

**Before reading the chapter(s) for this week please click the next button at the bottom right of the page to find the homework sheet for the assigned reading. The homework will aid you in taking the quizzes, mid-term, and final. Complete the homework as you read the reading assignment below.**

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

The Christian's assurance concerning divine certainties does not lie in a code; not even in a formal creed. It lies in a simple, living faith in the true character and person of God Himself. Because God is Who He is, we can rely upon Him. He cannot lie and He cannot fail. He loves us with an everlasting love; therefore we can trust Him.

Abraham, the pioneer of faith, went out of Ur of the Chaldees, not knowing where he went. But he knew who had sent him, the eternal God. The man of faith went forward without detailed blueprints in his hands, for they were in the mind of his God.

Life itself brings shattering experiences to us all, experiences that have a way of leading us to the foundations that abide. The providence of God often upset our schematic views. In an ancient day, Job felt the blows of disaster in rapid-fire succession: resources taken away suddenly, loved ones snatched away by death, and berating and betrayal by false friends and a fickle wife. But he hung on in faith, declaring, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in Him" (Job.3:15). Even in the darkest hour, when God seemed to elude him, he insisted, "But He knoweth the way that I take: when He hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold" (Job.23:10).

Our light is clearer and brighter than that of either of these patriarchs, but the terrors of comparable soul-shaking experiences are ours today. Also, we have the added light and reassurance of Calvary's message and deliverance. Its message declares that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself" (2Co.5:19). Our deliverance is here and now, for the promise is that we are "more than conquerors" through Him that loved us (Ro.8:37). "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" (Ro.8:32).

Our faith today is in such a personal God. We must learn to trust Him though we cannot see Him.

"Fear not, I am with thee. Oh, be not dismayed, For I am thy God, I will still give thee aid; I'll strengthen thee, help thee, and cause thee to stand, Upheld by My gracious, omnipotent hand" (Is.41:10).

We are studying "How to Grow in Faith." This is a vital subject, for we are all given the measure of faith, and not full grown faith. Therefore it is important for us to know how to put into motion that knowledge of how to grow in the faith God has given us. Five (5) important things to follow through on, which will help us grow in faith, are:

### **A. Get to Know God Intimately**

He asks us to constantly trust Him like children trust their parents. This includes bringing Him every question and every hurt, everything that we are troubled with, so that He may guide us and bring the answer. This can come about by intimacy with God.

### **B. Read God's Word Constantly**

We need to read how God developed the faith of Abraham, Moses, Elijah, Elisha and Samuel. We should read the miracles of Jesus Himself, studying out the meaning of faith, and how to apply it.

### **C. Maintain Fellowship with People of Faith**

We are to join hands with people who preach faith. We must not keep continuous company, or follow, or listen to those who are constantly expressing doubts about God's Word and promises. Too much talking in the flesh destroys our faith, instead of growing it.

### **D. Express Our Faith in Our Prayers**

We are to claim the promises of God. We are to reaffirm our beliefs in what God said, daily. We are to keep on expressing our own faith in God's faithfulness to His Word. We should refuse to let the failure of others bring discouragement. Prayer is a battle and Satan will try to discourage us by delaying or hindering the answers.

### **E. Constantly Put God's Promises into Action**

"Take up thy bed and walk" (Mk.2:11), Jesus said to the man who was paralyzed, and the man acted. Praise God for the answers even before we actually see them. Faith will always be tested and tried, but it will certainly prevail.

## **II. THE ORIGIN OF FAITH**

Faith originates in Christ. "Looking unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith" (He.12:2). He is the Author or Source of faith and He is the Finisher or Perfecter of it also. Faith for salvation originates in Christ. Faith for healing originates in Christ. Faith for the provision of God originates in Christ (Ga.2:20; Ac.3:16). There were men and women who cried out for this faith that originates in Christ.

### **A. The Centurion**

The Centurion's servant was afflicted with disease, lying at the point of death. The Centurion pleaded with Jesus on behalf of his servant, saying, "Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented" (Mt.8:5-6). This Centurion understood the authority Jesus had over diseases, and simply wanted Jesus to speak the Word, for he knew that the servant would be healed by the faith words Jesus spoke. And Jesus saith unto him, "I will come and heal him." The centurion answered and said, "Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof; but speak the Word only, and my servant shall be healed" (Mt.8:5-8). The centurion, who was a man of authority, came to Jesus with faith that his servant would be healed. All he wanted Jesus to do was to speak the Word.

He said to Jesus, "For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me..." He went on to say that he simply gave orders, and the soldiers under his command did what he said. All that the Centurion desired was that Jesus would speak the word, for he knew it would accomplish the healing of his servant. When 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" (Mt.8:10).

### **B. The Ten (10) Lepers**

Leprosy is a terrible disease, rotting away the flesh and inner parts of a person until the extremities fall off for want of sustenance. Ten (10) of them came to Jesus, having heard that He was the healer. They stood afar off, but their desire was clear, for they lifted up their voices, saying, "...Jesus, Master, have mercy on us" (Lk.17:13). Jesus had mercy, simply saying, "Go, shew yourselves unto the priest" (Lk.17:14). There was no touch as He did to another with leprosy, simply the Word of direction. They desired Him to use His faith, and they expressed faith in His faithfulness.

### **C. Blind Bartimaeus**

Jesus was headed out of Jericho with the disciples when Bartimaeus began to cry out for mercy, for a touch by faith, because he wanted to see. "And Jesus stood still, and commanded him to be called: and they called the blind man, saying unto him, Be of good comfort, rise; He calleth thee. And he, casting away his garment, rose, and came to Jesus. And Jesus answered and said unto him, what wilt thou that I should do unto thee? The blind man said unto Him, Lord, that I might receive my sight" (Mk.10:49-51).

Blind Bartimaeus, the man who sat by the highway begging, heard that Jesus was passing by. What he heard caused faith to rise in his heart. The reason he cried "...Thou Son of David..." was because it had been prophesied that a deliverer was to come who would be the Son of David. So Bartimaeus cried, "Jesus, Son of David" or "the deliver who is come, have mercy on me and deliver me." To this Jesus replied; "Bring him to me."

"And Jesus said unto him, go thy way, thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way" (Mt.10:52)

Each of these saw that Jesus had faith, that which was lacking in all the religious hierarchy of that day. They had needs, and they expressed their faith in Him, so He extended His faithfulness to the Word to heal them by His Word.

### **III. TWO KINDS OF FAITH**

There is the faith that God measures to every man, which produces salvation (Ro.12:3; Ac.16:31). Then there is faith that every man measures to himself. We personally determine the supply of faith that we have to use as we see fit, or as God directs us. We can have faith to a lesser degree or to a greater degree, simply by what we are willing to do to cause it to grow.

It takes just as much faith to believe God for one (1) dollar as it does for a thousand (1,000) dollars. "For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again" (Lk.6:38b). As we hear the Word, as we live in it, faith is built. Hearing the Word of God then demands action in order to get the God-given results.

The Word is to the believer then, what the faucet is to water, the source of the supply. If we want our needs met, then God, by His Word is our source. If we want our bodies healed, then God, by His Word is our source. If we want our prayers answered, then God, by His Word is our source. If we want our problems solved, then God, by His Word is our source.

We have to learn to go to the source. We have to learn to put our faith in Him.  
We have to expect Him to do what He said He would do, to be faithful to His Word.

#### **A. Faith That David Exhibited**

When David killed the lion and the bear, he was just a shepherd boy tending to his father's sheep. Now, facing the possibility of the entire Army of Israel being wiped out, David's faith in God's faithfulness to His Covenant rose up, causing David to rehearse the victories he already had won, and realize that it would take the God kind of faith to be victorious.

David related unto Saul that as he kept his father's sheep, there came a lion, and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock. David told how he defended the lamb, and delivered it out of its mouth, and as it arose against David, he caught it by the beard, and smote him and slew him. David went on to say that "... this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God" (1Sa.17:34-36).

Meeting with Goliath the Giant required the same faith that was in operation when he met the lion and the bear. God honored his kind of faith and a victory was wrought (1Sa.17:48-49). It is not the size of the problem that counts; it is the kind of faith we have with which to handle the problem. God is not moved by circumstances, nor by problems, but by our faith.

#### **B. Faith That Paul Exhibited**

Paul and several sailors were in the midst of a storm. They had had their numerous problems for days. During this period, Paul fasted and prayed.

After prayer, Paul exhorted them to "...be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of any man's life among you, but of the ship." He recounted his experience of the angel's visitation, and then said, wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God that it shall be even as it was told me" (Ac.27:22-25).

The angel told him that although the ship would go down, no human life would be lost. Paul had faith in God's faithfulness to the Word that was delivered by the angel, and it happened just as the angel had said (Ac.27:44).

We have the same kind of faith as David and Paul, so do not settle for fewer results than they got. If God gave them miracles, and He is no respecter of persons, than He can and will give us miracles also. Our faith can unlock the door to all that God has. Our kind of faith is the kind they had, and it will work for us just like it worked for them. They had results because of their faith. God performed the miracles, but they supplied the "kind of faith" that resulted in the miracles.

#### IV. HAVING THE FAITH OF GOD

"And Jesus answering, saith unto them, Have faith in God. For verily I say unto you, that whosoever shall say unto this mountain, be thou removed and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith. Therefore, I say unto you, what things soever ye desire when ye pray believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them" (Mk.11:22-24)

One translation of verse 22 says, "Have the God kind of faith." This indicates to us that there is faith that is not like God's, which we will communicate about later on. However, there is no faith that receives like God's. That is why Jesus encouraged the disciples not to flounder around in a faith that did not get an answer. We can see that the faith of God is a powerful faith, that it always receives what it goes after.

We can see that the faith of God is creative (Ge.1:1; Mal.2:10; Co.1:16). God spoke worlds into existence by the Word of His power. He spoke creative words of faith and, as a result, made everything both visible and invisible.

We can see that the faith of God is productive. God produced and provided manna for Israel during their forty (40) years in the wilderness (Ex.16:35). Time after time God produced quail and water for Israel, while they were on their way to the land of promise. Jesus showed this same kind of production when He attended a marriage feast at Cana, where they ran out of wine. A miracle was performed and enough wine produced to take care of everyone. The governor remarked that "...that which is worse" is usually served when men have become drunk, but that this man had "...kept the good wine until now..." (Jn.2:10).

We can see that the faith of God is powerful. In Joshua's day, God's power eliminated a whole city. The first obstacle in the Land of Promise was Jericho. However, the faith of God told them how to take the city. As they obeyed, blowing the trumpets and shouting, "...that the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they took the city" (Jos.6:20).

God's power has eliminated nations, cities, and armies. It has also put Satan and demons under His feet because God's faith is powerful. This same power, God's power, moved upon a shepherd, and he killed a lion and a bear with his bare hands. David had faith that God was faithful to him, a covenant man, so he killed the giant just like he did the bear and the lion. If he had not had the faith of God, backed up by the power of God, he would have been the one killed.

We can see that the faith of God is protective. The three (3) Hebrew children were found guilty of not fulfilling the king's decree. The decree was, "If you do not bow, you will burn." Instead of falling down and worshiping a golden image, they chose to serve God (Da.3:17). The king had the fire heated seven (7) times hotter, so that those who were throwing the Hebrews into the fire died when they got too close. The three (3) Hebrew men were bound and thrown into the fire, but the story then turns very interesting. King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished, and rose up in haste to speak to his counselors. "Did not we cast three (3) men bound into the midst of the fire" was the king's question. "True, O king" they answered. However, the king had seen something that

troubled him, for he said, "Lo, I see four (4) men loose walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt: and the form of the fourth (4th) is like the Son of God" (Da.3:24-25). They were delivered because they had faith in God's protective power.

God sent an angel to protect Daniel in a den full of lions (Da.6:22). Daniel had been set upon by jealous political rivals who found a way to get the king to condemn Daniel to the lion's den. However, Daniel was not afraid, or troubled to go there. He simply said that God had shut the mouths of the lions.

## **V. WHO HAS FAITH?**

God has dealt to every man the measure of faith. It is faith that saves us initially, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God" (Ep.2:8). Paul wrote that "...the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, the just shall live by faith" (Ro.1:17).

God has given to all men faith some that is not of the type we are talking about but to the believer, the new-born Christian, He has given the measure of faith. "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" (Ro.12:3).

### **A. Natural Faith**

1. Farmers have faith in the seed they plant.

Farmers will take expensive seed, till the ground, and plant it. They run the risk of losing everything, but they believe that God has set in motion the laws of nature that will bring rain and sunshine and all that is needed to have a harvest.

2. We have faith in the vehicle we ride in.

It does not make sense to be able to turn a key, start an engine, engage the transmission, and drive down the road. Plastic and metal and rubber and petroleum products do not by themselves produce motion. However, we place our faith in the combinations of these elements and therefore drive the automobile to our destination.

3. We have faith in the airplane in which we fly.

As with the automobile, only to a greater degree, it makes no sense that a "heavier than air" machine should be able to go up into the sky and take us to our destination quicker than any train or car. However, millions of people get on an airplane every day and fly off to their destinations safely.

4. We have faith in the doctor who attends to us.

We allow doctors to give us tests to ascertain what is wrong with us, then we faithfully take the medicine they give us, down to the last pill. If the doctor says that we need surgery, we will possibly consult with another opinion, but we basically believe and do what the doctor says to do.

This is natural faith, and all men have it.. God gave it to man. This is the faith of the five (5) senses: seeing, hearing, smelling, touching and tasting.

The sixth (6th) sense is faith: that is, the God kind of faith. Jesus said "Have faith in God," or have the "God kind of faith" (Mk.11:22). This faith demands actions such as living by faith (Ro.1:17). It requires us to become "...doers of the Word, and not hearers only" (Ja.1:22). It requires us to:

1. We must trust fully in God.

Yes, there will be temptations that come to us, but, A 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..." (1Co.10:13).

2. We should rely completely on Him.

We are not to waver when we express faith in the Lord. We must come to understand that He has all authority in heaven and earth ( Mt.28:18), It is the reliance that we see of the Centurion, when he said, "I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed" (Mt.8:8-10).

3. We should be confident toward God.

We have a guarantee that if we ask according to His will, He hears us and answers us. This is not guess work, it is not a maybe deal, but guaranteed. When God says that we are to do it a certain way, asking according to His will, it is not that He will require something else at a later date. No, when we ask, we can be confident that He will hear and that we will receive (1Jn.5:14-15)

4. We are to be fully persuaded.

"And being fully persuaded, that what He had promised, He was able also to perform" (Ro.4:21). This is not the kind of faith that is created by spending a couple of minutes a day in the Word of God. It is a consuming of it until we know, that we know, that we know, that God is God and keeps His Word. This faith is not hope, for hope is future, while faith is now. This faith is not luck or chance, but an assurance, a conviction, evidence, and a reality. Abraham had hoped for a child. Then God's Word turned his hope into faith, "And being fully persuaded, that what He had promised, He was able also to perform" (Ro.4:21). Faith is being fully persuaded.

## **B. What is Believing Faith?**

"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (He.11:1).

Our faith is the substance, the actual reality, until what we have asked for becomes manifest. Our faith in the Word of God is the evidence or the proof of the reality of what we have asked for. It is our proof that we will receive what we cannot see. Believing faith means we are convinced fully persuaded that we already have what we do not presently see.

This believing faith is like a currency or medium of exchange that brings into existence what we believe for. Faith is the currency of heaven that which we supply to God in exchange for the things He says we can have. God requires it, and is pleased by our faith (He.11:6).

The blind man who went to the pool of Siloam believed he would receive his sight. Ten (10) lepers who went to the priest believed they would be cleansed. The Centurion who asked for healing for his servant believed his servant would be healed.

## **VI. HOW TO RECEIVE BY FAITH**

Faith comes by hearing the Word, pure and simple (Ro.10:17). Abraham heard God's Word to him. Joshua heard the Word from God. Moses heard God's Word at the Red Sea. We could go on and on about the many other times that men and women heard God speak, and then they obeyed that voice. The question is, will we believe when we hear? To receive by faith, several things must be done:

1. We must be obedient (Ro. 10:16; 1Jn.3:22; Ge.45:18).

2. We must believe that we receive (Mt.7:7; Jn.14:13-14). This is not waiting to see or feel something in the natural (Mk.11:24).
3. We must persevere in our belief in the following manner.
  - a. We must hold fast our confidence and patience (1Jn.5:14-15; He.10:35-36).
  - b. We must not draw back (He.10:38).
  - c. We must not confess negativity, doubt, or unbelief. We simply keep on in faith. After prayer, we keep on thanking God (Php.4:6). Thanking God is communication with God and a form of prayer.
4. We must stand on the Word (Ep.6:10-18)
  - a. We are to confess what we are standing on and believing in, then act like it is done and that we have received (2Co.10:5; Php.4:6-9).

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#### **VII. WHAT FAITH DOES FOR US**

1. We are saved by faith (Lk.7:50).
2. We are healed by faith (Mt.9:22).
3. We receive the Holy Spirit by faith (Jn.20:22; Ga.3:14).
4. We are partakers of all God's blessings by faith (Ro.8:32).
5. We walk by faith (2Co.5:7).
6. We live by faith (Ga.2:20).

7. We do the work of God by faith (Jn.6:29; He.11:6).
8. We have conviction and assurance of what God has done and will do for us by faith (He.11:1).
9. Faith counts things that are not as though they already were (Ro.4:17).
10. Faith builds our confidence (Ep.3:12).
11. Faith guarantees answers to our prayers (Mk.11:22-24).
12. Faith helps us to look at unseen, eternal things, the things of God (2Co.4:18; He.11:27).

God is a faith-God, Who created the heavens and the earth by His Word of faith. We are His faith people, and He wants us to be just like He is. This can only come about as we look to Him. When we do, we will find that faith makes us rest in the Lord, it makes us more than conquerors, it opens our eyes to God's faithfulness, and we will then look at the Word rather than the symptoms that we feel. This kind of faith will bring about the answers to our prayers.

### **VIII. FAITH WITHOUT WORKS IS DEAD**

The Centurion who came to Jesus believed the spoken Word, to the extent that he told Jesus to "...speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed" (Mt.8:5-10). The Centurion was commended for his great faith by Jesus.

The lame man in Peter's day arose at the words of Peter. There was nothing magic in the words Peter spoke, except that they were simply spoken in faith. When the lame man heard them, and Peter took him by the hand to help him take some action "...*immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. And he leaping up stood, and walked...*" (Ac.3:5-9). If the lame man had never taken a step, or if he had said to Peter, "Man, leave me

alone. You can see plainly that I cannot walk”, this would have sealed his being a cripple still. The action he took sealed his faith in the words Peter said.

The woman with the issue of blood touched the hem of His garment. However, it was with great effort and continually saying, “*when I touch the hem of His garment, I shall be made whole*” (Mt.9:21). She had to, not only confess, but put into action what she confessed.

The ten (10) lepers were obedient and showed themselves to the priest (Lk.17:14). If they had not started going to the priest, they would never have been healed. Their action proved that they believed the words of Jesus.

The blind man washed at the Pool of Saloam (Jn.9:7), at the words of Jesus. He had to be led to the pool, but once he washed, he did not have to be led again. It was the action he took because he believed the words of Jesus that purchased for him his eyesight.

Joshua walked around Jericho by faith. No army goes out to battle simply parading around the enemy’s fort, but that is what Joshua and the children of Israel did.

Jericho was straightly shut up, that is, under siege by the children of Israel. However, because it was a fortified city with two (2) walls, the people of Jericho felt safe enough. Add to that the fact that Israel did not show any effort to batter down their gates or climb over their walls. What could harm them in this position? But God had given instruction to “...compass the city seven (7) times, and the priests shall blow with the trumpets. And it shall come to pass, that when they make a long blast with the ram's horn, and when ye hear the sound of the trumpet, all the people shall shout with a great shout.” Of course this was a strange instruction. However, when Joshua and the people obeyed, A the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they took the city" (Jos.6:1-20). Only by taking action could they obey the Lord and see the victory they needed.

So, we can see that faith and works go together, like a hand in a glove (Ja.2:17-20).

## **IX. FAITH IS A CONFESSION AND AN ACTION**

*"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: 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. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness: and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the Scripture saith, whosoever believeth on Him shall not be ashamed" (Ro.10:8-10).*

Confession means to say what God says about our sins, about our sicknesses, about any condition we have that we wish to be changed. *“Wherefore, Holy Brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession (or confession), Christ Jesus” (He.3:1).*

Jesus confesses before the Father what we confess, the positive, but not the negative. Consider the ministry of Jesus at the Father's right hand. Jesus is the High Priest of our confession. If our confession is positive, then His confession will be positive before the Father. He, as our mediator is saying, “Father, that is My child; give him the desire of his heart.”

#### **A. Confession of God’s Word Causes Faith to Grow**

It is quite possible to tell when a person believes right, by what they say. If their confession is wrong, their believing has to be wrong also. If the believing is wrong, the thinking is wrong, and the confession will be wrong. It is because certain areas of their mind have not been renewed with the Word of God. All three (3) parts, the believing, the thinking, and the saying, go together. God has given us His Word to renew our minds and get our thinking corrected. We must think as God thinks, and He thinks in line with His Word.

On the subject of confession, we can see three (3) types of confession that are from the negative side:

1. The Jews confession of sin.
2. The confession of the sinner today.
3. The confession of a believer who is out of fellowship with God.

We are discussing the confession of our faith in God's Word. Whenever the word "confession" is used, we usually think of sin and failure. This is the negative side. It is important in its place, but the positive side is covered more in the Bible than the negative. Confession is stating something we believe in our hearts. It is giving evidence or agreement to something we are assured to be true. It is testifying to a truth that we have become fully persuaded of.

#### **B. Five (5) Parts of Confession**

Our confession should center around five (5) things to be valuable:

1. What God has done for us in the plan of redemption?
2. What God has done in us, through His Word and His Spirit?
3. What we are to the Father in Christ Jesus.
4. What Jesus is accomplishing for us now at the Father's right hand, where He is making intercession for us.
5. What God can accomplish through us.

### **C. Confession at Work**

God works through us by His Words that pass through our lips. Jesus said, "*Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature*" (Mk.16:15). That is the way God works through us. We carry the Word of God to the lost and dying world. If we do not carry the Word to the peoples of the world, then we waste our time praying that God would do something, for He has done all He is going to do. It would be useless to pray for someone who is lost if we do not carry the Gospel of salvation to them. We are God's mouthpiece.

If prayer was all it took to get people saved, we would not send missionaries out, for there would be no need. We could just pray and every tribe and tongue and nation would come into the kingdom. However, the Holy Spirit works only in connection with the Word.

Christ commanded us to go into the entire world and preach the Gospel. The disciples went forth in obedience, preaching the Word everywhere. It was plain in the Book of Acts that the Lord worked with them, confirming the Word with signs following. God did not do a thing, nothing happened, until the disciples preached the Word, then signs followed.

Signs do not follow an individual; they follow God's Word that comes forth from our mouths. Give the Word out, for the signs will happen, they will take care of themselves. Signs follow the Word. We do not have to pray that God would confirm His Word with signs following. All we have to do is to preach the Word! He will confirm His Word. If we will preach the Word, signs will follow.

Another thought is that if the signs are not following our preaching, we are preaching some other gospel. We cannot mingle tradition and personal opinion into our sermons and expect God to confirm those traditions or opinions with signs following. That is not what He said. The more and more of the undiluted Word of God we preach, the more and more we will see the signs following.

God moves only in accordance with His Word, which He has magnified above His Name. We cannot expect a move of God when we are speaking against His Word, even if it is an unconscious act on our part. We must treat the Word of God with the same reverence we would show to Jesus if He were present in the natural.

#### **D. Confession Drives out Fear**

Many times God told His children to "fear not," such as in Isaiah (Is.41:10). When Jairus sought Jesus to heal his daughter, the Lord said to him, "Fear not, believe only, and she shall be made whole" (Lk.8:50). Jesus said the same thing to His disciples, "*Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom*" (Lk.12:32).

When the Lord appeared to Isaac in the Old Testament, renewing the covenant He had made with his father Abraham, the Lord said, "*Fear not, for I am with thee, and will bless thee...*" (Ge.26:24).

We might say, "But I cannot help being afraid." That could be true if He had not gone on to say, "I am with thee." It is impossible to really believe He is with us and still be afraid, except we doubt Him.

God has an answer, no matter the infirmity we might feel. "But," someone says, "I am so weak." God said, "I will strengthen thee." "But I am so helpless," another might say. God said, "I will uphold thee." David said his soul was melting for heaviness, but that God would strengthen him "...*according unto thy word...*" (Ps.119:28).

It is true that we may be weak and helpless, burdened down with cares and problems in ourselves. But, though we are weak, we look to His Word for strength. "*The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple*" (Ps.119:130). Our confession may be, "God is with me." We can say, "*Greater is He that is in you (and me) than he that is in the world*" (1Jn.4:4), and "*If God be for us, who can be against us*" (Ro.8:31).?

We may be facing something that seems impossible to overcome from the natural viewpoint. Instead of talking about the impossibility of it, look to Him who is inside and say, "God, who is in me, is greater than what is outside of me." That confession of faith will cause Him to begin to work on our behalf. He will rise up in us,

strengthen us, and give us success. We can face life fearlessly when we know that He that is in us is greater than any forces that may be arrayed against us. This should be our continual confession.

### **E. Confession Increases Faith**

The God-kind of faith cannot be expressed without confession. Confession is faith's way of expressing itself.

Faith is of the spirit or heart. We know there is no love without word or action to prove it. It is not possible to reason love into or out of people. It is of the heart. As faith, too, is of the spirit or heart, we can safely say that there is no faith without confession. Faith grows with confession, and does two (2) things for the believer. First of all, it identifies us. Second, it sets the boundaries on the life of the believer. We never will receive more than our confession.

If we say we cannot do something, of course we cannot (Mk.11:23-24). Of course then we are agreeing with the devil. However, if we say we can, then we can. Mark 11:23 says we can have whatever we say or confess, whether it be belief or unbelief, success or failure, sickness or health. We have heard this before, but now it is becoming dogmatic. It seems that the majority of Christians, although sincere, are weak in their faith. It is because they never have dared to make a confession of whom, and what they are in Christ. They must find out how God looks at them, which is written mostly in the New Testament Epistles, because they were written to the Church, and then confess what God said. When we discover all that God has for us, and boldly confess what God declares us to be in Christ, our faith will abound.

The reason some peoples faith is held in bondage is because they never have dared confess what God says they are. Faith can never grow beyond the confession of our heart. Our daily confession of what the Father is to us, and of what Jesus is doing for us, and of what the Holy Spirit is doing in us will build a strong faith life.

When we have a strong faith life, we will not be afraid of any circumstances. We will not be afraid of any disease nor any conditions that we face. We will face life as a conqueror. To be a conqueror, we must confess that we are one (Ro.8:37).

Romans 10:10 contains, in capsule form, God's law of faith, "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." In seeking anything from God, we must believe in our heart, because the Word said so. Then we must confess with our mouth that it is so. One man of God gives his amplified or expanded version of Hebrews 11:6, saying that, "*without faith it is impossible to gratify or be fully agreeable with Him...*" This is indeed what faith is, the agreement that what God said is true.

Romans 10:10 tells us that to be saved, a man must believe in his heart and confess with his mouth that God raised Jesus from the dead. This is plain talk about the principle of faith that we have to believe in our hearts and confess with our mouth to receive the benefit of that sacrificial death. It is plain, we must believe it, confess it, and we will receive it (Mk.11:23).

As we study God's Word and find out what His Word says we are, who we are, and what we have in Christ Jesus, though it may not seem possible to us at first, we must simply start confessing, "Yes, that's mine, according to God's Word." When we do this, we will then find that faith's confession has created a true reality.

#### **F. Real Faith Casts Down Reasoning**

Reasoning will always try to exalt itself over and above the Word of God. But real faith will always cast down vain imaginations, the little voice that says it will not be done, the prayer will not be answered. Real faith will believe what the Word says. Remember, the Word is "Thus saith the Lord." It is God speaking and as such cannot fail or lie, or else it would be God lying and failing. We must exercise what the Word of God says by taking authority over our thought life.

Paul wrote plainly about it to the church at Corinth, saying, *"For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds; Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (2Co.10:3-5).*

#### **G. A New Set of Rules to Follow**

Redemption has brought about a whole new set of rules, even a new way of talking. As we get to know who we are in Christ, results will follow. Our faith will cause our confession to change. We will stop talking about our weaknesses, failures, and sicknesses, glorying in the negative, and will be talking about how we are winners continually. We can only rise up to our confession when it is based upon the Word of God. The way we talk will bring a harvest to us, positive or negative, sooner or later (Mt.12:35-37; Pr.18:21a).

We should begin to confess certain things in line with the Word of God, such as:

1. "I can do all things through Christ" (Php.4:13).

2. "I am more than a conqueror" (Ro.8:37).
3. "I am an overcomer" (1Jn.5:4).
4. "I am a joint-heir with Jesus Christ" (Ro.8:17).
5. "I am free from worry" (1Pe.5:7).
6. "I am victorious" (Php.4:13; 1Jn.4:4).
7. "I do not have a spirit of fear (1Jn.4:18).
8. "I have victory over Satan, for he is a defeated foe" (1Jn.2:13).
9. "I have all demons under my feet."
10. "I am a new creation in Christ Jesus" (2Co.5:17).
11. "Jesus is the Lord of my life" (Ro.10:9-10).
12. "Jesus is the Lord of my all" (Ac.4:12).

As we confess the Word, our faith will rise like the thermometer exposed to the hot, noon-day sun. Serving God will become more of a reality, and we will have taken the limits off of God (Pr.6:2). We are either captured or set free by the words of our mouth. Words will dominate us and make us a slave, or they will liberate us to an abundant life. Confession that is contrary to the Word of God will hold us captive, ensnaring us. Soon it

becomes as bad a habit as smoking, drinking, or using drugs. Just as men are slaves to a habit, so a bad confessing habit will make us slaves to sickness, failure or lack (Ga.6:7)

If we sow the Word, the right confession, we will reap what the Word says. This is a good habit. We must make our confessions based on the Word of God, and then hold onto that confession. The Bible says to "Hold fast the confession of your faith" (He.4:14).

We should be like a man holding on to the rail of an ocean liner. As the waves whip about it, the boat is tossed to and fro, but he holds on. The rail is his support. Hold on to the Word of God. As the devil tries to rock our boat, remember, the Word is all we have to hold on to. Keep that confession of faith based on the Word. God will never fail!

## **H. Real Faith Possesses**

If we confess what God says about our sins and sicknesses, we will be saved and healed. Confession based upon the foundation of God's Word will bring about the fulfillment of His promises. We cannot confess what we do not know. We can only confess what we know about Jesus and what we are in Him. Confessing the Word will assure successful results (Ps.34:10b).

When we seek the Lord, He will hear us. As we confess His Word, He will answer us. We never rise above our confession. Ten of the twelve spies that went out to spy out the land of Canaan brought back a negative report. What was so evil about their report? They were simply saying God was not big enough to do what He said He was going to (Nu.13:32-33). We can see that this report was negative, contrary to what God had said, and it was a result of unbelief.

They got their eyes on the giants instead of the Word of the Lord. Two (2) of the spies said, "Let us go up at once, and possess it, for we are well able to overcome it" (Nu.13:30). In both instances they were controlled by their confession. The one (1) group of ten (10) was imprisoned and died in the wilderness without going into the land. The other group of two (2) were free, and went into the land. The ten (10) spies left themselves wide open; the two (2) spies protected themselves. The faithless group let Satan in. *"Neither give place to the devil"* (Ep.4:27).

The other group kept Satan out by speaking as the oracles of God (1Pe.4:11).

## **I. Real Faith Matures in the Spirit**

Faith matures in the spirit as we continue to renew our mind to the Word of God. As the mind is renewed, it lines up with the spirit. Reasoning is a stronghold we must pull down. Reasoning must give place to the Word. We are to think God's thoughts instead of men, so that we will be able to receive. Abraham, in the face of reason, knew it was impossible for Sarah to have a child, Then he received a Word from God and started to think as God thought. He cast down all reasoning when reasoning could have played a large part, considering all the facts. Hope turned into faith when God gave Abraham his name change, with a reaffirmation of the promise of a son through Sarah (Ge.17:16; Ro.4:18-21).

Abraham never staggered, but was strengthened by his faith. When everything pointed to the fact that Sarah could not have a child, when the laws of nature were against her, when her age was against her, Abraham believed that she would bear because God said so (Ro.8:31b) To have God on our side, is to have the One Who created all things by the Word of His power. While science is still trying to reason things out, we have the answer: God. He spoke the universe into existence. He took the things that were invisible and made them visible.

This is not to be reasoned out, but believed. The Holy Spirit will help us. He will guide us into all truth. If we do not know how to put our faith into operation, we should ask the Holy Spirit to help us. He will, and we will see our faith mature and after a while we will be able to act, in spite of all circumstances, expecting God to do for us what He has promised.

As we mature in faith, we receive more answers to prayer. We learn how to act on our faith and how to live in expectancy. Circumstances and trials will just be stepping stones to fuller maturity.

Always let the Holy Spirit direct in the acting of faith. When we cast down and ignore reasoning like Abraham did, we will get God-given results and answers. Sarah did have a child and children as promised, a host of believers who have received the promise, as the stars of the heaven and the sand on the sea shore (Ge.22:17).

If God honored faith almost four thousand (4,000) years ago, then He will honor it now. He has not changed. *"For I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed"* (Ma.3:6).

## **J. Signs of a Weak Faith**

Here are four (4) signs of a weak faith:

1. The first sign of weak faith is demanding visible proof.

"Except ye see signs and wonders," said Jesus, "ye will not believe" (Jn.4:48). We desire to see. "Seeing is believing," says an old proverb; yet we can be deceived more readily by sight than almost any other sense. Faith based upon sight is not faith. "The devils believe and tremble" (Ja.2:19). They "see" evidences of God's power and they tremble before it.

Unbelief is what demands visible proof. Thomas, in unbelief, said, "I will not believe till I see." Jesus rebuked him when He said, "Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed" (Jn.20:25, 29). The rich man in Hades wanted Lazarus to go tell "my five (5) brethren not to come to this place of torment." His idea was that if someone they knew to be dead told them, they would be convinced. He felt his brothers would be convinced if they saw a man "living" that they knew was dead. "No," said Abraham; "if they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one (1) rose from the dead" (Lk.16:27-31). Men who will not hear God as He speaks through the Bible will not hear Him when He speaks through miracles.

2. Weak faith seems to be driven to God by the overwhelming need.

The nobleman's son was at the point of death. Every physician had tried to bring healing; even the most skillful had given up on his case. Now, the father thinks of Jesus, and starts for Him. It is like the soldier's cry, so often heard in battle, when he feels the bullet strike him, "Lord, have mercy!" Or, it is like the deathbed conversion, a final grasping for safety.

Such faith, though better than no faith, is not as good as the faith which draws us to God by gratitude and love. To be driven is good, but to come by drawing is better. Perhaps this nobleman had heard of Christ before; but he did not avail himself of the healing power of Jesus. Perhaps there had been opportunities to invite Him to his house, but he did not. Only when the situation became desperate, which he hopes Jesus may relieve, does he come to Him. Zacchaeus invited the Lord to dine with him when there was no sorrow to be relieved. His faith was, therefore, in better condition than that of the nobleman.

Matthew invited the Lord to dinner at his house. He wished to share his joys. Such faith, not under stress seeking relief, is of a higher order than that which drives us to Christ.

3. Weak faith, in praying, seems to try to pressure God for an answer.

A father besought Jesus so that He would come down and heal his son. We are to make known our wants and leave to Him as to how they shall be supplied. It was as if he was saying, "I will invite Him to my mansion, and be the first among the nobility to show Him respect, if He will come and heal my son." This is the opposite of the Centurion's attitude, who recognized that he was "...not worthy that Thou shouldest come beneath my roof..." (Mt.8:8). He would go uninvited to the Centurion's house, and heals his servant. God will not be boxed in as to how He meets our needs. We are not to pressure Him, but simply stand in faith that He will do what He says He will.

Perfect faith does not dictate to God. However, much of our praying consists of patronizing dictation. We try to convince God that He is wrong in His way of doing. Though we are greatly shocked by this thought, it is true. Some would go so far as to say, "If I had been present at the creation, I could have given God some advice"; or, "If He would consult me as to how to govern the world, I could help Him in it." Sometimes, we show a spirit distressingly similar.

Some tenants were ejected from a building in New York City years ago. Upon trying to get back in, the police refused to let them enter. The reason they were refused entry was the condition of the building, which was about to fall down. The police knew that for the benefit of the tenants, it was better they should suffer the cold than suffer death from collapsing walls. Yet the tenants persisted in trying to put themselves in danger by returning to the decayed building. The result showed that the police were the wiser. And the result will always show that God's dealings with us are wise and good.

John Wesley had two (2) preachers under his direction, named Bradburn and Duncan. Bradburn was eloquent; Duncan was a poor speaker. When Bradburn preached, Duncan would be present; but when Duncan preached, Bradburn was usually absent. Duncan finally approached his Brother Bradburn, asking why it was that he was nearly always absent when he preached. Bradburn answered, "I cannot hear you without being greatly tempted. "What, pray tell me is the nature of the temptation" asked Duncan? "I am tempted to think that I can preach better than you, and it ministers to my pride" said Bradburn. Such is the feeling of "Brother Weakfaith." He has the impression, mistakenly so, that he could do lots better than the Lord, if he had the whole thing in hand.

#### 4. Weak faith is impatient.

This father evidently became impatient: "Sir, come down ere my child die." There is almost petulance in this request. It is spoken as if he thinks that there is no time left to argue in. What he wants is an answer now, and he cannot tolerate delay. Our impatience with God then is a sign of very weak faith.

Jesus honors even faith like this. Though impatient and possibly dictatorial, driven by need, and seeking visible evidence, yet God answers that prayer.

## K. The Signs of a Strong Faith

Let us look at four (4) signs of strong faith.

### 1. Strong faith trusts in the Word of God.

John tells us that "...the man believed the Word that Jesus had spoken" (Jn.4:50). No sign needed here, he could simply rely upon the simple Word. There was something in the tone of the voice, as well as what Jesus said, which went to his heart and gave him faith. There is something in the Word of God, confirmed by the Holy Ghost, something that helps us to believe.

We must not treat the Bible as one patient did. The doctor told him to put the prescription in a little water and take it according to directions. When the man saw the doctor the next day, he found the patient worse. "Did you take the prescription?" he asked. "Yes, here it is," the man replied as he handed him a glass of water in which the paper had been dissolved. He had taken several spoonfuls of paper-pulp for medicine. Instead of doing what the prescription told him, he simply took the prescription itself. In that sense "*the letter killeth.*"

The truth of God is sacred. One man refused to let any book into his house except the Bible. He regarded it as above all books, and hence his children came to reverence it also. What the Book "means" is worth much more than the Book itself. The Words of God are very precious, and we learn to revel in the truth itself, apart from any benefit that we receive from it.

A house-decorator was asked to paper every room in a house but one. He was curious to know why that room was to be left blank. On entering it he saw a strange scene. On the walls were pasted hundreds of letters. The young lady, an invalid who was not able to go out on her own, said she had thus papered the walls of her room because every letter was precious to her heart. There were letters from mother, friends, childhood friends and school days. She could sit in her room and revel in these associations. So may we also have our memory filled with Scripture truths, each suggestive of something in the past, the remembrance of each victory they have brought, giving us delight. No man can prize the Word of God too highly and depend upon it too implicitly.

### 2. A sign of strong faith is restfulness.

This father came from home in great haste, seeming to be impatient at the delay of Jesus. But, after Jesus had said "*Thy son liveth,*" we find him in no hurry. Not until next day does he start for home, for there is no need of hurry when He believes that his son is cured. Meeting the servant on the way home the next day, he accepts the account of the healing without surprise, for it is hardly news to him.

"He that believeth maketh not haste" (Is.28:16). He rests upon God with a quiet heart. He has the promise, which to the eye of faith is equal to the fulfillment. It is a done deal. He has already entered into the enjoyment of what is promised (Is.26:3). In this age of hurry, we need such a rest of faith.

3. A sign of strong faith is its readiness to receive confirmation.

As the father goes homeward, he hears the echo "*Thy son liveth.*" Jesus spoke it, and the servants say: "*Thy son liveth.*" An echo like this, which the nobleman heard, is sweeter than all the echoes in nature. We who believe God's Word will hear the echo of answer. We will hear it in fulfillment of some kind. "Faithful is He Who has promised" (He.10:23).

Notice how ready the nobleman was to receive the confirmation of his faith. He compared the time, the time when Christ spoke, and the time when his son was healed. No amazement, it was the same hour. Unbelief suggests to us, "This is a remarkable coincidence, to be sure; but there is no necessary connection between the Words of Jesus and the healing. He might have gotten well anyhow." Be very careful, when we have asked and received, to never take honor from God by giving credit to chance or coincidence. The tempter suggests, "You have what you wanted, but it might have come even without praying for it." Such is the attitude of unbelief. Faith stands ready to be confirmed by the testimony of others.

4. Another sign of strong faith is its willingness to receive spiritual blessing.

The nobleman "himself believed, and his entire house." It is likely that the first thing he did, when he reached home, was to search out the old Scriptures and read the prophetic Word concerning the Messiah. Then, he probably shared with his son how he had been saved from death by the Great Physician. He likely told his wife and other children and servants the same. He came to Jesus for temporal blessing and received spiritual blessing. God deals with us sometimes strangely to our thinking. He knows how to give above all we can ask or think. Great faith prizes spiritual above temporal blessings, and has the secret by which the temporal is transmuted into the eternal.

#### **L. Real Faith Relies on God's Promises**

"Without faith it is impossible to please God" (He.11:6). "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (He.11:1).

There are many kinds of faith, such as religious faith, material faith, and believing faith. Every man has some kind of faith, so faith is not a strange thing. It is by faith alone that man can act. To seek or ask for faith is not correct. We already possess faith, but we need to put our faith into action and operation.

God provides, as faith takes and uses. In salvation, it is the faith of a free person, believing, receiving, and opening his life to the control of Jesus Christ, who died to save him and so enables him to live and walk by faith.

Faith for healing is exactly the same as faith for salvation. The Bible teaches that a sinner is to believe that he is saved, and encouraged to confess with his mouth on the basis of God's promise alone:

*"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. 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 shall be saved" (Ro.10:8-9).*

A sinner must confess with his mouth even before he feels the joy and peace of salvation. The joy will come even as he confesses, if only he will believe on the authority of God's Word, and then claim salvation by faith. This is God's way to save the lost, and it is God's way to heal the sick also. Since God is anxious to save sinners, He will save them because Jesus Christ has died to save them. He will also heal the sick because Jesus Christ has taken stripes to heal them (1Pe.2:24).

Genuine faith means we are so certain that God will fulfill His promises that we believe them even in spite of contrary evidence. The enemy will come after our minds, trying to convince us that faith has not received its promise" (2Co.10:3-5). The battleground is in the mind.

We must know our Bible. Then when Satan comes, we can resist Him as Jesus Christ dealt with him by stating: "It is written, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every Word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." At each offensive attack, Jesus said unto him, "It is written" (Mt.4:4-10). Jesus Christ used the written Word to overcome Satan, and we must do the same.

Hope is not faith. To "hope" or "wish" God would do something is not faith, because it is not based upon God's Word. To "hope and pray" is not faith, and it does not receive. This kind of hope is lodged in the intellect, where it does no good. Faith knows what God has promised and acts accordingly (Mk.11:24).

Pity is not faith. Though God is full of compassion and pity, we do not receive until we believe and act. God wants all to be saved, but until all act in faith, they will not be saved. So in healing, God's hands are tied until our faith is put into operation. God promises in His Word what He can and will do for everyone who believes and acts on that belief.

Satan lies to us and says, "You had better be careful," or, "That is not what God means," or, "Do not be venturesome in case it does not come to pass," or perhaps his best one, "You had better see if you do feel better before you testify to your faith in God." Satan can only lie. He is the father of lies. The way to tell if he is lying is to see if his mouth is moving. If it is, he is lying for he cannot tell any truth. If he says to us that we do not have something, then we can rest assured, based on his record of lying, that we have it.

Our testimony is the thing that will decide which way the situation will go. We could say that God has a vote, Satan has a vote, and we have a vote. We decide whom we believe and obey. Doubting God is just what Satan wants us to do. Such actions will produce only disappointed hopes. They that believe God, faithfully testify and declare what God is doing in spite of what they see, feel, hear or can understand, will get what they believe for. God said it, and that is enough for faith. We overcome the enemy's lies by the blood of the Lamb and the word of our testimony (Re.12:11).

To recap what we are saying, here are three (3) simple rules of faith for receiving what God has promised:

1. Have knowledge of what God has promised.
2. Ask Him to fulfill His promises.
3. Act upon those promises as though God had already fulfilled them, with praise following.

Click [Modules](#) to return to the module list or click [Quiz 2](#) to take the quiz for this unit.

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**Before reading the chapter(s) for this week please click the next button at the bottom right of the page to find the homework sheet for the assigned reading. The homework will aid you in taking the quizzes, mid-term, and final. Complete the homework as you read the reading assignment below.**

#### **X. KNOWLEDGE OF GOD'S PROMISES**

Every promise of God in His Word is a direct revelation to us of what He is eager to do for us. We cannot separate God from His Word. He not only is the Word, but He is continually watching over it to fulfill it and to see that not one Word fails or falls to the ground (2Kg.8:56).

We should give the Bible the same place we would give Jesus Christ if He were here physically in our presence. His Word talks to us and tells us the same things He would say if He spoke audibly, "You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (Jn.8:32).

We read the Word to get knowledge of the truth. As we read the Word, we will gain knowledge of God, getting to know and believe Him (2Ti.1:12b; He.8:11b) We must take in the Word to feed our spirit man the same as we take in food to feed our physical man (Mt.4:4).

It is our responsibility to claim all the benefits and rights that are ours (Ps.103:2). God is delighted when we assert our claims. Satan is a liar and he delights to blind us to our rights and benefits that were purchased at Calvary. In each circumstance, there are only two (2) positions on which we can stand. We must take one (1) or the other, either belief or unbelief. God's Word is either completely true, or it is a lie. As we get knowledge of God, believing faith will arise within us. People do have faith in some areas, yet not in others.

Matthew writes about the Centurion who came to Jesus. The Centurion's servant "...lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented." Jesus offered to go and heal him. The Centurion answered and said, "Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldst come under my roof: but speak the Word only, and my servant shall be healed." Jesus was amazed at the Centurion's understanding of authority. Such was Jesus marveling at his faith, that He said, "...I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." Then Jesus made an indictment against Israel for her unbelief. Turning to the Centurion, Jesus said, "...Go thy way; and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee. And his servant was healed in the selfsame hour" (Mt.8:5-13).

He had knowledge of God's healing power or he would not have approached Jesus. He said, "Speak the Word only, and my servant shall be healed." Jesus not only admired but honored the Centurion's faith, and his servant was made whole. Faith in God and what He can do brings about miracles (Lk.4:40; Mt.12:15; Mt.12:35; Mt.14:14; Lk.6:19; Is.53:5; Mt.8:17; 1Pe.2:24).

#### **A. Ask Him to Fulfill His Promises**

We have not because we ask not, Jesus said, "Ask and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full" (Jn.16:24b; 1Jn.5:14-15).

As we gain knowledge of God, we find out His will. His Word is His will and the foundation we build our faith on for receiving. To know the will or Word of God helps us to ask with the expectation of receiving. A leper came to Jesus saying: "Lord, if thou wilt thou canst make me clean." Jesus erased the "if" and said, "I will, be thou made clean" (Mt.8:2-3). Blind Bartimaeus cried out: "*Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me.*" Jesus said, "*Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole*" (Mk.10:47b, 52a).

#### **B. Act on the Promise as Though It is Already Fulfilled**

Real faith is simply believing what God says, speaking it out of our hearts, and acting accordingly. It is knowledge changed into action. Knowledge without obedience is not faith. Act on the Word. Many people ask Him to deliver or heal them. No, He has already healed and delivered us. We must begin to do the things which we could not do before, acting on His promise. He will confirm the promise. We are to rise above all doubts and fears. We are to prove our faith by our actions. We are to claim our liberty from Satan's prison house of fear and sickness.

God's Word is our guarantee of liberty. We are to walk out of the prison of bondage, and testify to God's Word and power as the basis for our freedom. We have known God's Word was true for a long time, but we have never acted upon it. We have had faith, but we have never put that faith into action. We have made a prisoner of our faith. It is time for us to: set our faith free, call on the Lord, claim the promise, ask Him to fulfill it, believe that He hears us, claim our deliverance or healing or need by faith, and act like it is true. *"According to your faith be it unto you" (Mt.9:29b)*. Faith without works is nothing. Faith talks, faith walks, faith sees, faith acts, faith works!

## **XI. FAITH AND TRIALS**

In order for faith to reach maturity and rely one hundred percent (100%) on God, it has to be tested. The man who invented the light bulb only succeeded after failing over one thousand (1,000) times. "The trying, testing of our faith works patience (Ja.1:3). *"Tribulation worketh patience" (Ro.5:3b)*.

Most people tell us about their great experience and answers to prayer, but never fill us in on the trials they went through.

### **A. Faith in the Midst of Trial**

God's great Apostle and church planter of the first (1st) century Church was in jail. Paul, if any one, seemed indispensable to the Church. Yet, from behind bars, he sent word to the young church in Philippi, declaring, "This shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ" (Php.1:19).

Paul knew that God could get him out of jail; God had done it before. In fact, it was in this very city, Philippi, where God had sent an earthquake that shook the prison posts, set all prisoners free, and filled the poor jailer with such consternation, that he nearly committed suicide at the prospect of losing all his charges. Instead, with the help of Paul and Silas, he was converted and baptized with his whole household.

Paul surely had heard about the angel coming and opening the prison doors for Peter and John. God could do it again. But now Paul is in jail. No earthquake, no angel. Trouble was piling up, and no relief was in sight. How wonderful to believe God, and see the needed answer come immediately. But, it is better to believe God when the gates are still locked. It is just as necessary to believe in the Divine Omniscience as in the Divine Omnipotence. God's judgment must be trusted, the same as we trust His power. Sometimes the answer comes quickly, but many times it comes later than the time we are looking for it. Elijah prayed on Mount Carmel, his prayer was short and the fall of the fire swift. But, when he prayed for rain, he agonized on his face in prayer. His labor was so intense that he took the position of a woman giving birth to a baby. He sent his servant seven (7) times before the cloud appeared, assuring the answer to his prayers.

Paul refused to be classified as a prisoner of Rome. He was there on business, and described his bonds as being "in Christ." It was for his Lord Jesus Christ that he was in jail. That made a difference in his attitude. Also, Paul transformed the prison into a pulpit, a place of witness for his Lord. He testifies, *"So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in the entire palace and in all other places"* (Php.1:13).

Paul saw the effect of his imprisonment upon the Church to be beneficial. Many brethren *"...are much bolder to speak the Word without fear."* It seems that Paul felt it was better that he be in jail, for many timid ones were now witnessing fearlessly to the grace of God. The promotion of the Gospel was Paul's life aim, while his own comfort and freedom were secondary.

Paul was having trouble within the Church. Evil actions were done in the name of religion. Some were preaching a Christ of contention, some of envy, and some of strife. Paul sensed their insincerity. They thought to pile on agony, and add affliction to his bonds. Many will declare that they can stand opposition from the world, for it is expected. However, they have problems enduring trouble amongst the believers in the Church. Paul was suffering both. However, he did not dwell on the troubling situations. He pointed out quickly that, while *"...some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife..."*, there were *"...some also of good will"* (Php.1:15-17). While some were insincere, Paul saw that there were others motivated by love, knowing that Paul was *"...set for the defense of the Gospel."* Paul dwelt on the good people. He concludes with rare insight, that *"...Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice..."* Paul refused to be hindered by the insincere, contentious religionists. He chose to look at the genuine Christians and rejoice that the preaching of Christ was going forth.

What is the secret of this faith which remains strong in the middle of perplexities and adversities? How can Paul be so sure that things are going to change for the better? The foundation for it all is an unswerving confidence in God. The Lord's faithfulness is the basis for Paul's hope for the future, enabling him to declare, *"According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed"* (Php.1:20).

We cannot treat God with too much confidence. God can never be overrated. God is far better than the best that we can think of. He always exceeds our fondest dreams and deepest desires. The patience Jesus demonstrated at His trials speaks of the power resident in Him, not of any weakness.

There are men who have challenged God and defied Him by trying to reduce Him to man-made concepts. Yet, we see that His ways and thoughts are higher than ours, as the heavens are higher than the earth. One man stood on a public platform, challenging God to prove His identity by coming down and striking him dead. But he lived! We would probably have killed him in thirty (30) seconds if challenged this way and we were God. *"The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance"* (2Pe.3:18). God will not change His way of dealing with men just because one (1) of them challenges Him.

This confidence in God must be demonstrated in an everyday courage, a practical courage. This courage filled Paul "with all boldness." He was so sure of God that he was willing to risk everything for Him. How would we react or act if we knew that we could not fail? That is actually what was empowering Paul, for he knew that God never failed, and his faith was in God. This is called grace. It is God's operational power that was working in Paul. It is His divine enabling that comes when men need it. This did not bring or require immunity from trial. Actually it demonstrated itself in spite of the trial. Paul did not need providential coddling, but divine enabling, and that is what he was getting. Too many times we use our prayers petitioning God to "change the weather" or "the circumstances of our life," when we should be asking Him to cause the "wool" to grow a little faster. Sometimes we ask God to perform a miracle for us, when it would really be a miracle if we had dared to trust Him. Much of our praying is given over to offering God a large supply of unsolicited advice. We tell God what we want, even hinting how He could or should do it for us. At times, with strong urgings that are based on an emergency, we even have the gall to tell Him when to do things for us. That is not faith.

English sheep graze in delightfully green, succulent fields. These sheep have a very heavy coat of wool. The cool weather and good pastures make for a good coat of wool. God is at work here, providing in His foreknowledge what is needed, both the green grass and the heavy wool. Perhaps the "inclement weather" we see in life's circumstances, plus the "green pastures" of God's Word, afford a counterpart in the development of a healthy soul. Moral strength comes in answer to the fact that we have courageously faced the winds of adversity. Faith in God will prevail, and He will help us stand the storm.

Faith will make adversity our servant rather than our master as we stand in constancy. Paul demonstrated this in that he was dogmatic in the assertion, "As always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body" (Php.1:20). Paul had learned that faith must be applied to each new situation. His commitment was timely because it was timeless. A "daily yes" must be included in our lives.

This is where Christianity is finally put to the test, in the strain of daily living. To be genuine, faith must be good for the commonplace as well as for the crisis. The validity of the crisis is verified or proven in the daily routine. Paul was sure that the distressing circumstances of his life, his imprisonment, would change, "this shall turn," because God would not change. Paul had decided that he would not alter his outlook of trust in God. Paul was fully persuaded that, "As always, so now also" (Php.1:20a). Paul recognized that what was not seen was the truth, and what was seen was temporary. Only one thing was left to be changed, the jail term.

Paul made a commitment that was without reservation. "Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death" (Php.1:20b). No reservations, no questioning, no maybes. Paul had learned that there is no true holiness without faith, and that faith is not valid or valuable until a complete commitment has been made. All of us need to learn this lesson, no matter where our active assignment may put us. Total commitment is costly; there are no bargains in this area of life. Paul's commitment was irrevocable; he renewed it day by day. The world thinks "Every man has his price." Not so. Here was a man who could not be bought, no matter the adversity. He had made the supreme commitment, and he was standing by it.

With the commitment, Paul also received a commission, expressed as, "For to me to live is Christ..." (Php.1:21). His life was an extension of his Master's incarnation; in that his assignment was to do the Master's will and deliver His message.

Paul discovered that his consecration meant not only something to him, but also to God. Paul sensed himself to be the most deeply obligated person in the community of believers, and he was going to do something about it.

This kind of radiant living can be limited to a special few in our thinking, those who have a genius for it! No, it is actually the Divine norm for every one of us. We are all to pray like Jesus, "*And all mine are thine,*" and then take hold of the counterpart, "*and thine are mine.*" Our "little all," given to Him brings to our disposal His limitless resources. What a deal, what a partnership!

This jail term did not slow Paul, but actually showed him the real issues of life. Paul now understood the significance of life's consummation. Some things are seen extra clearly through prison bars. He knew the intent of his enemies, to put him to death. But, he had faced the monster and came away unafraid. He concluded, "*...To die is gain*" (Php.1:21). He looked death in the face and saw the truth, that to be "*...absent from the body...*" meant to be "*...present with the Lord*" (2Co.5:8). Death was not a stopping point, nor a separation for him, but an abiding union with Christ. Death, Paul recognized, was not an anticlimactic event; it was the beginning of a better day to which we all look forward. Being confronted with the alternative, Paul chose "*to be with Christ; which is far better*" (Php.1:23).

However, personal happiness or choice is not the controlling issue. He faced the needs of the young churches, seeing their situations, and decides his duty is to stay. He senses that God is going to let him remain a while longer.

Paul was incurably optimistic. He was imprisoned, but not bound. The faith inside him could not be chained, it remained forever free. His faith in the ultimate triumph of God, in the completed work of Christ made him to know no defeat. Though in prolonged and severe trials, he could be cheerful. While he was bound in jail, he reveled in the Christians, though they had been timid, who had now shown their strength when it was put to the test. His loss to them in leadership was a challenge that they were meeting. The undesirable jail experience was furthering the Gospel. The Christian witness, thought to be stifled, was now running through Caesar's court and faraway key places. The hypocrites in the Church could not get him down. Their bad spirit and improper motives did not stop the note of praise he had because the message of his incomparable Christ is preached.

Will we have this kind of faith in the midst of severe trial? Is God the same today, or a respecter of persons? The same miracle of grace will happen for us when needed. Faith was made for any age. It works whether our prayers are answered speedily, or after long delay. Faith can triumph in any undesirable event or loss in our life's. Will we dare to put our trust in Christ with an abandon? Will we stand when trouble comes with our commitment firm? Will we accept the assignment that costs us something, and when the end comes see clearly that the things that we have lived for are trustworthy? Is our hope in God today, and always? God looks to us for the commitment, so that He can use us, by our saying, "I will trust Him and not be afraid."

## **B. Faith When God is Silent**

The silences of God tend to be occasions for our heart to fear. Trouble comes in unexpected proportions and certainly uninvited. Even God's providence is sometimes beyond our understanding. Rain falls on the just and unjust; tragedy, pain, and loss strike the good and bad alike. We tend, in the agony of our distress and our search for meaning, to cry out, "Why?" Then, when the silence of God is prolonged, our soul cry becomes, "How long?"

Jesus reminded us in His parting words that the silences of God are on the side of faith when He said, "In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you" (Jn.14:2). God is not deceiving us in His silence, nor is He out to fool us. Just because He does not speak, is He weak? NO! He knows the answer and holds the key to our question. However, God does not use skywriting, just because we chafe at the situation. He spoke the final Word by His Son. Therefore, the supreme answer to our deepest questions is found in His Cross. His resurrection sounds out the assurance that God's purposes for us are steadfast and reliable. The home of God is also our final home, with many dwelling places.

Our heart is to claim this in the simplicity of faith. We are to rejoice, though His purpose may be hidden from view. He would not deny us by default nor deceive us by silence. The unexpected and the unrevealed are to hold no terror for us. God's wisdom is on our side, and His love overwhelms the silence of today. All we need to do is have faith in God.

## **C. Abraham Had His Faith Tried**

*Abraham "...against hope believed in hope..." He became the father of many nations because he was "...not weak in faith..." How would we fare when we knew our body was now not productive? Sarah's womb was also dead, yet he "...staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief but was strong in faith, giving glory to God." We must become like Abraham, in the face of situations that in the natural are impossible, yet believing because God speaks. We must become "fully persuaded..." that God will fulfill what He has promised (Ro.4:18-21).*

## **D. Moses Had His Faith Tried**

*"Why do you cry to Me?" God asked Moses. Then He said, "Tell the people of Israel to go forward" (Ex.12:15. AMP); Moses was in a hard spot. The Red Sea was behind him, the enemy's army before him, and the wilderness on both sides. There was no place to go, and God had the audacity to say, "Go forward." "What is God thinking?" Moses could have thought. "Does He not know that Pharaoh wants to put the people back in captivity and he will probably kill me?" The test came, but Moses acted in faith, lifting the rod over the water,*

and the water rolled back. We face the same thing, perhaps not as severe, but the same testing. Will we trust God, or will we trust our senses? That is the question. By exercising faith in speaking out the plagues, Moses found God to be reliable, faithful to His Word, so now Moses became bold in his faith. We are to become bold also, extending our faith to God and allowing Him to prove His faithfulness to us.

### **E. The Three (3) Hebrew Children's Faith Was Tested**

The furnace was hot. There was an audience looking on. It was now or never. Will they stand or not? "Now if ye be ready that at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery and dulcimer, and all kinds of music, ye fall down and worship the image which I have made well: but if ye worship not, ye shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace, and who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?" (Da.3:15).

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered the king as to the extent of their faith. They were not careful as to how they answered, for their faith was strong. They would not "...serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image..." Nebuchadnezzar was so mad that his countenance changed. He ordered the furnace heated seven (7) times hotter, and some mighty men to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and cast them into the burning fiery furnace. Amazingly, these men were consumed by the furnace's great heat. However, the flame treated Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego totally different. It was as if they were in an air-conditioned place, or that the laws of nature were suspended for them.

The king was astonished, for he saw "...four (4) men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth (4th) is like the Son of God." Nebuchadnezzar called the three (3) Hebrew children forth from the midst of the fire. With astonishment the princes, governors, and captains, and the king's counselors gathered around to see what was transpiring. There were no burns upon them, and the smell of fire was not there. It was a miracle, bringing the king to realization that this God was the one (1) to be served (Da.3:15-28).

### **F. Daniel Had His Faith Tried**

The result of the trying of Daniel's faith was to be put into the lion's den, but the real test came when he had to make a decision as to whether he would pray as before or not. It was the result of that decision that put him in the lion's den. His enemies thought that Daniel would cave in. They did not recognize that his faith was so strong that even if it meant death, he would not turn from God.

*At the king's arrival at the den, Daniel said, "O king, live forever. My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me" (Da.6:19-22). Daniel stood strong in faith, and God stood strong by Daniel.*

### **G. The Disciples Had Their Faith Tried**

Jesus and the twelve (12) disciples were on the sea, passing to the other side. "And behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves: but he was asleep" (Mt.8:24). Jesus was exhausted by the ministry of that day, and had gone to sleep. His statement to the disciples was, "Let us go to the other side." There was no question as to whether He was going to the other side, but did the disciples know that? Where was their faith? They had spent years on the sea, and knew the violent storms that could come up in just a few minutes. As the boat filled with water, they "...came to him, and awoke him saying, Lord, save us: we perish." That is not what Jesus said, there was no perishing to occur then. However, the disciples looked at the circumstances instead of remembering His Words. We would do well to remember His Words, so our faith will grow. Otherwise, He will have opportunity to say to us, "... Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? (Mt.8:24-26).

### **H. The Trial of Our Faith is Precious**

The trial of our faith is more precious than gold to God. When Jesus returns, He is expecting to find faith. During our testing periods, our faith becomes pure. Doubt and unbelief, like the dross in the purifying of gold, come to the top and are removed (1Pe.1:7). Remember, tried faith is not defeated faith, but rather the education and perfection of our faith.

Many want to "see" before they will confess with their mouths or believe with their hearts what God has declared about their sicknesses and diseases. Those people rarely "see" because faith is not needed after they "see" the works of God; it will then be facts. Faith has to be exercised before we can see or feel any change in our conditions. Faith is a willingness to believe that God will certainly do what He says He will do. If we doubt God's Word, then we are declaring that there is something more powerful than God.

We are saved and healed or lost and destroyed by what we testify. The Lord tells us to "...*attend to my words; incline thine ear unto my sayings...*", for they provide health to all our flesh" (Pr.4:20-22).

We are instructed to keep our minds, ears, eyes and heart occupied with God's promises. We are to reject fear, unbelief and failure. When we have faith in God, fear goes out, for fear is of Satan. Fear injects poison into the blood and weakens our physical body. As we keep our hearts full of the Word, the Word is what we will speak (Mt.12:34).

God never leads anyone to be afraid. He will keep His promises, for the Spirit of God inspires us to believe every Word of God. The Holy Spirit urges us to claim every promise in the Book and to act accordingly. We shall receive everything we ask for with right motives for the glory of God.

To learn how to exercise faith and to believe God hears and answers prayer when we pray is a much greater blessing than the healing itself, because we then know we can pray the prayer of faith ten thousand (10,000) times for ourselves and for others. Our whole lives will be spent in the wonderful joy of seeing God answer our prayers and fulfill His promises.

### **I. Peter's Faith Was Tried**

Peter was standing by his boat, washing his nets with his partners in the fishing business. Jesus was there, and as the people pressed upon him to hear the Word of God, he saw the two (2) ships that Peter and his partners had used to fish all night. He got into one (1) of the ships, Simon's, and asked that he push out and allow Him to use his boat. The boat became a pulpit, for the message of the day. After the teaching, Jesus wanted to bless Peter. Peter had heard the message, and now was asked to step out on faith and "...let down your nets for a draught" (Lk.5:4). Notice that it was not just one (1) net, but "the nets." Now Peter had washed his nets, leaving them to dry on the shore (Lk.5:2). All he had in the boat was a net that they no longer used, and probably rotten or at least a weak one. Simon protested that they had "...toiled all the night, and have taken nothing." The Sea of Galilee was/is a very clear sea, making daytime fishing useless. The fish could see many yards, negating any daylight fishing. However, Peter edged out on that faith that had been planted in him by the Master, and said, "...nevertheless at Thy Word I will let down the net."

A great number of fish came into that net, so that it began to break. They called for help and their partners came to help them. Both the ships were filled, so that they began to sink. Simon Peter saw it, and fell down at Jesus' knees. He recognized this was not just another man, but the "Lord." Peter was astonished, as well as those who were with him, at the catch of fish (Lk.5:1-11). It was that faith that had been planted into him, by the message he heard, that caused him to let down the net. Letting down the net was all it took, the action that corresponded with the Words of Jesus. So it is today, as He speaks, we act, and get the results He says we will get.

Although Peter had faith, he only had enough for a one (1) net catch. Jesus said "nets" not "net." Let us fully obey and trust His Word and see the result.

### **J. The Father's Faith Was Tried**

Jesus told the father of the demon-possessed boy, "...If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth" (Mk.9:23). When we dare to believe that what God says, it will surely come to pass.

We have to do like the father, putting aside every fear, every thought of failure. We have to begin to act on God's Word and promises. We must believe the promises in our own heart, and then confess them aloud. We repeat them until our whole being is in line with God Himself.

Faith brings the blessing of God. Doubt brings cursing. Faith heals the sick and saves. Doubt breeds sin and failure. By faith we receive all good things. Doubt destroys and by it we lose everything. All because of, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever" (He.13:8).

## **XII. DIFFERENT KINDS OF FAITH**

There are several kinds of faith talked about in the Scriptures. There are different levels of faith, a lack of faith, or a different way of describing faith. They are not in a descending order of importance, but it will be easy for the student to understand which kind of faith they need to pursue.

As Christians we need to make decisions that will change our entire life. These decisions are threefold:

1. When we decide to give our lives totally to Christ.
2. When we decide to be all we can be in life. When we refuse never to settle for less than we can be.
3. We decide to raise our standards, our values and our expectations in life.

This will be the beginning of an exciting journey towards our destiny, a journey that could take us to many nations around the world. These decisions could enable us to meet people who can help change us and bring new adventure and excitement into our lives. There is power in making a decision. Everything that happens in our lives, including success or failure, begins with a decision. Our destiny is shaped by our decisions. The decisions we make today will determine our tomorrows, the future. For example, what we are today is the result of our past.

Every decision we make has an outcome. It is the decisions we make, not our environment, that will determine and shape our destiny. There are thousands of testimonies of men and women who have succeeded in life despite their limitations, poor environment and disadvantages. There are those who have become failures in life in spite of all the advantages they had. It is our decisions, not our environment that will determine our destiny.

When we make a decision, that decision has to be followed by action. It is our actions, not mere words that make our decisions powerful. Every action we take produces either a positive or negative result. We reap what we sow. If we want to change our lives, we must take actions that will produce the kind of results we desire. Different actions produce different results. We can become what we want by paying the right price. If we do not like what is going on in our lives, then we need to stop what we are doing and start doing things differently. We need to change our actions and start sowing a different kind of seed. Those seeds are sown by faith.

#### **A. Great Faith**

"When 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" (Mt.8:10). Jesus commended the faith of the Gentile Centurion, for he demonstrated it by telling Jesus it was not necessary for Him to come to his house, but to just speak the Word. This faith was based upon the understanding of the authority Jesus had over disease. The Centurion did not require a touch as many did in order to receive their healing. He did not require the presence of Jesus, just His Word. So it is with us, when we understand the authority of Jesus Christ. Matthew tells us that Jesus said, "All authority is given unto me, in heaven and in earth" (Mt.28:18). It is this authority over the entire universe, and the authority to use His name, that can take care of any sickness. Also, see Matthew 15:28.

#### **B. Weak Faith**

Paul spoke of the one (1) who was weak in the faith (Ro.14:1). Weak faith is the faith that has not been fed the Word of God recently, nor has there been any praying in the Holy Ghost (Jude.20). Feeding the Word of God causes faith to come (Ro.10:17), and praying in the Holy Ghost causes us to be strong in the faith we have, "building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost." Weak faith is a faith that will not be able to receive. It is a faith that needs to be fed and fed until it grows strong and has strength to receive (Mk.11:24).

#### **C. Little Faith**

"If then God so clothe the grass, which is today in the field, and tomorrow is cast into the oven; how much more will he clothe you, O ye of little faith? (Lk.12:28) Jesus expressed this size faith when talking about the natural things of life. It is easy to see that God has provided all things for us. When we think about it, we really have no need that is not met. However, we get to thinking about it, and begin to worry about it, as if God is not about His business of seeing to His universe and all of its needs. He is taking care of it, so why should we worry.

#### **D. Saving Faith**

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God" (Ep.2:8). Faith is what saves us. It is the believing in our hearts and confessing by our mouths that God raised Jesus from the dead (Ro.10:9-10). It is not a matter of repenting of every sin we have ever committed in our several years of life, for that is even impossible for us to remember. However, repentance of sins is very much the activity of the Christian who fails to obey what God says. Saving faith is that measure of faith that God gives to each of us when He brings conviction to our hearts and we accept Him as our Savior and Lord.

#### **E. Healing Faith**

"And Jesus said unto him, Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole, and immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way" (Mk.10:52). Jesus placed the responsibility for the results of the man's faith squarely where it should be, on the man who believed. Healing faith comes into play when we believe that the stripes of Jesus are sufficient for our healing, or for someone else's healing (1Pe.2:24; Is.53:5).

#### **F. Dead Faith**

"Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone" (Ja.2:17; Ja.2:26). Faith requires corresponding action. It is not possible to have a living faith without action. Action is what living faith does. Inaction, lying dormant and not moving is what dead faith does.

#### **G. Strong Faith**

"He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded, that what he had promised, he was able also to perform" (Ro.4:20-21). We could safely say that Abraham's faith was strong, for he faced an impossible situation. He was well past the time of fathering a child, his wife's womb was dead, she was well past child-bearing years, and besides that, she had always been barren. It seemed to be an impossible situation, but not too hard for God (Lk.1:37). Abraham had the deciding vote in this, and he opted to vote with God. Because of this, he and Sarah received a son, Isaac.

#### **H. Rich Faith**

"Hearken, my beloved brethren, hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?" (Ja.2:5). The "poor" mentioned here are those who are

bankrupt because they are without God. A rich faith is one that receives everything promised. Jesus had this kind of faith, and we should too.

### **I. Mustard Seed Faith**

"And Jesus said unto them, If you 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" (Mt.17:20). Much has been made of the size of the mustard seed, how that it is so small, yet produces a large tree. However, this is not the most important fact about this seed. It is that it must be planted to produce this kind of harvest. No seed that is not planted can produce. Yes, the germ of life is still in it, but nothing happens until it is planted. And nothing happens in our lives until we plant something. It is the Law of the harvest, that whatsoever we sow we shall reap. However, we must sow first.

### **J. Overcoming Faith**

*"For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith" (1Jn.5:4).* There is no victory outside of faith. With faith, there need be no defeat. Why should we be defeated when Jesus never was, and we are to grow up into the image of Him? We overcome the world's way of thinking and doing by the faith we have in Christ. For instance, the world says to "grab all you can and hang on to it." Jesus says, "...give and it shall be given unto you..." Totally different thinking, yet Christ's Words are proven right by those who take the steps of faith to do so.

### **K. Growing Faith**

*"We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of everyone of you all toward each other aboundeth" (2Th.1:3).* The church at Thessalonica had some problems, but she was growing in faith. That is what we are to be doing, growing in faith every day. It is by the intake of the Word, the meditation of the Word, and the action taken on what the Word says that brings a growth in faith and insures our success in life (Jos.1:8).

### **L. Prayer of Faith**

"Is any sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he hath committed sins, they shall be forgiven him" (Ja.5:14-15). The prayer of faith was, according to this Scripture, to be prayed by the elders. This does not mean that they were the only ones who could pray it, but that they should be praying in faith when they pray. Praying in faith will always bring the desired results when we faint not.

**M. Tried Faith**

*"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 honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ" (1Pe.1:7).* Faith is no good unless it is tried or proven. We are the ones who must have our faith tried, for we do not know how strong our faith is. God knows how strong it is, He just tries it so we will know.

**N. Measure of Faith**

"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" (Ro.12:3). The measure of faith is what God gives us to start on. Then it is up to us to make it grow. God treats all men alike, so no one is mistreated or shorted on faith. When we see someone whose faith is not working, it is not God's fault, for He has given us all out of His own faith.

**O. Justifying Faith**

"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Ro.5:1). It is faith that justifies us, or places us in Christ, just as if we had never sinned, and peace is the result of that justification.

**P. Perfected Faith**

*"Seest thou how faith wrought with his works and by works was faith made perfect?" (Ja.2:22).* Perfected faith is the faith that is so strong that works are wrought by it. It is the faith that has put action to the believing, and has received what it was believing for.

**Q. Word of Faith**

*"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" (Ro.10:8).* The Word of faith is the "rhema" of God, that is, the spoken Word of God. It is the Holy Spirit speaking in our spirit man which empowers the Word to do what God said it would do.

**R. Purifying Faith**

*"And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us; and put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith" (Ac.15:8-9).* We either believe God or we do not. With belief of what He has said, our hearts are purified, because the Word of God washes our minds clean, and that which passes through our minds into our hearts is what we have come forth, pure as the Word of God.

### **S. Sanctifying Faith**

*Faith will sanctify us, or set us apart from the world. It will cause us to become separate from its filthiness and depravity (Ac.26:18).*

### **T. Walk of Faith**

*"For we walk by faith not by sight" (2Co.5:7).* Walking by faith is to not look upon the circumstances or conditions that appear to our sense of vision, but to the sixth (6th) sense, which is faith. It is to refuse to be moved by our natural vision, and require of ourselves to walk by the leading of the Holy Spirit in faith.

### **U. Shield of Faith**

*"Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked" (Ep.6:16).* The "shield of faith" is our faith extended before us that keeps the enemies' missiles of fire from hitting us. It is by faith that we refuse to allow the words of the devil to control us or bring fear, doubt, or unbelief.

### **V. Breastplate of Faith**

*"But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for a helmet, the hope of salvation" (1Th.5:8).* The "breastplate" of faith is another way of expressing the shield of faith, for it is the covering of an area that is vital to our lives. It is not only the protection of vital organs physically, but the covering of vital parts of our spiritual man also.

### **W. Unity of 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 fullness of Christ" (Ep.4:13).* There is only one faith, the faith of Jesus Christ. There are not several ways to heaven, but only one way. It is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all that we are to be attached to by faith.

## X. Steadfast Faith

*"For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ" (Co.2:5).* Our faith is to be an unmovable faith, a faith that is strong in Jesus, a faith that is steadfast, not wavering. James says that the person who wavers will never receive anything from God.

**Before reading the chapter(s) for this week please click the next button at the bottom right of the page to find the homework sheet for the assigned reading. The homework will aid you in taking the quizzes, mid-term, and final. Complete the homework as you read the reading assignment below.**

### VII. WHAT FAITH DOES FOR US

1. We are saved by faith (Lk.7:50).
2. We are healed by faith (Mt.9:22).
3. We receive the Holy Spirit by faith (Jn.20:22; Ga.3:14).
4. We are partakers of all God's blessings by faith (Ro.8:32).
5. We walk by faith (2Co.5:7).
6. We live by faith (Ga.2:20).
7. We do the work of God by faith (Jn.6:29; He.11:6).
8. We have conviction and assurance of what God has done and will do for us by faith (He.11:1).

9. Faith counts things that are not as though they already were (Ro.4:17).
10. Faith builds our confidence (Ep.3:12).
11. Faith guarantees answers to our prayers (Mk.11:22-24).
12. Faith helps us to look at unseen, eternal things, the things of God (2Co.4:18; He.11:27).

God is a faith-God, Who created the heavens and the earth by His Word of faith. We are His faith people, and He wants us to be just like He is. This can only come about as we look to Him. When we do, we will find that faith makes us rest in the Lord, it makes us more than conquerors, it opens our eyes to God's faithfulness, and we will then look at the Word rather than the symptoms that we feel. This kind of faith will bring about the answers to our prayers.

### VIII. FAITH WITHOUT WORKS IS DEAD

The Centurion who came to Jesus believed the spoken Word, to the extent that he told Jesus to "...speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed "(Mt.8:5-10). The Centurion was commended for his great faith by Jesus.

The lame man in Peter's day arose at the words of Peter. There was nothing magic in the words Peter spoke, except that they were simply spoken in faith. When the lame man heard them, and Peter took him by the hand to help him take some action "*...immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. And he leaping up stood, and walked...*" (Ac.3:5-9). If the lame man had never taken a step, or if he had said to Peter, "Man, leave me alone. You can see plainly that I cannot walk", this would have sealed his being a cripple still. The action he took sealed his faith in the words Peter said.

The woman with the issue of blood touched the hem of His garment. However, it was with great effort and continually saying, "*when I touch the hem of His garment, I shall be made whole*" (Mt.9:21). She had to, not only confess, but put into action what she confessed.

The ten (10) lepers were obedient and showed themselves to the priest (Lk.17:14). If they had not started going to the priest, they would never have been healed. Their action proved that they believed the words of Jesus.

The blind man washed at the Pool of Saloam (Jn.9:7), at the words of Jesus. He had to be led to the pool, but once he washed, he did not have to be led again. It was the action he took because he believed the words of Jesus that purchased for him his eyesight.

Joshua walked around Jericho by faith. No army goes out to battle simply parading around the enemy's fort, but that is what Joshua and the children of Israel did.

Jericho was straightly shut up, that is, under siege by the children of Israel. However, because it was a fortified city with two (2) walls, the people of Jericho felt safe enough. Add to that the fact that Israel did not show any effort to batter down their gates or climb over their walls. What could harm them in this position? But God had given instruction to "...compass the city seven (7) times, and the priests shall blow with the trumpets. And it shall come to pass, that when they make a long blast with the ram's horn, and when ye hear the sound of the trumpet, all the people shall shout with a great shout." Of course this was a strange instruction. However, when Joshua and the people obeyed, A the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they took the city" (Jos.6:1-20). Only by taking action could they obey the Lord and see the victory they needed.

So, we can see that faith and works go together, like a hand in a glove (Ja.2:17-20).

## **IX. FAITH IS A CONFESSION AND AN ACTION**

*"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: 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. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness: and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the Scripture saith, whosoever believeth on Him shall not be ashamed" (Ro.10:8-10).*

Confession means to say what God says about our sins, about our sicknesses, about any condition we have that we wish to be changed. *AWherefore, Holy Brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession (or confession), Christ Jesus" (He.3:1).*

Jesus confesses before the Father what we confess, the positive, but not the negative. Consider the ministry of Jesus at the Father's right hand. Jesus is the High Priest of our confession. If our confession is positive, then His confession will be positive before the Father. He, as our mediator is saying, "Father, that is My child; give him the desire of his heart."

### **A. Confession of God's Word Causes Faith to Grow**

It is quite possible to tell when a person believes right, by what they say. If their confession is wrong, their believing has to be wrong also. If the believing is wrong, the thinking is wrong, and the confession will be wrong. It is because certain areas of their mind have not been renewed with the Word of God. All three (3) parts, the believing, the thinking, and the saying, go together. God has given us His Word to renew our minds and get our thinking corrected. We must think as God thinks, and He thinks in line with His Word.

On the subject of confession, we can see three (3) types of confession that are from the negative side:

1. The Jews confession of sin.
2. The confession of the sinner today.
3. The confession of a believer who is out of fellowship with God.

We are discussing the confession of our faith in God's Word. Whenever the word "confession" is used, we usually think of sin and failure. This is the negative side. It is important in its place, but the positive side is covered more in the Bible than the negative. Confession is stating something we believe in our hearts. It is giving evidence or agreement to something we are assured to be true. It is testifying to a truth that we have become fully persuaded of.

## **B. Five (5) Parts of Confession**

Our confession should center around five (5) things to be valuable:

1. What God has done for us in the plan of redemption?
2. What God has done in us, through His Word and His Spirit?

3. What we are to the Father in Christ Jesus.
  
4. What Jesus is accomplishing for us now at the Father's right hand, where He is making intercession for us.
  
5. What God can accomplish through us.

### **C. Confession at Work**

God works through us by His Words that pass through our lips. Jesus said, "*Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature*" (Mk.16:15). That is the way God works through us. We carry the Word of God to the lost and dying world. If we do not carry the Word to the peoples of the world, then we waste our time praying that God would do something, for He has done all He is going to do. It would be useless to pray for someone who is lost if we do not carry the Gospel of salvation to them. We are God's mouthpiece.

If prayer was all it took to get people saved, we would not send missionaries out, for there would be no need. We could just pray and every tribe and tongue and nation would come into the kingdom. However, the Holy Spirit works only in connection with the Word.

Christ commanded us to go into the entire world and preach the Gospel. The disciples went forth in obedience, preaching the Word everywhere. It was plain in the Book of Acts that the Lord worked with them, confirming the Word with signs following. God did not do a thing, nothing happened, until the disciples preached the Word, then signs followed.

Signs do not follow an individual; they follow God's Word that comes forth from our mouths. Give the Word out, for the signs will happen, they will take care of themselves. Signs follow the Word. We do not have to pray that God would confirm His Word with signs following. All we have to do is to preach the Word! He will confirm His Word. If we will preach the Word, signs will follow.

Another thought is that if the signs are not following our preaching, we are preaching some other gospel. We cannot mingle tradition and personal opinion into our sermons and expect God to confirm those traditions or opinions with signs following. That is not what He said. The more and more of the undiluted Word of God we preach, the more and more we will see the signs following.

God moves only in accordance with His Word, which He has magnified above His Name. We cannot expect a move of God when we are speaking against His Word, even if it is an unconscious act on our part. We must treat the Word of God with the same reverence we would show to Jesus if He were present in the natural.

#### **D. Confession Drives out Fear**

Many times God told His children to "fear not," such as in Isaiah (Is.41:10). When Jairus sought Jesus to heal his daughter, the Lord said to him, "Fear not, believe only, and she shall be made whole" (Lk.8:50). Jesus said the same thing to His disciples, "*Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom*" (Lk.12:32).

When the Lord appeared to Isaac in the Old Testament, renewing the covenant He had made with his father Abraham, the Lord said, "*Fear not, for I am with thee, and will bless thee...*" (Ge.26:24).

We might say, "But I cannot help being afraid." That could be true if He had not gone on to say, "I am with thee." It is impossible to really believe He is with us and still be afraid, except we doubt Him.

God has an answer, no matter the infirmity we might feel. "But," someone says, "I am so weak." God said, "I will strengthen thee." "But I am so helpless," another might say. God said, "I will uphold thee." David said his soul was melting for heaviness, but that God would strengthen him "...*according unto thy word...*" (Ps.119:28).

It is true that we may be weak and helpless, burdened down with cares and problems in ourselves. But, though we are weak, we look to His Word for strength. "*The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple*" (Ps.119:130). Our confession may be, "God is with me." We can say, "*Greater is He that is in you (and me) than he that is in the world*" (1Jn.4:4), and "*If God be for us, who can be against us*" (Ro.8:31).?

We may be facing something that seems impossible to overcome from the natural viewpoint. Instead of talking about the impossibility of it, look to Him who is inside and say, "God, who is in me, is greater than what is outside of me." That confession of faith will cause Him to begin to work on our behalf. He will rise up in us, strengthen us, and give us success. We can face life fearlessly when we know that He that is in us is greater than any forces that may be arrayed against us. This should be our continual confession.

#### **E. Confession Increases Faith**

The God-kind of faith cannot be expressed without confession. Confession is faith's way of expressing itself.

Faith is of the spirit or heart. We know there is no love without word or action to prove it. It is not possible to reason love into or out of people. It is of the heart. As faith, too, is of the spirit or heart, we can safely say that there is no faith without confession. Faith grows with confession, and does two (2) things for the believer. First of all, it identifies us. Second, it sets the boundaries on the life of the believer. We never will receive more than our confession.

If we say we cannot do something, of course we cannot (Mk.11:23-24). Of course then we are agreeing with the devil. However, if we say we can, then we can. Mark 11:23 says we can have whatever we say or confess, whether it be belief or unbelief, success or failure, sickness or health. We have heard this before, but now it is becoming dogmatic. It seems that the majority of Christians, although sincere, are weak in their faith. It is because they never have dared to make a confession of whom, and what they are in Christ. They must find out how God looks at them, which is written mostly in the New Testament Epistles, because they were written to the Church, and then confess what God said. When we discover all that God has for us, and boldly confess what God declares us to be in Christ, our faith will abound.

The reason some peoples faith is held in bondage is because they never have dared confess what God says they are. Faith can never grow beyond the confession of our heart. Our daily confession of what the Father is to us, and of what Jesus is doing for us, and of what the Holy Spirit is doing in us will build a strong faith life.

When we have a strong faith life, we will not be afraid of any circumstances. We will not be afraid of any disease nor any conditions that we face. We will face life as a conqueror. To be a conqueror, we must confess that we are one (Ro.8:37).

Romans 10:10 contains, in capsule form, God's law of faith, "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." In seeking anything from God, we must believe in our heart, because the Word said so. Then we must confess with our mouth that it is so. One man of God gives his amplified or expanded version of Hebrews 11:6, saying that, "*without faith it is impossible to gratify or be fully agreeable with Him...*" This is indeed what faith is, the agreement that what God said is true.

Romans 10:10 tells us that to be saved, a man must believe in his heart and confess with his mouth that God raised Jesus from the dead. This is plain talk about the principle of faith that we have to believe in our hearts and confess with our mouth to receive the benefit of that sacrificial death. It is plain, we must believe it, confess it, and we will receive it (Mk.11:23).

As we study God's Word and find out what His Word says we are, who we are, and what we have in Christ Jesus, though it may not seem possible to us at first, we must simply start confessing, "Yes, that's mine, according to God's Word." When we do this, we will then find that faith's confession has created a true reality.

#### **F. Real Faith Casts Down Reasoning**

Reasoning will always try to exalt itself over and above the Word of God. But real faith will always cast down vain imaginations, the little voice that says it will not be done, the prayer will not be answered. Real faith will believe what the Word says. Remember, the Word is "Thus saith the Lord." It is God speaking and as such cannot fail or lie, or else it would be God lying and failing. We must exercise what the Word of God says by taking authority over our thought life.

Paul wrote plainly about it to the church at Corinth, saying, *"For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds; Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (2Co.10:3-5).*

#### **G. A New Set of Rules to Follow**

Redemption has brought about a whole new set of rules, even a new way of talking. As we get to know who we are in Christ, results will follow. Our faith will cause our confession to change. We will stop talking about our weaknesses, failures, and sicknesses, glorying in the negative, and will be talking about how we are winners continually. We can only rise up to our confession when it is based upon the Word of God. The way we talk will bring a harvest to us, positive or negative, sooner or later (Mt.12:35-37; Pr.18:21a).

We should begin to confess certain things in line with the Word of God, such as:

1. "I can do all things through Christ" (Php.4:13).
2. "I am more than a conqueror" (Ro.8:37).
3. "I am an overcomer" (1Jn.5:4).

4. "I am a joint-heir with Jesus Christ" (Ro.8:17).
5. "I am free from worry" (1Pe.5:7).
6. "I am victorious" (Php.4:13; 1Jn.4:4).
7. "I do not have a spirit of fear (1Jn.4:18).
8. "I have victory over Satan, for he is a defeated foe" (1Jn.2:13).
9. "I have all demons under my feet."
10. "I am a new creation in Christ Jesus" (2Co.5:17).
11. "Jesus is the Lord of my life" (Ro.10:9-10).
12. "Jesus is the Lord of my all" (Ac.4:12).

As we confess the Word, our faith will rise like the thermometer exposed to the hot, noon-day sun. Serving God will become more of a reality, and we will have taken the limits off of God (Pr.6:2). We are either captured or set free by the words of our mouth. Words will dominate us and make us a slave, or they will liberate us to an abundant life. Confession that is contrary to the Word of God will hold us captive, ensnaring us. Soon it becomes as bad a habit as smoking, drinking, or using drugs. Just as men are slaves to a habit, so a bad confessing habit will make us slaves to sickness, failure or lack (Ga.6:7)

If we sow the Word, the right confession, we will reap what the Word says. This is a good habit. We must make our confessions based on the Word of God, and then hold onto that confession. The Bible says to "hold fast the confession of your faith" (He.4:14).

We should be like a man holding on to the rail of an ocean liner. As the waves whip about it, the boat is tossed to and fro, but he holds on. The rail is his support. Hold on to the Word of God. As the devil tries to rock our boat, remember, the Word is all we have to hold on to. Keep that confession of faith based on the Word. God will never fail!

## H. Real Faith Possesses

If we confess what God says about our sins and sicknesses, we will be saved and healed. Confession based upon the foundation of God's Word will bring about the fulfillment of His promises. We cannot confess what we do not know. We can only confess what we know about Jesus and what we are in Him. Confessing the Word will assure successful results (Ps.34:10b).

When we seek the Lord, He will hear us. As we confess His Word, He will answer us. We never rise above our confession. Ten of the twelve spies that went out to spy out the land of Canaan brought back a negative report. What was so evil about their report? They were simply saying God was not big enough to do what He said He was going to (Nu.13:32-33). We can see that this report was negative, contrary to what God had said, and it was a result of unbelief.

They got their eyes on the giants instead of the Word of the Lord. Two (2) of the spies said, "Let us go up at once, and possess it, for we are well able to overcome it" (Nu.13:30). In both instances they were controlled by their confession. The one (1) group of ten (10) was imprisoned and died in the wilderness without going into the land. The other group of two (2) were free, and went into the land. The ten (10) spies left themselves wide open; the two (2) spies protected themselves. The faithless group let Satan in. *"Neither give place to the devil"* (Ep.4:27).

The other group kept Satan out by speaking as the oracles of God (1Pe.4:11).

## I. Real Faith Matures in the Spirit

Faith matures in the spirit as we continue to renew our mind to the Word of God. As the mind is renewed, it lines up with the spirit. Reasoning is a stronghold we must pull down. Reasoning must give place to the Word. We are to think God's thoughts instead of men, so that we will be able to receive. Abraham, in the face of reason, knew it was impossible for Sarah to have a child, Then he

received a Word from God and started to think as God thought. He cast down all reasoning when reasoning could have played a large part, considering all the facts. Hope turned into faith when God gave Abraham his name change, with a reaffirmation of the promise of a son through Sarah (Ge.17:16; Ro.4:18-21).

Abraham never staggered, but was strengthened by his faith. When everything pointed to the fact that Sarah could not have a child, when the laws of nature were against her, when her age was against her, Abraham believed that she would bear because God said so (Ro.8:31b) To have God on our side, is to have the One Who created all things by the Word of His power. While science is still trying to reason things out, we have the answer: God. He spoke the universe into existence. He took the things that were invisible and made them visible.

This is not to be reasoned out, but believed. The Holy Spirit will help us. He will guide us into all truth. If we do not know how to put our faith into operation, we should ask the Holy Spirit to help us. He will, and we will see our faith mature and after a while we will be able to act, in spite of all circumstances, expecting God to do for us what He has promised.

As we mature in faith, we receive more answers to prayer. We learn how to act on our faith and how to live in expectancy. Circumstances and trials will just be stepping stones to fuller maturity.

Always let the Holy Spirit direct in the acting of faith. When we cast down and ignore reasoning like Abraham did, we will get God-given results and answers. Sarah did have a child and children as promised, a host of believers who have received the promise, as the stars of the heaven and the sand on the sea shore (Ge.22:17).

If God honored faith almost four thousand (4,000) years ago, then He will honor it now. He has not changed. *"For I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed"* (Ma.3:6).

## **J. Signs of a Weak Faith**

Here are four (4) signs of a weak faith:

1. The first sign of weak faith is demanding visible proof.

"Except ye see signs and wonders," said Jesus, "ye will not believe" (Jn.4:48). We desire to see. "Seeing is believing," says an old proverb; yet we can be deceived more readily by sight than almost any other sense. Faith based upon sight is not faith. "The devils believe and tremble" (Ja.2:19). They "see" evidences of God's power and they tremble before it.

Unbelief is what demands visible proof. Thomas, in unbelief, said, "I will not believe till I see." Jesus rebuked him when He said, "Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed" (Jn.20:25, 29). The rich man in Hades wanted Lazarus to go tell "my five (5) brethren not to come to this place of torment." His idea was that if someone they knew to be dead told them, they would be convinced. He felt his brothers would be convinced if they saw a man "living" that they knew was dead. "No," said Abraham; "if they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one (1) rose from the dead" (Lk.16:27-31). Men who will not hear God as He speaks through the Bible will not hear Him when He speaks through miracles.

## 2. Weak faith seems to be driven to God by the overwhelming need.

The nobleman's son was at the point of death. Every physician had tried to bring healing; even the most skillful had given up on his case. Now, the father thinks of Jesus, and starts for Him. It is like the soldier's cry, so often heard in battle, when he feels the bullet strike him, "Lord, have mercy!" Or, it is like the deathbed conversion, a final grasping for safety.

Such faith, though better than no faith, is not as good as the faith which draws us to God by gratitude and love. To be driven is good, but to come by drawing is better. Perhaps this nobleman had heard of Christ before; but he did not avail himself of the healing power of Jesus. Perhaps there had been opportunities to invite Him to his house, but he did not. Only when the situation became desperate, which he hopes Jesus may relieve, does he come to Him. Zacchaeus invited the Lord to dine with him when there was no sorrow to be relieved. His faith was, therefore, in better condition than that of the nobleman.

Matthew invited the Lord to dinner at his house. He wished to share his joys. Such faith, not under stress seeking relief, is of a higher order than that which drives us to Christ.

## 3. Weak faith, in praying, seems to try to pressure God for an answer.

A father besought Jesus so that He would come down and heal his son. We are to make known our wants and leave to Him as to how they shall be supplied. It was as if he was saying, "I will invite Him to my mansion, and be the first among the nobility to show Him respect, if He will come and heal my son." This is the opposite of the Centurion's attitude, who recognized that he was "...not worthy that

Thou shouldest come beneath my roof..." (Mt.8:8). He would go uninvited to the Centurion's house, and heals his servant. God will not be boxed in as to how He meets our needs. We are not to pressure Him, but simply stand in faith that He will do what He says He will.

Perfect faith does not dictate to God. However, much of our praying consists of patronizing dictation. We try to convince God that He is wrong in His way of doing. Though we are greatly shocked by this thought, it is true. Some would go so far as to say, "If I had been present at the creation, I could have given God some advice"; or, "If He would consult me as to how to govern the world, I could help Him in it." Sometimes, we show a spirit distressingly similar.

Some tenants were ejected from a building in New York City years ago. Upon trying to get back in, the police refused to let them enter. The reason they were refused entry was the condition of the building, which was about to fall down. The police knew that for the benefit of the tenants, it was better they should suffer the cold than suffer death from collapsing walls. Yet the tenants persisted in trying to put themselves in danger by returning to the decayed building. The result showed that the police were the wiser. And the result will always show that God's dealings with us are wise and good.

John Wesley had two (2) preachers under his direction, named Bradburn and Duncan. Bradburn was eloquent; Duncan was a poor speaker. When Bradburn preached, Duncan would be present; but when Duncan preached, Bradburn was usually absent. Duncan finally approached his Brother Bradburn, asking why it was that he was nearly always absent when he preached. Bradburn answered, "I cannot hear you without being greatly tempted. "What, pray tell me is the nature of the temptation" asked Duncan? "I am tempted to think that I can preach better than you, and it ministers to my pride" said Bradburn. Such is the feeling of "Brother Weakfaith." He has the impression, mistakenly so, that he could do lots better than the Lord, if he had the whole thing in hand.

#### 4. Weak faith is impatient.

This father evidently became impatient: "Sir, come down ere my child die." There is almost petulance in this request. It is spoken as if he thinks that there is no time left to argue in. What he wants is an answer now, and he cannot tolerate delay. Our impatience with God then is a sign of very weak faith.

Jesus honors even faith like this. Though impatient and possibly dictatorial, driven by need, and seeking visible evidence, yet God answers that prayer.

### **K. The Signs of a Strong Faith**

Let us look at four (4) signs of strong faith.

1. Strong faith trusts in the Word of God.

John tells us that "...the man believed the Word that Jesus had spoken" (Jn.4:50). No sign needed here, he could simply rely upon the simple Word. There was something in the tone of the voice, as well as what Jesus said, which went to his heart and gave him faith. There is something in the Word of God, confirmed by the Holy Ghost, something that helps us to believe.

We must not treat the Bible as one patient did. The doctor told him to put the prescription in a little water and take it according to directions. When the man saw the doctor the next day, he found the patient worse. "Did you take the prescription?" he asked. "Yes, here it is," the man replied as he handed him a glass of water in which the paper had been dissolved. He had taken several spoonfuls of paper-pulp for medicine. Instead of doing what the prescription told him, he simply took the prescription itself. In that sense "*the letter killeth.*"

The truth of God is sacred. One man refused to let any book into his house except the Bible. He regarded it as above all books, and hence his children came to reverence it also. What the Book "means" is worth much more than the Book itself. The Words of God are very precious, and we learn to revel in the truth itself, apart from any benefit that we receive from it.

A house-decorator was asked to paper every room in a house but one. He was curious to know why that room was to be left blank. On entering it he saw a strange scene. On the walls were pasted hundreds of letters. The young lady, an invalid who was not able to go out on her own, said she had thus papered the walls of her room because every letter was precious to her heart. There were letters from mother, friends, childhood friends and school days. She could sit in her room and revel in these associations. So may we also have our memory filled with Scripture truths, each suggestive of something in the past, the remembrance of each victory they have brought, giving us delight. No man can prize the Word of God too highly and depend upon it too implicitly.

2. A sign of strong faith is restfulness.

This father came from home in great haste, seeming to be impatient at the delay of Jesus. But, after Jesus had said "*Thy son liveth,*" we find him in no hurry. Not until next day does he start for home, for there is no need of hurry when He believes that his son is cured. Meeting the servant on the way home the next day, he accepts the account of the healing without surprise, for it is hardly news to him.

*"He that believeth maketh not haste" (Is.28:16).* He rests upon God with a quiet heart. He has the promise, which to the eye of faith is equal to the fulfillment. It is a done deal. He has already entered into the enjoyment of what is promised (Is.26:3). In this age of hurry, we need such a rest of faith.

3. A sign of strong faith is its readiness to receive confirmation.

As the father goes homeward, he hears the echo *"Thy son liveth."* Jesus spoke it, and the servants say: *"Thy son liveth."* An echo like this, which the nobleman heard, is sweeter than all the echoes in nature. We who believe God's Word will hear the echo of answer. We will hear it in fulfillment of some kind. *"Faithful is He Who has promised" (He.10:23).*

Notice how ready the nobleman was to receive the confirmation of his faith. He compared the time, the time when Christ spoke, and the time when his son was healed. No amazement, it was the same hour. Unbelief suggests to us, "This is a remarkable coincidence, to be sure; but there is no necessary connection between the Words of Jesus and the healing. He might have gotten well anyhow." Be very careful, when we have asked and received, to never take honor from God by giving credit to chance or coincidence. The tempter suggests, "You have what you wanted, but it might have come even without praying for it." Such is the attitude of unbelief. Faith stands ready to be confirmed by the testimony of others.

4. Another sign of strong faith is its willingness to receive spiritual blessing.

The nobleman "himself believed, and his entire house." It is likely that the first thing he did, when he reached home, was to search out the old Scriptures and read the prophetic Word concerning the Messiah. Then, he probably shared with his son how he had been saved from death by the Great Physician. He likely told his wife and other children and servants the same. He came to Jesus for temporal blessing and received spiritual blessing. God deals with us sometimes strangely to our thinking. He knows how to give above all we can ask or think. Great faith prizes spiritual above temporal blessings, and has the secret by which the temporal is transmuted into the eternal.

#### **L. Real Faith Relies on God's Promises**

"Without faith it is impossible to please God" (He.11:6). "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (He.11:1).

There are many kinds of faith, such as religious faith, material faith, and believing faith. Every man has some kind of faith, so faith is not a strange thing. It is by faith alone that man can act. To seek or

ask for faith is not correct. We already possess faith, but we need to put our faith into action and operation.

God provides, as faith takes and uses. In salvation, it is the faith of a free person, believing, receiving, and opening his life to the control of Jesus Christ, who died to save him and so enables him to live and walk by faith.

Faith for healing is exactly the same as faith for salvation. The Bible teaches that a sinner is to believe that he is saved, and encouraged to confess with his mouth on the basis of God's promise alone:

*"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. 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 shall be saved" (Ro.10:8-9).*

A sinner must confess with his mouth even before he feels the joy and peace of salvation. The joy will come even as he confesses, if only he will believe on the authority of God's Word, and then claim salvation by faith. This is God's way to save the lost, and it is God's way to heal the sick also. Since God is anxious to save sinners, He will save them because Jesus Christ has died to save them. He will also heal the sick because Jesus Christ has taken stripes to heal them (1Pe.2:24).

Genuine faith means we are so certain that God will fulfill His promises that we believe them even in spite of contrary evidence. The enemy will come after our minds, trying to convince us that faith has not received its promise" (2Co.10:3-5). The battleground is in the mind.

We must know our Bible. Then when Satan comes, we can resist Him as Jesus Christ dealt with him by stating: "It is written, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every Word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." At each offensive attack, Jesus said unto him, "It is written" (Mt.4:4-10). Jesus Christ used the written Word to overcome Satan, and we must do the same.

Hope is not faith. To "hope" or "wish" God would do something is not faith, because it is not based upon God's Word. To "hope and pray" is not faith, and it does not receive. This kind of hope is lodged in the intellect, where it does no good. Faith knows what God has promised and acts accordingly (Mk.11:24).

Pity is not faith. Though God is full of compassion and pity, we do not receive until we believe and act. God wants all to be saved, but until all act in faith, they will not be saved. So in healing, God's hands

are tied until our faith is put into operation. God promises in His Word what He can and will do for everyone who believes and acts on that belief.

Satan lies to us and says, "You had better be careful," or, "That is not what God means," or, "Do not be venturesome in case it does not come to pass," or perhaps his best one, "You had better see if you do feel better before you testify to your faith in God." Satan can only lie. He is the father of lies. The way to tell if he is lying is to see if his mouth is moving. If it is, he is lying for he cannot tell any truth. If he says to us that we do not have something, then we can rest assured, based on his record of lying, that we have it.

Our testimony is the thing that will decide which way the situation will go. We could say that God has a vote, Satan has a vote, and we have a vote. We decide whom we believe and obey. Doubting God is just what Satan wants us to do. Such actions will produce only disappointed hopes. They that believe God, faithfully testify and declare what God is doing in spite of what they see, feel, hear or can understand, will get what they believe for. God said it, and that is enough for faith. We overcome the enemy's lies by the blood of the Lamb and the word of our testimony (Re.12:11).

To recap what we are saying, here are three (3) simple rules of faith for receiving what God has promised:

1. Have knowledge of what God has promised.
2. Ask Him to fulfill His promises.
3. Act upon those promises as though God had already fulfilled them, with praise following.

**Before reading the chapter(s) for this week please click the next button at the bottom right of the page to find the homework sheet for the assigned reading. The homework will aid you in taking the quizzes, mid-term, and final. Complete the homework as you read the reading assignment below.**

#### **X. KNOWLEDGE OF GOD'S PROMISES**

Every promise of God in His Word is a direct revelation to us of what He is eager to do for us. We cannot separate God from His Word. He not only is the Word, but He is continually watching over it to fulfill it and to see that not one Word fails or falls to the ground (2Kg.8:56).

We should give the Bible the same place we would give Jesus Christ if He were here physically in our presence. His Word talks to us and tells us the same things He would say if He spoke audibly, "You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (Jn.8:32).

We read the Word to get knowledge of the truth. As we read the Word, we will gain knowledge of God, getting to know and believe Him (2Ti.1:12b; He.8:11b) We must take in the Word to feed our spirit man the same as we take in food to feed our physical man (Mt.4:4).

It is our responsibility to claim all the benefits and rights that are ours (Ps.103:2). God is delighted when we assert our claims. Satan is a liar and he delights to blind us to our rights and benefits that were purchased at Calvary. In each circumstance, there are only two (2) positions on which we can stand. We must take one (1) or the other, either belief or unbelief. God's Word is either completely true, or it is a lie. As we get knowledge of God, believing faith will arise within us. People do have faith in some areas, yet not in others.

Matthew writes about the Centurion who came to Jesus. The Centurion's servant *"...lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented."* Jesus offered to go and heal him. The 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."* Jesus was amazed at the Centurion's understanding of authority. Such was Jesus marveling at his faith, that He said, *"...I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel."* Then Jesus made an indictment against Israel for her unbelief. Turning to the Centurion, Jesus said, *"...Go thy way; and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee. And his servant was healed in the selfsame hour"* (Mt.8:5-13).

He had knowledge of God's healing power or he would not have approached Jesus. He said, "Speak the Word only, and my servant shall be healed." Jesus not only admired but honored the Centurion's faith, and his servant was made whole. Faith in God and what He can do brings about miracles (Lk.4:40; Mt.12:15; Mt.12:35; Mt.14:14; Lk.6:19; Is.53:5; Mt.8:17; 1Pe.2:24).

#### **A. Ask Him to Fulfill His Promises**

We have not because we ask not, Jesus said, "Ask and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full" (Jn.16:24b; 1Jn.5:14-15).

As we gain knowledge of God, we find out His will. His Word is His will and the foundation we build our faith on for receiving. To know the will or Word of God helps us to ask with the expectation of receiving. A leper came to Jesus saying: "Lord, if thou wilt thou canst make me clean." Jesus erased

the "if" and said, "I will, be thou made clean" (Mt.8:2-3). Blind Bartimaeus cried out: "*Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me.*" Jesus said, "*Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole*" (Mk.10:47b, 52a).

## **B. Act on the Promise as Though It is Already Fulfilled**

Real faith is simply believing what God says, speaking it out of our hearts, and acting accordingly. It is knowledge changed into action. Knowledge without obedience is not faith. Act on the Word. Many people ask Him to deliver or heal them. No, He has already healed and delivered us. We must begin to do the things which we could not do before, acting on His promise. He will confirm the promise. We are to rise above all doubts and fears. We are to prove our faith by our actions. We are to claim our liberty from Satan's prison house of fear and sickness.

God's Word is our guarantee of liberty. We are to walk out of the prison of bondage, and testify to God's Word and power as the basis for our freedom. We have known God's Word was true for a long time, but we have never acted upon it. We have had faith, but we have never put that faith into action. We have made a prisoner of our faith. It is time for us to: set our faith free, call on the Lord, claim the promise, ask Him to fulfill it, believe that He hears us, claim our deliverance or healing or need by faith, and act like it is true. "*According to your faith be it unto you*" (Mt.9:29b). Faith without works is nothing. Faith talks, faith walks, faith sees, faith acts, faith works!

## **XI. FAITH AND TRIALS**

In order for faith to reach maturity and rely one hundred percent (100%) on God, it has to be tested. The man who invented the light bulb only succeeded after failing over one thousand (1,000) times. "The trying, testing of our faith works patience (Ja.1:3)."*Tribulation worketh patience*" (Ro.5:3b).

Most people tell us about their great experience and answers to prayer, but never fill us in on the trials they went through.

### **A. Faith in the Midst of Trial**

God's great Apostle and church planter of the first (1st) century Church was in jail. Paul, if any one, seemed indispensable to the Church. Yet, from behind bars, he sent word to the young church in Philippi, declaring, "This shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ" (Php.1:19).

Paul knew that God could get him out of jail; God had done it before. In fact, it was in this very city, Philippi, where God had sent an earthquake that shook the prison posts, set all prisoners free, and

filled the poor jailer with such consternation, that he nearly committed suicide at the prospect of losing all his charges. Instead, with the help of Paul and Silas, he was converted and baptized with his whole household.

Paul surely had heard about the angel coming and opening the prison doors for Peter and John. God could do it again. But now Paul is in jail. No earthquake, no angel. Trouble was piling up, and no relief was in sight. How wonderful to believe God, and see the needed answer come immediately. But, it is better to believe God when the gates are still locked. It is just as necessary to believe in the Divine Omniscience as in the Divine Omnipotence. God's judgment must be trusted, the same as we trust His power. Sometimes the answer comes quickly, but many times it comes later than the time we are looking for it. Elijah prayed on Mount Carmel, his prayer was short and the fall of the fire swift. But, when he prayed for rain, he agonized on his face in prayer. His labor was so intense that he took the position of a woman giving birth to a baby. He sent his servant seven (7) times before the cloud appeared, assuring the answer to his prayers.

Paul refused to be classified as a prisoner of Rome. He was there on business, and described his bonds as being "in Christ." It was for his Lord Jesus Christ that he was in jail. That made a difference in his attitude. Also, Paul transformed the prison into a pulpit, a place of witness for his Lord. He testifies, "*So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in the entire palace and in all other places*" (Php.1:13).

Paul saw the effect of his imprisonment upon the Church to be beneficial. Many brethren "*...are much bolder to speak the Word without fear.*" It seems that Paul felt it was better that he be in jail, for many timid ones were now witnessing fearlessly to the grace of God. The promotion of the Gospel was Paul's life aim, while his own comfort and freedom were secondary.

Paul was having trouble within the Church. Evil actions were done in the name of religion. Some were preaching a Christ of contention, some of envy, and some of strife. Paul sensed their insincerity. They thought to pile on agony, and add affliction to his bonds. Many will declare that they can stand opposition from the world, for it is expected. However, they have problems enduring trouble amongst the believers in the Church. Paul was suffering both. However, he did not dwell on the troubling situations. He pointed out quickly that, while "*...some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife...*," there were "*...some also of good will*" (Php.1:15-17). While some were insincere, Paul saw that there were others motivated by love, knowing that Paul was "*...set for the defense of the Gospel.*" Paul dwelt on the good people. He concludes with rare insight, that "*...Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice...*" Paul refused to be hindered by the insincere, contentious religionists. He chose to look at the genuine Christians and rejoice that the preaching of Christ was going forth.

What is the secret of this faith which remains strong in the middle of perplexities and adversities? How can Paul be so sure that things are going to change for the better? The foundation for it all is an unswerving confidence in God. The Lord's faithfulness is the basis for Paul's hope for the future, enabling him to declare, "According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed" (Php.1:20).

We cannot treat God with too much confidence. God can never be overrated. God is far better than the best that we can think of. He always exceeds our fondest dreams and deepest desires. The patience Jesus demonstrated at His trials speaks of the power resident in Him, not of any weakness.

There are men who have challenged God and defied Him by trying to reduce Him to man-made concepts. Yet, we see that His ways and thoughts are higher than ours, as the heavens are higher than the earth. One man stood on a public platform, challenging God to prove His identity by coming down and striking him dead. But he lived! We would probably have killed him in thirty (30) seconds if challenged this way and we were God. "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2Pe.3:18). God will not change His way of dealing with men just because one (1) of them challenges Him.

This confidence in God must be demonstrated in an everyday courage, a practical courage. This courage filled Paul "with all boldness." He was so sure of God that he was willing to risk everything for Him. How would we react or act if we knew that we could not fail? That is actually what was empowering Paul, for he knew that God never failed, and his faith was in God. This is called grace. It is God's operational power that was working in Paul. It is His divine enabling that comes when men need it. This did not bring or require immunity from trial. Actually it demonstrated itself in spite of the trial. Paul did not need providential coddling, but divine enabling, and that is what he was getting. Too many times we use our prayers petitioning God to "change the weather" or "the circumstances of our life," when we should be asking Him to cause the "wool" to grow a little faster. Sometimes we ask God to perform a miracle for us, when it would really be a miracle if we had dared to trust Him. Much of our praying is given over to offering God a large supply of unsolicited advice. We tell God what we want, even hinting how He could or should do it for us. At times, with strong urgings that are based on an emergency, we even have the gall to tell Him when to do things for us. That is not faith.

English sheep graze in delightfully green, succulent fields. These sheep have a very heavy coat of wool. The cool weather and good pastures make for a good coat of wool. God is at work here, providing in His foreknowledge what is needed, both the green grass and the heavy wool. Perhaps the "inclement weather" we see in life's circumstances, plus the "green pastures" of God's Word, afford a counterpart in the development of a healthy soul. Moral strength comes in answer to the fact that we have courageously faced the winds of adversity. Faith in God will prevail, and He will help us stand the storm.

Faith will make adversity our servant rather than our master as we stand in constancy. Paul demonstrated this in that he was dogmatic in the assertion, "As always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body" (Php.1:20). Paul had learned that faith must be applied to each new situation. His commitment was timely because it was timeless. A "daily yes" must be included in our lives.

This is where Christianity is finally put to the test, in the strain of daily living. To be genuine, faith must be good for the commonplace as well as for the crisis. The validity of the crisis is verified or proven in the daily routine. Paul was sure that the distressing circumstances of his life, his imprisonment, would change, "this shall turn," because God would not change. Paul had decided that he would not alter his outlook of trust in God. Paul was fully persuaded that, "As always, so now also" (Php.1:20a). Paul recognized that what was not seen was the truth, and what was seen was temporary. Only one thing was left to be changed, the jail term.

Paul made a commitment that was without reservation. "Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death" (Php.1:20b). No reservations, no questioning, no maybes. Paul had learned that there is no true holiness without faith, and that faith is not valid or valuable until a complete commitment has been made. All of us need to learn this lesson, no matter where our active assignment may put us. Total commitment is costly; there are no bargains in this area of life. Paul's commitment was irrevocable; he renewed it day by day. The world thinks "Every man has his price." Not so. Here was a man who could not be bought, no matter the adversity. He had made the supreme commitment, and he was standing by it.

With the commitment, Paul also received a commission, expressed as, "For to me to live is Christ..." (Php.1:21). His life was an extension of his Master's incarnation; in that his assignment was to do the Master's will and deliver His message.

Paul discovered that his consecration meant not only something to him, but also to God. Paul sensed himself to be the most deeply obligated person in the community of believers, and he was going to do something about it.

This kind of radiant living can be limited to a special few in our thinking, those who have a genius for it! No, it is actually the Divine norm for every one of us. We are all to pray like Jesus, "*And all mine are thine,*" and then take hold of the counterpart, "*and thine are mine.*" Our "little all," given to Him brings to our disposal His limitless resources. What a deal, what a partnership!

This jail term did not slow Paul, but actually showed him the real issues of life. Paul now understood the significance of life's consummation. Some things are seen extra clearly through prison bars. He knew the intent of his enemies, to put him to death. But, he had faced the monster and came away unafraid. He concluded, "*...To die is gain*" (Php.1:21). He looked death in the face and saw the truth, that to be "*...absent from the body...*" meant to be "*...present with the Lord*" (2Co.5:8). Death was not a stopping point, nor a separation for him, but an abiding union with Christ. Death, Paul recognized, was not an anticlimactic event; it was the beginning of a better day to which we all look forward. Being confronted with the alternative, Paul chose "*to be with Christ; which is far better*" (Php.1:23).

However, personal happiness or choice is not the controlling issue. He faced the needs of the young churches, seeing their situations, and decides his duty is to stay. He senses that God is going to let him remain a while longer.

Paul was incurably optimistic. He was imprisoned, but not bound. The faith inside him could not be chained, it remained forever free. His faith in the ultimate triumph of God, in the completed work of Christ made him to know no defeat. Though in prolonged and severe trials, he could be cheerful. While he was bound in jail, he reveled in the Christians, though they had been timid, who had now shown their strength when it was put to the test. His loss to them in leadership was a challenge that they were meeting. The undesirable jail experience was furthering the Gospel. The Christian witness, thought to be stifled, was now running through Caesar's court and faraway key places. The hypocrites in the Church could not get him down. Their bad spirit and improper motives did not stop the note of praise he had because the message of his incomparable Christ is preached.

Will we have this kind of faith in the midst of severe trial? Is God the same today, or a respecter of persons? The same miracle of grace will happen for us when needed. Faith was made for any age. It works whether our prayers are answered speedily, or after long delay. Faith can triumph in any undesirable event or loss in our life's. Will we dare to put our trust in Christ with an abandon? Will we stand when trouble comes with our commitment firm? Will we accept the assignment that costs us something, and when the end comes see clearly that the things that we have lived for are trustworthy? Is our hope in God today, and always? God looks to us for the commitment, so that He can use us, by our saying, "I will trust Him and not be afraid."

## **B. Faith When God is Silent**

The silences of God tend to be occasions for our heart to fear. Trouble comes in unexpected proportions and certainly uninvited. Even God's providence is sometimes beyond our understanding. Rain falls on the just and unjust; tragedy, pain, and loss strike the good and bad alike. We tend, in the agony of our distress and our search for meaning, to cry out, "Why?" Then, when the silence of God is prolonged, our soul cry becomes, "How long?"

Jesus reminded us in His parting words that the silences of God are on the side of faith when He said, "In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you" (Jn.14:2). God is not deceiving us in His silence, nor is He out to fool us. Just because He does not speak, is He weak? NO! He knows the answer and holds the key to our question. However, God does not use skywriting, just because we chafe at the situation. He spoke the final Word by His Son. Therefore, the supreme answer to our deepest questions is found in His Cross. His resurrection sounds out the assurance that God's purposes for us are steadfast and reliable. The home of God is also our final home, with many dwelling places.

Our heart is to claim this in the simplicity of faith. We are to rejoice, though His purpose may be hidden from view. He would not deny us by default nor deceive us by silence. The unexpected and the unrevealed are to hold no terror for us. God's wisdom is on our side, and His love overwhelms the silence of today. All we need to do is have faith in God.

## **C. Abraham Had His Faith Tried**

*Abraham "...against hope believed in hope..." He became the father of many nations because he was "...not weak in faith..." How would we fare when we knew our body was now not productive? Sarah's womb was also dead, yet he "...staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief but was strong in faith, giving glory to*

*God." We must become like Abraham, in the face of situations that in the natural are impossible, yet believing because God speaks. We must become "fully persuaded..." that God will fulfill what He has promised (Ro.4:18-21).*

#### **D. Moses Had His Faith Tried**

*"Why do you cry to Me?" God asked Moses. Then He said, "Tell the people of Israel to go forward" (Ex.12:15. AMP); Moses was in a hard spot. The Red Sea was behind him, the enemy's army before him, and the wilderness on both sides. There was no place to go, and God had the audacity to say, "Go forward." "What is God thinking?" Moses could have thought. "Does He not know that Pharaoh wants to put the people back in captivity and he will probably kill me?" The test came, but Moses acted in faith, lifting the rod over the water, and the water rolled back. We face the same thing, perhaps not as severe, but the same testing. Will we trust God, or will we trust our senses? That is the question. By exercising faith in speaking out the plagues, Moses found God to be reliable, faithful to His Word, so now Moses became bold in his faith. We are to become bold also, extending our faith to God and allowing Him to prove His faithfulness to us.*

#### **E. The Three (3) Hebrew Children's Faith Was Tested**

The furnace was hot. There was an audience looking on. It was now or never. Will they stand or not? "Now if ye be ready that at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery and dulcimer, and all kinds of music, ye fall down and worship the image which I have made well: but if ye worship not, ye shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace, and who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?" (Da.3:15).

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered the king as to the extent of their faith. They were not careful as to how they answered, for their faith was strong. They would not "...serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image..." Nebuchadnezzar was so mad that his countenance changed. He ordered the furnace heated seven (7) times hotter, and some mighty men to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and cast them into the burning fiery furnace. Amazingly, these men were consumed by the furnace's great heat. However, the flame treated Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego totally different. It was as if they were in an air-conditioned place, or that the laws of nature were suspended for them.

The king was astonished, for he saw "...four (4) men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth (4th) is like the Son of God." Nebuchadnezzar called the three (3) Hebrew children forth from the midst of the fire. With astonishment the princes, governors, and captains, and the king's counselors gathered around to see what was transpiring. There were no burns upon them, and the smell of fire was not there. It was a miracle, bringing the king to realization that this God was the one (1) to be served (Da.3:15-28).

## **F. Daniel Had His Faith Tried**

The result of the trying of Daniel's faith was to be put into the lion's den, but the real test came when he had to make a decision as to whether he would pray as before or not. It was the result of that decision that put him in the lion's den. His enemies thought that Daniel would cave in. They did not recognize that his faith was so strong that even if it meant death, he would not turn from God.

*At the king's arrival at the den, Daniel said, "O king, live forever. My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me" (Da.6:19-22). Daniel stood strong in faith, and God stood strong by Daniel.*

## **G. The Disciples Had Their Faith Tried**

Jesus and the twelve (12) disciples were on the sea, passing to the other side. "And behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves: but he was asleep" (Mt.8:24). Jesus was exhausted by the ministry of that day, and had gone to sleep. His statement to the disciples was, "Let us go to the other side." There was no question as to whether He was going to the other side, but did the disciples know that? Where was their faith? They had spent years on the sea, and knew the violent storms that could come up in just a few minutes. As the boat filled with water, they "...came to him, and awoke him saying, Lord, save us: we perish." That is not what Jesus said, there was no perishing to occur then. However, the disciples looked at the circumstances instead of remembering His Words. We would do well to remember His Words, so our faith will grow. Otherwise, He will have opportunity to say to us, "... Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? (Mt.8:24-26).

## **H. The Trial of Our Faith is Precious**

The trial of our faith is more precious than gold to God. When Jesus returns, He is expecting to find faith. During our testing periods, our faith becomes pure. Doubt and unbelief, like the dross in the purifying of gold, come to the top and are removed (1Pe.1:7). Remember, tried faith is not defeated faith, but rather the education and perfection of our faith.

Many want to "see" before they will confess with their mouths or believe with their hearts what God has declared about their sicknesses and diseases. Those people rarely "see" because faith is not needed after they "see" the works of God; it will then be facts. Faith has to be exercised before we can see or feel any change in our conditions. Faith is a willingness to believe that God will certainly do what He says He will do. If we doubt God's Word, then we are declaring that there is something more powerful than God.

We are saved and healed or lost and destroyed by what we testify. The Lord tells us to "*...attend to my words; incline thine ear unto my sayings...*", for they provide health to all our flesh" (Pr.4:20-22).

We are instructed to keep our minds, ears, eyes and heart occupied with God's promises. We are to reject fear, unbelief and failure. When we have faith in God, fear goes out, for fear is of Satan. Fear injects poison into the blood and weakens our physical body. As we keep our hearts full of the Word, the Word is what we will speak (Mt.12:34).

God never leads anyone to be afraid. He will keep His promises, for the Spirit of God inspires us to believe every Word of God. The Holy Spirit urges us to claim every promise in the Book and to act accordingly. We shall receive everything we ask for with right motives for the glory of God.

To learn how to exercise faith and to believe God hears and answers prayer when we pray is a much greater blessing than the healing itself, because we then know we can pray the prayer of faith ten thousand (10,000) times for ourselves and for others. Our whole lives will be spent in the wonderful joy of seeing God answer our prayers and fulfill His promises.

## **I. Peter's Faith Was Tried**

Peter was standing by his boat, washing his nets with his partners in the fishing business. Jesus was there, and as the people pressed upon him to hear the Word of God, he saw the two (2) ships that Peter and his partners had used to fish all night. He got into one (1) of the ships, Simon's, and asked that he push out and allow Him to use his boat. The boat became a pulpit, for the message of the day. After the teaching, Jesus wanted to bless Peter. Peter had heard the message, and now was asked to step out on faith and "...let down your nets for a draught" (Lk.5:4). Notice that it was not just one (1) net, but "the nets." Now Peter had washed his nets, leaving them to dry on the shore (Lk.5:2). All he had in the boat was a net that they no longer used, and probably rotten or at least a weak one. Simon protested that they had "...toiled all the night, and have taken nothing." The Sea of Galilee was/is a very clear sea, making daytime fishing useless. The fish could see many yards, negating any daylight fishing. However, Peter edged out on that faith that had been planted in him by the Master, and said, "...nevertheless at Thy Word I will let down the net."

A great number of fish came into that net, so that it began to break. They called for help and their partners came to help them. Both the ships were filled, so that they began to sink. Simon Peter saw it, and fell down at Jesus' knees. He recognized this was not just another man, but the "Lord." Peter was astonished, as well as those who were with him, at the catch of fish (Lk.5:1-11). It was that faith that had been planted into him, by the message he heard, that caused him to let down the net. Letting down the net was all it took, the action that corresponded with the Words of Jesus. So it is today, as He speaks, we act, and get the results He says we will get.

Although Peter had faith, he only had enough for a one (1) net catch. Jesus said "nets" not "net." Let us fully obey and trust His Word and see the result.

## **J. The Father's Faith Was Tried**

Jesus told the father of the demon-possessed boy, "...If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth" (Mk.9:23). When we dare to believe that what God says, it will surely come to pass.

We have to do like the father, putting aside every fear, every thought of failure. We have to begin to act on God's Word and promises. We must believe the promises in our own heart, and then confess them aloud. We repeat them until our whole being is in line with God Himself.

Faith brings the blessing of God. Doubt brings cursing. Faith heals the sick and saves. Doubt breeds sin and failure. By faith we receive all good things. Doubt destroys and by it we lose everything. All because of, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever" (He.13:8).

## **XII. DIFFERENT KINDS OF FAITH**

There are several kinds of faith talked about in the Scriptures. There are different levels of faith, a lack of faith, or a different way of describing faith. They are not in a descending order of importance, but it will be easy for the student to understand which kind of faith they need to pursue.

As Christians we need to make decisions that will change our entire life. These decisions are threefold:

1. When we decide to give our lives totally to Christ.
  
2. When we decide to be all we can be in life. When we refuse never to settle for less than we can be.

3. We decide to raise our standards, our values and our expectations in life.

This will be the beginning of an exciting journey towards our destiny, a journey that could take us to many nations around the world. These decisions could enable us to meet people who can help change us and bring new adventure and excitement into our lives. There is power in making a decision. Everything that happens in our lives, including success or failure, begins with a decision. Our destiny is shaped by our decisions. The decisions we make today will determine our tomorrows, the future. For example, what we are today is the result of our past.

Every decision we make has an outcome. It is the decisions we make, not our environment, that will determine and shape our destiny. There are thousands of testimonies of men and women who have succeeded in life despite their limitations, poor environment and disadvantages. There are those who have become failures in life in spite of all the advantages they had. It is our decisions, not our environment that will determine our destiny.

When we make a decision, that decision has to be followed by action. It is our actions, not mere words that make our decisions powerful. Every action we take produces either a positive or negative result. We reap what we sow. If we want to change our lives, we must take actions that will produce the kind of results we desire. Different actions produce different results. We can become what we want by paying the right price. If we do not like what is going on in our lives, then we need to stop what we are doing and start doing things differently. We need to change our actions and start sowing a different kind of seed. Those seeds are sown by faith.

#### **A. Great Faith**

"When 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" (Mt.8:10). Jesus commended the faith of the Gentile Centurion, for he demonstrated it by telling Jesus it was not necessary for Him to come to his house, but to just speak the Word. This faith was based upon the understanding of the authority Jesus had over disease. The Centurion did not require a touch as many did in order to receive their healing. He did not require the presence of Jesus, just His Word. So it is with us, when we understand the authority of Jesus Christ. Matthew tells us that Jesus said, "All authority is given unto me, in heaven and in earth" (Mt.28:18). It is this authority over the entire universe, and the authority to use His name, that can take care of any sickness. Also, see Matthew 15:28.

#### **B. Weak Faith**

Paul spoke of the one (1) who was weak in the faith (Ro.14:1). Weak faith is the faith that has not been fed the Word of God recently, nor has there been any praying in the Holy Ghost (Jude.20). Feeding the Word of God causes faith to come (Ro.10:17), and praying in the Holy Ghost causes us to be strong in the faith we have, "building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost." Weak faith is a faith that will not be able to receive. It is a faith that needs to be fed and fed until it grows strong and has strength to receive (Mk.11:24).

### **C. Little Faith**

"If then God so clothe the grass, which is today in the field, and tomorrow is cast into the oven; how much more will he clothe you, O ye of little faith? (Lk.12:28) Jesus expressed this size faith when talking about the natural things of life. It is easy to see that God has provided all things for us. When we think about it, we really have no need that is not met. However, we get to thinking about it, and begin to worry about it, as if God is not about His business of seeing to His universe and all of its needs. He is taking care of it, so why should we worry.

### **D. Saving Faith**

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God" (Ep.2:8). Faith is what saves us. It is the believing in our hearts and confessing by our mouths that God raised Jesus from the dead (Ro.10:9-10). It is not a matter of repenting of every sin we have ever committed in our several years of life, for that is even impossible for us to remember. However, repentance of sins is very much the activity of the Christian who fails to obey what God says. Saving faith is that measure of faith that God gives to each of us when He brings conviction to our hearts and we accept Him as our Savior and Lord.

### **E. Healing Faith**

"And Jesus said unto him, Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole, and immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way" (Mk.10:52). Jesus placed the responsibility for the results of the man's faith squarely where it should be, on the man who believed. Healing faith comes into play when we believe that the stripes of Jesus are sufficient for our healing, or for someone else's healing (1Pe.2:24; Is.53:5).

### **F. Dead Faith**

"Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone" (Ja.2:17; Ja.2:26). Faith requires corresponding action. It is not possible to have a living faith without action. Action is what living faith does. Inaction, lying dormant and not moving is what dead faith does.

### **G. Strong Faith**

"He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded, that what he had promised, he was able also to perform" (Ro.4:20-21). We could safely say that Abraham's faith was strong, for he faced an impossible situation. He was well past the time of fathering a child, his wife's womb was dead, she was well past child-bearing years, and besides that, she had always been barren. It seemed to be an impossible situation, but not too hard for God (Lk.1:37). Abraham had the deciding vote in this, and he opted to vote with God. Because of this, he and Sarah received a son, Isaac.

### **H. Rich Faith**

"Hearken, my beloved brethren, hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?" (Ja.2:5). The "poor" mentioned here are those who are bankrupt because they are without God. A rich faith is one that receives everything promised. Jesus had this kind of faith, and we should too.

### **I. Mustard Seed Faith**

"And Jesus said unto them, If you 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" (Mt.17:20). Much has been made of the size of the mustard seed, how that it is so small, yet produces a large tree. However, this is not the most important fact about this seed. It is that it must be planted to produce this kind of harvest. No seed that is not planted can produce. Yes, the germ of life is still in it, but nothing happens until it is planted. And nothing happens in our lives until we plant something. It is the Law of the harvest, that whatsoever we sow we shall reap. However, we must sow first.

### **J. Overcoming Faith**

*"For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith" (1Jn.5:4).* There is no victory outside of faith. With faith, there need be no defeat. Why should we be defeated when Jesus never was, and we are to grow up into the image of Him? We overcome

the world's way of thinking and doing by the faith we have in Christ. For instance, the world says to "grab all you can and hang on to it." Jesus says, "...give and it shall be given unto you..." Totally different thinking, yet Christ's Words are proven right by those who take the steps of faith to do so.

#### **K. Growing Faith**

*"We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of everyone of you all toward each other aboundeth" (2Th.1:3).* The church at Thessalonica had some problems, but she was growing in faith. That is what we are to be doing, growing in faith every day. It is by the intake of the Word, the meditation of the Word, and the action taken on what the Word says that brings a growth in faith and insures our success in life (Jos.1:8).

#### **L. Prayer of Faith**

"Is any sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he hath committed sins, they shall be forgiven him" (Ja.5:14-15). The prayer of faith was, according to this Scripture, to be prayed by the elders. This does not mean that they were the only ones who could pray it, but that they should be praying in faith when they pray. Praying in faith will always bring the desired results when we faint not.

#### **M. Tried Faith**

*"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 honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ" (1Pe.1:7).* Faith is no good unless it is tried or proven. We are the ones who must have our faith tried, for we do not know how strong our faith is. God knows how strong it is, He just tries it so we will know.

#### **N. Measure of Faith**

"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" (Ro.12:3). The measure of faith is what God gives us to start on. Then it is up to us to make it grow. God treats all men alike, so no one is mistreated or shorted on faith. When we see someone whose faith is not working, it is not God's fault, for He has given us all out of His own faith.

#### **O. Justifying Faith**

"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Ro.5:1). It is faith that justifies us, or places us in Christ, just as if we had never sinned, and peace is the result of that justification.

#### **P. Perfected Faith**

*"Seest thou how faith wrought with his works and by works was faith made perfect?" (Ja.2:22).* Perfected faith is the faith that is so strong that works are wrought by it. It is the faith that has put action to the believing, and has received what it was believing for.

#### **Q. Word of Faith**

*"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" (Ro.10:8).* The Word of faith is the "rhema" of God, that is, the spoken Word of God. It is the Holy Spirit speaking in our spirit man which empowers the Word to do what God said it would do.

#### **R. Purifying Faith**

*"And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us; and put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith" (Ac.15:8-9).* We either believe God or we do not. With belief of what He has said, our hearts are purified, because the Word of God washes our minds clean, and that which passes through our minds into our hearts is what we have come forth, pure as the Word of God.

#### **S. Sanctifying Faith**

*Faith will sanctify us, or set us apart from the world. It will cause us to become separate from its filthiness and depravity (Ac.26:18).*

#### **T. Walk of Faith**

*"For we walk by faith not by sight" (2Co.5:7).* Walking by faith is to not look upon the circumstances or conditions that appear to our sense of vision, but to the sixth (6th) sense, which is faith. It is to refuse

to be moved by our natural vision, and require of ourselves to walk by the leading of the Holy Spirit in faith.

#### **U. Shield of Faith**

*"Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked" (Ep.6:16).* The "shield of faith" is our faith extended before us that keeps the enemies' missiles of fire from hitting us. It is by faith that we refuse to allow the words of the devil to control us or bring fear, doubt, or unbelief.

#### **V. Breastplate of Faith**

*"But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for a helmet, the hope of salvation" (1Th.5:8).* The "breastplate" of faith is another way of expressing the shield of faith, for it is the covering of an area that is vital to our lives. It is not only the protection of vital organs physically, but the covering of vital parts of our spiritual man also.

#### **W. Unity of 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 fullness of Christ" (Ep.4:13).* There is only one faith, the faith of Jesus Christ. There are not several ways to heaven, but only one way. It is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all that we are to be attached to by faith.

#### **X. Steadfast Faith**

*"For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ" (Co.2:5).* Our faith is to be an unmovable faith, a faith that is strong in Jesus, a faith that is steadfast, not wavering. James says that the person who wavers will never receive anything from God.

**Before reading the chapter(s) for this week please click the next button at the bottom right of the page to find the homework sheet for the assigned reading. The homework will aid you in taking the quizzes, mid-term, and final. Complete the homework as you read the reading assignment below.**

### **XIII. FACTS ABOUT FAITH**

#### **A. Faith is Persuasion**

*"And being fully persuaded, that what he had promised, he was able also to perform" (Ro.4:21).* Paul talked about how Abraham was fully persuaded. This is a persuasion that cannot be moved. We come to this position when we speak the Word, meditate on it, and act accordingly. This persuasion is so strong that no matter what people tell us or do to us, we will not be moved from our position of faith. God is looking for people who will be steadfast in their believing, for He is able to use them to bring to pass His plan in the earth.

## **B. Faith is Confidence**

*"In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of Him" (Ep.3:12).* If we are confident that we can fly without wings, it will not be hard for us to jump across a canyon hundreds (100's) of feet wide and hundreds (100's) of feet deep. However, if we are not absolutely sure we can fly, we will hesitate. Hesitation is a sign of a lack of confidence. God is looking for people who will come to the point of faith that they will not hesitate to follow Him in whatever He asks them to do.

## **C. Faith Has Substance**

*"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (He.11:1).* Faith has substance or materiality. It is the title deed of our receiving. No, we cannot see it at the moment, but the manifestation of it can be seen. It is what brings substance or materiality into the natural world.

## **D. Faith is Trust in 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" (1Co.10:13).* True trust is like falling off a cliff in the dark, and catching a limb on the way down. You cannot see the bottom, so you hold on for dear life. Yet your grip is growing weaker and weaker. You cry out to God and He says "Let go." Now that is a strange instruction, so you continue to hold on, wishing for some human who could understand your plight. But no human comes. Finally, by loss of grip and desperation, you release your grip, and fall three (3) inches to the ground. What we cannot see, whether in the dark or light, God sees, and has instruction for us that will save the day.

## **E. Faith is Utter Reliance Upon God**

*"If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king" (Da.3:17).* There was no quibbling about an answer. There was no time for a conference as to how they would answer, nor did there need to be. They had settled it some time ago. They would not bow. Because they would not bow, God would not allow them to be burned either.

This is utter reliance upon God. They were in a hard place, without recourse against the king. However, it was no problem, for God came through for them.

#### **F. Faith is a Fruit**

*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith" (Ga.5:22).* Faith shows up as a fruit of the Spirit, or in other words, it is produced in us by the Spirit of God. It comes as we allow the Holy Spirit to work in us and accomplish what God said He would do.

#### **G. Faith is a Guarantee**

*And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God. For verily I say unto you, that whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith. Therefore I say unto you, what things so ever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them" (Mk.11:22-24).* This is one of the most powerful passages in the Bible, for it describes the faith principle that will always bring us victory. Jesus uses a word, "shall," that we need to understand more fully. This word is the most emphatically positive word we have ever used. It means that it will always work, no matter what. It means that no matter the condition faith faces, it will receive what it is after. It means to be "emphatically positive, without possibility of failure." That is good news, brothers and sisters. We know, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that Jesus is working for us, on our behalf, assuring that what we have asked will come to pass.

### **XIV. HINDRANCES TO THE GROWTH OF FAITH**

#### **A. Sin**

*"If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me" (Ps.66:18).* Sin is the most critical thing in the life of a Christian. It is corruption that will eat away at everything that is good and beneficial. John tells us to "Sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee" (Jn.5:14b). This is telling us that if we go back to sin, we will be worse off the second (2nd) time we go back than we were before. No one can dabble around with sin, not even a Christian, and be safe. We must not regard or give place to iniquity, for its results are devastating, perhaps even more so than being conquered a second (2nd) time by the same sin. Iniquity is that tendency that is on the inside of us, that we tend to gloss over, as if it is not there, or that it has no hold upon us.

#### **B. Doubt**

*"For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea: and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass: he shall have whatsoever he saith" (Mk.11:23).* Doubt is insidious. It hides behind the cloak of religiosity, as if there is real faith there. However, way too many people are stuck in doubt. What is needed? It is a good strong dose of the Word.

1. We must deal with doubt.

We cannot afford to keep this subject out of sight. We have no choice. We meet men who doubt, those who raise skeptical difficulties about the Word of God. It is a matter of practical importance that we should know how to deal with doubt, in them and in us. There are men who are perplexed, men who come with serious and honest difficulties. These are men of intellectual honesty, who will not allow themselves rest by words, or phrases, or traditions, or theologies, but who must get to the bottom of things. The outsiders were always interested and touched Christ. The orthodox, the religious, were much less interested in Christ. Jesus went with the publicans and sinners, those in revolt against the respectable, the intellectual and religious ones of that day.

2. The origin of doubt.

a. We are born questioners.

We are born with a certain curiosity. A little child asks questions with its eyes before it can speak. The child's first (1st) sentences are usually prefaced with "Why?" Every child is full of questions, about every kind of thing: what moves, shines, and changes in the little world in which they live.

Doubt is in the fallen nature of man. Respect doubt for its origin, for it is an inevitable thing. Heresy is truth in the making, and doubt is the prelude of knowledge.

b. The world is a Sphinx.

That is, it is a vast riddle, an unfathomable mystery, and on every side there is temptation to questioning. In every leaf, in every cell of every leaf, there are a hundred (100) problems. There are ten (10) good years of a man's life in investigating what is in a leaf, and there are five (5) good years more in investigating the things that are in the things that are in the leaf. George Washington Carver wanted to know the secrets of the universe, and prayed to God about it. "No", God said, "you cannot handle the secrets of the universe, but I will show you the secrets of the peanut." This is how God has planned the world to incite men to intellectual activity.

- c. Our understanding is broken.

The instrument with which we attempt to investigate truth is impaired. It fell in the Garden, and now the "glass" is broken. Prejudice, heredity, or sin has spoiled its sight, and has blinded our eyes and deadened our ears. In any case the instruments with which we work upon truth are feeble and inadequate to the tremendous task.

- d. Religious truths cannot be proven by reason.

Even that fundamental truth, the existence of God, no man can prove by reason. Yes, nature speaks of Him plainly every day and everywhere around us, but not by reason. The proof for the existence of God involves general revelation, special revelation, an argument, or a contradiction. The impression and understanding and certainty of God are kept up by experience, not by logic. When the experimental religion of a man, community, or nation wanes the Church wanes. Then their conception or idea of God grows indistinct, then that man, community, or nation becomes infidel.

3. What should this origin of doubt teach us?

It should teach us great intellectual humility. It teaches us sympathy and toleration to those who venture to find the path through doubt for themselves. It is sometimes hard to feel sympathy and toleration for others, especially when we see the truth so clearly ourselves. We must not abuse the brother who is short sighted or speak against him. It is our responsibility to pity him, and if possible, improve his sight, or to make things that he is to look at so bright that he cannot help seeing. Never let us think evil of those who cannot yet see as we do.

4. The Church's treatment of doubt must change.

In the past, the Church has reacted with, "There is a heretic. Burn him!" "There is a man who has gone off the road. Bring him back and torture him!" Yes, today we are a bit more tolerant, but not much. We have gotten past that in the physical; but have we got past it morally? The Church of today says to the skeptic, "Brand him!" "Brand him," that is, call him a bad name. In many places, a man who is branded as a heretic is despised, tabooed, and put out of all religious societies, so much more than if he had gone wrong in morals. In many communities the man who is unsound in doctrine is looked upon with more suspicion and pious horror than the man who gets drunk each night. "Burn him!" "Brand him!" "Excommunicate him!" That has been the Church's treatment of doubt, and

perhaps the treatment we are inclined to give to those who cannot see the truths of Christianity like we do.

5. Christ's treatment of doubt was different.

Jesus had a strange partiality to the outsiders, the scattered heretics up and down the countryside. He loved to deal with them in care, and He showed no disrespect to them over their intellectual difficulties. Christ never failed to distinguish between doubt and unbelief. Doubt is "I cannot believe;" while unbelief is "I will not believe." Doubt is honesty while unbelief is obstinacy, a rebellion. Doubt is looking for the Light, while unbelief is perfectly satisfied and wants to be left alone in the darkness. Loving darkness rather than light, that is what Christ spoke against with the Pharisees and religious people of the day. However, the intellectual questioning of Thomas, and Philip, Nicodemus, and many others who came to Him He was respectful of, generous, and tolerant.

The Church says, "Brand him!" but Christ says, "Teach him." When Thomas came to Him, denying His very resurrection, he stood before Him probably expecting scathing words and a tongue-lashing for his unbelief, but it never came. Christ simply gave him facts which he could not go around. *"Behold My hands and My feet." "Look at me, here I am."*

This is the great lesson of the New Testament way of looking at doubt, by Christ's treatment of it, lovingly, wisely, and tenderly teaching the man the truth. Faith is never opposed to reason in the New Testament, but always opposed to sight. Think this principle over again, faith is never opposed to reason in the New Testament, but to sight.

With these principles in mind as to the origin of doubt, and Christ's treatment of it, how do we then deal with those who are in intellectual difficulty?

6. How to deal with doubt.

a. We are to make all the concessions we conscientiously can.

Doubt will cause us to pour out a heap of abuse on churches, ministers, creeds, and Christians, most of which will be true. We have been carrying these doubts for years, yet we are not responsible for everything that is said in the name of Christianity. We do not throw out a needed medicine because there are quack doctors who prescribe it. No man should give up Christianity, or be stalemated in their growth because there are inconsistent Christians.

Creeds are human versions of Divine truths. We do not have to accept all the creeds. It is Christ we accept, the facts about Christ and the Words of Christ.

The battle is half won when we get down to the business of simply admitting that there are people with actions and activities that do not line up with the Word of God. These doubts are against the kind of religion which is exhibited to the world in the name of Christianity, against the "cannot" that is taught as if it is the way God is. If men have never seen the real thing, if they have never seen the love and compassion and care that is God, and it can be shown to them, they will receive it eagerly. It is revolt against the things that are taught that are imperfections and inconsistencies, what does not really represent Christ, that cause us to doubt.

b. We are to set aside all unsolved questions.

This could be like the question of the origin of evil, the question of the Trinity, the question of the relation of human will and predestination, and other questions which have been studied for years without an answer. Put aside these questions as insoluble to our finite mind. As a man who is studying mathematics may be asked to set aside the question of squaring the circle, let him proceed on with what can be done, and what has been done, and leave alone the impossible. This will relieve our minds of a great deal of unnecessary baggage that has been in our way. If it is not a salvation point, leave it alone.

c. Talking about difficulties only aggravates them.

Entire satisfaction to the intellect is unattainable concerning any of the greater problems. If we try to get to the bottom of them by argument, there is no bottom there, and we simply make the matter worse. It would be a pity if all questions could be solved by the finite mind. The joy of the intellectual life would be largely gone. Problems tend to be the delight of life, and the whole intellectual world would be stale and unprofitable if we knew everything.

d. We are to turn away from reason into the moral life.

Do not go into the moral life to see if we are living in conscious sin, the great blinder of the eyes. What we are to address is the honest doubt. Here we should open a door into the practical side of our nature. We must not postpone life and life's usefulness until we have settled the problems of the universe. There are problems that will never be settled in this life, so we must get on with life in the meantime. Do not waste life or its usefulness.

Now is the time to deal with the moral and practical difficulties of life. We are to leave or set aside the intellectual questions as we go along. To spend time upon these is to put the less important before the more important. Remember, "The good is the enemy of the best." It is a good thing to think, but a better thing to work. It is a better thing to do good, to take action upon the Word, to dwell in the Word instead of upon the doubts. There are two (2) organs of knowledge: reason and obedience. Since we have tried the first (1st) and found little in it, we should now just do the second (2nd). There is no question about to whom we are to obey, there is but One, and it is Jesus Christ, the one (1) perfect life, the one (1) Savior of mankind, the one (1) Light of the world.

We must get into practical contact with the needs of the world, and lose our intellectual difficulties meantime. Now we are putting our nature into the relation in which it ought to be, and we then begin to live. By obedience we will soon become a learner and pupil for ourselves, and Christ will teach us things, and we will find whatever questions are solvable gradually solved as we go along the path of practical duty. The best "apologetic," or defense of the faith for Christianity, is a Christian. That is a fact which man cannot get over.

### **C. Unbelief**

"And He did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief" (Mt. 13:58). Jesus was well known there, so much so that they even talked about who His parents and family really were. It was true, the proverb that Jesus quoted to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in His own country."

The disciples could not cast out the epileptic spirit. Jesus said it was because of their unbelief. He went on to tell the disciples that if they would just plant their faith, that which was "...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" (Mt. 17:2). Notice that it is the planted faith that grows. It is not the faith that does not get planted. We can speak faith all day long, but if we do not plant it, that is, take an action, it can never grow.

Unbelief may hinder our faith, but it will not change the faithfulness of God. We may miss the blessing because of our unbelief, but that will not alter any of God's ability or effectiveness (Ro. 3:3). Unbelief will keep people from entering into the promises of God (Ro. 3:19)

### **D. Fear**

Dominion over fear is available to the believer. The decision is ours as to whether we will be victorious in Jesus. Some people refuse to exercise the dominion God has given them through Christ Jesus. They are afraid to take authority over the problem areas of their lives.

It was by transgression that Judas failed (Ac.1:25). It was not an accident, there was no weakness on God's part, nor an insufficient supply of power. Judas fell because he refused to take dominion over the sinful area of his life. He yielded himself to the devil through temptation, and in so doing he lost his life.

We all know people who have refused to exercise dominion. We see them die premature deaths, fail in business, and permit the devil to destroy them. Following are seven (7) deadly fears, which will keep us from overcoming.

1. Some are afraid of change.

We see people who grow old quickly, and we picture them as set in their ways. However, this literally means they refuse to change. It is a fear of changing jobs, of moving to a new location, or fear of making new friends that often stifles the power of the dominion God has given us. Most all people would be prosperous and victorious if they were not fearful of change.

2. Some are afraid of people.

The devil tricks us into being afraid of people. Nehemiah's enemies tried to make him afraid, but he responded to their hired prophet, "Should such a man as I flee or run and hide?" (Ne.6:11). Nehemiah knew dominion, his authority from God, and had no fear.

Sometimes people fear their boss because he gets in their face, being overbearing and demanding. Other people, because of fear, will not witness to their neighbors about their relationship with Jesus.

God told His prophet Jeremiah, "Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee" (Je.1:8). We must never fear people.

3. Some are afraid of the unknown.

A person can never take dominion by fearing the unknown. God is in charge of the unknown, and His positive power is greater than the enemies. We must rest in the fact that God has His hand on tomorrow, so we do not need to be afraid of it.

In Numbers, chapter thirteen (13), twelve (12) select leaders of Israel were sent into Palestine to spy out the Land of Promise. Ten (10) of them returned with what the Bible calls an "evil report." They were not told to check out the possibility of Israel taking the land; they were only to report on the land as to whether it was good or bad. They said, in effect, "The land is good, and the country is beautiful. It is rich and desirable, but giants live there." They told Moses, "We are like grass-hoppers before them" (Nu.13:32-33). Of course this was a lie, they could not possibly know without contact what the people of the land thought. In fact, when the two (2) men from the Israelites went into Rahab's house forty (40) years later, she told them that all Jericho knew what God had done for them in destroying Pharaoh and his army. She said that the people of Jericho were afraid of Israel.

The nation of Israel accepted the majority, the spy's evil report. They had so soon forgotten God bringing them out of Egypt, not through their strength, but in His power. They had forgotten the miracles that took place in the desert, the food and water they had been supplied. Now they refused the dominion, the authority, the power that belonged to them. Instead of taking the land that was given to them, they turned back into the Sinai desert. For forty (40) years they wandered in that water-less wilderness until those who were of the adult generation that came out of Egypt died. Not one (1) of the adults who accepted that report of fear entered the Promised Land. Only Joshua and Caleb, the two (2) who brought a good report, went into the land.

God had said, "The land is yours." The devil had said, "You are too small, too weak, and too insignificant." The Israelites obeyed the wrong source of information, listened to the wrong voice, and their fear of the unknown kept them from receiving God's promises.

4. Some have fear of responsibilities.

We cannot enjoy dominion if we fear to take on greater responsibilities. We will stay at the bottom or camp right where we are if we cannot accept responsibility and we will never know the joys of dominion. Fear paralyzes us.

5. Some have a fear of failure.

Nothing destroys the power of dominion like the fear of failure. It is the fear of losing face, of being seen as a person lacking success. The devil brings this fear, but the Spirit of Jesus does not know failure. When we are linked with Him, we will not be afraid of anything.

6. Some are afraid of added work.

Many do not want added work, for fear of what it would do to them. They do not realize that while they are worrying or giving place to that fear, they could be accomplishing the very task they fear. Additional work brings spiritual and material growth. The devil always exaggerates and gives us erroneous information, so that we will be afraid. Therefore, we must never be afraid of taking on added jobs.

7. Some are afraid of physical or mental breakdown.

Many men and women are tormented by the fear of having a breakdown in their mind. They fear the disintegration of their strength and moral courage, yet this very fear is the thing that tends to break it down. Job said that his fear, the thing that plagued him greatly, came upon him (Job.3:25).

It is our responsibility to rebuke all such fear and be part of the ones who take their dominion in every situation. "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind" (2Ti.1:7). Rebuke the devil, and he will flee. He has no power over us except what we will allow. Rebuke fear, and it will flee from us, for it has no power over us unless we allow it also. Once fear is out of our lives, we will become the person of power God wants us to be.

**E. Dependency on Others**

Today, millions of people are dependent on others for their very lives. Many Christians constantly need the evangelist or the pastor to uphold them by prayer due to their failure to rely on Christ for their physical and spiritual health. Others seek out specialists who will pry deep into their conscience, searching for the answer to the individual's problems. They will lean on those of the psychology or psychiatry professions to help bring them out of the mentally confused state they are in.

Some people need pep pills for a kick start in the morning and then have to rely upon tranquilizers to calm their troubled nerves that night. Waking up feeling good and retiring feeling fulfilled is just not in

their lives. They do not know the joy and confidence that comes from holding the reins of life, of being in control of themselves.

Victories that come because someone else laid hands on us can be lost by our own weaknesses later. Healings wrought by the prayer of a pastor can be lost in a moment, by a defeat at home or work. Having real victory and keeping our healing means we must learn that Jesus Christ will do the work for us personally, just as He does for anyone else. We will not be completely free or permanently healed until we can receive it for ourselves through the Word of God (Jn.8:32).

Multitudes do not know that they are in command. They hold the reins of their own destiny. They can stay free by their own prayers and God's power after they have received deliverance by the laying on of hands or by the revelation of God's Word. However, they must exercise a spiritual determination to be free and realize that they now are in control.

Multitudes of people are only half blessed and healed, for they do not know the truth. It is not enough to go to the altar and say, "Lord, forgive me of my sin." The sin is gone then, yes, but the inner being is still empty. It must be filled up with the Word of God. Full salvation comes when we lift our heart to God and are filled with His love, His joy, His peace, and His Word.

Once people are delivered by the power of Christ, they must become filled with His Spirit and His Word. Then, it is necessary for them to take the reins of power and authority in their own hands, under the Lord's direction. If they will do that, they are virtually unlimited in Christ. Everything heaven possesses has been opened to anyone who meets God's requirements (Mt.16:16-19). But we must go after it, for the devil will contest us, and we must therefore be warriors to receive all the blessing and power that God has for us.

When we hear that someone has been especially blessed, the world system, and even Christians will sometimes say, "He's a lucky guy," or "She's a lucky person." That's not true. Luck is a false claim, for it comes from the devil and he is a liar. Every successful person has used spiritual laws, whether they know it or not, even if they are not a "believer." The Law of Reciprocity works for everyone.

God sets the limits for those in divine relationship with Himself. He says we are unlimited, but it is how we think and believe in our hearts that controls or limits the outcome, along with our confession of that belief. "As [a man] thinketh in his heart, so is he (Pr.23:7). It is the right thinking, that which lines up with the Word of God that propels us to right speaking and right doing.

The boy's meal with five (5) loaves and two (2) fishes became unlimited when he handed them, to be planted into the ministry of Jesus. The Apostle Peter became unlimited when he dared to step out of

the boat, and took that step onto the waves. When we hold the reins of our own life through Christ, we are limited only by our vision, our perception of who we are and what we can do. If we believe, we can do something, for that is the first step toward doing it. Many people limit themselves because they do not think they can, and thus become the victims of their own limited thinking. They have no vision as to doing what they would really like to do. There are some things that the Christian can do, though it looks like it is impossible. For instance:

1. We, the Church, are unlimited in God.

The living, vibrant, glorious Church is unlimited. Jesus said the "...gates of hell shall not prevail against the Church" (Mt.16:18). Only the individual members who make up the Body of Christ limit the activities and victories of the Church. The Church is what we make it to be, what we believe it to be. This takes vision, to be able to see as God sees. We could say, "As the Church thinks in its heart, so is it." This is entirely accurate, for the believers are the Church.

As an individual member of the universal Church, we can help the Body of Christ complete its ministry by taking our individually assigned place as a free and victorious "member in particular" (1Co.12:2).

We are unlimited in our relationship to God. No believer has ever reached the spiritual maximum that is completely possible in God. No one has climbed to the ultimate heights that God says we can attain (Ep.3:20). That place is beyond what any of us can dream, hope, think, imagine, or pray. We can be what we want to be through the unlimited power of God that abides in us. We can reach for God's highest and best, and attain it. God calls our name and says to us, "You can have anything you can conceive in your heart. Conceive it, and receive it." It takes time in God's presence, through meditation of the Word and prayer, to get God's best. If we are willing to spend the time with Him, to drink in His Word, to discover His will for our lives, no power can hold us back.

A well known man of God began preaching without a Bible School education. In just a few months, he was ministering to the largest congregation in the City of London. He went on to build a tabernacle that seated five thousand (5,000). So powerful were the sermons he preached that the city newspapers printed them every Monday morning. Did this come about by accident? No, it came about because this man gave himself completely and absolutely to the Most High. God took this young, uneducated man, filled him with Himself, and used him to save thousands of people.

We are to accept the challenge of reaching higher than we have ever reached. God is not limited by the weaknesses or frailties that are so prevalent in our lives. If God can take Jacob and make an Israel out of him, He can surely do great things for us. So, we must be unlimited in our relationship to God.

2. We are to be unlimited in friendships.

We can be unlimited in our relationships with our fellowman. The quantity and quality of our friendships does not have to have any bounds. We can have the number of friends we wish. If we do not have many friends, we likely did not go after them. It is not up to the other person to decide if they want to be our friend or not. We are the one who decides who we will be friends with.

Friends who come at the right time with an encouraging word and a comforting touch are extremely valuable. People with many friends are the happiest people. People without friends are miserable. We must learn to develop lasting and meaningful friendships. We are to be a true friend to many people, and the rewards will be well worth the effort.

3. We are to have unlimited health.

Health is a state of spirit, a measurement of the condition of the inner man. When we say, "I walk in Divine health in Jesus' name," then we are on our way to being and staying healthy. If we say, "Well, my grandpa was always sick, so I guess that I am going to be sick too," then we can rest assured we will be sick. The power of our tongue has guaranteed it (Pr.18:21).

We must accept the unlimited health that the Lord has for us. Look at all of God's handiwork and say, "I will be like His Kingdom, and all His handiwork. I will be well and strong." We will then be unlimited in health and strength. Remember, God's Word says, "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." Our health has to do with our faith.

4. Christians are to walk in unlimited prosperity.

God blesses those who serve Him, whether they are nations or individual followers of Him. God prospers those who recognize His power to supply all their needs (Ps.35:17; Php.4:19).

Some who have had little opportunity to get a good education have become wealthy through the world of business. They have discovered and put into practice the secret of unlimited potential in Christ. Some people limit themselves and thus limit God by their unbelief. God can do anything (Lk.1:37;

Mk.10:27; 9:23). If great things do not happen in our lives, we cannot blame God. We should start searching within ourselves, asking God what we can do to walk in His unlimited ability and power.

Many fail in this area because they become selfish in their desire for prosperity and blessing. It is against the nature and love of God to reach into the unlimited resources of God for our own selfish reasons. If we long to help, to love, and to bless others, God will grant us the desires of our heart.

5. We must release our potential.

The eagle is a majestic bird, stretching his powerful wings and flying into the sky screaming, "Unlimited! Unlimited!" How much more should the Christian do the same thing? The open heavens are the home of the eagle, and he knows no limits as to how far and how high he can go. We are to take control of our lives and move with God. No one is happy in defeat. When a friend is victorious, we are to be happy in their victory.

We are the only one who can limit our own life. The devil cannot limit it, the demons cannot limit it, and God certainly will not limit it. So why should we limit it? We are to release the totality of our being to the unlimited God, and experience the true meaning of life in the Spirit. Get ready for the blessings to flow.

**Before reading the chapter(s) for this week please click the next button at the bottom right of the page to find the homework sheet for the assigned reading. The homework will aid you in taking the quizzes, mid-term, and final. Complete the homework as you read the reading assignment below.**

#### **XV. FAITH IS A NECESSITY**

Abraham heard from God that Sarah at the age of ninety (90) would have a child. He had faith, and Sarah conceived when Abraham was ninety nine (99) years old (Ge.17:16-19; Ge.21:1-2). However, it would not have come about without Abraham becoming fully persuaded that God would do what He said He would do (Ro.4:20-21).

Moses heard from God to go forward and cross the Red Sea. He had faith, held out his rod, and crossed the Red Sea. Not only did God roll back the waters, but also provided for a dry sea bed on which they could travel to the other side. Over six hundred thousand (600,000) men and their families, which could amount to over two million (2,000,000) trod that dry river bed by faith (Ex.14:16-29). These people appeared trapped, and had three (3) options. They could surrender, fight, or trust God. Under Moses direction, they trusted God, and demonstrated their faith by walking across the dry bed of the Red Sea.

Joshua was told to lead the children of Israel around Jericho seven (7) times and God would give them the city and all its inhabitants. He responded by acting on his faith in accordance with God's Word, and the walls fell down. The end result was the capture of the inhabitants, their leaders, and the whole city and its contents (Jos.6:2-20).

These are just a few examples of those who had faith and saw the necessity of using it. They heard a Word from God (Ro.10:17). They had confidence in God, that He would do it (1Jn.3:21). God was pleased with their faith (He.11:6).

To all those who place their faith in the Word, God says, "*Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise*" (He.10:35-36). "For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end" (He.3:14).

## **XVI. RECEIVING MADE SIMPLE**

Our faith will be tried, but God will always bring us through as we trust in Him (1Pe.1:7). God has unlimited provision for every aspect of our lives, spiritually, emotionally, physically, and materially. The trial of our faith is precious in the respect that it gives us a greater confidence and faith, than we ever had before. Gold is tried by fire in order that all the dross may be removed and it may come forth pure.

Our faith has more honor because it is the one thing that will see us through. Tried faith is not defeated faith, but rather a stepping stone to a greater and more stable or grounded faith. The trial of our faith is much more precious, because each trial it faces and overcomes makes it stronger. When our faith is tried time and time again, it should start to reach a peak of looking to and relying utterly on God (Ja.1:2-4). To waver is to doubt. "Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him" (He.10:38). Therefore we must stand on the Word.

### **A. While We Are Standing On the Word**

As we stand on the Word of God, we can be sure that things are going to happen. We can be assured about this because the enemy does not want us to receive from God. So, we should be doing these things and looking for these events.

1. Our faith will be tested.

In Matthew, we are told that if we ask "...it shall be given you..." We are to seek, and the result will be that we "...shall find..." We are told also to knock, and it "...shall be opened..." unto us (Mt.7:7-8). There is no more positive word in the English language than "shall." It means that there is no possibility of failure. From asking to receiving, however, there is usually a waiting period. This can be called the "patient period," a "waiting period", or the "trial of our faith period."

During this period, whether or not we will receive the answer to our prayer is determined by the way we talk. Remember, the tongue will either snare us or free us. The way we talk during the patient, waiting, or trial period is important.

2. We must cast down vain imaginations and take captive our thoughts.

Paul told us to "...*Cast down imaginations*" and every thing that exalts itself against what God says (2Co.10:5). Usually when people are trusting God to work on their behalf, all kinds of imaginations go through their minds. In most cases, it is not the imagination that will edify, but the kind that tends to tear down faith and rob of the blessing of God. That is vain imagination. "What if God does not do it? What if He does not come through? What if He does not answer my prayer?" These are the kinds of thoughts that will fill our minds when the enemy is talking to us.

### **B. What If He Does**

Start praising God for what He is doing for you. God has guaranteed His answer to our prayer that is a prayer in faith, based upon His Word (1Jn.5:14-15). This is the time to hold fast our confidence and start praising God. Remember, praise is the language of faith. What is left to do after we have asked and had faith to receive? What do we do while waiting? Praise Him!

### **C. Have a Praise Meeting**

If things look bad, have a praise meeting. Remember, it is what the Word says, not the circumstances, that determines the final outcome. Joshua had a praise meeting at Jericho. Jehosaphat had a praise meeting when the much larger enemy army showed up to destroy them. Jesus had a praise meeting at Lazarus tomb.

### **D. Five (5) Simple Steps to Receiving from God**

1. Have faith in the Word, our foundation.
2. Ask God to fulfill His Word by honoring our faith.
3. Stand firm on the Scripture applicable to our need.
4. Do not waver, doubt, or stagger to and fro, that is, one minute believing, and the next minute doubting, but hold fast to the confession and the Word.
5. Praise Him for the answer.

God will work on our behalf in ways we never expected.

### **E. The Jesus Kind of Faith**

Jesus was manifest for one purpose: that He might destroy, make of no effect, cause to come unglued, the works of the devil. Jesus arrived in town four (4) days after Lazarus' burial (Jn.11:17). Jesus was met by Martha who said, "*...Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died*" (Jn.11:21). *Jesus replied to her that, "...Thy brother shall rise again"* (Jn.11:23).

Notice that Martha had faith for last week, "...If you had been here..." Martha also had faith for next week, "...There will be a resurrection..." But what Jesus is looking for now faith. The sickness had sapped his life, the undertaker had come and after a funeral service, they had buried him. Then Jesus arrived; not four (4) days late, but just on time, the Father's time.

Jesus went to the tomb, told them to take away the stone, and without even praying for Lazarus, had a praise meeting. "Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. And I knew that Thou hearest Me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that Thou hast sent me" (Jn.11:41b-42). When we read verse 42, we can ask, "Jesus, when did you know that Your Father heard?"

1. He knew His father heard Him when He turned the water into wine.
2. He knew His Father heard Him when He multiplied the loaves and fishes.
3. He knew His Father heard Him when He cleansed the lepers.
4. He knew His Father heard Him when He opened the blinded eyes.
5. He knew His Father heard Him when He raised Jairus daughter from the dead.
6. He knew that if His father could hear Him in the past, He could certainly hear Him at the tomb of Lazarus.

Jesus cried with a loud voice, "...Lazarus, come forth..." (Jn.11:43-44). That is all it took after the praise meeting. Notice that the faith of Jesus was an unconscious reality. He looked not at the things seen. He had utter reliance on the Father. Faith was the only evidence He needed.

#### **F. A Faith Sermon**

Faith for receiving is like playing checkers. God makes a move. We make the next move. God gives a promise. We have faith and act upon that promise. Faith is like nature, in that it cannot exist alone. Natural things are placed in something. For instance, a fish is placed in water. A tree is placed in soil. It is evident that they cannot exist alone.

Natural faith cannot exist alone. It exists in a friend. It exists in a pastor. It exists in a relative. Living faith exists in the promises of God. Faith and promises go together. One does not work, no; it cannot work without the other one. We have been given "...exceeding great and precious promises..." so that we can be partakers of His Divine nature (2Pe.1:4).

Promises are like a pipe-line for blessings to flow through. God will not give us the blessing of salvation because we need saving, but because we believe and act on His promises. God does not give us the blessing of healing because we need healing, but because we believe and act on His promises. God does not supply our need because we need it, but because we believe and act on His promises.

God is faithful to His promises (1Kg.8:56; 2Kg.7:1). This was God's promise to His children. The next step was to believe that it was theirs. God would take care of meeting their need. Four (4) lepers sitting at the entrance of the gate asked one another, "*Why sit we here until we die?*" They decided to rise up, and act their faith, and move on to the enemy's camp. This act of faith changed their lives and the lives of all those to whom God had given the Word of promise. As the four (4) lepers started their faith march, God made them to sound like a mighty army. This so frightened the enemy that they fled, leaving all that they owned.

After the lepers arrived, and found the camp vacated, they went back and told the King of Israel, who sent spies to see if it was a trick. Israel had the Word of God fulfilled that had been prophesied by Elisha. There was plenty of flour and barley for sale at the gate of Samaria, just like it had been prophesied, and all this happened within twenty four (24) hours. The only person who did not partake of this blessing was the lord, on whose hand the king leaned, who doubted the promise that was given. The people trod on him in the gate leading to their blessing, and he died. He walked by sight, wanting proof. Faith does not require sight or proof. The Word, the promise God is all the proof we need.

## **XVII. HOW TO WALK WITH JESUS**

Walking with Jesus is about renewing our minds and receiving it in our spirits. Following is what we must do to receive with our spirits.

1. Learn how to be guided by the Holy Spirit. We can only begin from where we are, and the best time to begin is now. Start listening to His voice every moment. He is speaking and guiding us, but far too often our minds are preoccupied with the worldly things and are not keen or sensitive to what He is saying.
  
2. We should be confident that God has a plan for our lives, and believe Him to guide us into its fulfillment. God told Jeremiah that He had his life planned out from before he was formed in the womb (Je.1:5). Someone who plans this far in advance is someone that we can rely upon.
  
3. We should prepare ourselves for God's guidance. To do this:

- a. We accept the Bible, God's Word, as His supreme revelation to man.
- b. We have confidence that the Holy Spirit can lead us, personally.
- c. We submit ourselves to the ministry gifts that God has placed in the Church for our edification and Christian growth.
- d. We cooperate with the Holy Spirit in His mission on earth, exalting Jesus among men.

Now that we are prepared for God's guidance and are on our way to receiving it, do not go after religion, but go after Jesus. By this we mean, do not let experiences and Christian dogma become our lifestyle; rather, let our hearts and lives be led by the Holy Spirit as He directs us through the Word of God. This will require a daily walk with Jesus.

#### **A. Walking With Jesus**

We may hear people make statements like this, "I read the Bible, but I cannot seem to find God's answers to my personal problems. How can I read and find my answers?" There is a similar case in Acts 8:26-39. Here the Ethiopian Eunuch was reading from the Prophet Isaiah, chapter fifty three (53). Phillip approached the chariot with this question, "*Understandest thou what thou readest?*"

The Eunuch could not understand, and he admitted it. He invited Phillip into his chariot to instruct him. The verse of Scripture which he read was this, "He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth" (Is.53:7). Phillip began at the same Scripture, and preached unto him Jesus.

Although the Ethiopian Eunuch was a man of great authority under Candace, Queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, he was in search of truth that wealth could not buy. Yet, he was humble enough to allow Philip to sit up in the chariot and reveal to him what the Scriptures say about Jesus. At the right time, as he read the right Book, God sent the right man, and everything was all right!

Philip was not one of the twelve (12) disciples, nor did he have any claim to apostleship. He was one of the "deacons" who was chosen in the early Church to wait on tables (Ac.6:1-7). But he was a preacher of the Word (Ac.8:34), and an evangelist with a godly family (Ac.21:8).

1. God will send the guidance we need.

We, too, may have difficulty in finding answers to our questions. As we remain in God's Word, open before Him in our search, we will, at the right time, have that person that God sends across our path to help us. It may come through revelation, insight from one who shares the Word, a prophecy, a word of wisdom, or another manifestation of the Spirit. We can be sure that God will send the guidance we need, at the right time.

2. Be cautious about personal prophecy.

Personal prophecy by itself is not our answer, but a confirmation of the Word God has already spoken to our spirit. Through the Word and prayer, we will sense what is right by our spirit man. Most especially when the prophetic word comes from one who is not acquainted with us and tells us what God has already shown us, then we can step out in full assurance that the Lord is directing us further.

We should also know that a prophecy can be true, but not intended to change our direction or alter the course of action we have received from God. In the case of Agabus' prophecy to Paul, the prophet from the region of Judea came unto them, took Paul's girdle, and used it to deliver a message that "...the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver *him* into the hands of the Gentiles." There was immediate effort to stop Paul from going on, but he knew what he was to do (Ac.21:10-14).

The rest of Acts shows that though Agabus' prophecy was true, yet it was not God's will for Paul to change his direction. According to Paul's own teachings, prophecy is for edification, exhortation, and comfort (1Co.14:3). God knows all. Here He gave Agabus a portion of His knowledge, to exhort Paul about the future. Those standing by did not understand the scope of Paul's mission, and could not understand why he insisted on continuing the trip to Jerusalem despite what a true prophet was saying. Because of these events coming to pass, Paul appeared before Felix, Festus, Agrippa, and finally Caesar. Not only that, but Paul wrote several books of the New Testament from the Roman prison. How thankful we are that Paul considered his personal calling and direction from God greater than a word of prophecy or man's opinion. This is a great lesson for us today about being led by the Spirit.

3. God wants to answer the questions of believers.

There are many questions confronting believers today: "Should I go by plane or car?" "Where should I work?" "Whom shall I marry?" "When should I take my trip?" "What shall I wear?" "Must I continue school or begin my profession now?" "Is it right to quit my job?" "What church shall I attend?" "Shall I enter full-time ministry?"

An endless list of questions confronts us for which the Bible does not give clear, complete, direct answers. What is the solution in such cases? Jesus gave the ultimate guideline in Matthew, chapter six (6). He defined the Christian life as a "life of faith" (Mt.6:30), thus eliminating many unnecessary questions.

An attitude of trust and confidence will be the rule of life as we get our priorities in proper order, which is, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Mt.6:33).

We need to realize that God's kingdom is where Jesus is (Lk.17:21; Ro.14:17; Jn.10:30). As we feel our heart break free from all condemnation, we can stand before God and receive the desires of our heart. When we put God first, many problems which we face on a daily basis will be sorted out as a matter of course. We will find the Scripture true which says, "Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself..." (Mt.6:34).

Taking no thought is comparing the lifestyle of the Christian to that of an unbeliever. In other words, with God as our heavenly Father and Him in control of our plans, we no longer magnify the smallness of our needs; we think instead on the greatness of our Father's abundance!

4. "Take no thought" does not mean we should "make no plans."

To "take no thought" does not mean we drift aimlessly in life without definite goals. Slothfulness is not for the Christian (Pr.6:6,8). In comparison, God says to the one who does not plan, that a little sleep, and a little folding of the hands will bring poverty to that lazy one (Pr.6:11)

If we sit and wait for "something to turn up," about all we can expect to turn up is all of next month's bills. Too many people mistake a life of idleness for a life of faith. There are certain obligations to our family and their needs which God expects us to meet with His help. Any shirking of these

responsibilities is not faith. God says that people who evade their duty to family obligations deny the faith (1Ti.5:8).

The Spirit of God will never lead us into idleness. In all God's Word, He never measures faith by inactivity or laziness. The Bible requires work of us, as it says in James, "Even so, faith, if it hath not works, is dead. I will shew thee my faith by my works (Ja.2:17,18).

The Spirit will lead us into job situations. Sometimes the Holy Spirit works miracles for us overnight, but not necessarily in the way we expect. We will find that He expects us usually to master the small things first, then He will lead us on to greater things (Lk.16:10).

Before David killed the giant, he had first killed a lion and a bear. Today, if we do a good job in the place God has placed us, He will entrust us with more responsibility tomorrow. Do not think that secular work is not spiritual enough, provided it is a wholesome career. This could be God's way of enlarging our witness. God needs witnesses in the shops and schools and manufacturing plants. After all, He said "...let your light so shine before men..." (Mt.5:16). The best place for our light to shine most brightly is in the midst of darkness!

There are Biblical examples of very powerful Christians doing secular work while advancing God's kingdom:

- a. Paul made tents (Ac.18:3). These were not tents as we understand them, but prayer shawls, from the Greek word meaning "to cover."
- b. Dorcas made clothing (Ac.9:36-39).
- c. Peter, Andrew, James and John were fishermen (Mt.4:18-22).
- d. Simon of Joppa was a tanner (Ac.9:43).
- e. Jesus was a carpenter (Mk.6:3).

When Christ said to "*Go ye into all the world*" (Mk.16:15), He not only meant the geographical land masses of the earth and the unreached people groups of the earth, He was also referring to the world as the "social order of your influence." How can we expect Him to lead us to the "heathen" of foreign lands when we are unfaithful to live the life among the non-evangelized at home and first win them to Jesus?

At the same time we should continually judge ourselves and reevaluate the priorities of our lives. If we cannot serve God through our vocation, we had best get out of it. It is easy to say, "I will make a lot of money and help send someone else," but that is not what the Great Commission says.

Jonah tried to ignore the task God called him to do. But he did not get very far. The men on the ship with Jonah asked him, "What is your vocation?" (Jon.1:8.) He could have said, "I am on my way to Joppa to make some money; I am going to send a messenger to Nineveh!" No, he could not get away with that any more than we can. He had to go himself. God chose him, and would not accept any substitute! After much tribulation Jonah obeyed God. He went to Nineveh, spoke the words God told him to say and the people of Nineveh repented and were spared.

5. We must add action to our faith.

There is much emphasis on faith. It is true that it is good and required. We define it and discuss its qualities. It is good to note, however, that true faith always has action. When the writer of the Book of Hebrews wrote the eleventh (11th) chapter, one (1) verse was devoted to the definition of faith, while the remaining thirty-nine (39) verses tell how faith acts.

It was by faith that Abel offered (v.4), Noah built (v.7), Abraham went (v.8), Sarah conceived (v.11), Isaac blessed (v.20), Jacob worshiped (v.21), Joseph gave commandment (v.22), Moses refused, chose, esteemed, and forsook (vv. 23-27). A host of others have put the right corresponding actions to their faith. These examples of active faith are written here to help us understand more clearly how to be led by the Spirit. The point is that we do not just talk faith in a good confession, but begin to act upon our confession. As we do this, we will soon find ourselves moving into a broader discovery of God's plan and purpose for our individual life.

When James linked faith's confession with faith's action, he used the analogy of a bit in a horse's mouth and the rudder of a ship at sea (Ja.3:2-8). As long as the horse stands still, the bit fulfills no practical purpose, for bits are used primarily for guidance while the horse is moving. If the ship is tied to the dock, regardless of how much the rudder moves, the vessel itself does not respond.

This illustrates how people can hear the Word, confess it with their mouth, and not see the desired results in their lives. The reason it does not work is because the confession of our tongue is like the rudder of a ship. God designed it to work, only as we dare to face the winds of adversity, hoisting our sails upon the seas of life!

Faith is expecting God to do what He said in His Word He would do. Obedience is acting on God's Word and doing what His Word says to do, no matter what our circumstances may say nor how bad it may look.

6. We are to learn from Abraham's walk of faith.

As we look at Abraham's example of faith, we can see an established guideline from which we must not go astray. They are:

a. Abraham obeyed God.

Like Abraham, we must move in obedience to God's command (He.11:8). The New Testament leaves no doubt about His will for us as Christians. We must accept Christ as Lord and seek to put Him first. We must love our neighbor as ourselves. We must obey Christ's Commission to evangelize the world, whether the witness the Lord desires be across the seas or across the street. The early-day believers and apostles followed this rule of life. Although at times they did not understand about every situation, they stayed strong in their allegiance to Christ and their devotion to His cause.

b. Abraham went out from Ur of the Chaldees.

Abraham's progress was always in the direction in which God called him, away from the family fortune, the old lifestyle, and the old country (He.11:8). He refused to think on the old life, but began to think new thoughts, renewing his mind daily in his walk with God. Thus, there was no opportunity for him to go back, (He.11:15).

c. Abraham looked for God's promise to be fulfilled.

In our walk with God, we must expect Him to keep His Word (He.11:10). We are to be continually looking for His answers. We should be praising Him for His promises, believing Him to make them true in our lives. In this attitude of faith and trust, we have His favor, "...For he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him (He.11:6b). In other words, our faith is to be rooted in more than the fact of God's existence that He is. Believe, instead, that He is WHAT He is, a rewarder!

To God, we are special. God sees each of us as a special person and will deal with each of us as an individual. We are not like a toy soldier or mechanical robot to be wound up and set to going. God does not feed truth into us from tapes and program us for service as though we were a modern-day computer. He does not want a response like a trained animal, imitating what others have told us to do.

We are each different from all others, a unique individual. In fact, we each have an individual will and have been divinely given the power of personal choice. Because of this, we alone determine the glory that God receives from our lives and the pleasures we will receive from serving Him.

The Spirit-led life is worth the living. We not only develop a confidence in God based upon the integrity of His Word, we come to realize that God also has confidence in us. He believes in us enough to allow us to make decisions, knowing He will receive the glory because we will do what is right. When in doubt, we learn to seek out His plan by always continuing steadfast in the Word of Truth (Ps.138:2; Je.1:12).

Click [Modules](#) to return to the module list or click [Quiz 5](#) to be taken to the quiz for this unit.  
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