I perish, I perish*” (Esther 4:16). Immanuel Kant would say, “Do right though the heavens fall.”

Great Or Little Faith?

Only two passages in the New Testament picture Jesus marveling [and few show him commenting on people of great faith]. Surprisingly neither of them describes one of the apostles in a good light.³ Being among those of his own country who should have most easily accepted him, he “*marveled because of their unbelief*” (Mark 6:6). Matthew 8:10 records a positive instance in which one whose faith might have been suspect by some people’s estimation resulted in untold admiration by the Lord himself. Consider this remarkable incident.

Jesus Heals A Centurion's Servant

⁵And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came unto him a centurion, beseeching him, ⁶And saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented. ⁷And Jesus saith unto him, I will come and heal him. ⁸The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed. ⁹For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it. ¹⁰When Jesus heard it, he marveled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel [Matt. 8:5-10; cf. Luke 7:1-9].

The Faith Of Abraham

What makes the difference between the faith that is weak and faltering and the faith that moves mountains? Great faith keeps the company of great trust—the kind that believes God can and will accomplish his promises. Ponder the example of Abraham.

²⁰He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; ²¹**And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform.** ²²And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness. Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; ²⁴But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that

raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; ²⁵Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification (Rom. 4:20-25, Emphasis added).

¹⁷By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son. ¹⁸Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: ¹⁹Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure (Heb. 11:17-19).

¹Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: ²By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. ³And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; ⁴And patience, experience; and experience, hope: ⁵And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us. ⁶For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly (Rom. 5:1-6).

Since faith rests upon God's Word great faith must be built upon a thorough knowledge and implicit trust in the truth of that Word. Great faith is not one which goes untested but one which stands the test (Heb. 11, etc.). Great faith cannot be the worthless dead or demonic faith of James 2. It must be living and active, going about doing good (James 1:27; Acts 10:38). It must "work by love" (Gal. 5:6). Great faith is the outcome of "the faith" (Jude 3) or the "like precious faith" mentioned in 2 Peter 1:1. Our own subjective

faith must rest upon our conviction that “the faith” is trustworthy. Faith may be said to be the intellectual part of the process and trust to be the volitional part. To repeat, faith is knowledge based on revelation. Trust deals more with accepting and acting upon that revelational knowledge.

Great faith must be one which “walks” according to conviction [2 Cor. 5:7] while carrying a Christian cross [Matt. 16:24]. Great faith must be a growing faith [2 Peter 1:5-11; 3:18]. It cannot shrink back [Heb. 10:38f] or become shipwrecked [1 Tim. 1:19]. Great faith “in the making” may admit its frailties [Mark 9:24]. Great faith assures us that we are on the right track and that we must stay the course [Heb. 10:22ff].

How Can We Gain Stronger Faith And Stay Faithful?

Our task, then, is to develop and maintain a strong faith and to stay faithful to the Lord and to His church. Every facet of our lives must seek this goal if we are to accomplish it. We cannot partition our values and time expecting to be Christian in our attitudes and behavior only occasionally. It is no wonder that God encourages and instructs us about it in so many ways and places.

We can gain strength and courage from God in answer to prayer [John 16:32-17:26; Acts 16:25], and through feasting on His word [James 1:21; Psalm 119:11]. We need to encourage one another [Heb. 3:13; 10:23-25; Gal. 6:1-2,10; Philemon 7]. We must add the “Christian graces” [2 Peter 1:5-7]. We should learn the law of spiritual sowing and reaping [Gal. 6:7-9]. We have to live the Sermon on the Mount. We seek the mind of Christ [Phil. 2:5-8; 1 Peter 2:23]. We put to death the works of the flesh and replace them with the fruit of the Spirit [Gal. 5:19-25]. We remember that we were purchased [Acts 2:28; Eph. 1:14; 1 Cor. 6:20; 7:23], purified for a purpose [Titus 2:14; 1 Cor. 6:11],

and presented to God [Gal. 5:25-27]. We appreciate the goodness and the severity of God [Rom. 11:22]. We contend earnestly for the faith [Jude 3]. We discipline ourselves [1 Cor. 9:27, NNAS]; and we accept the chastisement of God with meekness [Heb. 12]. We humble ourselves in the sight of the Lord [James 4:10; 1 Peter 5:6]. We pray for one another and confess our faults one to another [James 5:16]. We practice the principle of tenderness and forgiveness [Eph. 4:15,31-32]. In other words we do our best to follow the will of God and grow as Christians, keeping our eyes on the goal [Phil. 3:13-15; Heb. 12:2].

Necessary But Not Sufficient

God has placed conditions upon our discipleship that define and sculpt it. He has stated stipulations for our reception of his grace through faith which appropriate and manifest it. The New Testament letters as well as “the law and the prophets” of the Old Testament witness the intent of God not only to save us but to keep us saved. Further, that preservation of the saints never appears as foregone and unconditional but contingent upon our “keeping good faith” with him [cf. Isaiah 26:3]. Try as one might to insert the grace-only and faith-only doctrines of denominationalism into the revelation of God they will not fit. This is not the place, nor is there room adequately to refute these dogmas. Still, the mere mention of the language of Paul, Peter, James, John and the other Bible writers is enough to show that the continuity of our right standing before God depends upon our continued strong faith and walk with him. We must stay faithful.

Reflect on the experience of Enoch. “*And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him*” [Gen. 5:24, Emphasis added]. Enoch’s walk with God was not physical, but moral and ideological. The Hebrews penman uses his as the best example of that

which God means by the faith that avails [at least to that point in the eleventh chapter].

¹Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. ²For by it the elders obtained a good report. ... ⁵By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God. ⁶But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him (Heb. 11:1-2, 5-6).

Did Enoch believe [have strong faith in] God? Certainly! Did his faith receive the blessing before he acted upon it? Not at all—his faith was necessary to please the Father, but it was not sufficient. So it is with all “faith,” even strong faith. One cannot be pleasing without it; but it is not the end of the requirement.

There are many necessities of the faith that one might list which by themselves are powerless, but combined or manifested as God directs are enough to allow a human soul to lay hold upon hope set before him (Heb. 6:18). Each step of the plan of salvation is worthless to save by itself (insufficient) but is a requirement to the reception of God’s grace and the Savior’s redemptive work [necessary]. Peter eloquently enlarged upon our Christian discipleship:

²Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, ³According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: ⁴Whereby are given unto us exceeding great

*and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. ⁵And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; ⁶And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; ⁷And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. ⁸For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. ¹⁰Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for **if ye do these things**, ye shall never fall: ¹¹For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. (2 Peter 1:2-11; emphasis added — pd).*

This list presupposes that mere initial salvation from “past and alien” sins is but a starting point (Eph. 2:3,12). The first law of pardon is necessary, but it is not sufficient for anyone who lives past his baptism. Peter tells us that it provides us with a clean conscience: “Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you—not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 3:21, NNAS; see also Col. 2:12).

Walking On Water

Scriptures are full of unlikely happenings. Jesus was extraordinary. Much that surrounded His ministry

was surprising. There was very little about Him or it that people expected. Each lesson he taught and each wonder He performed seemed only thinly to veil a deeper meaning — a metaphor of life and of the scheme of redemption. One of the most remarkable of these is the incident recounted in the following passage:

22And straightway Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship, and to go before him unto the other side, while he sent the multitudes away. 23And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone. 24But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary. 25And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea. 26And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear. 27But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid. 28And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water. 29And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus. 30But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me. 31And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt? 32And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased. 33Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God [Matt. 14:22-33].

The fourth watch was just before dawn. Jesus appeared as a specter on the breast of the sea, ghostly, pale, silhouetted by the eerie glow of a night far-spent that is giving way to day. What wakened the disciples? Was it the wild sea⁴ churned by the antagonistic winds?⁵ The disciples were “troubled.”⁶ “They were terrified” [NASB]! Their emotions were as turbulent as the water’s surface. They could not believe their eyes. Surely their senses were deceiving them or some horrific illusion of their most dreaded imaginings was troubling the elements.

But it was Jesus! For reasons only he knew — to think, to survey his creation, to demonstrate his power, to test their faith — he left his mountain-top prayer vigil and appeared close to their small craft. Peter was the first to grasp the situation. He must have gained great confidence in the Lord’s ability. Only the day before Jesus had fed the thousands with the five loaves and two fish.

Admirably Peter called to the Savior and vowed his confidence in the Lord’s power to grant him the same skill. Whatever his motive, Peter could not share this moment of common experience with his Lord by waiting on the deck of the boat. He had to move from the mere realization, the belief, the faith that Jesus could do this Himself, to the trust that would test the Lord’s promise to empower him as well. The moment prophesied a parable of Peter’s entire life.

Each of us has his water to walk. Why should one take the risk? Even if we know the Lord Jesus can rise above the treacherous maelstroms of life—can we? He is divine; we are mortal. Does not His relationship with the Father explain to “reasonable” minds why He is an exception to the rule? Anyone knows that ordinary humans had best remain in whatever ark they own when the riptides surge. Stepping out of the boat is diving to disaster. “Not I! My best chance is to stay in the boat.” Though it seems paradoxical, the over-

whelming justification for such a venture is to keep us from drowning. Ultimately only those who by great faith learn to walk on the water of doubt and fear can survive the stormy seas of life. We think our vessel of self-sufficiency to be buoyant and sea-worthy. But in the bowels of the ship is an irreparable hole that is taking on water while its decks are being washed with the foam. Man is not able to bail it out fast enough to stop the disaster. To refuse to walk on water is to “go down with a sinking ship.”

Charles H. Spurgeon wrote with insight,

It will not save me to know that Christ is a Savior; but it will save me to trust him to be my Savior. I shall not be delivered from the wrath to come by believing that his atonement is sufficient; but I shall be saved by making that atonement my trust, my refuge, and my all. The pith, the essence of faith lies in this—a casting of oneself on the promise.

With Peter, each of us by embarking on the adventure of Christianity, getting out of our seemingly safe ship of personal power, seeks to walk water. How impossible! Yet, with God all things are possible.

And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you [Matt. 17:20].

Truly I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, Be taken up and cast into the sea, and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says is going to happen, it will be granted him [Mark 11:23].

Jesus speaks here of our subjective faith based on the objective standard of “the faith,” the revealed word of God. Still, the point is overwhelming: the Lord promises that which we ask according to His will. That takes great faith! That requires true trust! God says, “*Faith is the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen*” (Heb. 11:6). Faith is the substance, the stasis, the foundation, the underpinning of all of our hopes. The hundred-fold life on earth, fellowship with the Deity and our eager anticipation of eternal heaven rely upon our acceptance of the power and authority of God.

We trust. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones tells us, “Faith is a refusal to panic.” Peter may at that moment have fully understood for the first time the words of the frantic father in Mark 9:22-24, who said, “*Lord, I believe. Help thou mine unbelief.*” He was crossing the fine line between theoretical acceptance and practical reliance. “I believe you, but I can’t quite let myself act upon my belief just yet.”

C. S. Lewis wrote, “You never know how much you really believe anything until its truth or falsehood becomes a matter of life and death to you.” George MacDonald stated, “A perfect faith would lift us absolutely above fear.” For Peter to walk the water he must reason as did Corrie ten Boom, “If all things are possible with God, then all things are possible to him who believes in him.” And perhaps Peter did believe — intellectually.

This is important. Is not this the juncture at which most of people meet their downfall of faith? “It looks good on paper; but I’m not ready to invest money in it.” Jesus never gives us a job without giving us the ability to accomplish it. Stated another way, Jesus never asks the impossible. We must lay hold on the promise of God: “*There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but*

will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it" (1 Cor. 10:13).⁷

When Peter believed the words of Jesus that he could walk the water he showed tremendous faith. When he stepped out of the side of that little dinghy he exhibited daring trust. When he started to rely on his own water-walking skills, trust changed to lethal distrust; from the Lord to himself. Cephas knew that alone he would "sink like a rock."

Peter's experience is also an allegory for all of faith and trust. If we are to reach the Lord we have to "get out of the boat" and risk the waves. "I surrender all, I surrender all. All to thee, my blessed Savior, I surrender all." Grant Peter a little credit. Water walking is no ordinary accomplishment. Grant yourself some credit. Trusting Jesus is a gigantic surrender of self-reliance, self-will and even of self. It is letting Him take control and "save to the uttermost" (Heb. 7:25; Gal. 2:20).

You see, we cannot in any ultimate sense, save ourselves. Yes, we can save ourselves "from this untoward generation," by accepting God's grace through our obedient faith in him culminating in the washing away of our sins in baptism by the Christ's shed blood (Acts 2:40; 22:16). We can "save ourselves" by working out our "*own salvation with fear and trembling*" (Phil. 2:12), conforming to his will (Rom. 12:1-2), adding to our faith (2 Peter 1:5-11), letting Christ be formed in us (Gal. 4:19), internalizing the mind of Christ (Phil. 2:5-8) and being "faithful unto death" (Rev. 2:10-11). These are only a few of the factors involved in faithfulness. But each of us in great faith must trust Jesus to be able to accomplish these.

So, when one acts faithfully to the Lord he is only co-operating with God's will and accepting his salvation thereby (Col. 2:12). This is no "grace-only" affair. The Lord beckoned; Peter believed and walked. He was empowered (blessed) when he acted upon belief.⁸ When

Peter “turned back” in his mind he would have plunged to the depths had he not remembered who is the Redeemer and reached out to take his hand [Luke 9:62]. Is this not true of our personal quests of faith? “Our sufficiency is not of ourselves but of God” (2 Cor. 3:5). What was that?! I cannot “go it alone.” I may think my ship will weather the gale. Yet without a relation to God this life is a bleak, stormy raging ocean crashing around me, threatening to pull me to its floor. Without God it makes good its promise; and I lie forgotten under the chilly depth of its watery shroud.

We survive spiritually, as Peter did, by our awareness and acknowledgment of God in our lives. Paul invokes the immanence of Deity — the utter nearness of the Divine — to the lives of the Athenians gathered to debate theories powerless to save souls [Acts 17:26ff]. Can you imagine — they were arguing philosophy among themselves while their souls were in peril. They championed theories admitted by all but the most callow or callous of partisans to be without any value beyond this mortal and moral realm (1 Cor. 1:17-31). Even those who still clutched their superstitions and held to the mythic Pantheon knew in their hearts that they were hopelessly entangled in a net of conflicting values and beliefs. Whose god would rule? Which tradition would be imposed? What is the real meaning of life?

Yet, unlike Peter’s tentative trust and faltering faith in the God of glory, these feverishly clawed at the Gordian knot tied in the end of their frayed philosophical and theological rope — and their hands were slipping. Peter gripped the Savior’s hand; they dangled on a tattered strand. Abraham Lincoln wrote, “Faith is not believing that God can, but that God will.” Jesus is the Lord who says to us, “*I will never leave thee nor forsake thee*” (Heb. 13:5), and “*Cast...all your cares on him for he careth for you*” (1 Peter 5:7). Faithfulness is

keeping our faith and acting upon the trust we place in his promises.

Do we believe the Word of the Lord? Do we believe the Lord of the Word? Others may doubt. Others may turn their eyes and minds away from Him. They may fall prey to temptation or despair. Whatever they may do we must trust implicitly and invest our lives in our conviction. We must “hold fast our integrity” (Job 2:3b; 13:15). Someone has said, “To have faith is to believe the task ahead of us is never as great as the Power behind us.” Oswald Chambers warned,

Beware of worshipping Jesus as the Son of God and professing your faith in him as the Savior of the world, while you blaspheme him by the complete evidence in your daily life that he is powerless to do anything in and through you.

We must decide—and follow through—on the direction of our lives. With Peter we must by great faith vow, “*Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee*” (Matt. 26:35). Faithfulness is acting consistently upon that vow. When we start sinking in the world’s dark waters of doubt we must again reach out to the only One who can save us. By great faith may we ever live in such a way as to someday hear, “*Well done, good and faithful servant...enter thou into the joy of thy lord*” (Matt. 25:23).⁹

END NOTES

¹A few moments before I wrote these words an alcoholic walked in off the street wanting sympathy and transportation to his AA meeting. I felt helpless because of his seemingly hopeless attitude and condition of life.

²Commenting on verses 36-37, R. C. H. Lenski writes, “*hupomonee* is bravely remaining under a load

and holding out...They need this perseverance so that (*hina* — contemplated result), by having done (effective aorist) the will of God (his good and gracious, saving will, John 6:40), you may carry off the promise, objective, what God has promised, namely everlasting life. We ought to hold fast our confidence, it would be folly to throw it away; all we need is perseverance so that, having done God's will, his great promise will fall into our lap; for Christ is on the way without delay, but only faith will obtain life; God's soul rejects him who shrinks back in cowardice."

³Strong's number G2296 *thaumazo*, thou-mad'-zo; from G2295; to wonder; by impl. to admire:—admire, have in admiration, marvel, wonder.

⁴Strong's number G928 *basanizo*; from G931; to torture:—pain, toil, torment, toss, vex.

⁵Strong's number G5015 *tarasso*, to stir or agitate (boil water):—trouble. and number G1727 *enantios*; from G1725; opposite; fig. antagonistic:—[over] against, contrary. (wind)

⁶G5015 *tarasso*

⁷I write this remembering a recent occasion when I went to the hospital room of a distraught Christian man. His family situation had so burdened him that he tried to take his life. Faith and faithfulness tell us that suicide is not the answer. Yet by the time he got to this state he was so despondent that he was no longer reasoning clearly.

⁸This is a major theme of Hebrews 11.

⁹There are so many scriptures that pertain to this topic that it is hard to limit the list. Below is a partial list of encouraging passages for those who wish further to fortify their faith and faithfulness: Matt. 5:10-12; 13:43; 25:31-34; Mark 10:29-30; John 4:14; 6:35; 8:12; 14:1-3; Rom. 8:16-28; 31-35; 37-39; 2 Cor. 1:3-4a; 4:16-5:8; Gal. 6:9; Phil. 3:20-21; 4:19; Col. 3:4; 1 Thess. 1:10; 3:13; 5:8-11; 1 Tim. 4:16; 2 Tim. 4:7-8; Heb. 4:9; 14-16; 1 Peter 1:3-9; 5:10; 2 Peter 1:8-11;

3:13-15; 1 John 2:25; 5:11-12; Jude 24-25; Rev. 2:7, 10b-11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21.

Chapter 11

Law Of Faith **Romans 3:27**

Gilbert Gough

We are living in a society that is ruled by thousands and thousands of laws. Yet, in this society we have tremendous opposition and rebellion to the laws of the land by people who have adopted the antinomian philosophy of life. This false philosophy leads to extremism and utter chaos. At the same time we have those in our society who want to make more laws for citizens to take away the freedoms we now enjoy. The weakness of societal law has always been that it is primarily of human origin. When men think that they have the answer to society's problems, they are doomed to failure. The wise man wrote, "*There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death*" (Prov. 14:12; 16:25). Also, the prophet Jeremiah observed, "*O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps*" (Jer. 10:23). If our society continues to follow the humanistic pattern that "man is the measure of all things" and the existential philosophy that truth is relative and subject to our feelings, then soon, if not already, we will be like Israel during the days of the Judges where the Bible records that "*...every man did that which was right in his own eyes*" (Judges 17:6).

Laws are necessary for there to be order in the universe. Without laws of nature mankind could not survive. The laws of procreation must not change lest

man be without power to reproduce. The law of biogenesis must not change lest every animal species and all men cease to exist. Laws of chemistry, by which water consists, must remain constant or all organic life will end.

What Is Law?

Law is absolutely necessary for man to be happy and have a successful existence. Without law there would be chaos and tyranny. An English judge by the name of Blackstone said law is "That which commands the right and prohibits the wrong." He is correct in his definition, but law must be enforced by some power or authority in order to determine who or what commands the right and prohibits the wrong. By a synopsis of English dictionaries we learn that law is rule or restraint of action; code of conduct; set of rules; that which governs and gives conditions; legislated system of regulations. Thus, if there is no law, then there is no restraint or guidance. If there is no restraint or guidance, then chaos reigns and man is left unprotected from evil. It matters not whether you are involved in a ball game, in government, in the home, or in school, law is necessary for orderly existence and participation.

What Is "The Law Of Faith?"

There is a law of faith revealed in the Bible. The only explicit reference to the law of faith is found in **Romans 3:27**, "*Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith.*" Whatever this "law of faith" is, it is contrasted with a law that is "excluded." What is this "law of faith?"

It is not the law of Patriarchy. This ancient law is not under discussion in Romans 3. This oral law lasted from the beginning until Sinai for the Jews, but it lasted until the new will and testament of Christ for the

Gentiles. Since Christ's last will and testament is for all men, Jew and Gentile, then Patriarchy has ended.

It is not the law of Moses. First, when Paul was writing his inspired epistles of Romans and Galatians, part of his purpose for writing these epistles was to combat the Judaizing teachers who were trying to bind the law of Moses on Christians even though the law of Moses was no longer a binding law. This law was the "excluded" law of our key verse. Second, in Hebrews 8:13 Paul wrote that the first law was "old" and "*that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away.*" In Hebrews 7:18 Paul had already said of Moses' law, "*For there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof.*" The law was a "shadow" of the substance [Heb. 10:1], therefore it would be taken away for the "good things to come" [Heb. 10:9]. Paul wrote the Colossian brethren a similar message in chapter 2 verse 14, "*Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross.*" To the churches of Galatia he wrote, "*Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster*" [Gal. 3:24,25]. That schoolmaster was the law of Moses. Take note that when "faith is come," no one would be under the schoolmaster.

The "law of faith" is that law which comes from faith. The source of this faith is not from our personal faith. By personal faith it is meant our response to God's message. Law is not made up of how we choose to respond to God's message. In fact, our personal faith in God and His Word comes by the hearing of the Word [Rom. 10:17]. Our trust and confidence in God is based upon the nature of God. God cannot lie [Titus 1:2; Heb. 6:18], therefore whatever God requires we respond in faith and obedience [e.g. James 2:14-26]. This personal

faith is necessary to salvation (Heb. 11:6), but it is not the source of law. So what is this faith from whence this law comes?

The prepositional phrase “of faith” means that the law comes from the total system of truth as revealed in the gospel. Paul wrote in Romans 1:16,17, *“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.”* Paul introduces the gospel of Christ which is the good news of our salvation through Christ. He says *“therein is the righteousness of God revealed.”* It is not God’s personal righteousness under consideration, but it is the righteousness God has revealed through the gospel. It is this righteousness that men must obey (Acts 10:35; Psalm 119:172). So, the saving gospel through Christ is the righteousness of God revealed “from [by, ek] faith to [eis] faith.” From the objective faith of God’s gospel to man’s responsive faith in trust and obedience.

There are other passages to support this claim of the phrase “of faith” meaning the total system of truth revealed in the gospel. Jude writes, *“Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that **ye should earnestly contend for the faith** which was once delivered unto the saints”* (Jude 3). Paul exhorted the young preacher Timothy at the end of his first epistle to him with these words: *“O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called: Which some professing have erred **concerning the faith**. Grace be with thee. Amen”* (1 Tim. 6:20,21). Also, in his second epistle to Timothy Paul writes, *“Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus”* (2 Tim. 1:13). The “form of

sound words” is the truth Christians hold dear “*in faith and love.*” The church of Colossae was told that their daily walking with Christ was to be firmly established in the faith. “*As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: Rooted and built up in him, and **stablished in the faith**, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving*” [Col. 2:6,7]. From this source of faith, which is the gospel, the righteousness of God, the truth, comes law, “the law of faith.”

This objective faith comes to us through Christ and is indicated in Paul’s writings. In the very context where “the law of faith” is mentioned, Paul writes, “*Even the righteousness of God which is **by faith of Jesus Christ** unto all and upon all them that believe...*” (Rom. 3:22). This is not discussing the personal faith of Jesus, but the system of faith by which man is saved. The Galatian letter further affirms objective faith comes through Christ.

*¹⁶Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by **the faith of Jesus Christ**, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified **by the faith of Christ**, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified... ²⁰I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live **by the faith of the Son of God**, who loved me, and gave himself for me... ²²But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise **by faith of Jesus Christ** might be given to them that believe [Gal. 2:16,20; 3:22].*

In Philippians 3:9 Paul wrote, “*And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is **through the faith of Christ**,*

the righteousness which is of God by faith" (Phil. 3:9). In the context of Ephesians 4 where Paul is discussing unity among brethren, he writes, "*Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ*" (v.13).

Now that it has been ascertained that "of faith" means the objective standard of truth which is the gospel, and it has been learned that this standard of truth came to us through Jesus Christ, then "the law" under consideration is the standard by which right and wrong are determined which is "by the faith of Christ." After all, Jesus has all authority, and thus every right to rule (Matt. 20:18). He has the God-given right to legislate for He is the "one lawgiver" (James 4:12). Thus, Paul in Romans 3:27 describes the Lawgiver's law as "the law of faith."

The Law Of Faith Is Also Called...

The law of Christ. In Galatians 6:2 Paul wrote, "*Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.*" Also, he wrote to the Corinthians, "*To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law*" (1 Cor. 9:21). It is hard to imagine "*the King of kings, and the Lord of lords*" (1 Tim. 6:15; Rev. 17:14; 19:16) reigning and ruling over His kingdom (Eph. 5:5; Col. 1:13; 2 Peter 1:11; Rev. 1:9) without law. However, many are imagining that very situation where the church is under grace and under no law of any kind. How utterly preposterous! The conditions for entering into the grace of Christ are the LAW OF CHRIST. The grace of Christ and the law of Christ are not mutually exclusive, but are in perfect harmony.

The perfect law of liberty. In James 1:25 James wrote, "*But whoso looketh into the perfect law of*

liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed." The one who reaps the blessing is the one who continues in the perfect law of liberty. It is a perfect law because it can set us free. It does not set us free from responsibility toward God. Obedience is still a must. However, the perfect law does set us free from the bondage of Satan. In verses 13-15 James was describing how men can be seduced and overcome by Satan and end up being separated from God. Men, though, can be set at liberty if they will be "doers of the word," that is, keep on obeying Christ's law. Beware: The very law that can give liberty is the law men will be judged by in the judgment. All men "shall be judged by the law of liberty" (James 2:12).

The royal law. James also said of Christ's law: "*If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself, ye do well.*" It is a "royal law" because it is given by the One who has preeminence (Col. 1:18) and to Whom "every knee should bow" (Phil. 2:9-11). Christ is the royal lawgiver (James 4:12).

The law of the Spirit of life. Paul wrote in Romans 8:2: "*For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.*" There is life in God's Son (1 John 5:11-13) when there is submission to Christ's law. The Spirit of God revealed Christ's message to inspired men just as Jesus said He would (John 14:26; 15:26; 16:7-13), and that message was the law which brings life, not sin and death. Even though King David was not under "the law of the Spirit of life," yet he realized that whatever law came from God protected him from sin. "*Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee*" (Psalm 119:11). The "word" is used interchangeably throughout Psalms 119 with "law" (e.g. 1:1,18). The law of the Spirit of life protects Christians from sin.

The law of God. Paul wrote, “For I delight in the law of God after the inward man...I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin” (Rom. 7:22,25).

Laws into their mind. Paul in his Hebrew letter quoted from Jeremiah 31:31-34. “For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people” (8:10).

The law of love. Paul implies that Christ’s law is a law of love by writing, “Love worketh no ill to his neighbor: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law” (Rom. 13:10).

The Law Of Faith Means...

Keeping the commandments of Christ out of a heart of love. Jesus made it clear to His disciples, “He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him” (John 14:21). A man may say he loves Jesus, yet if “he keepeth not his commandments” John says he “is a liar, and the truth is not in him” (1 John 2:4). That is why Jesus said to the disciples, “If ye love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15). Or as John writes in 1 John 5:3, “For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.” As the old saying goes, “Show me a man who loves Christ, and I will show you a man who will keep Christ’s commandments.” Or “show me a man who is keeping God’s commandments, and I will show you a man who loves God.” Biblical love (*agape*) means to do your duty

toward God, your fellowman, and yourself as God requires [Matt. 22:37-39].

Obeying the charges of inspiration. When a father brought his child before who was possessed by a foul spirit, Jesus spoke to the evil spirit and said, *“Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him”* (Mark 9:25). Immediately the evil spirit departed from the child crying. The charge of the Lord demanded instant obedience. Jesus laid down the law to that demon of hell. Now, how much more should Christians today respond to the charges of inspiration? Paul gave direct charges to Timothy at least four times in his two epistles to the younger preacher. (1) *“This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare”* (1 Tim. 1:3). (2) *“I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, that thou observe these things without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality”* (1 Tim. 5:21). (3) *“I give thee charge in the sight of God...That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ”* (1 Tim. 6:13,14). (4) *“I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word...”* (2 Tim. 4:1,2). And Paul told Timothy to give charges to those for whom he preached. (1) *“As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine”* (1 Tim. 1:3). (2) *“And these things give in charge, that they may be blameless”* (1 Tim. 5:7). (3) *“Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy”* (1 Tim. 6:17).

Being doers of the word. James gives a clear explanation in chapter 1 verse 21. “Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls. But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.” Everyone must be a hearer of the word. Everyone must receive the word. And everyone must be a “doer” of the word. Christianity is a religion of doing God’s will. Jesus said, “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven” (Matt. 7:21). He continues by saying that when the day of judgment comes, many will profess to be followers of Jesus. “Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works” (Matt. 7:22)? But Jesus’ response was, “I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (Matt. 7:23). In Luke’s account he has Jesus asking the probing question, “And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say” (Luke 6:46)? Yes, when Christ’s law is obeyed, all will be doers of the word.

The Law Of Faith Requires Obedience To Be Saved

Obedience to the conditions of salvation is obedience to Christ’s law. Jesus the great lawgiver required men to hear the word of God (Matt. 13:9; Rom. 10:17), to believe in Jesus (John 8:24; Mark 16:16; John 3:16), to confess Him before men (Matt. 10:32; Rom. 10:9, 10), and be baptized in order to be saved (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 1 Peter 3:21). No one can be saved unless they obey the words of Christ (Heb. 5:9). Obeying the plan of salvation results because law requires the right things to do. In order to be saved

there are conditions set in the law of Christ and must be obeyed.

Yet, if one desires salvation they must realize that law prohibits the wrong. It is wrong to remain in unbelief (John 3:18; Heb. 3:12). It is wrong to be impenitent (Matt. 11:20). It is wrong to fail to confess Christ (Matt. 10:33). It is wrong to reject baptism (Luke 7:30).

Conclusion

Law is good if it is the law God requires men to obey. The law of Moses was good and perfect for the purposes God intended. It was good to learn and know of sin (Rom. 7:7; cf. 3:20; 4:15; Psalm 119:11). It was holy and righteous and something to delight in (Rom. 7:12; cf. Psalm 119:97, 174). If these things were true of the old law which has been done away, how much more precious is the law of Christ? Perhaps it would be good for the book of Hebrews to be studied again. Hebrews emphasizes how the new law is better than the old (Heb. 7:19,22; 8:6).

The law of faith must not be altered by men. Who is man that he can change the law of God? The scripture gives many warnings about tampering with its laws (Gal. 1:6-9; 1 Cor. 4:6; Rev. 22:18, 19).

Chapter 12

One Faith

Ephesians 4:5

Garland M. Robinson

What faith are you?

This question is often asked by those who have no idea what they are asking. The concept of the world is that there are “many faiths” and that everyone must be of one faith or another. It is thought of as if it were a smorgasbord religion where each one has the liberty to choose and be whatever he/she desires. With them, it matters not what you are in regards to what faith you espouse. The current thinking is that good people from all faiths are pleasing to God and will enjoy each other’s company in heaven.

It ought to come as no surprise that this lesson concerns itself with answering the question, “Are all faiths pleasing to God?” Though men may hold great delight in the fact they can choose what they want from a variety of many faiths, the question is, “What does God say about it?” “What is heaven’s word on the subject?” Should not everyone concern themselves with searching to find the answer to these questions? Since it is God that made us and not we ourselves (Psalm 100:3), since He gave His Son to die for sinful men (John 3:16), since Jesus went to prepare a place for the faithful (John 14:1-3), should we not concern ourselves with what He says and what He desires? Any other answer than a resounding YES to these questions would be astonishing!

Almighty God, our Father in heaven above, what is thy will on the subject? What does thy word say about it? Let us have the sentiment of Samuel as he listened to Jehovah: "...*Speak; for thy servant heareth*" (1 Sam. 3:10).

There Is One Faith

Ephesians chapter four and verse five says there is "**one faith.**" That settles the matter. There ought to be no other question about it. However, this does not settle it for literally thousands and millions of people in the world today. Somehow, people seem oblivious to this clear, precise, distinct, definite word from the Lord. They stare at this verse with "glazed-over eyes." They see it, they read it, but do not comprehend its plain words. Its meaning is not too profound. Its message is not hidden in obscurity. Its point is not difficult. It is rather simple and elementary. **There is "ONE FAITH."** You can't get any plainer than that! In fact, one would need help to misunderstand it. And, sad to say, there are many who are willing to assist the unsuspecting in missing its message.

It is interesting that in the context of Ephesians 4:5 there are seven "ones" that are listed. Read them (vs.4-6):

⁴There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; ⁵One Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

There is "**one body.**" The one body is the church of Christ, the kingdom of Christ (Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18). There is only one body/church, not two, two hundred or two thousand.

There is **“one Spirit.”** The one Spirit is the Holy Spirit, one of three members of the Godhead [Eph. 2:18; 3:16; 4:30].

There is **“one hope.”** The one hope is that which is not only desired, but includes expectation and anticipation. The one hope is spiritual in nature and includes Jesus the Christ [1 Tim. 1:1; Col. 1:27], the Lord’s second coming [Titus 1:12-13], the resurrection of the dead [Acts 23:8] and our eternal reward in heaven [Col. 1:5; 1 Peter 1:3-4].

There is **“one Lord.”** Jesus the Christ is the one Lord [Acts 2:36; 10:36; 1 Cor. 8:6]. Salvation from sins is found only in him [Acts 4:12; John 14:6]. There are not “many” lords. Mohammed (the lord of Islam) or Buddha (Buddhism, Siddhartha Gautama, the enlightened one) or Brahman (the god of Hinduism) are not Lord.

There is **“one baptism.”** Immersion in water for the forgiveness of sins is the one baptism. This is the baptism of the great commission [Matt. 28:18-20]. It was commanded on Pentecost [Acts 2:38].

There is **“one faith.”** This does not say there are “faiths” (plural). It is singular, one.

So many in the world believe there is one Spirit, one Lord, one God and perhaps even one hope. However, they will adamantly say there are many bodies, many faiths and many baptisms! Their contention is that we must be open to the idea of many bodies, faiths and baptisms. But I, nor you, can get away from the fact that Heaven says there is ONE body, ONE Spirit, ONE hope, ONE Lord, ONE faith, ONE baptism, ONE God. “One” does not mean two or more. It means one and no more.

What The One Faith Is Not

The one faith is not one’s personal faith, one’s own belief. This would not and does not make sense.

What would be the point? What knowledge or understanding would this cause one to possess? If I have my own faith and you have your own faith and yet another has their own faith, that adds up to three separate faiths. Yet the scripture is clear that there is only one faith.

The one faith is not simply a common belief in Jesus as the Savior. Some suggest that though there are many denominations, we all have a common faith [belief] that Jesus is Lord and Savior, therefore, we all have “one faith.” This does not match the teaching of the scriptures because it spells confusion and division.

The one faith is not one’s denomination. It is often used this way in every day conversation. That is why people ask, “what faith are you?” By that they mean, “what denomination are you a member of?” This likewise spells confusion and division and is contrary to everything the New Testament teaches. Jesus prayed for unity, not denominationalism [division] [John 17:20-21]. We are to strive to keep “*the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace*” [Eph. 1:3].

The one faith is not salvation by “faith only.” Many contend this is a wholesome doctrine and full of comfort. But one major thing is wrong concerning it, it lacks authority from the Word of God. To the contrary, the Bible firmly reveals that salvation is “*not by faith only*” [James 2:24].

What The One Faith Is

The “one faith” is the faith of Christ — the Law of Christ. ¹¹“According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord: ¹²In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by **the faith of him**” [Eph. 3:11-12]. “And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through **the faith of Christ**, the righteousness which is of God by faith” [Phil. 3:9].

*“My brethren, have not **the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons**”* [James 2:1]. The one faith is the Law of God by which all men must live and by which they will be judged [cf. John 4:48]. It is the “system of faith” by which men obey God and continue pleasing in his sight. The “one faith” is THE faith — the WAY of the Lord. The “one faith” is set in contrast to one’s personal faith.

One Faith

The “one faith” can be preached. *“And after certain days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, which was a Jewess, he sent for Paul, and heard him concerning **the faith in Christ**”* [Acts 24:24]. Concerning Saul of Tarsus we read, *“But they had heard only, That he which persecuted us in times past now **preacheth the faith which once he destroyed**”* [Gal. 1:23]. Paul was not preaching himself nor his personal faith. He was preaching the Word of God, the Faith, to which all men are amenable.

The “one faith” can be heard. ²*“This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by **the hearing of faith**? ⁵He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by **the hearing of faith**”* [Gal. 3:2,5]? “The hearing of faith” is when we hear the Word of God. Therefore, Christians are not justified by the works of the Law of Moses, they are justified by their obedience to **the faith** which they have heard.

The “one faith” can be obeyed. *“And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were **obedient to the faith**”* [Acts 6:7]. *“By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for*

obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name" (Rom. 1:5). "But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for **the obedience of faith**" (Rom. 16:26). Simply hearing the faith [word of God] does not save. But when one hears the word of God, and by their personal faith are moved to respond in obedience to what they have heard, salvation is the result.

The "one faith" can be defended. "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should **earnestly contend for the faith** which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3). "**Fight the good fight of faith**, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses" (1 Tim. 6:12). Every Christian is obligated to defend the Way of God, the Word of God, the Lord's church.

One can be sound in the "one faith." "This witness is true. Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be **sound in the faith**" (Titus 1:13). "That the aged men be sober, grave, temperate, **sound in faith**, in charity, in patience" (Titus 2:2).

One can be weak in the "one faith." "Him that is **weak in the faith** receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations" (Rom. 14:1).

The "one faith" can be resisted, denied and abandoned. "But Elymas the sorcerer [for so is his name by interpretation] withstood them, seeking to **turn away the deputy from the faith**" (Acts 13:8). "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times **some shall depart from the faith**, giving heed

to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils" (1 Tim. 4:1). ¹⁸"This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare; ¹⁹Holding faith, and a good conscience; which **some having put away concerning faith** have made shipwreck" (1 Tim. 1:18-19). "But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath **denied the faith**, and is worse than an infidel" (1 Tim. 5:8). "For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have **erred from the faith**, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows" (1 Tim. 6:10). "Which **some professing have erred concerning the faith...**" (1 Tim. 6:21). "Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, **reprobate concerning the faith**" (2 Tim. 3:8).

Those who resist and deny the faith will not receive the eternal inheritance while those who hold fast to the faith will reap eternal life. The church at Pergamum had not denied the faith. "I know thy works and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is: and **thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith**, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth" (Rev. 2:13).

The "one faith" combats and defeats error.
⁸"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: ⁹Whom **resist stedfast in the faith**, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world" (1 Peter 5:8-9). We are to use the "sword of the Spirit" [the Bible, the Word of God, the Faith once for all delivered unto the saints] in fighting the good warfare in resisting every evil way [Eph. 6:17; 1 Tim. 1:18; 2 Cor. 10:4-5; Rom. 1:16].

We should love each other in the “one faith.” “All that are with me salute thee. Greet them that **love us in the faith**. Grace be with you all. Amen” [Titus 3:15].

Christians must continue in the “one faith.” “Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to **continue in the faith**, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God” [Acts 14:22]. “And so were the churches **established in the faith**, and increased in number daily” [Acts 16:5]. “Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that **ye stand fast** in one spirit, with one mind striving together for **the faith** of the gospel” [Phil. 1:27].

One must be bold in the “one faith.” “For they that have used the office of a deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree, and **great boldness in the faith** which is in Christ Jesus” [1 Tim. 3:13].

One must live every day by the “one faith.” “For **we walk by faith**, not by sight” [2 Cor. 5:7]. “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh **I live by the faith** of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me” [Gal. 2:20]. “If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, **nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine**, whereunto thou hast attained” [1 Tim. 4:6].

One must stand fast in the “one faith.” “Watch ye, **stand fast in the faith**, quit you like men, be strong” [1 Cor. 16:13]. “If ye **continue in the faith** grounded and settled, and be not moved away from

the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister" (Col. 1:23). "**Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving**" (Col. 2:7). "*I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith*" (2 Tim. 4:7).

We resist the devil by remaining steadfast in the faith. "*Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world*" (1 Peter 5:9).

One must examine himself to see if he is steadfast in the "one faith." "*Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates*" (2 Cor. 13:5)?

The "one faith" is the law by which one is justified. "*Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified*" (Gal. 2:16).

There is unity in the "one faith." "*Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ*" (Eph. 4:13).

The "one faith" is set in contrast to the Law of Moses. ²²"*But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.* ²³*But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith*

which should afterwards be revealed. ²⁴Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. ²⁵But after that **faith is come**, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. ²⁶For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. ²⁷For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Gal. 3:22-27).

A heavenly reward is given to those who keep "the faith." "Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that **keep the commandments of God, and the faith** of Jesus. ¹³And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them" [Rev. 14:12-13].

Synonyms Of The One Faith

There are many synonyms of the one faith in the New Testament. These words are used interchangeably for they all speak of the same thing.

The "one faith" is the Truth of Christ. "Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist **the truth**: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning **the faith**" [2 Tim. 3:8]. "And ye shall know **the truth**, and **the truth** shall make you free" [John 8:32]. "For the law was given by Moses, but grace and **truth** came by Jesus Christ" [John 1:17]. "Sanctify them through thy truth: **thy word is truth**" [John 17:17]. "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey **the truth**, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you" [Gal. 3:1]? "In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard **the word of truth, the gospel** of your salvation..." [Eph. 1:13]. "For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in **the word of the truth of the gospel**" [Col.

1:5). *“Of his own will begat he us with **the word of truth**, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures”* (James 1:18).

The “one faith” is the Gospel of Christ. *“And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching **the gospel** of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people”* (Matt. 4:23). ¹⁵*“And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and **preach the gospel** to every creature. ¹⁶He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned”* (Mark 16:15-16). *“And they, when they had testified and **preached the word** of the Lord, returned to Jerusalem, and **preached the gospel** in many villages of the Samaritans”* (Acts 8:25). *“For I am not ashamed of **the gospel** of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek”* (Rom. 1:16). *“That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by **the gospel**”* (Eph. 3:6). *“But the other of love, knowing that I am set for **the defence of the gospel**”* (Phil. 1:17). *“Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for **the faith of the gospel**”* (Phil. 1:27). *“For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that **obey not the gospel** of God”* [1 Peter 4:17]?

The “one faith” is the Word of Christ. *“When any one heareth **the word of the kingdom**, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side”* (Matt. 13:19). *“And it came to pass, that, as the people pressed upon him to hear **the word of God**, he stood*

by the lake of Gennesaret" (Luke 5:1). "Now the parable is this: The seed is the **word of God**" (Luke 8:11). "And he answered and said unto them, My mother and my brethren are these which hear the **word of God**, and do it" (Luke 8:21). "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: **the word** that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day" (John 12:48). "Howbeit many of them which heard **the word** believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand" (Acts 4:4). "And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake **the word of God** with boldness" (Acts 4:31). "And **the word of God** increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith" (Acts 6:7). "Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching **the word**" (Acts 8:4). "But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, **the word of faith**, which we preach" (Rom. 10:8). "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" (2 Tim. 4:2).

The "one faith" is called the words of Life. "Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the **words of this life**" (Acts 5:20). "Holding forth the **word of life**; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain" (Phil. 2:16). "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of **the Word of life**" (1 John 1:1). "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: **the words** that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life" (John 6:63).

The “one faith” is called Light. *“The people which sat in darkness saw great **light**; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death **light** is sprung up”* (Matt. 4:16; cf. Luke 1:79; 2:32; Acts 26:18). *“For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov’d. ²¹But he that doeth truth cometh to the **light**, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God”* (John 3:20). *“In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the **light of the glorious gospel** of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them”* (2 Cor. 4:4). *“Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you: because the darkness is past, and the **true light** now shineth. ⁹He that saith he is in the **light**, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now. ¹⁰He that loveth his brother abideth in the **light**, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him”* (1 John 2:8-10).

The Origin Of The One Faith

The origin of the one faith is God, not man. Paul told the brethren of Galatia, *“But I certify you, brethren, that **the gospel** which was preached of me is **not after man**. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but **by the revelation of Jesus Christ**”* (Gal. 1:11-12). It was revealed to those of Ephesus:

³How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, ⁴Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) ⁵Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit (Eph. 3:3-5).

¹⁶All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: ¹⁷That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Tim. 3:16-17). “For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (2 Peter 1:21). Jesus said, “And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd”(John 10:16). One shepherd necessitates one law, one faith.

The Demand Of The One Faith

The DEMAND of the one faith is obedience. Faith without obedience (works) is dead (barren, worthless) [James 2:26]. Jesus said,

*²¹Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that **doeth the will** of my Father which is in heaven. ²²Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? ²³And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity (Matt. 7:21-23).*

Jesus is the giver of salvation to those who obey him. ⁸“Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; ⁹And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him” (Heb. 5:8-9).

Obedience demands doing the will of the Lord. Jesus said that all men MUST:

BELIEVE in Him — *“I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins”* (John 8:24). *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life”* (John 3:16). *“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned”* (Mark 16:16).

REPENT of their sins — *“I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish”* (Luke 13:3). *“And they went out, and preached that men should repent”* (Mark 6:12). *“Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost”* (Acts 2:38). *“And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent”* (Acts 17:30).

CONFESS faith in Jesus as the Son of God — *“Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. ³³But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven”* (Matt. 10:32-33). *“And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God”* (Acts 8:37). ⁹*“That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. ¹⁰For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation”* (Rom. 10:9-10).

Be BAPTIZED (immersed) in water — *“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned”* (Mark 16:16). *“Then*

Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:38). "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16). "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 3:21).

³Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? ⁴Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. ⁵For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: ⁶Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. ... ¹⁷But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. ¹⁸Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness (Rom. 6:3-6, 17-18).

Be FAITHFUL all the days of your life. *"Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful" (1 Cor. 4:2). "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Cor. 15:58). "But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be*

saved" (Matt. 24:13). "...*Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life*" (Rev. 2:10).

The End Of The One Faith

The end of the one faith is eternal life. "*And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life*" (Matt. 19:29). "*And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal*" (Matt. 25:46). "*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life*" (John 3:16). "*But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life*" (Rom. 6:22). "*For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting*" (Gal. 6:8). "*Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting*" (1 Tim. 1:16).

Respect For The One Faith

Respect for the one faith is demanded. The apostles could only "bind" (teach) what had been bound in heaven. They had to respect the divine limits which Jesus placed upon them. Jesus said, "*And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven*" (Matt. 16:19). The force of the language used in this verse demands that the apostles could only "bind" what had already been

bound in heaven and could only loose what had already been loosed in heaven. It was not their prerogative to make laws or loose laws for God.

No one should think above that which is written in the Bible (1 Cor. 4:6). *“Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son”* (2 John 1:9). There must be no additions or deletions to God’s Holy Word.

⁶I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: ⁷Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. ⁸But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. ⁹As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed (Gal. 1:6-9).

¹⁸For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: ¹⁹And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book (Rev. 22:18-19).

Conclusion

Will you listen to the instructions and commands of the one faith and heed its warnings? Great and precious promises await you if you obey and continue faithful all the days of your life.

Chapter 13

Departures From The Faith

1 Timothy 4:1

James W. Boyd

We introduce this study by reminding the students of the Bible of two very pronounced and heavily stressed truths found in both the Old and New Testaments. First, there is the possibility of departing from the faith. Whether you are considering Israel and their unfaithfulness to the law of Moses, or a Christian digressing from the faith of Christ, departing from the faith is revealed. While this truth is not to be the burden of our study, it is imperative that we recognize how firmly established this truth is in Scripture. Let us read a few of the more familiar passages, confining ourselves to the New Testament.

First Timothy 4:1, *“Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times, some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrine of devils.”*

Second Timothy 4:3,4, *“For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears, and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.”*

Second Peter 2:20-22, *“For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. ²¹For it had been better for them not to have known the way of*

truth, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. ²²But it happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire."

Galatians 5:4, "Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace."

Acts 20:30,31, "Also of your own selves shall men arise speaking perverse things, to draw disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears."

First Timothy 6:10, "For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows."

Hebrews 6:4-6, "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame."

First Corinthians 10:12, "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed, lest he fall."

James 5:19,20, "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins."

Matthew 10:22, "And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake; but he that endureth to the end shall be saved."

Luke 17:32, "Remember Lot's wife."

Need we say more? Need we read further? Is there any doubt in the honest mind of the possibility that one

can depart from the faith? Does not the fact carry significance that warnings against departing from the faith in some form appear in every one of the books of the New Testament? It does to those who have respect for the inspired Scripture.

The second truth is closely related to the first. There are those in the Biblical record that did depart from the faith. This tragic situation became a reality to them, not just a possibility. Our study will consist of considering some of these alongside our inquiries as to why they fell away, and the spiritual consequences of it. As with the verses presented regarding the first truth, we shall again confine ourselves to New Testament revelation.

Judas Iscariot

Judas was an apostle of Jesus Christ. He was called the keeper of the bag (John 12:6), indicating that he must be considered the treasurer for the apostles. We must not forget that Judas was sent forth on the limited commission to preach the coming of the kingdom to the Jewish nation (Matt. 10:5). Furthermore, he, like the rest, was equipped with powers against unclean spirits, and the miraculous ability to heal sickness and all manner of diseases.

Judas was one of the privileged few who heard the Lord Jesus teach His doctrine time after time. He saw the Lord in spiritual combat with evildoers and false teachers. He could testify to the many instances of the compassion and power of Jesus Christ. He heard His parables firsthand. There was the close association he enjoyed with the other apostles. He was included in the number that went into the upper room with Christ and the rest of the apostles to observe the last Passover feast. But he did not stay throughout the gathering, did he? That was because of the evil he had conspired to commit.

Judas was the man who covenanted with the Jewish leaders to betray Christ into their hands by identifying Him when they came to seize Him. For a mere thirty pieces of silver, the price of a slave, he sold Christ, but also sold his own soul to the devil (Matt. 26,27), only later to painfully acknowledge he had betrayed innocent blood.

There is little doubt that Judas grieved over his sinister action and was sorry for what he did. But his sorrow was obviously not of the godly sort that produces genuine repentance, but of the worldly sort, more like he was sorry he got caught or that things did not materialize as he might have purposed.

Why would this man, once in such marvelous fellowship with Christ, choose to depart from the faith and turn against the Lord as he did? While not specifically revealed, we can piece together this man and his other actions and justifiably conclude that greed and love of money was one contributing cause. Very likely he was a jealous man, and jealousy did invade the ranks of the apostles. Could it have been a growing fear of the enemies of Christ, or his desire to be acceptable to the ruling class? People have done woefully for such reasons since the day of Judas.

Whatever may have been his motives, his deed is unmistakable. He departed from the faith by departing from Christ. He went out and hanged himself. And to this day, two thousand years removed, his name and his deed is a monument of reproach and a hiss and a byword to indicate that which is reprehensible, like the name of Jezebel. Indeed, it would have better for him that he had not been born [Matt. 26:24].

Demas

This man is mentioned only three times in the New Testament. Yet, from this brief revelation we can construct something of his career as a Christian and his

departure from the faith. Noting the chronological order of Paul's writings, it was first in Philemon 24 he is listed alongside several stalwart and faithful companions and workers with the apostle Paul, even having special commendations made about him like the others.

The second mention of him is in Colossians 4:14 where, again, he is listed with fellow workers of the noble apostle. It may carry some subtle significance that every one listed this second time again received some special word of commendation, except Demas. Does this possibly indicate that he was already showing signs of slipping and not deemed deserving of good words as stated previously?

The third time Demas' name is used is in Second Timothy 4:10 where Paul relates what finally happened regarding Demas and why. "*Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world,*" To forsake Paul was an obvious reference that he no longer worked with Paul, not simply pursuing the cause of Christ in another area, but to have abandoned the work, forsaking that which Demas, Paul, and others had labored so hard together in accomplishing. The love of this world is not compatible with being a faithful child of God [James 4:4: 1 John 2:15-17].

Everything indicates that Demas made the same grave mistake so many are apparently making in our own time. They are focusing entirely upon the here and now without regard to their spiritual duty to God and eternity. It seems to be so easy for mankind to center his attention on the present and the earthly matters with which he is daily confronted to the neglect of the spiritual matters that exceedingly far supersede the things of this life.

What a glorious opportunity he allowed to go by him! How tragic that he made such a disastrous choice of priorities in life! But he is not alone in this catastrophic decision. Let us examine ourselves.

Several Specifically Named By Paul

Several names are found in New Testament writings in which the Holy Spirit guided Paul to write that include specific names of people who forsook the truth and departed from the faith. Alexander is named as having done Paul much evil (2 Tim. 4:14). To do Paul evil, when he was doing such a great work in spreading the gospel of Christ, cannot be harmonized with remaining loyal to the truth. Something our generation needs to learn is that one cannot degrade and demean faithful brethren and claim faithfulness at the same time. That is no more possible than condoning and endorsing unfaithful brethren and claiming to be loyal to Christ. Alexander had his reasons, which are not named, but he showed he had departed from the faith.

Alexander is linked with Hymenaeus in 1 Timothy 1:20. These are named as two who were delivered unto Satan because of their blasphemy. To be delivered to Satan is no description of one who remains steadfast in the faith. What a graphic way to define a person who had considered the truth at one time in their lives, accepted it, but turned from it. How can one who blasphemes the things of the Son of God be anything other than a turncoat against the faith? They had made shipwreck the faith and had put away faith and a good conscience. What conclusion can be reached but that they had departed from the faith?

Hymenaeus is later connected with Philetus in 2 Timothy 4:14 where both are called a "cancer." They are charged with having strayed or erred concerning the truth because they were false teachers regarding the resurrection, teaching it had already occurred. Does this sound familiar today as some once among us are teaching something like that (the A.D. 70 theory)? These men had departed from the faith and were even being successful in overthrowing the faith of others. It was bad enough that they had given up on the truth,

but they were not content to let others continue to believe. This is exactly like the notorious “change agents” of our time. They deplore and degrade the church and the Christ by degrading His doctrine that the church upholds. They, however, are not honest enough to walk away from it, but try to stay “within” because they want to destroy the faith of others in the things most surely believed. Of course, there is a way to deal with such malicious people and that is to mark, brand, label, expose, and withdraw from them.

Second Timothy 1:15 informs us of two others, Phygellus and Hermogenes, who Paul said had turned away from him. This sounds much like the fatality of Demas.

As a side lesson and not primary to our study, please take note that Paul did not hesitate to name names when he was citing those who departed from the faith and were causing havoc among brethren. Just why some today have concluded naming names is something unworthy of us is beyond Biblical explanation. Possibly, if they had been with Paul when the Holy Spirit was directing him, they would have had a more loving and “irenic spirit,” and chastised both Paul and the Holy Spirit for being so mean-spirited.

The reasons these people departed from the faith may well vary from person to person. But who can doubt the spiritual destruction in every instance? Regardless of why anybody leaves Christ and goes another way, there is no justification for it, and there is no gain that is not overshadowed by eternal loss.

Unnamed People Who Departed

Second Thessalonians 3:6 gives instructions regarding those who walk disorderly. The disorderly are those who do not walk, or live, according to the tradition handed them by the apostles. A tradition is simply something handed down. There are human traditions,

some of which are innocent enough. There are apostolic traditions, the truth of Christ that is to be taught from generation to generation. Those who are not obedient to the apostolic tradition are to be severely disciplined. They are to have fellowship withheld from them.

Can we withdraw fellowship from those who are still in fellowship with God? Obviously, this would be wrong. Therefore, those from whom fellowship is withdrawn because they walk not according to apostolic teaching have departed from the faith.

A similar teaching is given regarding those who create division among brethren by teaching false doctrines (Rom. 16:17). They are to be marked and avoided. If faithful brethren were more faithful in this action then the Lord's church would be spared a great deal of the grief that it suffers due to the tolerance of sin and sinners going their own way to the havoc of all. But why would the Holy Spirit ever instruct brethren to mark and avoid a person except they had departed from the truth?

We do not know the names of those who were guilty of such things in Paul's day and to whom he had reference specifically. But we can know the kind of person he had in mind. We also can know from the passages given that they are the people who are selfish, self-centered, egotistical, and serving their own bellies, seeking personal gain, whether it be acceptance, fame, finances, or whatever else. We are naive if we think every religious teacher has as his motive for serving the welfare of souls. Often the only person's welfare he has in mind is his own, and his physical welfare is the kind with which he is concerned.

Paul warned the elders of the church at Ephesus of those who would come from among their own number, not sparing the flock (the church), speaking perverse things and drawing disciples away. He characterized them as wolves among sheep. This strong warning and vivid description makes it certain that some would have

departed from the faith before they could do such things. Again, we see the ambition of apostates trying to make others also apostatize.

Peter warned of false teachers that would arise from among brethren (2 Peter 2:1). Not everyone who is a servant of the devil has always come against the church from the outside. The most damaging people are those who undermine and work against the church from within. Who can even question that those who would teach falsely and bring in damnable heresies had themselves departed from the faith?

Another very powerful condemnation and example of those who depart from the faith is presented in Second John 9-11. We are commissioned and permitted to declare the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27) as did Paul. We are to preach and teach the doctrine of Christ, which is His doctrine, what He taught, not simply teaching about Him, but the doctrine that has been revealed by His authority. Those who do not bring that doctrine have not God. Who would foolishly contend that those who have not God, especially those once in the fold, have not departed from the faith? To bid Godspeed to those of that disposition is to also make ourselves partakers of his evil deeds. If we do that, have we not departed from the faith?

It is a more serious matter than many have obviously considered to give support and encouragement to teaching and teachers that are out of harmony with the doctrine of Christ. What better way, or more potent way, can we demonstrate that we have left the faith?

Some unnamed brother in Corinth (1 Cor. 5) was guilty of fornication. The church was rather indifferent toward it. But Paul let them know that such a one is to be delivered to Satan if he did not repent. Immorality does not have acceptance among those of the faith. It is not because others are self-righteous or above transgression themselves that immoralities are condemned, but because those who persist in immoral lives have

departed from the faith. They belong more in the fellowship of the devil's servants than the fellowship of the children of God.

Judaizing Teachers

What is a Judaizing teacher? Recall that the church began in Jerusalem that was dominated by Jews who for centuries had followed the Mosaic law. At least, that was the law they were supposed to follow, although they often departed from the faith. When the covenant of Christ was set in place, the law of Moses was no longer the way God governed anybody. It never was the way except for Israel. It was never a law to the Gentiles. But there were some Jews who were converted to Christ who contended that Christians, Jews and Gentiles, were still bound by certain tenets of the law of Moses. One of the most divisive and explosive problems of the early church was the matter of the relationship of the law of Moses to the will of Christ.

Paul had taught how the law was nailed to the cross, taken out of the way, fulfilled in its purpose since the religion of Christ was the end (goal) of the law. It was to bring us to Christ. But once the faith of Christ had come, it was no longer operative. Some had a hard time accepting that, or were so wedded to their Jewish heritage that they closed their minds to even the possibility of that being true. So they vigorously busied themselves teaching the need to conform to the law of Moses to be saved. Their efforts caused great disturbance throughout the Jewish and Gentile converts.

Paul declared, however, that those who thought they could be justified by the law had "fallen from grace" (Gal. 5:4). Is it not strange that some today say that cannot happen when we read that it already happened? Those in Galatia were warned of those who taught a different, perverted, variant "gospel" which was really not the gospel at all. They presented a

system that challenged the authority and religion of Christ. Had not they departed from the faith when they allowed some other faith as if it were superior to that of Christ, or alongside that of the only faith that saves? Judaizing teachers, and those who were subverted by them, departed from the faith of Christ that allows for no sharing of allegiance. How could they expect to hold to one without despising the other?

Churches in Asia

Jesus dictated letters to churches in Asia that John penned and are recorded in the early chapter of the book of Revelation. These churches had not completely departed from the faith because the letters were sent to them with the intent of turning them around before they reached that dreadful condition of total apostasy. Five of the seven churches were urged to repent of their ways lest their spiritual association with Christ would be marred, even terminated. Who could doubt that Christ, the Holy Spirit, and John, by whom these letters were written, believed the possibility of departing from the faith. If that is impossible, as some denominationalists would contend, most of these letters make no sense.

Ephesus was urged to remember their first love lest their candlestick be removed (their recognition as a church of Christ terminated). Being urged to repent only underscores their danger of departing from the faith.

The same thing could be said of the Philadelphia church, that could become a synagogue of Satan. Thyatira was accused of permitting one called Jezebel of seducing its members to commit fornication. Whether you think of it as spiritual or literal fornication, such conduct would mean they departed from the faith that condemns it. Laodicea was a lukewarm church, thinking themselves rich because of their material prosperity, but actually in poverty because of their

degraded spiritual condition. Are not these examples and warnings to Christians down through the ages of the deadliness of departing from the faith.

Present Day Departures

We have instances of departures from the faith that are very current and we will take note of just a few to illustrate, certainly not exhaust the many examples that could be cited. There are those who were once faithful to the Lord and loyal to His church but who have obviously decided there is a better way because they now wage war against what they formerly upheld. They have departed from the faith.

Consider the attitudes toward the church that we hear coming from the liberal and elite element. Has Scripture been rewritten that now allows for more than one church? Evidently some think so because they now contend that the church really does not make that much difference, only Christ, and you can be saved regardless of the church to which you belong. That used to be heard only from those of denominations. But now these same people are busily engaged trying to change the church into just another denomination among others.

False teachers have long taught salvation can be ours outside the church, or in any church, endorsing the propriety of the existence of many churches. The Scripture has not changed, but some who once preached the Bible on this theme have departed from the faith, adopting the denominational point of view, willing to fellowship denominations, conducting joint work and worship with them, and provoking laughter at the Lord's church by ridicule and sarcasm. There is no depth of slander to which these digressive apostates will go to cast scorn on Biblical teaching about the church of Christ revealed in Scripture.

Couple that with the new attitudes toward worship that stems from the false position that we do not need authority for how we worship, but what really matters is what appeals to man, makes man feel good, and is sincere. The result has been instrumental music, choirs, entertainment and performances of dramatic stripe, services designed to arouse emotions, make people feel good, never taking into consideration that the One worshipped should have some say in how He is to be worshipped. Some have departed from the faith regarding the Lord's Supper as to what it means and when it is to be observed.

Is it not a departure from the faith to adopt doctrines that violate the teaching of Scripture regarding marriage, divorce, and remarriage? How can one claim to be faithful when he upholds positions that undermine the sanctity. The sacredness of the husband-wife relationship, the commitment to vows, and the uniqueness of the home?

Is one still loyal to Christ when he proclaims a different plan of salvation, such as the false doctrine of salvation by faith only, or grace only? How does one remain faithful when he even dismisses the need for people to understand the purpose of baptism correctly in order to be acceptably baptized?

Is it not treason against sacred revelation to mock and defame the virgin birth of Christ, castigating and parading Mary as just another lewd woman who got caught? What does this do to the divinely given evidence that the babe that was born is the Son of God? Such blasphemy is tantamount to departing from the faith. How faithful can one consider those who defend and publish such trash?

There is no way one is still following the faith of Christ when he attacks the verbal and plenary inspiration of Scripture, including its infallibility, inerrancy, all-sufficiency, and authoritative nature of it.

These are some of the ways and false views and practices being propagated by some who were once of us but have gone from us as far as speaking the same things and being of the same mind as commanded. They have opted for accommodating those in error rather than remaining faithful to the faith. They are busily engaging in undermining the very foundations of New Testament Christianity, and are guilty of denying the very Lord they are claiming to follow. But what of that? Some of them have already openly and defiantly announced they are no longer interested in restoring the New Testament church, even though there is no divine authority for any other to exist. Their doctrines and practices are nothing other than a “do your own thing” religion, born and concocted of their own desires to serve themselves and be acceptable to men, men in error. It is a departure from the faith in our own time. It is no less tragic than that which we read in the Bible in the early days of Christianity.

Not A Pleasant Theme

The reader must take my word for it, but probably will share the view, when I state it is not a pleasant task to focus the mind so intently on this matter of departing from the faith. To depart from what Christ brought means His coming to this world, His sacrifice, His doctrine, His church, the hope that He offers, is all for naught and is in vain, actually most deceptive. People may not realize what all they are really saying when they come to Christ, but back away later on.

What will we learn? What of us? We know it is possible to depart from the faith. We know it has happened to others. We even know of people in our own lives who have come to Christ but gone back into the ways of sin and error. But nobody is forced to do that. Those who depart from the faith do so from their own choice. They may well have been influenced, but

in the last analysis, each one of us is responsible, accountable, and answerable to God (2 Cor. 5:10; Rom. 14:12). Let us not be like those of this study, but rather imitate the many faithful of whom we read, resolving to never depart from the faith.

Chapter 14

Live/Dead Faith

James 2:20

Robert R. Taylor, Jr.

Some Introductory Matters

It is always a joy supreme to come to Garfield Heights and have a part in your great lectureship each fall. Sincere thanks are expressed to Charles Blair, the elders here and all the Garfield Heights congregation for this invitation to participate in the 1997 lectureship. It is surely good to be here.

Faith or belief is truly one of the key, kingly terms of the entire Bible. Surely, no astute student of God's Sacred Book will quibble about this self-evident assessment for a single moment.

Defined, it is an ardent acceptance of testimony with the accompanying action demanded therein. Biblical faith has NO room, not as much as a tiny particle, for crippling doubts and skeptical quibbles. Frank L. Cox, a warm and dear friend of mine for many years, used to say, "We need to believe our faith and doubt our doubts." This scholarly man and saintly sage knew that when a man believes his doubts and doubts his faith, he is in real jeopardy indeed!

Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen as per Hebrews 11:1. Our eyes have not surveyed God, Christ, the Holy Spirit or a bonafide miracle such as abounded in both testaments and yet our faith in ALL these is as sure and steadfast as if our very eyes had seen all the foregoing.

The Christ, subsequent to His resurrection, pronounced a blessing on those who *“have not seen, and yet have believed”* (John 20:29). This was made to the slow-to-believe Thomas who should have accepted apostolic testimony from the other ten a week earlier that Christ indeed had risen from the dead. Thomas saw and then believed. We have not seen and yet are required to believe and we DO!

The finest definition of faith I know, outside the Bible, was given by Henry Thayer on page 511 of his Greek-English Lexicon. This lexical authority defined faith as, *“a conviction, full of joyful trust, that Jesus is the Messiah — the divinely appointed author of eternal salvation in the kingdom of God, **conjoined with obedience to Christ**”* [Emphasis supplied].

Note the salient statements — the ardent affirmations made by the eminent Thayer.

- 1) Faith is conviction;
- 2) Faith is joyful trust;
- 3) Faith accepts Jesus to be the Messiah;
- 4) The Messiah is the divinely appointed author of eternal salvation;
- 5) Jesus saves NOW;
- 6) Jesus saves in ETERNITY;
- 7) This salvation, both in the here and now and in the there and then, is IN the kingdom of God;
- 8) Implied is the well established realization that NO salvation from sin is available for any person outside the pale of kingdom membership;
- 9) this portrayed faith is conjoined with obedience to Christ;
- 10) Conjoin means, “To join together as in action or purpose; unite; combine,”
- 11) Implied therefore is a live and not a dead faith, an obedient faith and not an inactive faith.

Our case for a live faith and not a dead faith could rest now as proved. But I desire to make the case even more airtight as our study progresses. Biblical faith will

be clearer if we know and avoid many of the misconceptions abounding toward faith. This will be our next segment of study.

Mass Misconceptions Of Faith

[1] For centuries men have taught that faith-only is a very wholesome doctrine and filled with comfort (Article Nine — Methodist Discipline). This negates every other stipulation of salvation which makes it manifestly false. James 2:24 refutes it in one verse. Faith only is dead faith — not live faith!

[2] A denial that faith is a work is a misconception and a very serious one at that. In John 6:28,29 John wrote cogently and clearly, *“Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? ²⁹Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.”* Paul joined faith and work in 1 Thessalonians 1:3, the third verse he wrote for the New Testament.

[3] Making repentance and faith arrive at the same time is a misconception of both repentance and faith. Some will even have the arrival of repentance before faith in order to be able to say that one is saved at the point of faith without further acts of obedience. But if repentance comes before faith, it could not be pleasing to God since without faith it is impossible to please God (Heb. 11:6). In the correct gospel order, faith precedes repentance just as hearing precedes faith, repentance precedes confession, confession precedes baptism and all four of these precede immersion into Christ.

[4] Making faith a leap in the dark is dead faith — not living faith. God NEVER asks us to believe anything unless it is undergirded with sufficiency of evidence — strong, convincing evidence.

[5] Making faith NOTHING but mental assent is an insult to Biblical faith; it is dead faith — not living faith.

It calls for no subsequent act of obedience — not as much as one righteous act of obedience.

[6] Making just any kind of faith acceptable is lethal teaching-not living, wholesome, vibrant teaching. Demons believe and even tremble yet remain unsaved [James 2:19]. Chief rulers in John 12:42,43 believed on Jesus but refused to confess Him. They possessed dead faith — not a living faith.

[7] A denial of faith as a condition of salvation, the position of every grace-only advocate is tantamount to a dead faith — not a living one. Such is lethal to the very core. There is NOTHING alive about this damnable doctrine. Unbelief leads nowhere but hell at last.

[8] It is a further misconception of faith to confuse miraculous faith, one of the spiritual gifts mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12,13, with the non-miraculous faith necessary to become and remain a Christian. Not every saint in the first century had the spiritual gift of miraculous faith but all had to believe and obey to become a Christian and to remain one till death came.

Great Passages About Faith

In John 14:1-3 the about-to-be-crucified Son of God issued four dynamic directives to the still faithful eleven. Just previous to this Judas Iscariot had made his exit to prosecute his diabolical treachery against God's anointed — the Christ.

- 1) They were to believe in God;
- 2) they were to believe in Christ as God's only begotten Son;
- 3) they were to believe in the surety of His second coming;
- 4) they were to believe in the rich reality of heaven.

These beautiful beliefs were living — not dead.

In Romans 3:28 and 5:1 Paul affirmed the great Bible Doctrine of justification by faith. This is faith alive — not faith dead and ready for permanent burial.

Faith is so prominent in Holy Writ, that, at times, by a figure of speech known as synecdoche where a part is put for the whole, it refers to the entire gospel system. A dead faith could NEVER be used in such fashion!

In 1 Corinthians 13:13 Paul referred to faith, hope and charity or love. Hope here is not dead hope; charity (love) here is not dead charity (love); neither is faith here a dead faith. Quite to the contrary it is a living, vibrant faith.

In 1 Thessalonians 1:3 Paul referred to their work of faith, labor of love and patience of hope. Love and patience here are not dead love and dead patience. Neither is faith dead here. How can we be positively adamant about this? It is a working faith and a laboring love. There is no working in a dead faith; there is no laboring in a dead love. Dead faith is as impotent in working as is a corpse. Employers do not visit funeral homes and conduct interviews for potential workers from caskets and corpses!

Hebrews 11:6 is a kingly Scripture relative to faith. It affirms those who come to God must believe He is and that He is a diligent rewarder to those who seek Him and His Cause of Truth.

Degrees Of Faith

There is zero faith or no belief at all such as we see in Psalm 14:1 and 53:1. The man with such is styled a fool. Jesus, in Mark 6:1-6, marveled at the unbelief of His fellow citizens in Nazareth. Here is another case of zero faith. Such cannot be live faith by any stretch of the imagination.

More than once, during His personal ministry, Jesus referred to "little faith" among His disciples. Examples of such are found in Matthew 6:30; 8:26 and 14:28-32. Such needed more life than it had!

The greatest of faith during His ministry He found among non-Israelites. He styled as "great faith" what

the Syro-phoenician woman possessed in abundance in Matthew 15:21ff; Mark 7:24-30. Relative to the remarkable centurion in Luke 7:1ff Jesus called his a “great faith” and said He had not found its equal among all Israelites. Surely, these stately situations did not witness dead faith but faith that was living, vibrant and victorious. Each was granted her/his request respectively by the Miraculous Messiah, the Compassionate Healer.

Aged John, the apostle of love, classed as victorious the faith that overcomes the world as per 1 John 5:4,5. The beautiful believer (the obedient one) in Jesus as the Christ the Son of the Living God is the one, the ONLY one, who overcomes the world.

Live/Dead Faith (James 2:14-26)

I regard these thirteen verses as the greatest refutation of dead faith (same as faith-only) that has ever been penned. I propose to deal with these strategic verses under five segments which will be numbered and noted.

(1) Faith And Works: Two Questions Propounded

“What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?” (James 2:14)? Does advantage, profit or value emerge in a man’s life who professes faith with the lips but is absolutely deficient in works on the other hand? The first question by James draws this momentous matter into fundamental focus, into a sharp stance. Then with inspired emphasis he raises a rhetorical question designed skillfully to return an intense negative by way of response or reply. “Can that faith save him?,” of the American Standard Version, captures the Greek construction in a most remarkable way.

What type of faith? Just any kind of faith? NO! He writes of a specific type of faith. It is the very type of faith divorced entirely from works! Yet, this is the very type of pointless, profitless faith possessed by some in James' era. Furthermore, it is the very type of pointless, profitless faith most Protestant preachers parrot like mindless puppets dangling from the Calvinistic mindset and that Article Nine of the Methodist Discipline depicts as wholesome and filled with comfort. It is neither. It is minus wholesomeness because it is a colossal falsehood; it is minus any and all comfort because it is void of any and all truth, PERIOD! Millions of duped devotees in pews accept such falsehood, lock, stock and barrel without protests of any kind! It is amazingly amazing that such developed in the first century; it is even more amazing and alarming that this deeply entrenched error has continued to our day and shows NO sign of an imminent demise! James, in this passage, is ready to do verbal combat with this fundamental fallacy. He is ready to battle it to a clear finish in behalf of victorious truth and the living faith embedded therein.

[2] A Real Or Hypothetical Case Presented

This duet of verses reads, "*If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, ¹⁶And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit*" (James 2:15,16)?

Whether the case is real or hypothetical, the teaching is equally effective either way. In all probability James speaks of a Christian brother or sister yet the principle applies if he were speaking of a physical brother or sister or a needy non-Christian. Relative to the latter, which is very controversial, Galatians 6:10 and 2 Corinthians 9:13 obligate the church, as the

church and from its church treasury, to aid Christians and non-Christians with first priority given to those of the household of faith. Saint “onlyism,” helping Christians and Christians only from the church treasury, is congregational selfishness gone to seed and then some. God, Christ and the Holy Spirit, in the dispensing of physical blessings, are not so characterized. It is true that all spiritual blessings are in Christ, as per Ephesians 1:3, but sunshine rain, food, clothing and shelter provisions are showered upon all (Matt. 5:45; Acts 14:17; 2 Cor. 9:10ff; James 1:17). This saint-only doctrine makes Dead Sea churches — they will receive from non-saints when the contribution plate is passed but will not help those same givers from the church treasury when emergencies arise for needy and worthy non-saints. This saint-only doctrine is just as wrong in the beauty of benevolence as faith-only is in the realm of pardon. Neither is Biblical.

The brother or sister is minus food and clothing. Dire straits are herein projected. Yet the observing church member just uses a set of pious platitudes in meeting clothing and food needs of the destitute brother or sister. The wordy or verbose invitation is for a prompt departure to be executed with the expressed desire that they be warmed and filled!! But warmed with what? WORDS?? Filled or fed with what? EMPTY PROFESSION?? Empty words do not clothe the naked, pious platitudes do not fill hungry stomachs; meaningless verbiage or profitless chatter, whether from an individual or a congregation, does not add up the selfless beauty of Biblical benevolence. James denies adamantly that profit occurs in such inconsistencies between profession of lips with NO actions accompanied. James is depicting dead faith — not live faith.

[3] Living Faith Versus Dead, Barren Faith

“Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone” (2:17).

The analogy is significant and striking. Unaccompanied faith is as dead in the realm of real religion as unaccompanied verbiage is to an insufficiently clad man or woman whose hunger pains know no abatement day or night. Without question or quibble James is describing what the Ninth Article of the Methodist Discipline calls a most wholesome doctrine and one that brims over with comfort. Modern Methodists, who accept such from their own Discipline, are not on the same wave length with Inspired James. Neither are any other creedal concocters or naive receptors who teach the damnable faith-only dogma.

“Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works” (James 2:18).

James, by Inspiration, anticipates very accurately an objector who says in essence, “There are various degrees in which one’s religion may be expressed. One does it minus works; another does it by works. Each is a vital and valid expression of faith.” But is it? James demolishes such with Scriptural skill. James challenges the faith only advocate to exhibit faith apart from works if, indeed, he thinks he can! But how can he? He has to resort to what he vehemently denies, i. e., works, to prove possession of what he alleges to have. In so doing he surrenders his pet position of faith-only. Brother Guy N. Woods sagely states,

Works may be seen; these may be offered in evidence of faith which cannot be seen; one without works cannot offer proof of the faith which he alleges to have. It follows therefore, that one who disparages works *must resort to*

*them to prove that he has any faith at all.*¹
[Emphasis his]

“Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils [demons—ASV] also believe and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead” [James 2:19,20]?

“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord” constituted the famous “Shema” of Deuteronomy 6:4. Every loyal Jew uttered it or heard it uttered regularly in his worship to Jehovah God. No other statement was as likely to be uttered in every religious synagogue with endless repetition as was this tremendous theme of truth. In this beautiful belief the faith-only proponent did well as far as he went. However, he did not go far enough; he stopped FAR short of a full faith, a living faith, an obedient faith. Even devilish imps in Satan’s service went this far, they believed, and even a step farther, they trembled (KJV) or shuddered (ASV). Implied in this graphic word is the type of fear or horror that makes a person’s hair bristle or stand on end. Yet trembling faith and shuddering belief did not redeem demons. The faith only proponent is actually a step behind unredeemed demons who believe AND tremble (shudder). Yet, this is precisely what denominational preachers all over this country and throughout the world preach as saving faith, living faith. There is positively NO life in it — not a particle!

James styles the faith-only proponent as a vain man. The Greek literally means “an empty-headed” fellow. This is the proper category for every faith-only preacher and every faith-only receptor throughout the world. If the category seems hard and harsh, the placement therein rests with James, the Holy Spirit, the Father and the Son. The Spirit told him to write it. However, the Spirit is not an originator of truth but its revealer. He relayed to Biblical penmen what He heard from Father and Son (John 16:13-15). Furthermore, NO

preacher has to stay in this empty-headed category; neither does any receptor. Both chose to enter it; both alone can choose to vacate it which they both should do YESTERDAY!!

[4] Perfected Faith: Two Old Testament Examples

²¹Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? ²²Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? ²³And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God [James 2:21-23].

The example of Abraham offered the airtight case for a vibrant, living, obedient faith needed by James. Abraham was the father of the Israelite people physically and of Christians spiritually. No finer example of vigorous faith could be given than that of illustrious Abraham. Paul called him "*the father of all them that believest*" (Rom. 4:11). Faith-only (a dead faith for a surety) did not justify Abraham; he was justified by faithful compliance to God's will coupled with God's amazing grace. Faith-only did not move him around the Fertile Crescent from Ur to Haran to Canaan to Egypt and back again to Canaan (cf. Heb. 11:8ff). Faith only did not move him to travel to Moriah and offer his son which he would have done had not God stayed his sacrificial hand ready to strike the fatal blow on innocent Isaac. It would be difficult to find a human parallel to this dynamic degree of faith exhibited by Abraham. Vincent, in his Word Studies, says in the Greek there is a play on words, he "worked with his works." By such beautiful and deeply sacrificial acts

his faith was perfected; it was entire, complete, mature; it stood ten feet tall and then some! James then alludes to Genesis 15:6 and what is related subsequently relative to Abrahamic ventures of robust faith-living faith — not dead faith. Such culminates in Genesis 22. Here his faith reached its zealous zenith, its attractive apex in Isaac's offering or at least a willingness so to do. People with faith-only (dead faith) dispositions need to park at Genesis 22 and then go to Hebrews 11:17-19 to see that it all was an expression of living faith — not dead faith in ANY of the sacrificial undertaking. It is nothing short of slander to this faithful patriarch of old to link his faith with a dead, barren faith such as faith-only is. By such an eloquent exhibition of fervent faith in ardent action Abraham proved to be God's Friend (2 Chron. 20:7). We, today, can be friends to Deity by doing what Jesus commands (John 14:15; 15:14). In NO other way can friendship with Deity be attained and then maintained. Dead faith will not attain such or sustain such.

“Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only” (James 2:24).

This courageous conclusion is drawn with irresistible and forceful logic by the competence of an inspired penman. From premises laid down with prudent precision and stately skill James concludes that man is justified by works and not by faith-only (a dead faith). What kind of works are included? Not all works for there are works of the abrogated Jewish system, works of merit permitting human boasting, works of one's own invention, works of the devil and works of the flesh (See Rom. 3:20,28; 9:32; Eph. 2:9; Rom. 10:3; 1 John 3:8; Gal. 5:19-21). These are excluded in the works that justify. Included are the works of righteousness mentioned by Peter in Acts 10:35 and what Christ called the work of God (faith in action) in John 6:28,29. Faith-only (dead faith) is a doctrine spawned by Satan; only those allied to his infamous cause will accept it and

articulate it. Living, saving, availing faith is coupled with the works of gospel obedience. God has joined faith and works; He has not joined faith and NO works of obedience. The road to hell is paved with dead faith. This is all faith-only is for a surety.

“Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers and had sent them out another way” (James 2:25)? Seemingly, it was the deliberate design of the inspired penman to choose two Old Testament examples to illustrate saving, perfected and living faith. One was the illustrious Abraham; the other was a former pagan and one from the lowest order socially yet had exercised tremendous faith in God as Israel first invaded Western Palestine or Canaan. She was an inhabitant of Jericho, the very first city Joshua and his men of armed might planned to capture. She HAD BEEN a harlot (a woman who sold her body to men for immoral purposes); she NO LONGER was of this lascivious lifestyle regardless of what one of our notorious liberals implied sometime back in attacking certain women in the Bible inclusive of the Lord’s own mother. Such shows how far afield a professor from ACU in Abilene and a liberal paper in Nashville will go in religious slander and sexual innuendos. There seems to be no justification to soften this term of harlotry thus making her only an inn keeper as some have attempted. Her harlotry, though, was a thing of the PAST! This style of living did not characterize her when she was justified by faith coupled with works. She received the spies Joshua had sent to elicit imperative information relative to Jericho’s capture. She welcomed them; she hid them; she aided their safe escape from Jericho authorities; she received a promise of future salvation for her family (including herself) when the city would soon fall before the invading Israelites and their all-powerful Jehovah. In NO sense of the term was hers a faith-only experience or a dead, barren, fruitless faith. She believed. Action was

coupled courageously with her blossoming, beautiful, vibrant, robust, LIVING faith.

Her story of faith, trust and courage is related in Joshua 2:1-24. Hebrews 11 is Inspiration's Hall of Faith and Fame, a chapter I want to notice near the end of this study on LIVE/DEAD faith. Rahab is enshrined in this lovely, illustrious chapter with this intense inscription, "*By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace*" (Heb. 11:31). In both Hebrews 11:31 and here in James 2:25 her faith is followed by victorious verbs of action ("received" and "had sent them out"). Like faithful Abraham her faith exhibited itself in expressed actions — actions demanded by God. Living faith ALWAYS does this; dead faith NEVER does this; it is totally impotent in doing such!

Later she married Salmon who was an Israelite. She became a maternal ancestor of King David and, according to Matthew 1:5ff, was in the direct lineage from whom Jesus was born.

What living faith — not dead faith — did for this once morally abandoned woman, it can do for any person who has a sinful, sordid past to overcome and we all have sins of past and present of one kind or another as per Romans 3:9 and 3:23. But the faith to accomplish such is LIVING faith — not DEAD faith.

[5] Two Corpses

"For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also" (James 2:26).

Herein we have two corpses — a dead body and a dead faith. Each is void of the life principle. What is physical life? It is the resulting state or condition when body and spirit are linked. What is physical death? It is the resulting state or condition when body and spirit are severed. The body alone dies this death and hence

is buried; the living spirit returns to God its giver (Eccl. 12:7).

What is living, availing, saving faith? It is the resulting state or condition when faith and works of obedience are lovingly linked, are comprehensively connected.

What is dead, barren, fruitless, inert faith? It is the resulting state or condition when faith and works of obedience are severed. Those who teach and accept faith-alone or faith-only, as do millions of Protestants, teach a dead faith. They have to DO something to impart this devilish, diabolical and destructive dogma! How utterly strange! They have nothing in such empty theology but a corpse! Not only must the alien sinner link works of gospel obedience (repentance, confession and baptism or immersion) to his foundational faith, triggered by hearing God's Word, to be saved initially but Christians must link works (all God has commanded in our work, worship, waiting and watching) with faith. What did Henry Thayer say about faith? He said, "It is conjoined with obedience to Christ." Conjoined does not mean to disunite but to UNITE.

In my judgment Guy N. Woods has written the finest commentary ever penned on James, in the church or out of the church. I have read it carefully some three times since it came out in 1964. He sagely states,

Members of the church whose faith does not prompt them to faithfulness in the Lord's work, and to regular Christian activity such as consistent church attendance, liberality in giving, and personal work, are spiritual corpses, possessed of a faith which is destitute of all life.²

James has presented an airtight case for advocating live faith and in REFUTATION of a dead faith.

This material on James 2:14-26 has been lifted, for the most part, from my commentary on James and Jude first published in 1982.

Another Case In Point And Proof: Hebrews 11

Certain chapters in the Bible are noteworthy because they set forth one basic theme. Genesis 1 is the great creation chapter. Isaiah 53 is the great chapter on Messianic suffering and sacrifice. The great love and resurrection chapters are 1 Corinthians 13,15 respectively. The great faith chapter is Hebrews 11. Minus question or quibble to the contrary it is Inspiration's Hall of Faith and Fame. "By faith" and "through faith" constitute its key concepts. Each usage of these is followed by a valiant verb of action. Significant? Indeed so! Hence, this chapter depicts a live faith — not a dead faith. Let us make a brief journey, a real venture of faith, through this illustrious chapter. As we do we shall witness the portraits of faith Inspiration painted here through Paul's pen. For the sake of bold emphasis each verb of action will be properly noted following "by faith" or "through faith."

"By faith" the elders *obtained* (vs.1,2). "Through faith" we *understand* (v.3). Understanding requires mental action and reflection on the part of its possessor. "By faith" Abel offered and obtained (v.4). "By faith" Enoch pleased God (v.5). Genesis 5:21-24 informs us how he pleased God, viz., by walking with Him 300 years. Dead faith does not do any walking. It can no more walk than can a dead man walk out of a funeral home. Coming to God requires faith-live faith (v.6). Dead faith cannot do any coming in the Lord's own appointed way. We do not visit a cemetery site and invite the corpse of a loved one interred there to COME home with us! "By faith" Noah moved, prepared and condemned his contemporaries still steeped in corrup-

tion (v.7). Dead faith did not construct that massive ark for their preservation from the flood.

“By faith” Abraham obeyed, went out, sojourned, looked, offered and accounted (vs.8-19). Faith-only would have been deeply offensive and totally odious to the obedient Abraham. He would have disdained this devilish dogma just like we do today. “Through faith” Sarah judged God to be faithful (v.11). “By faith” Isaac sojourned, dwelt in Canaan and blessed his sons Esau and Jacob (vs.9,20). “By faith” Jacob blessed his sons and worshipped God (v.21). “By faith” Joseph made mention and gave a commandment (v.23). “By faith” Moses’ parents hid him three months from the wrath of Pharaoh. They saw and they were fearless toward the king’s evil edict. “By faith” Moses refused, chose, esteemed, respected, forsook, endured, kept the Passover and passed through the Red Sea (vs.24-29). “By faith” they compassed Jericho some 13 times during a seven day interval (v.30). “By faith” Rahab received the spies (v.31).

“Through faith” a distinguished group of Hebrew men and women subdued, worked, obtained, stopped, quenched, escaped, grew strong, waxed valiantly in fight, turned enemies into a hasty retreat, received the dead raised again, wandered and obtained (vs.32-39).

Live faith — not dead faith — permeates the whole of Hebrews 11.

Conclusion

A live faith pleases God; a dead faith pleases Satan. Now just which one are we seeking to please? The way to heaven is paved with live faith; the way to hell is paved with dead faith. Now just which way are we traveling?

The Biblical case is airtight in defense of a live faith and in rousing refutation of a dead faith. I hereby rest my case!

ENDNOTES

¹Guy N. Woods, *A Commentary On The Epistle Of James* (Nashville, Gospel Advocate Company, 1964) p.137.

²*Ibid.*, p.153.

Chapter 15

Faith Works By Love

Galatians 5:6

Jack Phillips

The battle of living the Christian life is ever before us. We are reminded every day of the on-going problems that afflict not only our communities, but also our nation, and even the whole world. Sin and its practices are flaunted in our presence on a daily basis. It is paraded in our streets; printed in our magazines and newspapers; viewed and heard by means of radio and T.V.; and now is reported as being on the computer line's super highway. It would appear that there are more ways available for man to be drawn farther and farther away from God than ever before!

Is it, therefore, no reason that the Lord's people must have a faith that is intact. John wrote that our faith is "*the victory that overcomes the world*" (1 John 5:3). Even now there is a divergence of differing philosophies and beliefs from among those of our own fellowship that strike at the very heart and core of our faith. In many areas of our brotherhood a "new hermeneutic" or way of thinking now pollutes the primitive doctrine of New Testament Christianity. It sadly can no longer be said that there is "*one faith*" (Eph. 4:5) from within the ranks of the churches of Christ. There are the proverbial left wingers, right wingers, and middle-of-the-road; there are the liberals, the conservatives, and the mainliners. Our own brotherhood suffers affliction from within which causes those concerned with the practice of "*pure religion*" (James 1:27) being placed

into the dubious territory of a no man's land. We apparently are *TOO* liberal for the ultra conservative and yet *TOO* conservative for the liberal. However, our major concern is not in the acceptance of any man, but in seeking God's approval of all. Paul settles the often confusing perplexity of where the faithful must stand when he wrote, "*for if I yet seek to please men, I should not be the servant of Christ*" (Gal. 1:10).

The subject laid before us in this hour enables us to give balance and objectivity to our Christian service. In Galatians 5:6, we are told, "*in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision availeth anything, neither uncircumcision availeth anything, but faith which worketh by love.*" What a sobering statement! For years the Calvinists have been unable to reconcile man's activity in God's scheme of redemption in a salvation of grace through faith. Martin Luther, during his time, was never able to resolve that faith included works. The conclusion to his hypothesis was that man, if saved by the grace of God through faith, could not contribute one iota to the action of his own salvation. As Luther viewed Paul's writings on the subject, then found the book of James relating that faith includes works upon man's part, Luther concludes that the book of James contradicts his presuppositions and brands the writing as heresy.

It must, therefore, be our objective in this study to scripturally and accurately bring these three elements into proper prospective.

Throughout the corridors of Biblical history faith is no stranger to those who play such an intricate role in bringing us to our convictions even today. Faith, along with its corresponding coordinates have been given to a variety of definitions. It should be our concern to review those definitions which have meaning and substance. Our definition must accompany Biblical accuracy with proper understanding. In Hebrews 11:1 we read that "*now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.*" Thomas

Nelson defines faith as being, "belief or a confident attitude toward God that involves a commitment to His will for life." In the volumes of *SOUND DOCTRINE* faith is well explained as, "taking God at His Word and doing what He says." In the combination of all these definitions, there can be only one right and accurate conclusion; the faith of the Bible must be predicated upon the action of the believer.

In the pages of the Old Testament, belief conjoined with obedience is an accepted way of life. In the New Testament, our thinking is challenged by a variety of different levels of faith. We must conclude that in areas of faith, there is more involved than just an intellectual agreement and assent. In James 2:19, it is recorded that, "*even the devils believed and trembled.*" The active, saving faith of our times must be predicated from two main and obvious sources. It is based upon a reliance of Christ to provide all that is necessary for the redemptive process to be intact. It then is based upon our commitment to Him coupled with obedience in meeting the terms of what is necessary to accomplish the redemptive process. Paul states in 2 Tim. 1:12, "*...for I know in whom I have believed and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.*"

THE ORIGIN OF FAITH must be founded in the Word of God. In many instances people are attempting to rationalize the origin of their faith from unreliable sources. Sometimes it is important for us to recognize where something did not come from with as much significance as where it did come from! Faith does not come from a direct operation of the Holy Spirit upon the heart of the sinner separate and apart from God's Word. It does not come from dreams, visions, still, small voices of the night. Faith does not come from some form of a spiritual experience that leads to ecstasy. It does not come from uncontrolled fits of sensationalism and emotionalism. And, it does not come from spasms

of spiritual enthusiasm that is incapable of being sustained over an indefinite period of time.

Our faith, if it is to be genuine, must have its origin in that which is safe, sure, and secure. Paul wrote, "*How shall they call on him of whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher*" (Rom. 10:14-15)? But then the conclusion is drawn that "*faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God*" (Rom. 10:17). The Holy Spirit by inspiration imparted unto holy men of God a reliable record of truth called the word of God (2 Tim. 3:16,17; 2 Peter 1:20-21). Its finished product has been secured within the pages of Holy writ and entrusted into the care and keeping of earthen vessels responsible for its distribution. God determined that the transmission of these facts and evidences from saint to sinner be the means used for His Word to be contacted. Whether it be from the preacher who stands in the pulpit (1 Cor. 1:20-21; 9:16); or Christians who may sit around the dining room table teaching these truths to the unknowing (Acts 18:26-28); or is contacted by the truth seeker reading and learning the truth for themselves from the very pages of Scripture (Eph. 3:3-5) faith still comes from the only way it may be received in its origin — **THE WORD OF GOD.**

THE OBJECT OF FAITH is God and His Son, Jesus Christ. In Paul's great discourse to the Athenians from Mars Hill, he made it abundantly clear that there is just one God, and that it is to this God alone that we owe our purpose for life and allegiance (Acts 17:20-31). Paul later writes a composite of the very heart and core of the Gospel which is to be believed surrounding the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. He writes in 1 Corinthians 15:1-2, that the gospel which he preached was to be received; it was to stand; it was to save; and that only through unbelief would its effects be voided. God is the only object worthy of our adoration and

trust. God is the only object capable of providing the necessary ingredients to provide our salvation. It is, therefore, the intent of Satan to use every means at his disposal to take away our focus from the true object of our faith. In an examination of the temptations of Jesus (Matt. 4), Satan used half truths, total lies, and enticements of material goods as an attempt to distract our Lord. How true it is that "Satan doesn't care who or what we worship and serve so long as it isn't God!"

THE OBJECTIVE OF FAITH is to bring man back to a saving relationship with God. From beginning to end we see through the corridors of the scriptures the displeasure of God toward man's transgression of His will. Isaiah wrote that "*your sins have separated you from your God and your iniquity has hid his face from you*" (Isa. 59:1,2). But God's plan for man also included an alternative to living in sin. It is God's pleasure and delight to see those from the human family interested in the pursuits of the spiritual above the worldly. It is written that, "even the angels of heaven rejoice over one sinner that repents."

The headlines of world events usually show mankind at its worse. Wars, famines, pestilences, earthquakes, natural calamities, sickness, death, drugs, abortions, homosexuality, thefts, and murders show us how bad, bad really is! Somehow, we have to wonder if through it all, will God really forgive this crooked and perverse generation? When we hear of one brother killing another then putting his remains in a shed and setting it afire to cover the evidence; a man taking a hot branding iron to his wife then saying, "I just wanted her to have a little taste of what hell is going to be like;" when a man takes 3 little girls ranging in ages 10-12, rapes them and mutilates their bodies, we have to ask if these among others' can also be a part of God's objective of faith?

God is in the saving business. He has given to man the ability to decide and choose for himself whom he

will serve (Josh. 24:15). *“Choose ye this day whom ye will serve.”* We may question just how far will God go in the process of saving the lost and forgiving sins? Every sin committed of man, known of God, and which man penitently seeks for the salvation of God is forgivable. The only sin known to not be forgiven of God is that sin which man is unwilling to repent of and renounce. *“For if we sin willingly after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins”* (Heb. 10:26). What a tragedy when we see God’s objective for our faith interrupted by man’s unwillingness to conform.

THE OBEDIENCE OF FAITH comes in man’s compliance to the Will and purpose of God. There has been much debate regarding the question, “is man active or passive in his salvation?” There is no doubt that by a careful investigation of God’s Word, that God expects man to “do” in order to distinguish the saved from the lost. Therefore, man must be active in his salvation, but what must his activities involve? We are told in Heb. 5:9 that Jesus is “the author of eternal salvation to every one that obeys him,” and *“Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven”* (Matt. 7:20-21). But what man is to do in order to obey God through faith is not done at random. Man’s obedience is a careful and precisioned process implemented of God in compliance with God’s Will with the purpose of accomplishing the salvation found only in Christ Jesus (2 Tim. 2:10).

DOES BIBLICAL FAITH INCLUDE WORKS? This appears to be the question most upon the minds of our denominational contemporaries. Modern crusaders, televangelists, along with their “men of the cloth” espouse that man cannot contribute one whit to his own salvation; that man is passive and not active in this process; and that man is saved totally by the grace of God without doing a single thing. We may, however, see

that the faith — works — combination of scripture includes belief conjoined with obedience. This does place man into an active roll in “doing” what God has laid down, as conditions or terms of salvation by grace through faith. On that great birthday c.f the Lord’s church on the first Pentecost after His resurrection, we hear the resounding words of Peter, *“Save yourselves from this untoward generation”* (Acts 2:40).

Our God has placed before us, clearly and precisely what is necessary to meet the terms or conditions of pardon. One’s belief conjoined with obedience enables us to know the difference between those who are saved by compliance to these terms and who remain lost because of their refusal to obey. During Our Lord’s final remarks to His masterful Sermon on the Mount, He made this proclamation: *“Not every one that saith unto me Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he that **doeth** the will of my Father which is in heaven”* (Matt. 7:21). John wrote in the revelation that, *“blessed are they which do His commandments that they may have right to the tree of life and enter in through the gates into the holy city”* (Rev. 22:14). With these and hosts of other passages, we may conclude that our salvation and our continued Christian walk of life is predicated upon doing. Our salvation is based upon obedience through a conformity of God’s divine will. In Hebrews 5:8 and 9 we are told, *“though he were a son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered. And then being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation to all those who **obey** him.”* Our efforts, therefore, must be directed toward an accurate and concise examination of those evidences which meet the approval of God in a faith that works by love.

IS FAITH IN ITSELF A WORK? If there are evidences that the premise established in the afore mentioned question is true, the doctrines of Calvinism respective of man’s inactivity in his salvation is once,

for all, for ever proven to be false. Our Lord was approached on one occasion by His disciples who asked "*what shall we do to work the works of the father? He said unto them the works of the father is to believe in him who he has sent*" (John 6:28,29). Paul wrote to the Thessalonians of his abiding interest that the Lord would accomplish in them a "work of faith with power" (2 Thess. 1:11). James records that "*ye see then how that by works a man is justified and not by faith only*" (James 2:24). Our Lord makes this condition of salvation essential when He remarks, "*but unless ye believe that I am he, ye will die in your sins*" (John 8:24). Here Jesus conditions the difference between being saved or lost upon one's believing or failing in Him as the Christ. The expression of our faith or belief in our Lord is manifested openly when we "*confess with the mouth*" (Rom. 10:9,10) that He is in fact the Christ, the son of the living God.

DOES REPENTANCE INCLUDE WORKS? the concept of repentance as a necessary ingredient to salvation is held in high esteem among almost all religions of our time. Even the most ardent critic can see the need for the sinner to repent in order for God to save him. Repentance demands a change, a turning from sin toward God, a redirecting, if you please, of one's heart, mind, and will in conformity to God. There is no doubt that this action demands effort on the part of man. Such changes may be so drastic and radical that the sinner may determine the price too great for salvation to be received. There are those living in adultery who determine that they will not pay the price that repentance demands of the adulterer in order to be right with God. Still others refuse to give up ungodly life styles such as in the cases of the alcoholic, the drug addict, the immoral, and, yes, even the materialist. We may well remember the incident found in Matthew 19 and Mark 10 of the rich, young ruler who came to Jesus. He came with such grave fervor and good intent,

but went away sorrowing because he had much possession. We will usually find that whenever someone refuses to obey the Gospel plan with particular reference to a failure to repent, there is something, someone, or some way of life which they enjoy so much or are entrenched so deeply that they refuse to give it up at any cost.

In Matthew 3:8 John the baptizer spoke of "bringing forth the fruits of repentance." Paul wrote concerning his work among the Gentiles, that they "*repent, and turn to God, and do the works of repentance*" [Acts 26:20]. Peter further indicates how important repentance is in the process of conversion when he said, "*repent ye and be converted that your sins may be blotted out when the seasons of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord*" [Acts 3:19]. There most definitely is a work to be done of man if true Biblical repentance is applied. It may be noted that in Hebrews 12:1, the Bible tells us what is involved in the performing of the work of repentance: "*wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us.*" Most definitely, whatever hinders or stands between us and our service to God must be "laid aside." It may come from the gross indecencies of immorality and ungodliness in man's inhumanity to man; it may come from those trivial, petty, insignificant matters that we attempt to play down.

Some have misunderstood what the concept of biblical repentance in the process of salvation has done. There seems to be the misnomer that once a person has openly made an admission of their individual sins, and having repudiated, renounced, and abandoned those sinful practices, it is at this very moment that God forgives them. We must, however, never lose our prospective of who it is that is saving us; when is it that *HE* determines the forgiveness to take place; and at

what point is salvation completed. For example, when Peter approached Simon the sorcerer with his sins of attempting to buy off the Holy Spirit with money, Peter states, "*repent and pray if perhaps the thoughts of thine heart may be forgiven thee*" (Acts 8:20-22). It is therefore right to conclude that although repentance may have taken place, forgiveness is not accomplished in this instance until prayer for the forgiveness of the sins repented of has been accomplished. In the case of those having never obeyed the Gospel initially, again, although repentance of sins may have been accomplished, it is not until repentance is followed by baptism for the remission of sins repented of that forgiveness is accomplished [Acts 2:38]. We must not forget that forgiveness is an executive act of Almighty God which is not accomplished until He says it is accomplished. This is why it is so important for us to consult His divine Will in order to know with accuracy and precision where He delegates the forgiveness to take place.

IS BAPTISM ALSO A WORK? Here seems to be the catch 22 with our denominational contemporaries. Whatever else may be said about faith, confession, and repentance being performed as works necessary for our salvation, there appears to be more intensity about baptism being a meritorious act or work than over any other step to conversion. It is argued that if one submits to baptism, that is in effect, working to achieve his own salvation. It seems strange that in the salvation process we have seen a definite connection between faith conjoined with confession, with repentance and works. No one can have faith for us; no one can repent of our sins for us; and it is evident that not even God himself can reverse the decision of our own minds to remain lost if that is our choice!

In the action of baptism, do we not see both the working of God and the working of man in response to what God is offering? The work of salvation being

considered cannot be associated with being meritorious, earned, of man's own making and design, nor of man's inventions. It is God who delegated the conditions; it is man who provides the obedience to meet the terms or conditions which God has provided. In Philippians 2:12-13, Paul records, "*Not now in my presence, but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God who worketh in you both to will and to do according to his own good pleasure.*" And, in Ephesians 2:10, the Bible says, "*For we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath foreordained that we should walk in them.*" The process of salvation is only accomplished when man fulfills by obedience what is necessary in meeting God's terms. It is not accomplished when man sets up his own terms; nor when man stops short of obeying all that God requires; nor in addition or substitution for what God's requirements demand.

When one by faith, repentance, confession of Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and application of New Testament baptism according to Biblical instruction, both the work of God in granting salvation and the work of man in compliance with Divine terms has been satisfied. The Christian walk of life is entered into and continued by faith (2 Cor. 5:7). We are admonished to "*be ye therefore, steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the works of the Lord forasmuch as ye know that your labors are not in vain in the Lord*" (1 Cor. 15:58). Clearly, there is a work to be done and it is God's work that we are to do. How important it is for us to know the value of Christian service! The church of our Lord is a spiritual community made up of different persons from different backgrounds, upbringing, training, etc! We are not all endowed alike; we do not all have the same abilities. We do not all have the same limitations. Paul put it this way,

19Nevertheless, the foundation of God standeth sure having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are his, and let everyone that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity. 20But in a great house, there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth. 21If a man, therefore, purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honor sanctified and meet for the master's use and prepared unto every good work (2 Tim. 2:19-21).

When we are Christians, wherever we are in life, with whatever abilities we may have, and even with what limitations we suffer, our work and service to God is accepted and approved. No greater words of encouragement may be found upon the pages of all holy writ than what Paul gave to Titus in chapter 3 and verse 1 when he said, ***“put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers; to obey magistrates; to be ready unto every good work.”*** The Christian walk of life may be carefully summed up in the words that our eternal destinies are based upon what contribution we are willing to make in the service of our God, His church, and our fellow man.

There is nothing that disgusts God more than a cold, heartless, loveless, and uncaring religion. Even with the many fine attributes of the Ephesian church, our Lord, in Revelation 2 lists their great faith and works, but indicts the omission of love as a condemnable oversight. God puts us in mind that religion may have the right doctrine intact; it may have the right works in operation; but the absence of love is inexcusable. Lovelessness is sin. Faith plus works minus love equals creedalism. While we have seen the essentiality of faith coupled with works, this equation is incomplete without the ingredient of love as the element that gives it its staying powers. Is it no wonder that the history of some religions have seen that the evidence of their

extinction has been their pursuits of propriety and their lack of love has been their birth in caves and deaths in cathedrals?

Misdirected love strikes at the very core of why men are lost. In Paul's great dissertation on the methods used by Satan to deceive the hearts of men, in 2 Thess. 2:9-12, there still remains the reality that men are lost because, "*they received not a love of the truth.*" Is it possible to conclude that the very essence of that Gospel which we hold dear is spurned, shunned, avoided, and even criticized by some? Look at the evidences! The fact that there are people now who do not even believe in God is not new. David wrote in Psalm 14:1 "*the fool has said in his heart, there is no God.*" Should it be a surprise to us that there are people of our day who openly attack the sonship of Jesus; who openly deny all miracles associated with his life, work, and ministry; who look at His church as a non-essential fluke; and who insult the integrity and intentions of those who are attempting to do His will? Peter remarks in 1 Peter 4:4, "*wherein they think it strange that you run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you.*" This kind of junk and tripe is not new. Man's basic strengths and weaknesses has not changed over the centuries. We may be living in a high tech world, we can send men to the moon, we can process data in matters of seconds that used to take us hours and even days to accumulate, and we are living better than any generation of the past. But, Satan appeals to us in the same three basic ways: the lust of the flesh (sexual and sensual passions); the lusts of the eyes (through appearance and the accumulation of material goods); and, the pride of life (power and prestige) (1 John 2:15-17). It has been rightfully said that "*the devil doesn't care who you worship or serve so long as it isn't God.*" And, "if we do worship God, Satan will try to make sure that it's not in the right way." There are many times when likes and loves of our lives are not

inherently wrong in themselves, but taken in disproportionate amounts become lethal poison. Our gods can become anyone or anything that takes priority over Jehovah God. There are some people who obviously love their jobs and work more than they do God. Others bow down before the shrine of recreation and use the time that is given them of God and should be used in His service for themselves. There are those whose money is the love of their lives. What a tragedy to see the lives of those so bountifully blessed wrapped up so much in themselves that there is no room for a real and genuine gesture of love toward God!

This business of a faith that works without love was approached by Paul when he wrote in the 1 Corinthian letter, chapter 13 about a “faith that could move mountains” but had not love and “*giving my body to be burned, and bestowing all my goods to feed the poor*” but having no love is without eternal reward. It is apparent from these and other evidences that although good may be done, nominally its participants cannot lay hold on the expectancy of a heavenly reward because love was missing. So many charitable organizations do so much good by feeding and clothing the poor. There are state run and independent organizations which continually plead for help in caring for the needy, the homeless, the orphans, the sick, the mentally handicapped, and the physically handicapped. There are even those who now make their pleas in the name of humanitarian aid as well as for our environment and the care of animals. But as much good as these may do, although there may be hosts of these persons involved in these many good works, and although several of these are “God-fearing” folk, there will not be even the first consideration of their involvement in these good efforts toward a heavenly reciprocation because “they received not a love of the truth.” Without a loving relationship with God that brings us into right relationship with God, there can be no salvation.

With all that man is able to amass, accumulate, and acquire, why is it, then that God places so much emphasis on love being a key ingredient to a working faith? Jesus made it abundantly clear in Luke 12:15, that it doesn't impress God with what a man has, but God is impressed with what a man is. Love strikes at us from the heart. It has to do with our disposition, our character, and our attitude. A loving heart impresses God with our sincerity and devotion to Him as the supreme importance of our lives. We cannot give God our education and make Him more intelligent. We cannot give God our riches and make Him more wealthy. we cannot give Him our physical resources and make Him more powerful. In Proverbs 23:26, Solomon wrote these words with God as his spokesman, "My son, give me thy heart." Paul wrote to the Athenians in Acts 17 that "God needs nothing." God with all of His power, might, strength, and abilities is totally self-sufficient and self-sustaining. He needs nothing but desires man's heart. It is the Creator saying to the created, "give me thy heart." It is the infinite saying to the finite, "give me thy heart." It is the bread and water of life saying to him that is a hunger and thirsting, "give me thy heart." It is the Savior saying to lost humanity, "give me thy heart." That one treasure which God desires of us that He values and will have that must be given freely, willfully, and submissively is the heart of man.

Faith that works by love carries with it all those necessary ingredients for the complete man of God. It carries with it our sincerity to serve our God with the very fervor of our being. It carries with it our responsibility in believing and knowing that we must be absolutely right with God and will be satisfied with nothing less than that. It enables us to surrender our rights and our hearts in a free gesture of a sacrificial offering that does not question or impugn our motive. Our singing without our hearts is perjury; our praying

without our hearts is hypocrisy; our partaking of the Lord's supper without our hearts is perjury; and, yes, our preaching without our hearts is duplicity.

Brethren, it is wonderful to be known for our doctrinal accuracy. It is wonderful to be known for our scriptural literacy in a "thus saith the Lord" for our beliefs and practices. It is wonderful to be known for our many good works both at home and abroad in meeting both physical and spiritual needs of our fellow man. But, it is not wonderful when we are known for being heartless, cold, and unloving. It must be that our aspiration and desire be that "our faith is known throughout the whole world." We should be interested in making sure that "our good works are not evil spoken of." But, we cannot overlook this other main objective that makes our mission and our message complete, "they shall be known by their love!"

Chapter 16

Holding Faith/Conscience 1 Timothy 1:19

Jim Blankenship

The Apostle Paul wrote, *“This charge I commit unto to thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare; Holding faith and a good conscience...”* (1 Tim. 1:18-19).

Definitions

“HOLDING” is defined by Thayer, “To have intellectual or spiritual faculties, endowments, virtues, sensations, desires, emotions, affections, faults, defects, etc. [Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, p.267]. Similar passages where the same word is used are, Matthew 17:20, *“And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, I have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.”* Jesus taught further, *“Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith, and doubt not, ye shall not only do this which is done to the fig tree, but also if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; it shall be done”* (Matt. 21:21). *“And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God”* (Mark 11:22). *“And the Lord said, If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be*

thou planted in the sea; and it shall obey you" (Luke 17:6). The inspired penman Luke wrote, "The same [i.e. crippled man at Lystra] heard Paul speak: who steadfastly beholding him, and perceiving that he had faith to be healed..." (Acts 14:9). The Apostle Paul wrote, "Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth" (i.e. approves/accepts) (Rom. 14:22). "Hearing of thy love and faith, which thou hast toward the Lord Jesus, and towards all saints..." (Philemon 5).

"FAITH" is defined by Thayer as, "Objectively, the substance of Christian faith or what is believed by Christians" [Thayer's Greek English Lexicon, p.513]. The Apostle Paul also used this same Greek word objectively in such passages as,

1:4 Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith: so do. 2:7 Whereunto I am ordained a preacher, and an apostle, (I speak the truth in Christ, and I lie not;) a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and verity. 3:9 Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. 4:1 Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils. 4:6 If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou has attained. 5:8 But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel. 6:10 For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with

many sorrows. ^{6:21}Which some professing have erred concerning the faith..." [1 Tim. 1:4; 2:7; 3:9; 4:1,6; 5:8; 6:10,21].

"AND" is the most frequently used of all the particles in the New Testament. It serves as a copulative to connect single words or terms or clauses and sentences" [Thayer, p.315].

"CONSCIENCE" "The soul as distinguishing between what is morally good and bad, prompting to do the former and shun the latter, commending the one, condemning the other...with epithets: not strong enough to distinguish clearly between things lawful for a Christian and things unlawful...free from guilt, consciousness of rectitude, of right conduct" [Thayer p.602]. The Apostle Paul taught the Corinthians,

⁷Howbeit there is not in every man that knowledge: for some with conscience of the idol unto this hour eat it as a thing offered unto an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled. ⁸But meat commendeth us not to God: for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse. ⁹But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak. ¹⁰For if any man see thee which hast knowledge sit at meat in the idol's temple shall not the conscience of him which is weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols" [1 Cor. 8:7-10].

The Apostle Peter teaches us, "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ" [1 Peter 3:21]. Paul said, "Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before

God until this day. ... Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned" (Acts 23:1; 1 Tim. 1:5).

Examples

THOSE WHO HOLD FAITH AND A GOOD CONSCIENCE. The best example we could ever hope or ask for is Jesus Christ himself. As early as the age of 12 we see Jesus' desire to "*be about His Father's business*" (Luke 2:49). He knew "*My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to finish His work*" (John 4:34). Throughout the biographies of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John Jesus never violated His conscience regardless of the opposition of His enemies of the Jewish leaders. Yet with all this opposition "*He was tempted in all points like as we are yet without sin*" (Heb. 4:15).

A second example we can see as he commanded Timothy to "*Hold faith and a good conscience*" is the Apostle Paul. To do any work well, we must really believe in the cause. Paul had always kept a clear conscience, even when he was on the wrong side (Acts 23:1; 2 Tim. 1:3). The quality of sincerity was very important to him. Timothy's work was to be directed toward holding to the faith, but that service came from a good honest heart guided by truth and righteousness. Man must be guided by his conscience to avoid hypocrisy, but he must guide that conscience by the Word of God. Here is where we see Paul being very sincere, devout, and hard working when we are first introduced to him (Acts 7:58). "*Saul...made havock of the church*" (Acts 8:3). What an enemy the cause of our Lord had with the man Saul of Tarsus. However, he "*saw the light*" on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:1-9). He then made an "*about face*" working as hard for the Lord as he had been doing against the Lord's cause.

A third example we need to look at is Abraham, the father of the faithful. In Genesis 12 when we first begin learning of Abraham and a desire to obey God he is promised,

¹Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee: ²And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: ³And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed. ⁴So Abram departed, as the Lord had spoken unto him [Gen. 12:1-4].

The Bible is permeated with the faith of Abraham. If his posterity had only had the same unwavering faith in God as did Abraham what a difference Bible history would have been. The Apostle Paul used Abraham as an excellent example to the Roman brethren when he wrote,

³For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. ... ¹⁸Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be. ¹⁹And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb: ²⁰He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; ²¹And being FULLY PERSUADED that, what He had promised, he was able also to perform" [Rom. 4:3, 18-21].

I think right here we find the key to what our subject matter is all about, **“holding faith and a good conscience”** (1 Tim. 1:19). Abraham kept on hanging on that every promise of God because he knew that only God could deliver what He said He would deliver. Here is where too many people miss the mark. They simply don’t hold on to what God says through His holy inspired word.

Questions We Need To Consider!

1. WHO CAN HOLD FAITH AND A GOOD CONSCIENCE? The first necessary step in doing so is for one to be a Christian. It is simply, **Hearing the Gospel** (Rom. 10:17); **Belief in God** (Heb. 11:6); **Repentance of all sins** (Acts 17:30); **Confession of one’s faith in Jesus Christ** (Matt. 10:32), and **being baptized** (Mark 16:16). Though we must all stand before God and be judged on the basis of our deeds, good or bad, as individuals (2 Cor. 5:10), how we live does affect others. Therefore, when we consider the matter of who should **“HOLD FAITH AND A GOOD CONSCIENCE”** we come to realize that the more there are who do so, the better it is for all those who have that desire. Thinking, then, in terms of the various members who make up the church, it is evident that EVERYONE should obey this divine injunction. It’s for the individual’s good and it is for the good of others inasmuch as it makes it easier for others to be and remain faithful.

INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS are ultimately responsible for his or her own life. If I am lost, I have no one to blame but myself. Since the Garden of Eden people have been inclined to blame others for their own failures and misdeeds, but this will not be weighed with favor in the final day of accounting. The individual who is not **“HOLDING FAITH AND A GOOD CONSCIENCE”** may find others to blame. There is the preacher, the elders, Bible class teachers, and various other members.

It could be true, and in some cases is, that the preacher, elders, and teachers are not what they should be, but the responsibility still remains with the individual to live a faithful life. Those who make it more difficult for the individual will have to account for their own actions as the individual will have to account for his. Individual members must be engaged in the warfare [Eph. 6:10-17]. We are always on call for duty! Just to be "on the roll" is not enough, action is necessary. The true soldier will not fraternize with the enemy [Eph. 5:11], nor ever will give the enemy's recruiter the time of day. Neither will he be afraid to stand up for what he believes.

BIBLE CLASS TEACHERS are in a position of considerable influence. This can be for good or evil. Paul wrote Timothy, "*And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou unto faithful men who shall be able to teach others also*" (2 Tim. 2:2). The key point here is FAITHFUL MEN teaching others that which had come from Paul, THE TRUTH. No Bible teacher has a God-given right to teach anything other than the truth to any age group. The Bible teacher should also teach by example. The teacher who is habitually late for class is teaching error by example. The person who is not living a faithful life has no right to stand before a class to teach (Rom. 2:21; Heb. 5:12).

PREACHERS are an integral part of God's plan of salvation. Christ commanded that the Gospel be preached to all nations and to every creature (Matt. 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16). Paul asked, "*How shall they hear without a preacher*" (Rom. 10:14)? But preachers have God-given authority to preach only God's word. Paul instructed Timothy, "*Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long suffering and doctrine*" (2 Tim. 4:2). Preachers are not above the law when it come to God's law. The sincere servant of the Lord will be concerned with

regard to the content of the preacher's preaching and teaching and will not be swayed by the preacher's congeniality.

QUALIFIED ELDERS serve as one of the greatest assets a congregation can have, whereas unqualified elders can constitute one of the greatest detriments. More than anyone else, the elders are in a position to encourage faithfulness within a congregation. As they fulfill their God-given responsibility they are continually aware of Paul's command to the Ephesian elders, "*Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which He: hath purchased with his own blood*" (Acts 20:28). As the true elder "*holds faith and a good conscience*" he is "*able by sound doctrine both to exhort and convince the gain-sayers*" (Titus 1:9). The true elders will never be swayed by intimidation from the wealthy or influential members, or by other sources. His desires and intention will be to always please God rather than man. I have heard brother Wiley Reeder say many times, "You can do more with a dozen faithful members than you can 100 unfaithful members."

2. WHAT IS IT WE'RE HOLDING? FAITH! WHAT'S THAT? Inspiration has given us the definition, "*Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen*" (Heb. 11:1). Brother Burton Coffman says, "The whole Gospel message embraces both doctrine and obedience. The faith is what we believe about Christ; good conscience is not allowing the conscience to be defiled by sinful practices contrary to the doctrine" (Commentary on 1 & 2 Thess., 1 & 2 Tim., Titus & Philemon, p.157). Brother Ben Flatt said, "Holding faith — Timothy's dedication and efforts would be for nought unless CHANNELLED IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION. Paul expected fidelity to the right cause. This is the same as "the faith" of Acts 24:24. The "holding" is the same as the "stand fast" of

1 Corinthians 16:13" (Studies in Timothy and Titus, "Paul's Thanksgiving for Mercy," p.47). I think Ben's comments "hit the nail on the head." Timothy's or mine or yours or anyone else's dedication and efforts would be of absolutely no value unless CHANNELLED IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION. Far too many people in the world today are dedicated to the wrong cause. We build our faith only upon what we learn from the pages of God's word, nothing more and nothing less. This is why we need to study (2 Tim. 2:15). This is why we need to "search the scriptures daily" (John 5:39; Acts 17:11). Our spiritual food comes from God's divine inspired word (2 Peter 3:18).

3. HOW DOES GOD'S WORD GIVE US A GOOD CONSCIENCE? Let's take a closer look at the word "GOOD." How does it apply to our subject matter for today. In every case wherein it is used with the word "conscience," except for one, it means, "Of the feeling awakened by what is good, pleasant, agreeable, joyful, and happy (1 Peter 3:10,13); with the same Greek word it also means, "A peaceful conscience, i.e. conscience-ness of rectitude, Acts 23:1; 1 Tim. 1:5, 19; 1 Peter 3:16; reconciled to God, v.21" (Thayer, p.2). The Apostle Peter said it quite well when he wrote,

¹⁰For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: ¹¹Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it. ¹²For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil. ¹³And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good? ¹⁴But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled; ¹⁵But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be

*ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear: ¹⁶Having a **good conscience**; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ. ¹⁷For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing. ¹⁸For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit” (1 Peter 3:10-18).*

We can easily see in this passage the perfect example of Christ with all of His enemies by His, **“refraining his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile”** (Isa. 53:7; Acts 8:32). Relative to the “peaceful conscience” Thayer mentions, the Apostle Paul said,

¹Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day. ... ⁵Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned. ... ¹⁹Holding faith and a good conscience which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck... (Acts 23:1; 1 Tim. 1:5,19).

In one case, Heb. 13:18, the writer uses the word, “good” meaning in the Greek, “Beautiful by reason of purity of heart and life, and hence praiseworthy” (Thayer, p.322). Here Paul says, “Pray for us: for we trust we have a good conscience, **in all things willing to live honestly.**” Here, too, is where far too many miss the mark in Christian living. If one bases his day-to-day living upon something besides God’s word, he may miss the point of having a “good conscience, in all

things” simply because he restricts his knowledge of God’s word; or, he does not violate his conscience in areas where he practices that which may violate God’s word simply because he has practiced some things so long it does not bother his conscience. As an example, we hear too many people use God’s name in vain either out-right or euphemistically. Because they have always done it or because it is socially acceptable, they keep on violating God’s word (Exodus 20:7; Deut. 5:11; Matt. 12:34-37). WHAT KIND OF LIFE ARE WE LIVING?

4. WHAT IS A GOOD PSYCHOLOGICAL EXPLANATION OF HOW THE CONSCIENCE WORKS? Dr. S. B. Narramore wrote, *Conscience*. The set of personality processes involved in evaluating oneself by one accepted ideals or standards..Beyond this broad definition, however, there is little agreement on the precise meaning and nature of conscience. Psychological theorists shape their understanding and definition of conscience to fit their theoretical framework. Fromm (1947), for example, spoke of an infantile, fear-based, authoritarian conscience and a more mature, rational, and sensitive humanistic conscience. Allport (1955) wrote of the generic conscience that enhances one’s life, and Freud (1927) drew a general parallel between his concept of the superego and conscience.

“Theologians also differ in their understanding of conscience. Pierce (1955, p.111), for example, sees conscience as God-given and the punitive functions of conscience as “the internal counterpart and complement of the wrath” of God. In contrast, Bavinck (1898) and Bonhoeffer (1959) view conscience as a result of the fall and as carrying out fallen humanity’s attempt to “know good and evil” apart from God and to solve its moral dilemma on its own.

“CONSCIENCE IN THE BIBLE. The Old Testament has no word fully equivalent to the conscience. The Hebrew “*leeb*” (generally translated heart), however is sometimes used to refer to the functions the New

Testament calls conscience. Conscience (*syneideesis*) is used 31 times in the New Testament, but nowhere is it clearly defined. Its functions include

- 1) bearing witness or evaluating oneself in relation to a standard [Rom. 2:14-15];
- 2) assuring one of consistent, integrative living [2 Tim. 1:3];
- 3) motivating constructively [Rom. 13:5; Acts 24:16];
- 4) inhibiting unnecessarily [1 Cor. 8:4-8], and
- 5) producing feelings of guilt and self condemnation [1 John 3:19-20].

“The first three functions of conscience are God-given. As moral beings we are created with the capacity to observe ourselves and to live consistently and responsibly out of a motivation of love. At times, however, the conscience can also needlessly inhibit and become the source of self-punitive, destructive emotions of guilt. Although some assume these functions are also the work of God, Scripture indicates they are not. Paul speaks of those with a weak conscience that is overly restrictive [1 Cor. 8:7]. And John indicates that condemnation is not God-given when he writes, *“If our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart”* [1 John 3:20]. The Biblical doctrines of the atonement and justification make it clear that the believer’s sins have already been paid for and that the Christian is no longer under condemnation [Rom. 8:1]. Seen in this light the condemnation of a guilty conscience actually involves a dilemma of the efficacy of the atonement. It constitutes an additional, self-inflicted penalty or payment for one’s sins.

“Biblically, conscience functions a great deal like the law. Prior to salvation it serves the useful purposes of showing us a standard to reach for, acting as a schoolmaster [Gal. 3:24], giving moral structure to society [Exodus 21:1–31:18], and showing us our failures and driving us to despair and consequently to

God's grace [Rom. 5:20-21]. After salvation, however, the Christian must learn to relate to conscience in an entirely different manner just as he does to the law. This effort to merit approval and avoid the condemnation of conscience must be replaced by a motivation of love growing out of the fact that Christ has fully taken our condemnation and that we are now acceptable through Him.

"THE DEVELOPMENT OF CONSCIENCE. The process we know as conscience develops out of the complex interaction between

- 1) one's God-given moral potential, which is rooted in the image of God and progressively unfolds with the development of one's cognitive capacities;
- 2) one's own desires and attempts to merit self-acceptance and avoid punishment;
- 3) the impact of socializing agents, particularly parents.

Although the Bible does not elaborate extensively on humanity's moral nature, it does describe us as moral beings, created in the image of God with the "*law of God written in the heart*" [Rom. 2:14-15]. It is this fundamental moral nature that provides the ability for the individual to profit from the socializing process and to develop a set of moral values.

"Beyond humanity's innate moral propensity and the law written on the heart, the unique shape of one's conscience is highly influenced by one's interaction with significant socialization agents. This takes place through the process of internalization. From early childhood children take in, or internalize, the ideals and expectations of parents and significant others because they fear parental punishment or rejection if they fall short and because they love and admire these significant adults. In the first five years of life parents are the main source of these expectations. As children grow older, they increasingly look to other authorities and to

peers and broader social standards for the ideals they adopt.

“As these ideals and expectations are internalized and merged with one’s innate moral awareness and individual desires, they come together to form what is generally called the ideal self or the ego ideal. This set of ideals becomes the standard by which one judges himself or herself.

“At the same time children are taking in their parent’s values and standards they also internalize the corrective attitudes of significant others. When parents rely on angry, punitive corrections, children tend to take in these corrective attitudes as their own. As these punitive attitudes merge with the child’s inherent sense of moral justice, they form the essential ingredients of punitive emotions of guilt generally called neurotic or false guilt. By contrast, when children take in predominantly loving disciplinary attitudes, those attitudes merge with the child’s inherent moral sense and love to form a set of love-based corrective attitudes. These compromise the essence of godly sorrow, or what is sometimes referred to as true guilt.

“With the completion of this process the development of the broad outlines of conscience is largely finished. Individuals have a set of standards, the perceptual ability to evaluate themselves [to bear witness], and two sets of corrective attitudes they can use to motivate themselves

“**PATHOLOGIES OF CONSCIENCE.** Problems of conscience grow naturally out of disturbances in the function of conscience described above. Some people have problems with the functioning of conscience because they develop inadequate standards. They may have failed to internalize acceptable standards, or they may have repressed their inherent moral nature and developed antisocial or sociopathic personality styles because they have inappropriate values. Or they may have internalized rigid and narrow standards that

inhibit unnecessarily, cause neurotic problems, and do not allow a creative and assertive style of life.

“Others develop problems because of inappropriate corrective attitudes and emotions. Internalization of punitive corrective attitudes can result in the severe guilt emotions found in depressive and obsessive compulsive personalities, the two “guilt neuroses.” The failure to internalize loving corrective attitudes can lead to a lack of concern for others and consequently anti-social behavior.

“PSYCHOTHERAPY OF PROBLEMS OF CONSCIENCE. An understanding of the process involved in the development of conscience also provides direction for resolving problems of conscience. Effective therapy needs to give attention to the development and adequacy of both one’s standards and one’s corrective attitudes. People who have developed rigid, neurotic standards need to rework those. Those who have repressed or failed to internalize Biblically and socially appropriate values need to develop those. And people who have developed self-punitive guilt feelings need to internalize the fact that they are forgiven and accepted by God and can give up their own self-punishment. In each case this is most effectively carried out within the context of a meaningful personal relationship that provides an emotional bond to help effect deep changes in one’s personal values rather than merely an intellectual change of standards.” [“Conscience” by S. B. Narramore, Baker Encyclopedia of Psychology, pp.220-221].

5. HOW DO I FEEL GUILTY? Dr. Narramore says, “Guilt can be used either as a judicial term referring to violation of a law or to designate an emotion that follows judging oneself in violation of a standard. The first usage refers to an objective state or condition. When individuals break a civil law, they are objectively guilty whether they feel guilty or not. The second

usage refers to a subjective experience. People may feel guilty even though they are not legally guilty.

“Objective and subjective guilt can be further divided into two types. Objective guilt can refer to one’s condition in relation to either a human law or to God. In reference to God all persons have been judged guilty [Rom. 3:23; Isa. 53:6], whereas only some people are guilty before human law. Subjective guilt can be divided into self-condemning emotions called neurotic guilt [i.e. false guilt, punitive guilt, or simply guilt feelings] and love-based corrective feelings variously called true guilt, ego guilt, existential guilt, or constructive sorrow.

“DEVELOPMENT OF GUILT FEELINGS. Punitive guilt emotions are usually referred to by psychologists simply as guilt. These feelings are based on attitudes of self-punishment, self-rejection add low self-esteem; they develop over a period of years within the context of the child’s relationships with parents and significant others. Four dynamics appear to be central in their development:

- 1) The child’s innate capacity for self-observation and judgments,
- 2) the taking in of the standards and expectations of others,
- 3) the taking in of the punishments and corrective attitudes of others, and
- 4) the child’s anger over the frustration of his or her needs and wishes.

“Although theorists vary in their understanding of the development of guilt feelings and other aspects of moral functioning, all agree that the child’s innate potential for cognitive development is central to the process. Without the unfolding of these cognitive abilities children would be unable to accurately evaluate their actions and the consequences of them or to profit from the socialization process. It is this process that sets humanity’s sense of right and wrong on a totally

different level from animals. Animals have the capacity for some simple learning of right and wrong through rewards and punishments but not the capacity for self-observation that can result in true moral judgments.

“Although most psychologists view the human potential for mature morality as simply the ability of an amoral individual to profit from socializing influences of parents and others, the scriptural assertions that we are created in God’s image suggests that we are born with more than simply the capacity to profit from experience. It suggests that every person has at least some ability (or potential ability) to know whether his deeds are good or evil apart from (or in addition to) what he is taught. Paul’s reference to the law written on the heart (Rom. 2:14-15) also suggests we are not born morally neutral but have some inherent sense of right and wrong.

“The second factor in the development of guilt feelings is the child’s taking in of the standards of parents and significant others. This process, called internalization, takes place as children begin to adopt parental and societal values. Since children admire and look up to their parents and because they fear punishment or rejection for disobedience, they gradually take their parents standards as their own. These standards, when merged with the child’s inherent moral capacity and own wishes and desires, form the core of the standard of conscience, or the child’s ego ideal or ideal self. This set of ideals becomes the criterion by which the child judges his or her level of morality and accomplishment. After it is well established it will operate much as an internal law, and the child will tend to feel guilty any time its standards are violated.

“At the same time children are taking in their parents’ ideals and standards they also take in the corrective attitudes and actions. Consequently, if parental punishment is severely punitive or rejecting, children soon adopt these attitudes toward themselves

and begin to mentally inflict similar punishments on themselves when they fall short of their ideals. These punitive and self-rejecting emotions form the core of neurotic guilt feelings.

“The other contributor to the development of guilt feelings is the child’s anger. When children become angry at parents and others, they naturally assume their parents are angry with them in return. Consequently, when parents punish children, children tend to see the parents as angrier than they really are. As children take in their parents’ punitive attitudes, they take them in as they perceive them to be rather than as they are in reality. The strength of the child’s punitive feelings of guilt in other words, is not simply a reflection of the punitiveness of parental discipline. It is actually as strong as the combination of the parents’ anger and the child’s own anger. This is one reason why many people with loving parents still have serious problems of guilt.

“THE ALTERNATIVE TO GUILT. While psychologists from a variety of theoretical perspectives point out the harm caused by punitive guilt emotions, most also see the need for an alternative form of motivation. Variouslly labeled true guilt (Tournier, 1962), existential ego guilt (Pattison, 1969), or constructive sorrow (Narramore 1984), this type of motivation is set off from punitive guilt feelings in several ways. Whereas punitive guilt feelings are a self-centered form of punishment designed to atone for one’s failures, constructive sorrow focuses on the damage done to others and the desire to make things right. Feelings of guilt are focused more on past failures, whereas constructive sorrow is oriented toward future changes. And feelings of guilt are based on anger, whereas constructive sorrow is motivated by love. Paul wrote of this type of motivation when he spoke of sorrow that is according to the will of God “that produces repentance without

regret in contrast to the sorrow of the world that produces death" (2 Cor. 7:8-10).

"Much punitive guilt feelings develop out of the interaction of the child's innate capacity for moral functioning and internalized parental punitiveness, feelings of constructive sorrow grow out of one's innate moral capacities and the internalizing of loving parental corrections. When parents and significant others correct children with firm but loving respectful discipline, children learn to respond to their failures not with punitive self-rejection but with a genuine desire to do better based on a concern for others and a desire for personal integrity. For Christians this constructive sorrow (or true guilt) is encouraged by God's loving care and provision. Before Paul wrote of a godly or constructive sorrow in 2 Corinthians 7:8-10, he reminded the Corinthians of a number of God's Old Testament promises [2 Cor. 6:16-18] and then wrote, *"Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God"* (2 Cor. 7:1). His appeal was not to avoid the pain of guilty condemnation, since that issue was already settled. Instead it was to respond in love to the work of God. It is the positive motivation that is the Biblical alternative to guilt feelings" (Ibid. pp.486-488).

In short, we can see why God through inspiration said,

22:6 Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it. ... 13:24 He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes. ... 22:15 Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him. ... 23:13 Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod he shall not die. 23:14 Thou

shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell. ... ^{29:15}The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame (Prov. 22:6; 13:24; 22:15; 23:13-14; 29:15).

Examples Of Those Not Holding The Faith

ISRAEL is one of the worst examples in all holy writ of those who had it “made in the shade” and turned their back on God. The writer of the Hebrew epistle reminds them,

¹²Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. ¹³But exhort one another daily, while it called today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. ¹⁴For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end; ¹⁵While it is said, To day if ye will hear my voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation. ¹⁶For some, when they had heard, did provoke: howbeit not all that came out of Egypt by Moses. ¹⁷But with whom was he grieved 40 years? Was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness? ¹⁸And to whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not? ¹⁹So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief (Heb. 3:12-19).

ACHAN is still another example of one of Israel’s problems.

¹But the children of Israel committed a trespass in the accursed thing: for Achan... took of the accursed thing: and the anger of

the Lord was kindled against the children of Israel. ²And Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, which is beside Bethhaven, on the east side of Bethel, and spake unto them, saying, Go up and view the country. And the men went up and viewed Ai. ... ⁴So there went up thither of the people about three thousand men... ⁵And the men of Ai smote of them about thirty and six men... ⁶And Joshua rent his clothes, and fell to the earth upon his face before the ark of the Lord until the eventide, he and the elders of Israel, and put dust upon their heads. ⁷And Joshua said, Alas, O Lord God, wherefore hast thou at all brought this people over Jordan, to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us? ... ¹⁰and the Lord said unto Joshua, Get thee up; wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face? ¹¹Israel hath sinned, and they have also transgressed my covenant which I commanded them: for they have even taken of the accursed thing, and have also stolen and dissembled also, and they have put it even among their own stuff. ¹²Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies, but turned their backs before their enemies, because they were accursed: neither will I be with you any more, except ye destroy the accursed thing from among you. ... ¹⁸and Achan...was taken. ¹⁹And Joshua said unto Achan, My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the Lord God of Israel, and make confession unto him; and tell me now what thou hast done; hide it not from me. ²⁰And Achan answered Joshua, and said, Indeed I have sinned against the Lord God of Israel, and thus and thus have I done: ²¹When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver,

and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them, and took them; and behold, they are hid in the earth in the midst of my tent, and the silver under it. ... ²⁴And Joshua and all Israel with him, took Achan... ²⁵and...stoned him with stones, and burned them with fire, after they had stoned them with stones...²⁶So the Lord turned from the fierceness of his anger (Josh. 7:1-26).

How many times do people try to hide sin from God's people only to realize later, "Your sin will find you out" (Num. 32:23)?

KORAH is still another example,

¹Now Korah... ²rose up before Moses, with certain of the children of Israel, 250 princes of the assembly, famous in the congregation, men of renown: ³And they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron, and said unto them, Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the Lord is among them: wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the Lord? ⁴And when Moses heard it, he fell upon his face: ⁵And he spake unto Korah and unto all his company, saying, Even to morrow the Lord will show who are his, and who is holy; and will cause him to come near unto him: even him whom he hath chosen will he cause to come near unto him. ... ³¹And it came to pass, as he had made an end speaking all these words, that the ground craved asunder that was under them: ³²And the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men that appertained unto Korah, and all their goods. ³³They, and all that

appertained to them, went down into the pit, and the earth closed upon them: and they perished from among the congregation. ...³⁵And there came out a fire from the Lord, and consumed the 250 men that offered incense [Num. 16:1-35].

We can easily see a lesson in Korah that when God has appointed man needs to leave alone. God's decisions are always right.

JUDAS ISCARIOT was a problem among Jesus' Apostles.

³Then entered Satan into Judas surnamed Iscariot. ... ⁴And he went his way, and communed with the chief priests and captains, how he might betray him (i.e. Jesus) unto them. ⁵And they were glad, and covenanted to give him money. ⁶And he promised, and sought opportunity to betray him unto them in the absence of the multitude. ... ²¹But, behold, the hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table. ²²And truly the Son of man goeth, as it was determined: but woe unto that man by whom he is betrayed! ... ⁴⁷And while he yet spake, behold a multitude, and he that was called Judas, one of the twelve, went before them, and drew near unto Jesus to kiss him. ⁴⁸But Jesus said unto him, Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss [Luke 22:1-48]?

A man who had all the rights and privileges appertaining to any Apostle lost it all as well as his soul and life for a small sum of money.

ANANIAS AND SAPPHIRA were the first hypocrites in the Lord's church.

¹But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, ²And kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet. ³But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land? ⁴Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? Why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? Thou has not lied unto men, but unto God. ⁵And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost: and great fear came on all them that heard these things... [Acts 5:1-11].

DEMAS is another problem child of the New Testament church. *"For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica..."* [2 Tim. 4:10]. We see four cases here in the New Testament where money was their downfall. His having loved the present age stands in contrast with those who love the appearing of the Son of God; and any hope that some seem willing to express on his behalf seems very precarious at best.

Conclusion

The very fact that the validity of our baptism depends upon a good conscience toward God lays the ground work for every aspect of our lives. When we are at home, work, school, play, shopping, etc., everything we do conscientiously because of learned principles we have stored in our minds from God's word. Our eternal salvation in heaven at last depends upon our daily behavior at home, work, school, play, shopping, etc

because in this way we either violate God's law or not. We at the same time violate our conscience or not.

Because I am a child of God [i.e. a Christian] I need to follow as closely as possible Jesus' perfect example all the way to Heaven. I need to follow Paul's positive attitude to keep on keeping on HOLDING FAITH AND A GOOD CONSCIENCE. I need to follow the undying faith of Abraham knowing that what God has promised to every Christian (i.e. salvation from sin, mansion in Heaven, etc.). He will keep His part of the bargain, but I must keep my part also.

The Bible is the only standard of authority by which I can channel my life in God's way. Because the Bible only makes Christians only and the only Christians-ALWAYS. I must never find myself doing what is right in my own eyes because "There's an all seeing eye" watching me and you. As long as I go by God's word my conscience won't misguide me because I'm using my Bible for a road map and my last stop's in Heaven some sweet day, how about yours?

**Forsaking
All
I
Trust
Him**

Chapter 17

Growing Faith

2 Peter 1:5

Charles W. Leonard

To grow means to add to, proceed further, enlarge, advance, increase or make progress. God intended for plant life, animal life and human beings to grow. Spiritual growth should be as normal as physical growth. Growth reported in the book of Acts has to do with increase of the word or with the numerical growth of the church, while the epistles refer to the spiritual growth of Christians.

There is a vast difference between having faith and growing faith. Many have faith that is not a growing faith. Christ should be our example to grow mentally, physically, spiritually and socially (Luke 2:52).

The Need For A Growing Faith

Every Christian needs to have a growing faith. It is impossible to please God without faith, but the kind of faith that pleases God is a growing faith that works by love (Heb. 11:6; Gal. 5:6). Faith alone is not sufficient, because faith must be perfected by works (James 2:17,18,24,26). An Old Testament character by the name of Abraham proved and perfected his faith by his works (James 2:21-22). The need for a growing faith should be evident from the instructions given by the apostle Peter (1 Peter 2:2; 2 Peter 3:18).

Before a Christian can leave the milk or baby stage, he must have a growing faith (1 Cor. 3:2; Heb. 5:12-13).

Immaturity always develops in the absence of a growing faith. Those who are immature are not only in the baby stage, but also unable to distinguish between right and wrong (Heb. 5:14). Preachers have often been criticized by those who are immature that do not recognize truth when it is taught.

Great heroes of faith, mentioned in Hebrews 11, were great because of the kind of faith that they had. One of the greatest needs in the church today is that of a growing faith.

The Way To A Growing Faith

Faith is not a blind leap in the dark as some believe, but is based upon evidences of the unseen (Heb. 11:1; 2 Cor. 4:18). The vehicle through which faith comes and grows is the word of God (Rom. 10:17; Isa. 55:11; Acts 15:7). The miracles recorded in the four accounts of the Gospel were designed to cause people to believe that Jesus was the Son of God (John 20:30-31).

After one believes, further teaching is necessary for one to have a growing faith. Part of the great commission was to teach those who were baptized to observe all things that were commanded (Matt. 28:19-20). Those in Berea were developing a growing faith when they readily received the word and then searched the scriptures daily to see if what they heard was the truth (Acts 17:11). There seems to be the tendency today to either receive or reject what is taught without any searching. Study must take place before one can have God's approval or be able to rightly divide the word (2 Tim. 2:15).

Only those who have an honest and sincere desire to really know the mind of God will have a growing faith. God's thoughts and ways are different and above ours (Isa. 55:8-9). Since we are unable to know the mind of God, we must turn to the word and let him reveal his thoughts and will to us (1 Cor. 2:16). God

reveals in his word all that pertains to life and godliness so that we can have a growing faith and live by it [2 Peter 1:3].

Evidences Of A Growing Faith

One of the evidences of a growing faith is when one is willing to accept all that God has spoken through Christ [Heb. 1:1-2]. All that God has bound in Heaven should be bound on earth and all that God has loosed in Heaven should be loosed on earth [Matt. 16:19]. No one has the right to bind or loose where God has not done so. We live under a system of faith that is based upon the word of God [2 Cor. 5:7; Rom. 10:17]. Those who refuse to hear Christ and submit to him will be destroyed [Matt. 17:5; Acts 3:22-23].

A growing faith will make a difference in the way that Christians live. Those who are baptized are raised to walk a newness of life [Rom. 6:4]. All who obey the Gospel are in Christ and have become new creatures and all things have become new [2 Cor. 5:17]. Souls are purified when they obey the truth [1 Peter 1:22]. Christians can be victorious over the world through a growing faith [1 John 5:4]. Followers of Christ are not to be conformed to the world, but live differently from the world [Rom. 12:2]. Being different means being pure in heart, thought and life [Matt. 5:8; Phil. 4:8; 1 Tim. 5:22]. The Christian graces are to be added to that growing faith [2 Peter 1:5-7]. A growing faith will also produce the fruit of the Spirit, which should be in the life of all Christians [Gal. 5:22-23]. The end result will be the development of real Christian character.

Evidence of a growing faith will be seen when Christians develop the proper priorities in life. Our world today has lost sight of what is really important in life. The soul of man is far more important than the material things of life [Matt. 16:26]. Those who are serious about going to Heaven will make God and his

kingdom their number one priority in life (Matt. 22:37; 6:33). The number two priority should be that of rendering service to our fellowman (Matt. 22:39; Gal. 5:13). At best it is difficult to keep our priorities straight in a world that offers so many allurements and makes so many demands on our time.

Those who have a growing faith, will look for opportunities to render service to their fellowman. Christians are to look out for the good of others instead of just being concerned about their own welfare (Phil. 2:4). Christ demonstrated what a growing faith should be, by ministering to the needs of others (Matt. 20:28; Acts 10:38). Many today are looking for someone to serve them rather than looking for someone to serve. The Lord taught that it is more blessed to give than to receive (Acts 20:35).

The attitude of those with a growing faith is different toward worship. People with a growing faith anxiously look forward to worship rather than feeling that worship is a duty that has to be performed (Psa. 122:1). They also recognize that worship must be in spirit and according to truth (John 4:24). All with a growing faith will recognize that there needs to be authority for all that is done religiously (Col. 3:17).

Hope for those with a growing faith is not limited to this life, but extends beyond the grave. When hope is limited to this life, it leaves people miserable (1 Cor. 15:19). The eternal reward of those with a growing faith is described as a house not made with hands and the city of God (2 Cor. 4:1; Heb. 13:14; 12:22). The growing faith is what moves people to lay up treasures in Heaven rather than here on earth (Matt. 6:20).

Evidences Of A Non-growing Faith

Those who do not have a growing faith, will not appreciate God and his word enough to find out how to live as Christians. God would have all men to be saved

and come to a knowledge of the truth [1 Tim. 2:4]). Paul revealed that the Jews had a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge and went about to establish their own plan of righteousness while rejecting God's plan (Rom. 10:2-3). Unless Christians have the proper respect for God and his word, they will not study enough to be able to rightly divide the scriptures (John 5:39; 2 Tim. 2:15). Christians with a non-growing faith will be unable to discern between right and wrong (Heb. 5:12-14).

Partial obedience on the part of Christians is an example of a non-growing faith. We have taught for years that denominational people are wrong by not doing all that God requires to become a Christian. Christians who do not want to render complete obedience are just as wrong (James 2:10; 4:17). Christianity is not based on the smorgasbord approach of choosing only those things which we agree with and that please us. We should always seek to please God and not ourselves (John 8:29; Matt. 3:17; 1 Thess. 4:1). God's people need to be honest enough to take the same medicine that we often give to others.

The attitude of wanting to be served rather than rendering service to others is further evidence of a non-growing faith. Christians should look for opportunities to serve God and others rather than wanting to be served (Matt. 4:10; Phil. 2:4). Christ came not to be ministered to, but to minister to the needs of others (Matt. 20:28). The Lord also taught that the one who was the greatest, was the one who became a servant (Matt. 23:11). The real servant of Christ will by love serve others (Gal. 5:13). Those who do not enjoy rendering service to others, will not enjoy Heaven because those in Heaven will serve God (Rev. 22:3).

Preoccupation with material things is an indication of a non-growing faith. The engrossment in material things reveals that Christians are in love with the world and at the same time are at enmity with God (James

4:4). The love affair which Christians carry on with the world is only a temporary thing because all material things will be destroyed when Christ comes again (1 John 2:15-17; 2 Peter 3:10). The cares of the world, riches and the pleasures of life choke the spiritual life out of Christians and they become unfruitful (Luke 8:14). The craze for materialism leads those involved to forget man's most important possession which is his soul (Matt. 16:26).

A non-growing faith is evident in the worship and work of Christians. Those who have a non-growing faith have a tendency to become a spectator instead of a participant in the worship and work of the church. Most of the criticism received is by those who are spectators and not participants. Those with a non-growing faith expect to go to Heaven on a second-handed faith and piggyback on the efforts of others. There is a failure on their part to understand that we will not be judged on the basis of what others have done, but on an individual basis (Matt. 16:27; Rom. 2:6; 14:12; 2 Cor. 5:10).

Conclusion

Growing faith takes effort on the part of Christians. Only those with a growing faith which works by love are pleasing to God. The lack of a growing faith may well be responsible for many of the problems we have in the church today. When one develops a growing faith, it is beneficial to him and also to the church. All of us should make sure that we have a growing faith.

Chapter 18

Assurance Of Faith

Hebrews 10:22

Dean Buchanan

Faith is the foundation of salvation. *“For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life”* (John 3:16). *“But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him”* (Heb. 11:6). *“I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins”* (John 8:24). *“Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned”* (Mark 16:15,16).

The word faith occurs 247 times in the King James Translation. Of that number, 245 occurrences are in the New Testament and only 2 in the Old Testament. While the NIV and RSV show as many as 18 times the word is used in the Old Testament, it is obvious that the concept of faith is a New Testament concept. The emphasis of the Law of Moses was the outward keeping of that Law for only by keeping that Law perfectly could a person be saved and that was an impossible task.

Our topic for this hour ASSURANCE OF FAITH is found in the book of Hebrews which was probably written sometime between 64 AD and 85 AD. The text tells us something about the people to whom it was written which is fortunate for the intended recipients

are not mentioned, the letter beginning with the message itself.

The recipients had evidently been Christians for some time for they should have been more astute in the word than they were.

¹²For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. ¹³For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. ¹⁴But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil (Heb. 5:12-14).

Based on this statement the recipients had been Christians long enough to be mature in Christ but they were not.

The writer also tells them to remember the “former days after they were illuminated” which would indicate they had been saved for some time (Heb. 10:32). There is some indication there were leaders among the recipients that had died a martyr’s death. “Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God; consider the outcome of their life, and imitate their faith” (Heb. 13:7, RSV). They had been persecuted but had not yet been killed for Christ. “Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin” (Heb. 12:4). They had also given up material possessions. “...And took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance” (Heb. 10:34). And from the overall tone of the letter there was persecution awaiting these people

The recipients were also a generous and giving people. *“For God is not Unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister”* (Heb. 6:10).

Because of the persecution they were facing, the recipients of this letter stood in grave danger of going back to the Jewish religion and living under the Law of Moses. The writer is evidently trying to prevent them from making this fatal mistake and the method he chooses constitutes the theme of the book, that Christ and his New Testament is better than Levitical system and the Law of Moses.

To develop his theme and therefore accomplish his purpose, the writer shows in chapters 1 & 2 that Christ is greater than the angels and the prophets; in chapters 3 & 4 that Christ is greater than Moses; in chapter 7 that the priesthood of Christ is greater than the Levitical priesthood; in chapter 8 that the new covenant is better than the old; in chapter 9 that the sacrifice of the New Testament (Christ) is better than the sacrifices (animals) of the Old Covenant.

After drawing a very clear and definite picture of the superiority of Christ and his covenant over the Law of Moses and the old covenant, the writer concentrates on faith beginning in 10:19 and continuing through 12:29. Faith is the much better way which is the way of Christ. This returns us to our specific text.

¹⁹Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; ²¹And having a high priest over the house of God; ²²Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. ²³Let us

*hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; [for he is faithful that promised;]
24And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works; 25Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another; and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching [Heb. 10:19-25].*

By use of the word "therefore" in verse 19 of this text, the author begins to make application of all that he has said from the beginning of the book. Our focus is on the expression ASSURANCE OF FAITH found in verse 22.

Faith is defined as "firm persuasion conviction based on hearing...New Testament faith in God or Christ or things spiritual" (*Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*). A word definition of faith is given by the writer of Hebrews. "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1, KJV). The American Standard Translation has this verse, "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." According to this verse, where there is sight, there can be no faith and where there is no sight, there must be faith. Faith then, is the belief, the conviction, that a thing or an idea, may be true or real.

We have under consideration the ASSURANCE OF FAITH from Hebrews 10:22. The definition of assurance is,

A fullness, abundance; also means full assurance, entire confidence, literally, a full carrying. In 1 Thessalonians 1:5 it describes the willingness and freedom of spirit enjoyed by those who brought the gospel to Thessalonica. In Colossians 2:2 the freedom of mind and confidence resulting from an understanding in

Christ; In Hebrews 6:11 the engrossing effect of the expectation of the fulfillment of God's promises; in Hebrews 10:22 [our text] the character of the faith by which we are to draw near to God (*Vines Expository of New Testament Words*).

Full assurance of faith describes a faith that dispels all doubt; takes God at his word; does what God commands; is not divided; is not hesitant; is not timid. A faith that is dynamic, active, energetic, enthusiastic, loving and sure. Surely this is the kind of faith our Lord had in mind in the first and greatest commandment. *"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind..."* [Luke 10:27].

With a FULL ASSURANCE OF FAITH there is no wavering on the question of the existence of God. One has but to look at the universe around him and know that God exists. *"The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament sheweth his handywork"* [Psalm 19:1]. Surely common sense tells us the earth and all the universe did not just happen, nor is it the result of millions of years of evolution which is a theory and nothing more than chance.

God has revealed Himself to man through different means. We have already mentioned the existence of the universe as evidence of the existence of God. (In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth, Gen. 1:1). *"Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear"* [Heb. 11:3]. To the Roman church Paul wrote,

¹⁹Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. ²⁰For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen,

being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse [Rom. 1:19-20].

These passages set out a simple truth that is self-evident whether it is stated in the Bible or not.

God reveals himself to man through man himself. God created man in his own image (Gen. 1:26). The Hebrew writer quotes Psalm 8, *"What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him? Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honor, and didst set him over the works of thy hands."* Man is created in the image of God. David said, *"I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made"* (Psalm 139:14).

God reveals himself to man through his son, Jesus Christ. *"In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made"* (John 1:1-3). Jesus himself said, *"I and my Father are one"* (John 10:30). Philip said to Christ, *"Lord shew us the Father and it sufficeth us,"* and Jesus responded, *"...he that hath seen me hath seen the Father"* (John 14:8,9). Therefore, through the person of Christ and through his teaching, God has been revealed to us.

God has revealed himself to man through the Bible. *"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction for instruction in righteousness That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works"* (2 Tim. 3:16). In his prayer to the Father, Christ said, *"Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth"* (John 17:17). Christ said, *"If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself"* (John 7:17). These are but

a few of the ways in which God has revealed himself to man.

With a FULL ASSURANCE OF FAITH there is no wavering on the question of the existence of God. The evidence is clear, available and in abundance, that God does indeed exist and is creator of the universe.

With a FULL ASSURANCE OF FAITH there is no wavering between Christ and the world; The apostle Paul knew where he stood. There was no doubt in his mind. *“For the which cause I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day”* (2 Tim. 1:12). When one knows Christ in whom one has believed, there will be no wavering when the call of the world comes, no matter how great the temptation might be. The apostle John admonished,

¹⁵Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. ¹⁷And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever (1 John 2:15-17).

While a Christian may use all the material things God has given him, he will never be willing to put them before Christ and as the Hebrews did, he will gladly “take joyfully to spoiling of his goods” rather than deny Christ.

With a full assurance of faith there will be no wavering between Christ and his church and denominationalism. Jesus said, “...upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Matt. 16:18). The church was

bought and paid for with the blood of Christ. *“Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Spirit hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God which he hath purchased with his own blood”* (Acts 20:28). The New Testament knows of only one church and that is the one built by Christ. The church is the body of Christ. *“And he is the head of the body, the church; who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence”* (Col. 1:18).

The denominational system of multiple churches (denominations) all making up the one church of the Bible is as far from the New Testament as dark is from light. This system was born of men out of efforts to ‘reform’ the Roman Catholic Church which is neither Roman, nor Catholic, nor the church. Paul, who had FULL ASSURANCE OF FAITH, warned against division (the embryo of denominationalism) in his letter to the church in Corinth.

12Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. 13Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul? 14I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius; 15Lest any should say that I had baptized in mine own name (1 Cor. 1:12-15).

Even in Paul’s day there were those who were beginning to follow men and Paul condemned this practice, not just in that letter but other places as well.

With a FULL ASSURANCE OF FAITH we will not waver between Christ and his church and Christianity and any other ‘world religion’ so called. Jesus himself said, *“I am the way, the truth and the life; no one cometh unto the Father, but by me”* (John 14:6). Again, *“I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in*

your sins: for except ye believe that I am he, ye shall die in your sins" (John 8:24). Regarding Christ, the apostles said, "And in none other is there salvation: for neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men, wherein we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). And again, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ" (Eph. 1:3).

Now if our Savior proclaimed it and his apostles preached it and wrote it, there must be no way to be saved except by Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Buddhism, Islam and other world religions do not recognize Christ as the Son of God and the savior of the world. We do not have to know what these religions teach in order to affirm that Christianity is the only way a person can reach heaven. It doesn't matter what they say. By reason of exclusion Christ has eliminated every other way. When he said he was "*the way the truth and the life*" that sealed the matter.

Now if we have a FULL ASSURANCE OF FAITH we will not concern ourselves with the possibility of some other religion being true. We will not waver between Christ and Christianity and the world religions.

With a FULL ASSURANCE OF FAITH we will not waver between Biblical Christianity and atheism. The doctrine of sincerity being sufficient is one of the most damnable doctrines that man has ever thought up. Taken to its logical conclusion this doctrine will allow atheists to go to heaven. If not, why not? Surely there are atheists that are sincere. Are those who hold to the doctrine of sincerity being enough ready to judge the minds of all atheists as being insincere? Surely not! That being the case then, based on the proposition that sincerity is the only thing that counts, all sincere atheists will be saved! Such is the logical conclusion of the erroneous teaching of the sincerity doctrine. Yet look at what the Bible says regarding faith. "*He that*

believeth and is baptized shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:15,16). In order to please God we MUST BELIEVE that he is (Heb. 11:6). Truth is consistent with itself and there is no possible way for the teaching of sincerity to be harmonized with the teaching of the Bible.

With A FULL ASSURANCE OF FAITH we will not waver between Christianity and atheism. With James we will say, "*Thou believest there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble*" (James 2:19). Without hesitation and without shame, we will tell the world we believe in God by the lives we live and the words we speak!

With a FULL ASSURANCE OF FAITH there is no wavering between Christ and his gospel and any other religious, social, political, or philosophic system espoused by man. We will recognize the total force of the words of Solomon as he evaluated the life he had lived in which he gave in to every desire and admonition of the flesh. "*This is the end of the matter; all hath been heard: Fear God and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every work into judgment, with every hidden thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil*" (Eccl. 12:13).

According to our text (Heb. 10:19-25), those brethren could enter into the holiest by a new and living way. To the average Jew of New Testament times, the idea of his entering into the holy place was almost blasphemy. But the law of Moses had been fulfilled by Christ (Matt. 5:17). According to Paul it had been nailed to the cross (Col. 2:14). Therefore, the new and living way had been provided by Jesus Christ through the shedding of his blood. This fact had been set out clearly and in much detail in the earlier chapters of the book. This had given the Hebrews the confidence to enter into a relationship with God that they could not have dreamed possible. The right to go directly to God

by the authority of Jesus Christ. They could “...draw near (to God) with a true heart in full assurance of faith.” The results of this was they had their thinking straight, their conscience pure and had been baptized into Christ for the remission of sins.

We today have the same rights and privileges concerning our access to God as had these Jews almost two thousand years ago. All people of all time have these rights and privileges of access to God.

Now for some Biblical examples of people with A FULL ASSURANCE OF FAITH. When God told Noah to build an ark and gave him the specifications for it, there is no indication that Noah wavered. No doubt there was ridicule from the world around him because the idea of a flood that covered the earth was not taken seriously by the people. So with A FULL ASSURANCE OF FAITH Noah built the ark and took all his family as well as animals, into that ark to the saving of their lives and the perpetuation of the natural order of things as God had made the world.

With A FULL ASSURANCE OF FAITH we will do what God tells us to do whether or not it makes sense. That is exactly what Noah did though it must have taken him a long time to do it.

When Abraham was called by God to leave his homeland and go to a strange country that God would show him, there is no indication that Abraham wavered [Gen. 12:1-4] He gathered his family and possessions together and began a journey that would last until he died for he “*searched for a city whose builder and maker was God*” [Heb. 11:10]. When he left his homeland he did not know where he was going.

With FULL ASSURANCE OF FAITH we will follow wherever God leads us. We may not understand why things happen the way they do. We may be surprised where we find ourselves in this life but we must continue to follow God in all ways.

When Moses sent the 12 spies into the land of Canaan and they returned with their report, twelve went in to do the work. When they returned, ten of the twelve said they could not take the land. Two, Caleb and Joshua said they could take the land. "*And Caleb stilled the people before Moses, and said, Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it*" (Num. 13:30). Caleb and Joshua evidently had a FULL ASSURANCE OF FAITH that they could take the land and they never wavered.

As these examples have shown us, there are a number of things that are characteristic of those who have A FULL ASSURANCE OF FAITH according to the text. They will hold fast the profession of their hope; they will consider one another; they will stir up one another; they will not neglect to meet together; they will encourage one another and even more as they see the day approaching.

What does it all mean? That when we believe in Jesus Christ as the son of God we will live by our faith every day. We may not understand why some people say and do the things they do. We may not understand why things happen to us that happen to us. We may be discouraged because some leave Christ and the Church. We may be hurt by brothers and sisters in Christ and their thoughtlessness. We may suffer from disease, infirmities, war, accidents and financial setbacks — but through it all, with A FULL ASSURANCE OF FAITH we will be true to God our Father and his Son Jesus Christ.

Chapter 19

Trying Of Faith

James 1:3

Virgil L. Hale

The book of James is unique in a number of ways. The word "Christ" is found but two times in the entire book (1:1; 2:1), and the word "gospel" is not found in the book at all. Some have referred to the book of James as "the common sense book." Some, however, have gone so far as to say that the book is not even for us today. Martin Luther did not want it in his Bible, and referred to it as a "book of straw." Of course I know why he did not like the book, because it plainly disproves the idea of salvation "by faith only" (James 2:24), and Luther, like so many of his day and today, believed that one is saved at the point of faith. The book is concerned with the moral demands of Christianity, and it is written in plain, simple, easily understood language.

The author of the book is generally accepted to be the brother of our Lord, a son of Mary and Joseph. The author does not give us this bit of information, but refers to himself as "*a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ...*" (1:1). The book is addressed to "brethren" (1:2; 2:1), and specifically to Jewish brethren. I am speaking now of Jews who had obeyed the Gospel of Christ, and were not only physical brethren, but were brethren in Christ.

This James is, in all probability, the same James as the one mentioned in Acts chapter 15. The word "greeting" is found only in this book and in the letters

written and sent from the “Jerusalem conference” to congregations of the Lord’s church [Acts 15:23]. Inspired men were responsible for the wording of those letters. The only other time that the word appears in the inspired text is in the recording of the fact that Claudius Lysias sent “greeting” to “governor Felix” [Acts 23:26].

As stated earlier, the book of James was written to Jewish Christians who were scattered abroad. They had to leave their homes because of persecution brought upon them by Saul of Tarsus who later became the great Apostle Paul [Acts 8]. These people were having to adjust to a new way of life in new surroundings, and to be sure, their faith and courage were being put to the test. James was writing to encourage them to be strong and courageous regardless of what might come their way, and to be faithful in their spiritual duties to the Lord. It is so important that we take a positive attitude toward the problems of life, because adversities can be stepping stones to greater heights in the Lord’s service. It all depends on how we use the problems that face us from day to day.

James wrote in verse 2 of chapter 1, “*My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations.*” This might seem like strange language to be using. Some might ask, “How in the world can people be joyful in time of temptation?” However, we are not made to wonder — James gives us the answer. He wrote, “*Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience*” (v.3). According to James, then, there is great benefit to be gained in our being tried (tested). How would we know how strong we are spiritually if we were never put to the test? We could be stronger than we think we are, or we could be weaker than we imagine ourselves to be. James wrote, “*Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him*” (v.12).

There has never been a time when God's people were completely free of persecutions. Paul wrote, "*Yea, and all that live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution*" (2 Tim. 3:12). Please notice that Paul did not say that we might suffer persecution, but he said that we shall. It is sure — it is certain to come.

When we go back and take a look at the Old Testament, we learn that all of the outstanding characters of that era had their faith tested, one way or another. That great character of faith, Abraham, had his faith tested on more than one occasion. First of all, God told him, "*Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee*" (Gen. 12:1). Later, after his son Isaac (the son of promise) was born, he was told to take him and offer him as a sacrifice (Gen. 22). In each of these instances, we might feel that Abraham's faith was tested to the limits, or even beyond reasonable limits. However, Abraham's faith was not weakened by being tested, but instead it seems that his faith in God became stronger. Hebrews chapter eleven is replete with examples of great characters of faith whose faith was put to tremendous tests. For some it not only meant much suffering, it meant death.

Daniel's faith was put to the test when the decree was put out that no one was to pray to any God or man for thirty days, but only to the king. This decree was signed by the king, Darius. Daniel knew that the punishment for violation of this decree would mean his being cast into the den of lions. However, we read in Daniel chapter 6 and verse 10,

Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime.

Daniel's faith in God was not altered by the decree that was made, and even though he was cast into the den of lions, his life was spared by God. He passed his test of faith with flying colors.

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, contemporaries of Daniel, had their faith tested when a decree went out,

⁵That at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of music, ye fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king hath set up. ⁶And whoso falleth not down and worshipeth shall the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace [Daniel 3:5-6].

When confronted by Nebuchadnezzar as to why they had failed to obey the decree, they answered, "...*be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up*" (v.18). It takes faith and courage to stand firm for truth and right. Have you ever wondered what you would have done under circumstances such as Daniel and Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego faced? We will never know until we are put to the test.

Every situation in life, whether good or bad, can work together for our good according to Paul in Romans 8:28. Please note that he did not say that all things are good, but that it will work together for our good. Because of trials and difficulties in life, we can be made stronger and become better servants of our Master.

When Peter was put to the test, following the arrest of the Lord, he failed miserably. Not only did he deny even knowing Jesus, the Bible tells us that he cursed and swore in his denial (Matt. 26:69-74). However, this same Peter, directed by the Holy Spirit wrote,

¹²Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: ¹³But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. ¹⁴If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified" [1 Peter 4:12-14].

In verse 16 he wrote, "Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf." When the Apostles of our Lord were persecuted, we are told "And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name" (Acts 5:41).

Far too often we want to blame God for our own failures. This is not something new, but can be traced all the way back to Adam and Eve. Neither of them was willing to accept personal responsibility for their lack of obedience to God's command concerning the tree. It seems that Adam was trying to blame God when he said, "...The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat" (Gen. 3:12). Adam was not able "to pass the buck" then and we cannot do it today. We are responsible for our own life. James wrote, "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man" (James 1:13). God allows man to be tempted with evil, but rest assured God does not do the tempting. James continued by saying, "But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. ¹⁵Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin when it is finished, bringeth forth death" [vs.14-

15). He then warns in verse 16, "*Do not err, my beloved brethren.*" Let us not be guilty of blaming God for our failure to overcome the temptations that come to us in life. Paul wrote, "*There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it*" (1 Cor. 10:13). God will not force us to take the way of escape, but it is provided by God. Twice in this verse the word "able" is used, thus we can overcome if we have the desire to do so. This should give us courage in the face of every temptation, because we have God's assurance that we can overcome it.

The Bible does speak of the chastening of the Lord, but it does not tell us exactly how or when such comes our way. The writer of the book of Hebrews said,

5...My Son, despise not the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked by him: 6For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. 7If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? 8But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. 9Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? 10For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness" (Heb. 12:5-10).

In the next verse he talks about the fact that such chastening is not joyous, but grievous. However, the fruit that it yields is "*the peaceable fruit of righteous-*

ness unto them which are exercised thereby." The more we read and study concerning testing or trying, the more we are made to realize that it is for our good. Yes, God allows us to be put to the test. He allowed Job to suffer more than any of us have ever suffered, and more than we will in all probability ever suffer. Could you have passed the test that Job had to take? Job did!

Automobile manufacturers constantly test their products. In fact, they have their own proving grounds where they put their products through all kinds of rigorous tests. This is done with one purpose in mind. They want to see if they can stand up under the pressure. We might say that our time on this earth, as a Christian, is the time that we are on the proving ground of our Lord. We will either stand the test or fail, and our eternal destiny is determined in this way.

Fiery trials test us to prove our works of what sort they are. According to Paul, every preacher's works is put to the test (1 Cor. 3:9, 11-15). Please note that this is referred to as his "work." In fact, they were a seal of his apostleship (1 Cor. 9:1-2).

When gold is tested by fire, it does not ruin the gold and make it have less value. The very opposite is true. It purifies the gold and its value increases. It gets rid of all of the impurities. So it is with the Christian. We can only obtain the crown after the trials (James 1:12).

Even our Lord was put to the test, and when He was tried (Matt. 4). He came through with flying colors. We are told that He "*was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin*" (Heb. 4:15). When we become disheartened and discouraged, we need to look to our Lord. After all, He is the author of eternal salvation (Heb. 5:9), and "*the author and finisher of our faith*" (Heb. 12:2). We are told,

⁵Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: ⁶Who being in the form of God thought it not robbery to be equal with God:

7But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: 8And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Phil. 2:5-8).

Trials can make us more patient. We might call trials a testing of our spiritual muscle power. David's killing the lion and the bear prepared him for the time that he would be confronted by the giant Goliath (1 Sam. 34-36). The Apostles under the Limited Commission (Matt. 10) were being prepared for their work under the Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20).

Background training is absolutely essential in order for a man to be qualified to be an elder in the church of our Lord. Serving as a deacon is one way that a man can be so trained. In fact, one of the qualifications that one must meet in order to serve as a deacon is that he must "*first be proved*" (1 Tim. 3:10). An elder cannot be a "*novice*" (1 Tim. 3:6).

Paul wrote to the brethren in Rome and told them that we can "*...glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope*" (Rom. 5:3-4). Paul surely knew whereof he spoke, because he had suffered much for the cause of our Lord. All you have to do is read Second Corinthians chapter 11, and this is evident. In chapter 12, he speaks about the "abundance of revelations" that he had received, and in order to keep him from being "exalted above measure" there was given him "a thorn in the flesh." We are not told what this was, and it does not really matter. Paul said that he "*besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from*" him, but the Lord said, "*...My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.*" Because he knew what the Lord's will was regarding that matter, Paul could write, "*Most gladly therefore*

will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." He even went on to say, *"Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for when I am weak, then am I strong."* Paul knew the real value of being put to the test. When he was the weakest physically (because of all of the persecutions that came to him) he was the strongest spiritually. The same can and should be true of us.

Our Lord was able to endure the cross because of the *"joy that was set before him"* (Heb. 12:2). There was no joy in dying on the cruel and painful cross, but there was joy in knowing that He was doing His Father's will; in knowing that He was providing a way for mankind to be saved; and in knowing that He would soon be able to go back to His home in heaven. We are told to *"consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds"* (Heb. 12:3). As verse 4 says, *"Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin."* How many of us have ever lost a drop of blood because we are faithful Christians? I will venture to say that none of us have. What do we ever have to complain about then?

Whether we stand or fall in the face of trials and tribulations really depends on the foundation upon which we have built. Jesus lets us know that our building is going to be tested from all directions. From Matthew chapter 7 we learn that the roof will be tested by the rain; the foundation by the floods; and the walls by the winds (vs.24-27). We must build upon the Lord and His word. He is the only sure foundation (1 Cor. 3:11), and we build on Him by hearing and obeying His word. Paul admonished the brethren at Corinth (and us as well), *"Therefore my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord"* (1 Cor. 15:58). If we are

faithful unto death (regardless of what we have to endure in life) we shall receive the crown of life (Rev. 2:10).

Our faith is shown by what we do and not by what we say (James 2). If we say "Lord, Lord" and fail to do what He says, we are contradicting ourselves. He is not our Lord if we are not His servants (Luke 6:46). We must do the will of the Father (Matt. 7:21). He only saves those who obey (Heb. 5:9). We must make up our mind as to whom we will serve. As Elijah challenged the people of his day, we need to be challenged with the same words today. He said, "*How long halt ye between two opinions*" (1 Kings 18:21)? When Joshua stood before God's people he said, "*Choose you this day whom ye will serve...*" (Josh. 24:15). We are not to serve the Lord when it is easy but turn from him when things get difficult. It is always or never!

We must learn to be patient in well doing (Rom. 2:7), and not grow weary (Gal. 6:9). Jesus said,

¹⁰Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ¹¹Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. ¹²Rejoice and be exceedingly glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you" (Matt. 5:10-12).

There are many things taking place within the Lord's church today that put us to the test. The version issue is a test. Using women in the public worship is a test. Some teaching that the Holy Spirit works directly upon our heart is a test. Many other things could be added to this list, but at least we get the point. Brethren, we can stand up and fight error, or we can go along to get along. Which will it be? I hope that all of

us can say with Joshua, “...*as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord*” (Josh. 24:15). May our service to the Lord be uncompromisingly, unconditionally, and for as long as we live. If this we do, we can look forward to hearing the Lord say on that day, “*Well done thou good and faithful servant.*”

Chapter 20

Precious Faith

2 Peter 1:1

Glenn Colley

I am delighted to be invited to speak in this lectureship, and to add this chapter to the lectureship book. I sincerely hope you will find the material useful as you strive to serve our God.

The apostle Peter began his second letter by writing, "*Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Savior Jesus Christ*" [2 Peter 1:1]. The words, "*like precious*" describe the kind of faith the Lord offers His people, and come from one Greek word, *isotimos*. It simply underscores the fact that in the church of our Lord we share in the precious faith. It is valuable and sweet.

Christ came to seek and save the lost [Luke 19:10], and yet the Bible also says He died to purchase the church [Acts 20:28]. In the church He offers us a family of brothers and sisters in which our faith will best grow. Because of faith, the church offers me a foretaste of heaven. The Hebrew writer mentions that Christians have "*tasted the heavenly gift.*" Isn't it true that in the church we enjoy many of the same ingredients which make up the heavenly abode? The "*like precious faith*" is a great blessing, and indeed a foretaste of heaven.

The word faith is used in the Bible in two different ways. In some passages it represents the system of religion which we follow. Jude 3 commands to "con-

tend earnestly for the faith.” In other passages faith represents an individual’s personal convictions and confidence in Christ. Luke 17:6 shows Jesus saying, “If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you.” The context reveals clearly that this faith is a personal devotion to the will of Christ.

Peter began both the first and second of his New Testament letters considering faith. In the second letter he mentions the like precious faith, but in the first letter he elaborates more on the nature of that faith. We will spend our time there (1 Peter 1:3-9).

³Blessed **be** the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, ⁵Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

⁶Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: ⁷That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: ⁸Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see **him** not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: ⁹Receiving the end of your faith, **even** the salvation of **your** souls.

In this passage Peter speaks of Christian's faith three times. Each mention has a special quality. Let's take them one at a time.

The first is in verse five, the faith through which I can tap into the power of God. The passage says, "Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." What is God's power in this passage? It is God's instruction in righteousness. What is faith in the passage? It is our part in salvation, our obedience to God.

The Bible teaches us that the Gospel is His power (Rom. 1:16), that the preaching of the cross is His power (1 Cor. 1:18), that the words of Christ are God's power (Luke 4:32), and that the knowledge of the Lord is power (2 Peter 1:3). To live by faith is simply to live by God's will. Faithful Christians place confidence in Him and His word. We place His direction ahead of our own. Without this adherence to His word, our faith is lifeless (James 2:17).

Herein lies the rub. We do not like to be told what to do. We treasure and nurture our independence. The late noted newspaper columnist Lewis Grizzard once wrote, "My life improved dramatically when I found a doctor who told me I could smoke, a preacher who says there is no hell, and an accountant who believes that 2 + 2 is whatever I want it to be." Some, under the guise of the modern-day "political correctness" demand a right to do as they please. They view everything as relative. They see no absolutes. Personal preference becomes people's only reference point in determining right from wrong.

Are we tapped into the power of God? Do we live by faith? Is our faith strong enough to motivate us to obey God's will? What about the matter of worshipping God in spirit and in truth (John 4:24)? So many today are not satisfied with the simple worship of the New Testament, but rather prefer that which is entertaining to people. They even clap for one another. What about

the matter of the sanctity of marriage? Jesus commanded us not to put it asunder (Matt. 19:6). In occasions where re-marriage would be adultery (Matt. 19:9), is our faith strong enough to live His way and stay out of sin? What about our homes? Are they designed after the biblical pattern or simply a carbon copy of the worldly homes we see about us (Eph. 5; Titus 2:1-4)? What about the purity of the church? Do we have enough faith in God to conduct the work of His church the way He told us? What about the discipline of the unfaithful and the matter of withdrawal from the impenitent (2 Thess. 3:6)? Men of weak faith believe they know what is better for God's church than God does. Men who believe in following the Bible have learned that God's power is there, and by faith they can patiently obey. May we never trade the power for half-hearted service.

The second mention of faith is in verses six through eight, a faith that transcends fiery persecution. The passage says,

*6“Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: 7That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: 8Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see **him** not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory” (1 Peter 1:6-8).*

People in the first century knew about having their faith tried. They were not strangers to suffering. Keep in mind that this was written to people who lived before the “miracle drugs” and life-saving surgeries of our generation. Sickness then was more often deadly. In

addition, many suffered because their culture was so intolerant of Christianity. The book of Acts historically records much of their suffering for our Lord. In Acts two confessors of Christ were insulted and accused of being drunken. In Acts three and four they were put in jail. In Acts five we see them beaten. In Acts seven we see our Christian brother Stephen stoned for his faith. Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 11,

²⁴Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. ²⁵Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; ²⁶In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; ²⁷In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. ²⁸Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.

People who suffered trials like these needed strong faith to see them through. And these Christians had that faith. Peter said that their faith was much more precious than gold!

People in the 1990's need the faith that will see them through the fiery trials too. What will you do when your life savings suddenly vanish? What will you do when your teenager is in serious trouble? What will you do when the doctor says there is a question in an x-ray, or says there is nothing more he can do? We need to develop that kind of like precious faith that will see us through life's perils. So many of our songs in our books were written by those who understood suffering and the need for strong faith: "Look away from the

cross to the glittering crown,” or, “Earth holds no treasures but perish with using; however precious they be; yet there’s a country to which I am going. Heaven holds all to me.”

Before we leave this point, consider that in life we do not know the strength of commitment until the winds of trial blow and put it under strain. The reality of love between a man and a woman is not brought to view by the beauty of the marriage ceremony which unites them, nor with what happiness the honeymoon moments pass. The depth of their commitment and love can only be seen later, when the day-in-day-out happy moments are mingled with the struggles of job, children, and mortgage — and young couples need that stress, because if denied those times, they cannot experience the satisfaction of knowing their love is real. That is why the early anniversaries are traditionally celebrated with things like paper, and the fiftieth is celebrated with gold.

How strong is your faith? Let us be thankful for trials. James said, *“Count it all joy when you fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trial of your faith worketh patience”* (James 1:2-3). Until your faith is placed under the fiery trial of persecution or offence, you don’t really know for sure. Yet and still, after the storm hurls its best effort at breaking that faith, and the faith holds strong, there is great satisfaction. You know that your faith is strong and can meet the challenge.

Remember that in Matthew 7:24-27 that the house built on the sand looked similar to the house built on the rock. Only after the storm had done its work could we see and enjoy the value of that great foundation.

The third mention of faith is in verse nine. It is a faith that will transport us to the Pearly Gates.

Peter writes, *“Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.”*

Please appreciate that the word “end” here does not mean termination. Heaven is not the conclusion of our

faith. The word here means "goal" or "aim." Heaven is the desire or object which is had in view; the principle purpose for which it was undertaken.

The same use of the word is found in Romans 10:4 where Paul wrote, "*For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.*" Some have mistakenly read this as meaning that if we believe in Christ we have terminated the need for law. But such is not the case. The true meaning of the verse is that Christ was the goal or aim of Moses' law. Galatians three describes that old law as a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ.

The goal or aim of the Christian is the salvation of his soul.

We can see heaven through faith. Second Corinthians 4:17-18 says, "*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.*" Sometimes we sing a song in which is found the words, "*There's a land that is fairer than day, and by faith we can see it afar.*" When we look into heaven we see no tears in the eyes, no death, neither sorrow, nor crying, nor pain. In fact, these are but the former things which have passed away. We can see however, the great golden throne of God, and the redeemed assembled there singing the rapturous chorus.

When Peter spoke of a "Like precious faith," he revealed to us the sweet reality of what it means to be united in the church with people walking the path to heaven. We are not tired. We are not discouraged. We are marching to Zion.

Chapter 21

Strong Faith **Romans 4:20**

Holger Neubauer

A strong biblical faith ought to be the desire of every child of God and all that call upon our Lord as Savior. To the Ephesian church Paul wrote, “*Finally my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might*” (Eph. 6:10). First Corinthians 16:13 proclaims, “*Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.*” Romans 4:19,20 tells us of the strong faith of Abraham in obeying God and trusting His promises. The text says,

¹⁹And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about one hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah’s womb: ²⁰He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief: but was strong in faith, giving glory to God.

The righteous individuals in Hebrews 11 were by faith out of weakness made strong [Heb. 11:34].

Strong faith is to be the end of every child of God. This is the kind of faith that made great victories over evil possible, and through strong faith men and women stood justified before God. Strong faith is the common denominator throughout all the ages that link the righteous to God, for, “*without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that*

diligently seek him" (Heb. 11:6). The phrase "*The just shall live by faith*" is found true in every biblical epoch (Habakkuk 2:4; Heb. 10:38).

Strong Faith is Sure

Strong faith is sure and certain. Our Lord said, "*Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free*" (John 8:32). I John 5:13 instructs, "*These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God: that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.*" Peter told the Lord, "*we believe and art sure that thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God*" (John 6:69). The first four verses of Luke's account of the gospel affirm the certainty of the record with these words:

¹For as much as many taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, ²Even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word; ³It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee most excellent Theophilus, ⁴That thou mightest know the certainty of those things wherein thou hast been instructed.

Luke speaks of a record that is "most surely believed" and that the readers would "know" the "certainty" of the things revealed. Believing the gospel record requires no irrational faith. God reveals his word in such definitive terms that each individual may know the Savior in whom he believes (2 Tim. 1:12).

Clear and simple statements of the Bible that create true faith and confirmed knowledge are today sadly

being undermined by religious agnosticism. In and out of the church there are legions who affirm that Christians simply cannot know about the proofs of Christianity. This is not new however, for the religious world has for hundreds of years been influenced by agnostic theologians. Blaise Pascal (1623-1662) was the first major theologian and philosopher who promoted a "less than sure religion." Notice this statement by Pascal,

Let us now speak according to natural lights. If there is a God, He is infinitely incomprehensible, since, having neither parts nor limits. He has not affinity to us. We are then incapable of knowing either what He is or if He is. This being so, who will dare to undertake the decision of the question?

...Let us then examine this point, and say, "God is, or He is not." But to which side shall we incline? Reason can decide nothing here. There is an infinite chaos which separated us. A game is being played at the extremity of this infinite distance where heads or tails will turn up. What will you wager? According to reason you can do neither the one thing nor the other; according to reason, you can defend neither of the propositions.

Do not then reprove for error those who have made a choice, for you know nothing about it. "No, but I blame them for having made, not this choice, but a choice; for again both he who chooses heads and he who chooses tails are equally at fault, they are both in the wrong. The true course is not to wager at all."

Yes: but you must wager. It is not optional. You are embarked. Which will you choose then? Let us see. Since you must choose, let us see which interests you least. You have two

things to lose, the true and the good; and two things to stake, your reason and your will, your knowledge and your happiness; and your nature has two things to shun, error and misery. Your reason is no more shocked in choosing one rather than the other, since you must of necessity choose. This is one point settled. But your happiness? Let us weigh the gain and the loss in wagering that God is. Let us estimate these two chances. If you gain, you gain all; if you lose, you lose nothing. Wager, then, without hesitation that He is.¹

Pascal in turn influenced many European and American philosophers with his skeptical faith. William James, an American pragmatist philosopher, quoted from Pascal in many of his lectures and it was James that Batsell Barret Baxter quoted in chapter 30 of his book *I Believe Because*. Notice Carefully:

In those situations where it is not possible to know complete and absolute truth — in those situations which involve faith — it is better to take the path of hope than the path of fear. After all, what have we to lose? When we add to this the impressive evidence reviewed in this book — touching all phases of the Christian view of life — faith and hope are more reasonable choices than doubt and despair.²

If faith is only a wager as Pascal, James and Baxter contend, how is it that Christianity should be preferred over Buddhism and Islam? When two blind men leap in the dark neither knows which one's leap is greater or lesser. The Bible picture of faith is quite different than the agnostic picture given by Baxter. Faith and reason work in unison. Paul prayed that we would be delivered from "unreasonable men" because he

affirmed, “all men do not have faith” (2 Thess. 3:2). God always has willed the case for His truth to be from strong reasons (Isa. 41:21; 1 Thess. 5:21).

Faith is not a holy hunch nor is it a godly guess. Faith is simply the acceptance of God’s Holy word, for “*faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God*” (Rom. 10:17). There are always three characteristics found in the lives of those who are justified by faith: (1) The fact of God speaking His word; (2) The hearing of that message by an honest soul; and (3) The obeying of God’s commands. Without exception, these three characteristics are necessarily involved when anyone is truly justified in faith.

One very powerful illustration of this point is found in Heb. 11:30 where the Scripture says, “*By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were encompassed about seven days.*” The Bible records all the details of this significant event in Joshua 6. The children of Israel were commanded to encircle the city once a day for six days. On the seventh day after the men of war encircled the city seven times, seven priests were commanded to blow their horns and then all the people were commanded to shout. After the careful obedience of Israel to all of God’s commands, the walls of Jericho came tumbling down. Yet, the Hebrew writer tells us that this was accomplished by “faith”. Faith that is true, biblical and righteous always obeys the commands of God.

Faith is concrete and objective and the faith of the New Testament is absolute and final (Acts 6:7; Jude 3).

Strong Faith is Based upon Strong Evidence

Though God does not overwhelm mankind with the evidence for his existence and the truthfulness of His word, He certainly declares Himself with sufficient natural and divine revelation to know that He does exist

[Rom. 1:20; Acts 14:17; Heb. 3:4]. Design always demands a designer; order an orderer; and thought a thinker. Just as it is an utter impossibility for a hurricane to pass through a lumber yard and leave a subdivision, so a fortuitous blast of millions of years ago cannot explain the profound order of our world (Psalm 19:1). No one who found a prosthesis for an arm in a stroll in the woods would conclude that some mysterious evolutionary process was responsible for its existence, so no reasonable person could then explain the human arm which is far more intricate and wonderful as the result of a natural process (Psalm 139:14).

Too, without God objective law would not be possible. Unless law rises above the provincial and transient laws of mankind, ultimate right and wrong cannot be determined. If law is only dependent upon the changeable norms of individual societies, then Hitler, Stalin and the recent tyrannical dictator Saddam Hussein stand justified because they themselves established law in the societies in which they lived. No right thinking individual could possibly claim that prematurely born babies whose lives depended upon incubators should be stripped from the incubators and thrown upon the cold hospital floors to die. Yet this is what happened during the Gulf War in Kuwait. Hussein claimed Kuwait was rightly still a part of Iraq. If Hussein was right about Kuwait, were his actions then justified? Evolutionary proponents would have to answer in the affirmative since law is only dependent upon human recognition. Hussein and his armies were guilty of real objective wrong doing because they violated a law which transcends human law, namely the law of God.

The Bible itself is a book that demonstrates strong evidence of its own inspiration. The Bible writers demonstrate over and over again that the message they wrote was derived from a source beyond themselves. When the popular view considered the world as flat,

Isaiah wrote, "It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth" (Isa. 40:22). The Bible demonstrates its truthfulness in citing the biological truism that "life is in the blood" (Lev. 17:11). The profound hydrological system of the earth is cited in Ecclesiastes 1:6, 7. Recent studies attest to the eighth day of an infant's life as the day which blood clotting elements in the body are at their highest level which corroborates God's law to Abraham (Gen. 17:12). Though, hygienic practices which prevent the spreading of disease are only recently established by modern medicine (1840), God's people in the long ago practiced the same (Num. 19:16-19).

Perhaps one of the greatest evidences of the Bible is prophecy. There are over 300 prophecies linked to the deity of the Lord Jesus. These prophecies are given with great specificity to demonstrate that the prophets themselves wrote from a source beyond themselves. As a blind folded archer who accurately hit a distant target over 300 times in a row would demonstrate an ability beyond human power, so too the Bible writers have demonstrated through prophetic utterances that their message has been derived from a power higher than themselves.

Strong evidence can also be produced to demonstrate that the Bible has been preserved *throughout the ages*. Before Gutenberg's invention of the printing press (around 1450 A.D.) the Bible was carefully copied. The Talmud, which compiled the teachings and opinions of Jewish teachers from 300 B.C. to 500 A.D. laid down very stringent laws for the scribes who copied the law. Some of these were,

- (1) The parchment must be made from the skin of clean animals; must be prepared by a Jew only, and the skins must be fastened together by strings taken from clean animals.
- (2) Each column must have no less than 48 nor more than 60 lines. The entire copy must be first

lined, and if three words were written in it without the line, the copy was worthless. [3] The ink must be of no other color than black, and it must be prepared according to a special recipe. [4] No word nor letter could be written from memory; the scribe must have an authentic copy before him, and he must read and pronounce aloud each word before writing it. [5] He must reverently wipe his pen each time before writing the word for 'God,' and he must wash his whole body before writing the word 'Jehovah,' lest the holy name be contaminated. [6] Strict rules were given concerning the forms of the letters, spaces between letters, words, and sections, the use of the pen, the color of the parchment, etc. [7] The revision of a roll must be made within 30 days after the work was finished; otherwise it was worthless. One mistake on a sheet condemned the sheet; if three mistakes were found on any page, the entire manuscript was condemned. [8] Every word and every letter was counted, and if a letter were omitted, and extra letter inserted, or if one letter touched another, the manuscript was condemned and destroyed at once.³

Though the original autographs of scripture no longer exist, the evidence that they did exist comes from 25,000 witnesses which are still extant. Edward Young in his classic work *Thy Word is truth* demonstrates the trustworthiness and reliability of careful copies,

Are these copies, however, hopelessly corrupt? For our part, we are convinced that they are not. We believe that the Bible which we have is accurate and that it is a remarkably

close approximation to the original manuscripts.

Suppose that a schoolteacher writes a letter to the President of the United States. To her great joy she receives a personal reply. It is a treasure which she must share with her pupils and so she dictates the letter to them. They are in the early days of their schooling, and spelling is not yet one of their strong points. In his copy of the letter Johnny has misspelled a few words. Mary has forgotten to cross her t's and to dot her i's. Billy has written one or two words twice, and Peter has omitted a word now and then. Nevertheless, despite all these flaws about thirty copies of the President's letter have been made. Unfortunately, the teacher misplaces the original and cannot find it. To her great sorrow it is gone. She does not have the copy which came directly from the President's pen; she must be content with those that the children have made.

Will anyone deny that she has the words of the President? Does she not have his message, in just those words in which he wrote it to her? True enough, there are some minor mistakes in the letters, but the teacher may engage in the science of textual criticism and correct them. She may correct the misspelled words, and she may write in those words which have been omitted and cross out those which are superfluous. Without any serious difficulty she may indeed restore the original.⁴

If however, the autographs were still extant, how would we know they had not been tampered with? Would not the possessor of the original immediately be suspect? The many witnesses from all over the world attest that there must have been an original document

that was copied from. The majority of the witnesses today corroborate the Greek text that underlies the King James Version of the scripture. John Burgon compiled 86,489 quotes from early church writers that span the twelfth century all the way back to the second century A.D. In these quotations the text of the New Testament, which underlies the King James Version, can be duplicated.

The sections of scripture that the modern translations deny are affirmed by the early writers. Mark 16:9-20 was quoted by Justin Martyr (150 A.D.), Tatian (175 A.D.), Irenaeus (180 A.D.), Hippolytus (200 A.D.). Even I John 5:7 is cited by Tertullian (200 A.D.), Cyprian (250 A.D.), Aphanasius (350 A.D.). Jerome included I John 5:7 in the Vulgate and of the 16 ancient copies that Robert Stevens possessed, nine contained it. There is no reason to doubt one iota of our Bibles. If God is not able to preserve His Word he is no God at all. Yet Peter said,

²³Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever. ²⁴For all flesh is as grass, and the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth forever. ²⁵And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you (1 Peter 1:23-25)

The King James Version is built upon the solid rock foundation of a pure text and its language and accuracy is unparalleled in beauty and specificity. Though the liberals attempt to tear it down, still it remains head and shoulders above the rest and should be the version of choice of every concerned elder, preacher and teacher of the faith.

Strong Faith Demands Strong Living

Given now the once delivered faith, built upon strong evidence which brings us to true knowledge and conviction, all of our actions ought to be consistent with the divine role or our faith, the Bible. God would have us trust in the Spirit not in the flesh (Rom. 8:12-14). Those who walk by faith trust God's revelation and not things as they appear (2 Cor. 5:7; John 7:24). God told Joshua to hough the horses and burn the chariots (Josh. 11:6). Those today who are convinced that there is a God in Heaven, that Jesus is Lord, that the Bible is true, will be unafraid and unashamed to unsheathe the sword of the spirit which is the word of God (Rom. 1:16), and do battle with every opposer of truth.

While many of the commands of God are sweet and pleasant to his children, there are some that demand strong faith because they are exceedingly difficult to obey. Jesus spoke to his disciples about not being able to exorcise a demon and admonished them to fast and pray (Luke 9:29; Matt. 17:19-21).

Abraham's faith was exceedingly strong in offering Isaac, believing God would raise his son after he was sacrificed (Heb. 11:17-19). The Hebrew children Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego demonstrated great faith when they responded fearlessly to Nebuchadnezzar and refused to bow down to his image (Daniel 3:17-19).

Strong faith will cause one to stand against every worldly foe of truth. Strong faith trusts the words of scripture and will contend against the homosexuals and lesbians of the age (Rom. 1:26,27). Strong faith will convict the adulterers and fornicators of this world (Mark 6:18; Matt. 19:9). Strong faith will always point to the authority of the word because it cannot be broken (John 10:35; Heb. 6:18).

Strong faith will withstand drunkenness and social drinking (Eph. 5:18; Prov. 23:29-31). Strong faith will

demand modesty in an age of immodesty (1 Tim. 2:9; John 21:7; Exodus 28:42). Strong faith will contend against this pleasure crazed society in which we live (Rom. 1:25; 2 Tim. 3:4). Strong faith will stand for godly homes (Eph. 5:23-25; 6:12).

Strong faith will contend for one church (Eph. 4:4-6) and one plan of salvation (Titus 1:4). Strong faith will contend against innovations of worship (Col. 3:17; John 4:24). Strong faith will demand a distinction in the roles of women in the church (1 Tim. 2:8-15; 1 Cor. 14:34,35). Strong faith will trust God and practice church discipline (2 Thess. 3:6; 1 Cor. 5:4,5). Strong faith will not fellowship false teachers (2 Tim. 2:17,18; Rom. 16:17,18). Strong faith will openly rebuke those in error (Gal. 2:11-14). Strong faith will rebuke those whom they love (Prov. 26:7; Rev. 3:17; Deut. 13:6-9).

Strong faith will deliver our souls as we live in a time where our adversaries mount against us within and without the church! Let us pray for strong faith to stand firmly against the winds of change so our Lord upon his return will find true and good and strong faith upon the earth.

ENDNOTES

¹Pascal, Blaise Persier, *Dutton Everyman* (New York, 1958) pp.66,67.

²Baxter, Batsell Barret, *I Believe Because* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1971) p.529.

³Miller, *General Biblical Introduction*. pp.184-185.

⁴Young, Edward, *Thy Word is Truth* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1957) p.57.

Chapter 22

Shipwrecked Faith

1 Timothy 1:19

Ben F. Vick, Jr.

I am honored to have a part as a speaker in this year's lectureship. My association with the Garfield Heights congregation goes back to 1976 when you supported me in my first full-time work in Auburn, Indiana. Since 1980 I have profited from the gospel meetings and lectureships conducted here. In 1995 you graciously allowed me the use of your building to debate Mr. Greg Dixon. Thank you for having asked me to speak.

The inspired apostle Paul wrote,

¹⁸This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare; ¹⁹Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck: ²⁰Of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme" (1 Tim. 1:18-20).

The title of my lesson is "Shipwrecked Faith," and the latter part of this passage is my text. My lesson is "the flip side" of brother Jim Blankenship's lesson. If we could all apply his lesson to our lives, there would be no need to give mine; but since all will not heed,

“holding faith and a good conscience,” it necessitated the Holy Spirit to show us the end result, i.e., a shipwrecked faith, in order that we might be faithful and keep a good conscience. This is circular reasoning, but if one will consider our lessons together, he will grasp the complete thought given by the inspired apostle.

History relates some disastrous wrecks at sea whereby there have been the loss of ships, possessions, treasures, and people. Wrecks are terrible — whether at sea, on land, or in the air. Paul knew firsthand what it was like to be shipwrecked, having been involved in at least three (Acts 27; 2 Cor. 11:25). According to one source, “Paul himself had suffered shipwreck at least four times when he wrote this epistle. He had on each occasion lost everything except himself” (*Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament*, p.618). Regardless of the number, to have been shipwrecked once would have been enough.

Anytime we learn of a wreck or crash whereby lives are lost, whether it be a plane, train, or car, it jars us. Someone’s mother, father, husband, wife, brother, sister, son or daughter has been killed. A loved one is gone. A void is there that cannot be filled. But a far worse disaster than being literally shipwrecked is for one to make shipwreck of his faith (Matt. 10:28; 16:25-26). It is a disaster to him personally (Matt. 25:30; 2 Peter 2:20-22) and may well be to those who are personally associated with him.

Making shipwreck of one’s faith also has a rippling effect upon others. Sin has a leavening influence on others (1 Cor. 5:67). Just as one’s faithfulness in adversity can be an encouragement to others (Phil. 1:12-14), likewise, unfaithfulness can be a discouragement to others. Peter had enough influence on Barnabas and others that his dissimulation caused them to be led astray (Gal. 2:11-14). Later, the apostle Paul wrote of his having had great anguish of heart over

the situation in Corinth in regard to the brother's having his father's wife [2 Cor. 2:1-5].

A Closer Look At The Text

According to *The Interlinear Literal Translation of the Greek New Testament* by George Ricker Berry, the rendering of 1 Timothy 1:19 reads "*holding faith and good conscience; which [conscience] some having cast away, as to faith made shipwreck;...*" "Conscience" in brackets, placed there by Berry, means it is not in the text, but is placed there to complete the thought in English. It is understood in the Greek.

Paul is saying that these individuals cast aside their conscience and ultimately made shipwreck of their faith. The words "*put away*" in the King James Version are translated from a word (*apothomein*) which means "to push away from one's self, to push aside, to reject, to repudiate. The word implies a violent and deliberate rejection [Guthrie]" [Linguistic Key, p.618].

The conscience is that part of man by which he "judges his own conduct according to ideals he has acquired" [Hilgard, Introduction to Psychology, p.400]. It is inherent in man, but must be trained. Every man has a conscience, but not all are trained by the same standard, i.e., the Bible [2 Cor. 4:2]. Henry C. Sheldon said,

Conscience, if the term be taken in its broader meaning, is inclusive of three different elements: a perception of moral distinctions, a sense of obligation to the right, as opposed to the wrong, and a feeling of self-approbation or self condemnation according as the act corresponds to the judgment of right and wrong....

Brother Guy N. Woods wrote,

Basically, the conscience monitors one's thoughts, motives, actions and general manner of life; it has nothing whatsoever to do with determining what is right and what is wrong — this is the faculty of the judgment. The conscience simply commends us when we do what our judgment tells us is right, and it chides and condemns us when we do what our judgment tells us is wrong (*Questions and Answers, Open Forum, p.213*).

The Bible tells us that the conscience convicts (John 8:9) and bears witness (Rom. 2:14-15; 9:1). The conscience can be weak (1 Cor. 8:7-12), defiled (Titus 1:15), and seared (1 Tim. 4:2); and it can be pure and good (1 Tim. 3:9; 1:5; Acts 23:1; 24:16; 1 Peter 3:21). There is a difference between the mind and the conscience, but both can be defiled (Titus 1:15).

Consciousness of God's presence and his will can motivate one to endure mistreatment and suffering (1 Peter 2:19). The Old Testament animal sacrifices, because they could not take away sins, were a conscience reminder of Israel's sins (Heb. 10:14).

The conscience, if properly trained by the word of God, guides us in the right way, approving the right and condemning the wrong. But one can so violate his conscience, i.e., go against his conscience, that it becomes defiled; and if repeatedly done, it will cause one's conscience to be seared, or callused (1 Tim. 4:2). The sin might be stealing, viewing or reading pornography, failing to do good, using filthy language, or forsaking the assembly of the saints. Ultimately, one will violently repudiate his conscience. Being without a monitoring system, or spiritual barometer, he wrecks his faith.

Shipwrecked Faith

“Faith” is used in several senses in the New Testament. Sometimes it is a reference to the system of faith, or the gospel [Acts 6:7; Gal. 1:23; Jude 3]. This is objective faith.

It is also used in the sense of personal faith, or belief. Some examples of this are Mark 16:16; John 20:27-29. Faith may be a reference to conviction. Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon defines the word in the original Greek as “conviction of the truth of anything, belief...in the N. T. of a conviction or belief respecting man’s relationship to God and divine things, generally with the included idea of trust and holy fervor born of faith and conjoined with it” (p.512).

Faith, or belief, may at times refer to a step in the plan of salvation [Mark 16:16; Acts 8:36-37] or to an obedient life [John 3:16; 3:36, ASV]. This is subjective faith.

Then “faith” is also used in the sense of one’s conscience. In the context of eating meats, a matter of judgment, Paul wrote, *“And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin”* [Rom. 14:23].

The faith that is shipwrecked is one’s personal faith, i.e., one’s belief. The system of faith, the gospel, cannot be shipwrecked or destroyed. It shall judge us one day [Matt. 24:35; 1 Peter 1:23-25; John 12:48]. The shipwrecked faith is not one’s conscience either, for the text tells us that some had already cast their conscience aside. Thus, we conclude that these had shipwrecked their own faith. How sad!

Some Examples Of Shipwrecked Faith

In the text the Holy Spirit, by the pen of Paul, alludes to some but specifies two who had made shipwreck of their faith. He names Hymenaeus and

Alexander (1 Tim. 1:20). Paul did far worse than some of our “kind,” “loving,” and “sweet-spirited” brethren today. According to the standards of some today, Paul would be considered harsh, caustic, and unloving, because he called names.

Why did he allude to “some,” yet, name others specifically, even within the same text? Of course, he was guided by the Holy Spirit in his very words (1 Cor. 2:13; 2 Tim. 3:16-17). But why the difference? When is it appropriate to call names and when is it inappropriate? Evidently, Hymenaeus and Alexander were named because they were influencing others, leading them astray. They were guilty of blasphemy, i.e., speaking against God and divine things. Therefore, their influence needed to be curtailed and their tongues silenced.

As was the case with the immoral brother living with his father’s wife (1 Cor. 5), these two were delivered unto Satan. They needed to be disciplined. The purpose of this “deliverance” was in order that they might learn not to blaspheme. Does this not imply that one who has shipwrecked his faith can be disciplined and his faith then be restored? Perhaps he will learn from the disciplinary action, repent of his sin, and return to the Lord. This shows, at least, one purpose of discipline.

There are other examples given in the New Testament of those who made shipwreck of their faith. Phygellus and Hermogenes, as well as others, turned away from Paul and the cause of Christ (2 Tim. 1:15). Hymenaeus and Philetus erred from the truth, saying the resurrection was past. They overthrew the faith of others (2 Tim. 2:17-18). Demas forsook Paul, turning back to the world (2 Tim. 4:10). Alexander the copper-smith did Paul much evil (2 Tim. 4:14). Even Jesus had many who turned back from him during his personal ministry (John 6:66-68).

Some Of The Causes Of Rejecting A Good Conscience

Though the repudiation, or rejection, of a good conscience results in one's making shipwreck of his faith, there are a number of things that cause one to cast away his conscience. Let us note a few of them.

A lack of attention at the helm, or carelessness, has led to disaster. The Bible is replete with warnings about being watchful (2 Tim. 4:1-5; 1 Peter 5:8; 1 Tim. 4:13-16; Acts 20:28; 1 Cor. 16:13; Matt. 26:41; Mark 13:37; Heb. 2:1-3). Sometimes the disaster is a result of the carelessness of others (Luke 15:8-10; Ezek. 33:7-8; Heb. 13:17). Sometimes it is carelessness on our part (Luke 15:3-7).

Do you recall the story in the Old Testament about the city of Laish? The tribe of Dan needed more space; so, they sent out men to search the land. Five men of Dan went northward and came to Laish. The men saw "the people that were therein, how they dwelt careless, after the manner of the Zidonians, quiet and secure; and there was no magistrate in the land, ...and had no business with any man" (Judges 18:7). Thus, the tribe of Dan destroyed the city and renamed the place Dan. The problem was that the city of Laish was not on guard.

Pride also causes people to violate their conscience, and then it becomes seared. One whose conscience is callused will shipwreck his faith. The writer of Proverbs said, "*Pride goeth before a fall*" (Prov. 16:18). Paul warned, "*Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall*" (1 Cor. 10:12). We are commanded to humble ourselves (James 4:9-10; 1 Peter 5:6). Those who exalt themselves will be brought down (Matt. 23:8-12; Daniel 5:17-22). Jesus is our perfect example of humility (Phil. 2:5-9). Many who know what is involved in returning to the Lord allow pride to stand in their way (Matt. 16:24).

The love of money has also led to the downfall of many. *"But godliness with contentment is great gain...."* [1 Tim. 6:6-11]. Again Paul wrote, *"Charge them that are rich in this world..."* [1 Tim. 6:17-19]. Most religious jokes I do not like, but this one makes a good point. Did you hear the story about the wealthy man who asked God if he could take some of his possessions to heaven? God finally relented and let him take one suitcase. So the man sold his possessions in exchange for gold ingots and placed them into his suitcase. When the man arrived at heaven's gate, he was stopped by Peter who asked him to open his suitcase so it could be inspected. When the man opened it, Peter said, "Pavement! Why did you bring that here" [Matt. 6:19-21]? How many will be profane like Esau and sell their souls for a mess of pottage [Heb. 12:15-16]? How many will wreck their faith seeking money?

Another cause of some making shipwreck of their faith is immorality. It seems that more and more we are hearing of members of the church, including preachers and elders, who will not control their passions. How sad and damaging it is to learn of preachers and elders in the Lord's church who are leaving their wives for some other women. Over the last several years two intelligent and talented preachers who have done a great deal of work in foreign fields have left their wives for other women. They are Pat McGee and Ray Peters. It is my prayer that they will repent and return to the Lord before it is too late.

All men, preachers included, need to heed the warning in the Bible regarding immorality. Peter wrote, *"Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul"* [1 Peter 2:11]. Paul instructed Timothy, *"Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart"* [2 Tim. 2:22]. Those guilty of the works

of the flesh will not inherit the kingdom of God [Gal. 5:19-21].

An evil heart of unbelief prevented many Israelites from entering into the land of promise. Their carcasses fell in the wilderness. The writer of Hebrews sounds the warning to all Christians since the first century to take heed. Any one of us can develop a hard heart, Read Hebrews 3:7-4:13. "Unbelief" and disobedience are terms used interchangeably [John 3:36 ASV; Num. 20:12]. Obedience in every age has been enjoined [Gen. 2:16-17; 9:22; Heb. 11:7-8; 1 Sam. 15:22-23; Matt. 7:21-23; Rev. 22:14].

Sometimes members of the church grow weary at the helm, fighting the storms of life; so, some just quit. But the Bible holds out many exhortations and examples which encourage us. The men of faith mentioned in Hebrews 11, "Faith's Hall of Fame," inspired us to be faithful. The greatest example is Jesus [Heb. 12:1-3]. Then think of these passages of Scripture: 1 Cor. 15:58; 1 Cor. 10:11; Gal. 6:9; 2 Tim. 4:6-8; Rev. 2:10; Phil. 1:12-14; 2 Cor. 11:23-28.

False doctrines have been the ruination of multiplied millions of people. There have been many brethren who have accepted and followed some false doctrine which has caused them to make shipwreck of their faith. We have mentioned some in particular. But the Bible warns us of the dangers of false teachers even in the church [Acts 20:28-32; Rom. 16:17-18; 2 Peter 2:1-3; 1 John 4:1; Phil. 3:17-19].

Navigating the ship of faith through the seas of life to eternal shores entails avoiding extremes. Off the coast of Sicily is a dangerous whirlpool called Charybdis; and on the opposite side, on the Italian coast, is the rock Scylla. The helmsman must be careful to avoid Charybdis and, at the same time, not hit Scylla. Or, to use a Biblical illustration, Amos wrote of "*As if a man did flee from a lion and a bear met*

him..." [Amos 5:19]. In avoiding one error, one must be careful not to run into another error.

Extremes beget extremes. A few years ago I was studying with a young preacher who was fighting against the liberal element in the church where he was preaching. I tried to caution him that in his departing from Rome, he should be careful not to pass Jerusalem and end up in Jericho. My warning went unheeded. Ketcherside was once anti everything but ante up; but something happened and he swung to the other extreme of accepting everybody who confessed that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. Martin Luther, in his opposition to Rome and her works, went to the other extreme and taught faith only.

Avoiding Making Shipwreck Of One's Faith

Preventing a wreck is much better than trying to clean up a wreck. Avoiding certain problems is much easier on us than trying to solve them. A young boy or girl is wise if he or she will live a pure life rather than to beget or bear a child out of wedlock. It is not only a sin to have sexual relations before marriage; it also brings with it problems [Heb. 13:4; Gal. 6:7-8]. So, if all of us can avoid wrecking our faith, it would be much better than trying to pick up the pieces after the wreck. But how do we do it?

First, one should fill his heart and life with the word of God [Psalm 119:9,11; James 1:21; 1 John 2:1]. It has well been said, "The Bible will keep us from sin, and sin will keep us from the Bible." We need to put on the whole armor of God [Eph. 6:10-17].

Second, we must stay alert at the helm. Peter commanded, "*Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.*" Paul told Timothy, "*But watch thou in all things...*" [2 Tim. 4:5]. To the Corinthian brethren Paul wrote, "*Watch ye, stand fast*

in the faith, quit you like men, be strong. Let all your things be done with charity" [1 Cor. 16:13-14]. Jesus said, "And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch" [Mark 13:37].

It is very easy for any of us to become complacent, thinking, "Oh, it won't happen to me. The devil might get someone else, but not me." Wrong! Paul warned, "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" [1 Cor. 10:12]. Another warning is sounded in Hebrews 3:12, "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. Even the apostle Paul had to discipline himself lest when he preached to others, he himself should be a castaway" [1 Cor. 9:27].

Third, one should draw nigh to God through prayer [James 4:8; Heb. 4:14-16]. One should pray, "Father, lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil" [Matt. 6:13]. Jesus prayed for Simon Peter [Luke 22:31-32].

Fourth, may I suggest that one choose his friends carefully. How many, young and old, have chosen to run with the wrong crowd. It has led to their downfall and wrecked their lives. Moses enjoined, "Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil..." [Exodus 23:1]. Paul wrote, "Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners" [1 Cor. 15:33].

Conclusion

As we travel the ocean of life through peaceful waters, stormy winds and reckless seas, may God's word always be our polar star. We must chart our course according to the New Testament, remaining true regardless of the trials and tribulations that come our way. If we do this, by God's grace we will reach the harbor of eternal bliss.

Chapter 23

Victorious Faith

1 John 5:4

Joe Gilmore, Jr.

And this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith (1 John 5:4).

Every human being delights in a victory. It is only a natural desire to want to win. Every candidate during the time of campaigning works zealously to win. During the years of war we worked long hours, submitted unselfishly and uncomplainingly to rationing, bought bonds, paid high taxes, all because we were eagerly desiring victory.

But a victory superlative to all of these is “the victory of faith.” This is the victory that should concern every mortal of Adam’s race. Faith in the Lord Jesus and obedience to His gospel are the source of means of this victory. Jesus said to His disciples, *“These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world”* (John 16:33). Hence our only source of victory is through Jesus Christ. Paul said, *“But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ”* (1 Cor. 15:57).

For the edification and encouragement of Christians, Paul said, *“For we walk by faith, not by sight”* (2 Cor. 5:7). He who walks by faith is guided by another in whom he has unshaken confidence. Having not traveled in that particular road before he knows not

the way in which he should go. Not being able to see unto the end he cannot walk by sight; hence he must be guided by another.

Faith is exercised in all relations of life. The mariner who guides his ship through the storms of the sea, the farmer plants the seed in the soil and awaits the harvest, the banker who makes an investment, all operate by faith. But that faith is of the earth and does not reach beyond the grave. The only faith which does reach out into eternity is the faith which "*cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*" (Rom. 10:17). Inasmuch as "*the word of the Lord endureth forever*" (1 Peter 1:25); hence it follows that the faith which "*the word of the Lord*" produces reaches beyond time into eternity.

Therefore it is important that we know the four following things concerning faith: First, we must know what faith is, otherwise we may not know whether or not we have it. Second, we should know how we may obtain faith, if we do not have it. Third, we ought to be concerned about how faith brings the blessing of God. Fourth, we should concern ourselves about how we may increase our faith if we have it.

1. What Is Faith?

The Bible definition for faith is found in these words, "*Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen*" (Heb. 11:1). Faith, then, is "*the substance of things hoped for.*" The word "substance" is from the Latin word "*substantia.*" It is made up of two words, the prefix "*sub,*" which means under, and the word "*stantia*" which means "to stand." Therefore, the word in its entirety means "to stand under;" that which stands under or underlies hope. But faith is also "*the evidence of things not seen.*" Here faith is defined as having relation to two classes of objects: "*things hoped for,*" and "*things not seen.*" The

Revised Version renders this passage in these words, "*Now faith is assurance of things hoped for, a conviction of things not seen.*"

Lest we fail to get the meaning of the term "faith" in Hebrews 11:1, the author proceeds to give us in this "faith" chapter a number of examples of faith in the Bible history. We shall note only one however that is recorded. Let us look to the case of faithful Abraham. The writer says,

⁸By faith Abraham, which when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. ⁹By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: ¹⁰For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God [Heb. 11:8-10].

Abraham went into a strange country;" hence had "a conviction of things not seen." "He looked for a city;" hence he had an "assurance of things hoped for." Therefore Abraham had faith in God; he walked by faith.

2. How May We Obtain Faith?

Not by the direct operation of the Holy Spirit; not in answer to prayer; not by dreaming; but "*Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*" (Rom. 10:17). How did Abraham obtain faith about a land which he knew not of? The Lord said to Abraham,

¹Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: ²And I will make of

of spiritual enthusiasm that is incapable of being sustained over an indefinite period of time.

Our faith, if it is to be genuine, must have its origin in that which is safe, sure, and secure. Paul wrote, "*How shall they call on him of whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher*" (Rom. 10:14-15)? But then the conclusion is drawn that "*faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God*" (Rom. 10:17). The Holy Spirit by inspiration imparted unto holy men of God a reliable record of truth called the word of God (2 Tim. 3:16,17; 2 Peter 1:20-21). Its finished product has been secured within the pages of Holy writ and entrusted into the care and keeping of earthen vessels responsible for its distribution. God determined that the transmission of these facts and evidences from saint to sinner be the means used for His Word to be contacted. Whether it be from the preacher who stands in the pulpit (1 Cor. 1:20-21; 9:16); or Christians who may sit around the dining room table teaching these truths to the unknowing (Acts 18:26-28); or is contacted by the truth seeker reading and learning the truth for themselves from the very pages of Scripture (Eph. 3:3-5) faith still comes from the only way it may be received in its origin — **THE WORD OF GOD.**

THE OBJECT OF FAITH is God and His Son, Jesus Christ. In Paul's great discourse to the Athenians from Mars Hill, he made it abundantly clear that there is just one God, and that it is to this God alone that we owe our purpose for life and allegiance (Acts 17:20-31). Paul later writes a composite of the very heart and core of the Gospel which is to be believed surrounding the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. He writes in 1 Corinthians 15:1-2, that the gospel which he preached was to be received; it was to stand; it was to save; and that only through unbelief would its effects be voided. God is the only object worthy of our adoration and

¹⁹Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil (Heb. 6:18-19).

Hence, the more you study the word of God, the more you will know of it, and the more you know of it and get laid away in your heart and memory, the stronger your faith will become.

3. How Does Faith Bring Us The Blessings Of God?

It is simply by faith existing in us, or what it leads us to do in obedience to God's word? Was it by "faith alone" that Abraham became "the friend of God?" Note the verb phrases used in Hebrews 11:8-10, in which the writer expresses the action of Abram's faith. Paul said that Abraham obeyed;" he "went out;" he "sojourned in the land of promise, he was "dwelling in tabernacles;" and he "looked for a city which hath foundations." Thus we can see that Abram's faith was expressed in action or obedience. How, then, was Abraham justified by faith? Not by believing God and sitting at home and remaining with friends and loved ones. Abraham obeyed" and God gave him victory.

Hence, his faith received the blessing by what it made him do, and if he hadn't done what it prompted him to do, he would have failed.

Now about our faith — how will it bring us the forgiveness of sins? Not by causing us to offer a lamb in sacrifice unto God as Abel did; nor by causing us to build an ark as Noah did; neither by leading us off on a long journey as in the case of Abraham. But by causing us to act on the same principle as they did, that is, by taking God at His word, doing just what He says in the way He says that it should be done. James said, "*But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works*

is dead" (James 2:20)? Again, the same writer said, "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only" (James 2:24).

Our faith is in Jesus Christ. He is "*the author and finisher of our faith*" (Heb. 12:2). If we believe that Jesus Christ is God's Son, ruling over heaven and earth, we will then act in harmony with His will, surrender our souls and bodies and all we have and all we are to his divine guidance and control. Jesus said, "*ye love me, keep my commandments*" (John 14:15). Hence to believe in Christ means to obey Him. A dead faith is a lack of faith. He who does not obey shows that he does not believe. Joshua marched around the walls of Jericho and they fell by faith (Heb. 11:30). Naaman dipped in the Jordan seven times and was healed by faith. The blind man of the ninth chapter of John washed in Siloam's pool and was cured by faith. Had these men performed some other action not commanded by the Lord, or had they stopped without completing the action God commanded, they would have shown their lack of faith. But they believed. Hence the faith that saves is the faith that obeys. The man who does not have faith enough to obey does not have faith enough to be saved. Jesus commands the believer to **repent** (Read Luke 13:3, Luke 24:46-47); to **confess** His name among men that the believer's name might be acknowledged before the throne of God in heaven (Matt. 10:32); and to be **baptized** in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, for the remission of sins (Matt. 28:19-20; Acts 2:38). The man who will not do these things shows by his lack of action that he has a lack of faith. He does not need to be convinced on baptism; he needs a lesson on "Faith in Christ" As soon as he has enough faith in Christ, It will be difficult to keep him from being baptized. Imagine a man trying to stop Joshua from marching around Jericho, or Naaman from dipping in Jordan, or the blind man from washing in Siloam's pool.

A victorious faith is *useful* and *active*. An inactive faith is a dead faith, just as the body dies when the spirit is separated from it [James 2:26]. A victorious faith is one that does something. It causes a man to do the Lord's will, to labor and to watch. "*Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works*" (James 2:18). How much faith do you have? How useful is your faith? How well does your faith serve you? Does it take you to church only when you have nothing to do and nowhere to go? This doesn't require any faith. A person may go to church as a matter of habit and without any faith. Certainly, if a man is faithful he will attend services. But this does not prove that one is faithful. Does your faith cause you to sing and then lets you neglect prayer? Many songs are not difficult to sing whether you sing with the spirit and understanding or not. Just to sing songs does in no way prove your faith. Does your faith cause you to rejoice when everything is delightful, but deserts you when the day is dark and gloomy with everything going wrong? Does your faith help you continue on even when you do not understand why conditions are adverse or does it let you murmur and complain about your lot? Does it help you enjoy the successes of life and then fail you in your disappointments and discouragements? Does it comfort and strengthen you in time of sorrow? Does it shield you from all the fiery darts of the devil [Eph. 6:16] in the time of temptation? What is your faith to you if it does not help you serve and sacrifice; if it does not help you conquer temptation; or if it refuses to stand by you in disappointments and despair, or if it isn't useful at all? What we need is great or victorious faith.

A victorious faith must have for its foundation the Word of the Lord. It can come in no other way [Rom. 10:17]. This is why Paul was so careful to preach "*Christ and him crucified*" to the Corinthians [1 Cor.

2:1-5). Why be baptized and be liberal in giving? Faith comes by hearing the word (Mark 16:16; Acts 8:37; Acts 20:35; Luke 6:38; 2 Cor. 9:7).

Our victorious faith blesses us according to its fullness (Heb. 10:22). The scarcity of faith can be so disappointing in the hour of need. There wasn't anything wrong with the oil the foolish virgins had, but they did not have a sufficiency of it. Some adverse winds will blow as we journey through life. Let us be ready for this testing.

Our victorious faith blesses us according to its purity. A faith that mingles with false doctrines is sure to meet with disappointments. A victorious faith is purified as gold is purified (1 Peter 1:6,7; Rev. 2:10). Our faith is purified if we can say with Paul: "*I know him whom I have believed;*" "*The Lord is my helper; I will not fear*" and "*I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me*" [2 Tim. 1:12; Heb. 13:5-7; Phil. 4:13].

Victorious faith is the result of preaching, or teaching of God's word (Rom. 10:17,14). Preaching the gospel is the manner in which God produces faith. The faith that always is the faith that saves.

4. How May We Increase Our Faith?

The apostles came to Jesus and said, "*Increase our faith.*" This should be our plea, for indeed it is our need. Since "*Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*" (Rom. 10:17); therefore, we can see the need of more Bible study, for truly there is no other means of increasing our faith. Faith does not come miraculously, accidentally, but as a result of Bible study. Do not expect God to send faith into your heart independent of His Word!

Conclusion

Indeed faith is the victory. Faith enables me to endure the temptations and trials of this life, for I believe indomitably with Paul that, "*All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose*" (Rom. 8:28). I do not know how God will bring good out of every adversity which befalls me; I cannot see how God will overrule every difficulty which besets me and make it for my good; yet if I walk by faith I believe that he can and will do it. This is the faith that will enable the Christian to approach death with a smile, for death will release him from the temptations, troubles and sorrows of this life, and enable him to sing the song of victory even in the face of death.

Chapter 24

Jesus, Author And Finisher Of Our Faith Hebrews 12:2

Gary Colley

It is my joy and privilege for the past several years, to have had a part each year in the great Annual Garfield Heights Lectureship. The themes chosen and the topics spoken have been of great importance to our brotherhood and the world. The elders and directors of these lectures at Garfield Heights, as well as the entire congregation, are highly commended for their interest, support, and labors in bringing these needed lectures to the public. We love and appreciate these stalwart brethren for their works sake. No doubt good will be the result throughout the future generations, as the book, tapes, and videos continue to go around the world!

Introduction

The Hebrew writer, attempting to keep these brethren from apostasy, begins the twelfth division of his letter to the Hebrews,

¹Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, ²Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him

endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God [Heb. 12:1-2].

This inspired portion of scripture speaks vividly of the life of faith, including its nature, power, and value. The inspired writer, whom we have long believed to be Paul, alludes first to the observers of the contests or games of the ancient Greeks, which were performed in a vast arena in the amphitheater, and second to Jesus, *“the author and finisher of our faith”* [Heb. 12:2].

Before we are prepared to see and appreciate as fully as we should the Author and Finisher of our faith, there are several considerations we must examine, teachings that must be clearly understood, and scriptures with which we must be impressed. What does the word “faith” mean, in so far as lost man’s needs are concerned? What has it meant in the Bible to those who have lived centuries before? Does it carry the same objective importance to those who live today? According to the scriptures, which are our only source of knowledge along this line, of what importance is faith in our lives? What does it mean objectively for us to so live in this life?

The Race Set Before Us

As with the olympics of our day, so then there were contests in jumping, boxing, wrestling, throwing, and racing. The racing referred to by the Hebrew writer included foot races as well as chariot and horse racing. These games were performed before crowds of twenty five to one hundred thousand spectators! The “great cloud of witnesses” referred to in verse one, are likened to spectators pressing around to see the competitors as they compete [Phil. 3:14]. These are used to give vividness to the image, and seem to suggest the added spirit and approval, to our efforts to please God by faith.

These who have already completed the course, and are now, through their examples, giving as it were encouragement and exhortation to us who now live, but who as yet have not finished the course! There certainly would be implied here also the disapproval of these witnesses if we refuse to walk in obedient faith!

Reading through the examples of the many noble and faithful ones described in Hebrews eleven, are the accounts of great endurance, some of them suffering martyrdom, but always depicted as receiving the thrilling victory as they continued faithful to God. They testify to the fact of God's faithfulness, which is of great encouragement to us also! Hence, these are pictured as urging us on to the goal, even through the severest trials. Those great Old Testament characters like Abel, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Joshua, so ably continue to extend their examples as to spur us on in patient endurance to the end of the race before us! Of Abel it is said, that through his example of faith, "*he being dead yet speaketh*" (Heb. 11:4).

Lay Aside Every Weight

The supreme need and energy of faith on our part is seen in that which must be laid aside if we expect to finish the race and win the crown! History records how the runners in these games attached weights to their ankles for practice, so that when removed they could "run like the wind." To "lay aside" means to be separated from. These weights suggest the absolute necessity to replacing unbelief with faith. We must mortify all the things that pertain to living in unbelief rather than faith, which must refer to "*the lust of the flesh, lust of the eye, and the pride of life*" (1 John 2:15-17). Paul wrote to the church at Colosse,

⁵Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness,

inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: ⁶For which things sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience: ⁷In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them. ⁸But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. ⁹Lie not one to another; seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds [Col. 3:5-9].

Not Removing The Weights — Failure!

Some try to continue in the eternal race while carrying the “weights” of disobedience in worldly hope and fears, or lying, swearing, drinking, gambling, dancing, and drugs! These encumbrances will interrupt and retard all attempts to run the race and win the crown! If they are not put aside they will paralyze our spiritual energies so as to make us faint by the way! No man can even think of winning the race who refuses to lay aside these weights (1 Cor. 6:9-11).

Looking Unto Jesus The Author

The second source of great encouragement to these faltering brethren is the most important of all. They are told to fix their eyes on Jesus, the “*lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world*” (John 1:29). We too must keep our eyes on the author and finisher of our faith lest we perish! It is possible for us to be like Peter, who obeyed the Lord in walking on the water, but who also began to sink the very moment he took his eyes off of the Lord (Matt. 14:25-33)! Looking continually to Him provides the greatest source of strength ever known to man.

He is the “author” of our faith. This means that He is the Leader, the Exalted One, the Procurer, the Prince,

the Captain, of all the host who will in the last day enter into Heaven (Acts 3:15; 5:31; Heb. 2:9-10). He is to be our Ideal, since He not only is our perfect example but also our vicarious offering, and therefore the object of our faith. He is more than just an example for our faith and trust; He is the Originator of the faith, the Leader Whom we are to follow each step of the Way to Heaven (2 Peter 1:5-11)! In fact, it is His promise in which we trust and upon which we lean for eternal strength and hope (Acts 1:9; John 14:1-6)!

The One And Only One

Paul had spoken of Jesus throughout this book as being the One, and only One, to whom lost man can leek to find eternal salvation! Of His priesthood and sacrifice he wrote;

⁸Though he were a son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; ⁹And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him; ¹⁰Called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec. ¹¹Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are full of hearing. ¹²For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. ¹³For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness; for he is a babe. ¹⁴But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil [Heb. 5:8-14].

Jesus is our Prophet, Priest, and King, who the Hebrew writer says is now sitting down at the right hand of the throne of God as our Ruler, Prince, and Saviour to give to all the opportunity of repentance and remission of sins! When we truly trust and obey Him, and accept His leadership as the procurer of our eternal welfare, we may then cry "*O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory*" (1 Cor. 15:55)? It is beyond our comprehension to understand how any one today can look at Jesus, His birth, life, miracles, example, temptations, suffering, death, burial, resurrection, and ascension, and not obey Him in loving devotion!

Finisher Of Our (The) Faith

The word "finisher" is used in the New Testament by this writer alone. "Finisher" carries with it the meaning of perfecter, or one who brings something to completion! It is pointed out here that Jesus is the One Who will bring our salvation to completeness, or full and perfect consummation! This will be accomplished through our submission to the one system of Faith revealed in the Gospel (Rom. 1:16-17; Jude 3).

Are We Living By Faith?

The subject of faith is in some ways like the weather, "everyone talks about it," but almost no one performs it as the Bible commands. What does "living by faith" mean? There is evidently much misunderstanding about the subject, as well as a lack of proper knowledge of the Author, Who brought faith to the world and for His followers will bring it to Perfect completion. Therefore let us have our minds impressed with the necessity of studying this subject with the greatest of sincerity and in the most profound manner of energetic interest! Especially is this point seen to be

needful, and found to be true, when we realize that our God in Heaven has seen fit to base our eternal welfare on the high principle of faith (Heb. 11:1,6). The importance of genuine faith cannot be over-stated, especially when we come to correctly realize our daily responsibilities and eternal obligations of obedience, because we desire to dwell in Heaven at last (John 14:1-6).

What Does It Mean To Live By Faith?

Paul wrote, *“For we walk by faith, and not by sight”* (2 Cor. 5:7). How did Paul walk or live in this life? Paul of himself wrote, *“Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ”* (1 Cor. 11:1). He also said, *“so then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God”* (Rom. 10:17). Hence, in saying that he walked by faith he is saying that he obeyed, to the best of his ability, all that God through Christ commanded in the New Testament (cf. Gal. 2:20).

He forbade the Galatian churches from thinking that they could add to or change the Word of God and still say that they were walking by faith (Gal. 1:6-9). The apostle John referred to the author and Finisher of our faith as the Word made flesh (John 1:1-3,14). God ever protected His Holy Word! Let us be reminded that Jesus brought the Word of God to the world and delivered it to the apostles by the power of the Holy Spirit, Who guided them into “all truth” (John 17:8,14, 18; 16:13). All that we say and do is to be according to that which is written (1 Cor. 4:6, Col. 3:16-17).

Hence for one to say “I believe,” surely means that he or she can find it written in the Bible! Feelings and opinions, no matter how sincere and honest we may consider ourselves to be, are not equal to Bible faith that comes from hearing God’s Word! Where there is no evidence from God, written in His Word, there can be no faith (cf. Rom. 10:17)! Where God has not legislated

on a matter, one cannot correctly claim to have faith about that teaching or doctrine! For one to say, "I believe it is alright to use instrumental music in worship," "I believe we can go to heaven in our own way," or "I believe women can take a leading part in public worship where men are present," places one under the obligation to show that God has spoken it, taught it, and approved that thought (John 16:13). Where God's Word begins, our faith may begin, and where God's Word ends, our faith must end.

Our Obedience Necessary

Surely all are aware that we must enter "the race" of which Jesus is the Author and Finisher, if we hope to be saved by Him! And, we must continue to follow our Lord's teaching each step of the Way to Heaven (John 8:24; Luke 13:3; Matt. 10:32-33; Mark 16:15-16; Rev. 2:10). As we page through the New Testament, which is the Law of God under which we live today (Rom. 8:1-2), it is clear that true faith now, as in all ages past, has meant obeying, or doing what God said because God said it (cf. 1 Cor. 9:24-27; 2 Tim. 2:5)!

Must Deny Ourselves

Did you notice that Hebrews 12 is introduced and connected by the word "Wherefore?" This shows its kinship to the great "faith chapter" of Hebrews 11. Hebrews 11 lists the honor role of many active heroes who lived by faith under the Patriarchal and Jewish Dispensations centuries before the New Testament was given. These great men and women, often under very great and adverse circumstances, lived to obey the Will of God, demonstrating what true faith really means. Hence, in God's sight, faith is more than just assenting to facts, it is trusting and obeying God's Word in faithfulness of life. It is walking or living in harmony

with the commands of God. Jesus states, *"If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me"* [Luke 9:23].

The Rewards Of Faith, Objectively Speaking

True faith meant salvation to those who lived before us, as well as to us today. Paul and Silas told the heathen jailor at Philippi, *"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house"* [Acts 16:31].

Bible faith is also presented to us as being the means of eternal life. Jesus said, *"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life"* [John 5:24].

Further, in answer to the question, "how we can truly know who are God's children?" this faith is proclaimed as being the means by which we are to be born or begotten of God. The apostle John wrote, *"Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him"* (1 John 5:1).

Also we are assured, that Bible faith is the means by which we shall have remission of sins. At the house of Cornelius, Peter preached, *"To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins"* [Acts 10:43].

And we learn from the scriptures, that it means justification. As Paul Preached in Antioch in Pisidia, he said,

³⁸Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached

unto you the forgiveness of sins: ³⁹And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses [Acts 13:38-39].

Warning Sounded

As he quotes from Habakkuk 1:5, Paul also addresses those who would reject the system of faith presented by Christ:

⁴⁰Beware therefore, lest that come upon you, which is spoken of in the prophets; ⁴¹Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe though a man declare it unto you [Acts 13:40-41].

We must be impressed with the fact that Jesus brought the system of faith by which lost men are made righteous in God's sight, and that it is revealed in the Gospel! And, it is intended by the revelation of "the faith" to produce saving faith in all who will perform the obedient acts of faith in following its precepts [Rom. 1:16-17].

Whom Having Not Seen Ye Love

The apostle Peter graciously speaks of the fact that though we have not seen Jesus in the flesh, the Author and Finisher of our faith, yet He has given to the believer a blessed assurance:

⁵Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. ⁶Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations:

That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: ⁸Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: ⁹Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls (1 Peter 1:5-9).

The greatest of possibilities are always before the believer, but they are always in keeping with and in obedience to the word of God (1 Peter 1:22-23). Hence objectively, faith in Jesus as our Lord and Saviour is of unparalleled importance in the lives of every individual today!

What Does Faith In Action Mean?

Thousands say "I believe," but who have not found their teachings in the Word of God and therefore do not really know what they believe! Too many times men declare their own feelings and thinking instead of the faith that comes from hearing God's instruction! Superstition and reverence are only a hair breadth apart in the hearts of some. Superstition is based on human thinking, reasoning, and feeling, while reverence is based on what is written in the Word of God! Not having realized the true source of faith and its responsibilities, these are actually depending on their sincere feelings and subjective thinking, rather than the Word of life (John 6:63)! But Paul informs us, "*so then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*" (Rom. 10:17). Peter reminds us,

If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all

things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever, Amen (1 Peter 4:11).

The Action Of Faith

The action of faith determines in actually what governs or directs our lives. Instead of being led by what our parents before us believed and followed (which may have been good or bad), or what may be the popular religious thought of the day, the true child of God is led by the Holy Spirit through the Word once for all delivered unto the saints (1 Peter 1:22-23; Rom. 8:1-2,14; Jude 3).

Horns Of Dilemma

If, as many people think, that faith as taught in the Bible means only "faith alone" or to give credit to certain facts without any obligation of obedience to the Gospel, how shall we understand those passages that teach repentance and baptism (Mark 16:15-16; 2 Thess. 1:7-9; etc.)?

Concluding Remarks

Jesus cannot, and will not, be the Author and Finisher of our faith at the end of life's race, unless we have made Him our Captain or Lord by meeting His conditions of pardon and sonship at some point in our life (Luke 6:46; Matt. 7:13-14; 21-28; Rom. 8:15-17)! But faithfulness to the "King of kings and Lord of lords" will be rewarded with eternal glory, with a crown that fadeth not away (Mark 16:15-16; Rev. 2:10)! As we look unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith, we cannot help but exclaim, "Oh, What a Saviour, Oh Hallelujah!"

And for those who have followed in His steps to the end of life, we may say with Paul,

⁶...the time of my departure is at hand. ⁷I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; ⁸Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing [2 Tim. 4:6-8].

With the Psalmist, we may have the assurance, if the Lord is our Shepherd, and we have followed as He has led us beside the still waters, restored our soul, and guided us in the paths of righteousness in this life, that He also will walk with us *“through the valley of the shadow of death,”* and that we will *“dwell in the house of Jehovah for ever”* (Psalm 23:16).

Let each soul be admonished to look *“unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith”* (Heb. 12:2).

Let us look forward in hope to the time when we shall receive the end of our faith, even the salvation of our souls (1 Peter 1:9)!

