

TAKEN BY STORM

THE BIG BOOK

Includes all 4 mini books in this series

*Fighting the Good
Fight of Faith*

RANDALL J. BREWER

TAKEN BY STORM[©]

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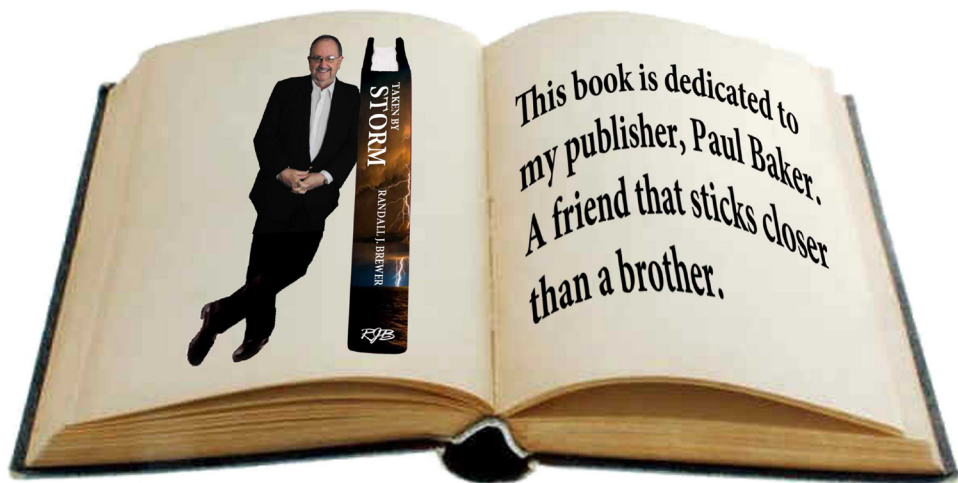
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This book is dedicated to
my publisher, Paul Baker.
A friend that sticks closer
than a brother.

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TAKEN BY STORM

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THAT'S UNBELIEVABLE

How many times have we heard that statement, not to mention the number of times we have said those words ourselves? “That’s unbelievable.” Most of the time we’ve said that when faced with the truth. When the fact of the matter is staring us in the eye, we will say in amazement, “That’s unbelievable.”

Or how about these, “I can’t believe it,” or “I don’t believe my eyes.” Or the worse one, whichever one above, is spoken when we’ve prayed for something and then we get it.

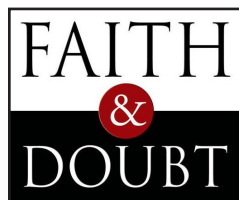
In this first set of chapters of *Taken By Storm*, Christian author Randall J. Brewer takes us on a discovery of the faith-life of the 21st Century Christian.

Faith is one of the hardest concepts to wrap our heads around, because it has never been properly defined for us; shown us how to obtain faith; nor have we been trained properly on how faith really works.

Don’t you dare put this book down until you have read it through the first time. Then get your pen and paper, and carefully read it again, taking notes you can refer back to again and again.

Randall calls *Taken By Storm* the “faith book series” and for good reason. I can promise you this, if you will meditate on the words you are about to read, you will never envision God the same again.

Paul Baker,
Publisher and Covenant Partner of Randall J. Brewer



INTRODUCTION

TSUNAMI FAITH

by Randall J. Brewer

I recently saw a program about the tsunami that occurred in Japan on March 11, 2011 and I saw some spiritual insight in it.

For the sake of illustration, let's pretend that a tsunami is a good thing that represents waves of God's blessings flooding into a believer's life. A tsunami begins with a disruption under the surface of the water.

Likewise, our faith enters the unseen world and disrupts the normal course of life which more times than not is a life of trial and hardship. Power is then released and very little of it is seen in the outside world.

Most of the turbulence in a tsunami is underwater. This program I saw told of some scuba divers who nearly died in the underwater torment while those in the boat on the surface didn't know anything was going on.

Faith also moves in the unseen realm. As the tsunami rushes toward its destination, it's building up power and nobody can see it. Just because we can't yet see the results of our faith, there is power being unleashed and it's working on

our behalf.

On the shoreline where the tsunami is about to hit, a strange occurrence takes place. All the water recedes away from the shoreline much further than the outgoing tide. All that's seen is an ocean of brown, yucky mud. Things appear to be barren, desolate, and downright ugly. This is where doubt tries to enter in. You pray for something good and things seem to get worse. This is when we need to stand strong. It is foolish to think we can receive from God without opposition from the enemy.

But praise God, on the horizon is the white crest line of an incoming wave. It's coming right toward you and before you know it the blessings of God are flooding over you. A tsunami is not some killer 50 ft. wave. No, it's a 10 ft. wave that's several hundred miles long and when it hits, the waves of God's blessings keep coming and coming and coming and coming...

Whew!

1

THE LIFE OF FAITH

“And the just shall live by faith.” Habakkuk 2:4

In the Word, our walk with the Lord is compared to being on a straight and narrow road ^{Matt. 7:13,14}.

Another similar example would be to say that we are traveling down the journey of life on a set of railroad tracks.

- The railroad line is owned and operated by the Heavenly Father.
- The powerful engine pulling the train is the Holy Spirit and,
- Jesus is the conductor.
- This train travels on two railings, one being the railing of love and the other of faith.
- Hope is the wooden railroad ties that hold love and faith together.
- The fruit of patience and long suffering are the spikes that secure the two railings onto the

wooden ties.

- Finally, we are the passengers on the train. We are led by the Lord Jesus Christ and are pulled through life by the Holy Spirit. We travel on love and faith, which are held together by hope.

So many times we overlook the value of hope. We want to be “faith” people and we want to walk by “love.” But how many times do you hear people say they want to be a person of “hope”? Many Christians do not understand what true Biblical hope is and its’ importance to faith and love.

The fulfillment of our heavenly call is also dependent on our knowledge of hope. In Heb. 6:19 hope is called “an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast...” If a person doesn’t have an anchor they’ll just float off in the direction of the current. This is what it



means to “cast off restraint.”

Hope is steadfast and sure. It holds you in place and builds in your mind a confident expectancy that comes when you get an inner image of something that hasn’t happened yet.

With hope comes joy and peace. Rom. 15:13 says, “Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”

In the same chapter Paul tells us, “For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope” (Rom. 15:4).

FAITH IS...

Hope builds a picture in your mind based on the promises of God found in His Word. As one continues to concentrate on the mental picture that is formed it begins to grow stronger and become more clear.

Hope takes that image from your mind and puts it in your spirit, and through meditation of what hasn’t

happened yet, begins to become real to you.

Eventually you’ll begin to act and talk like it has already happened. This is called “faith” and before you know it that image will become a reality in your life.

1 Thess. 5:8 tells us, “But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation.” The Message© states, “So let’s not sleepwalk through life like those others. Let’s keep our eyes open and be smart. People sleep at night and get drunk at night. But not us! Since we’re creatures of day, let’s act like it. Walk out into the daylight sober, dressed up in faith, love, and the hope of salvation.”

1 Cor. 13:13a says, “And now abide faith, hope, love, these three...” These three spiritual forces work hand-in-hand in the fulfillment of our dreams. Faith works through love ^{Gal. 5:6} and is the substance of things hoped for ^{Heb. 11:1}.

The Bible also says that “faith without works is dead” ^{James 2:26}. Faith must be used in the fulfillment of our Heavenly call because “without faith it is impossible to please God” ^{Heb. 11:6}.

*And now abide in
faith, hope, love,
these three...*

Faith—

- Begins in the spiritual realm of love,
- Passes through the mental realm of hope, and
- Concludes in the physical realm of works.

FAITH EMPOWERS ACTION

Faith is a substance from Heaven that comes and empowers you when you put actions to your hope. There is power in faith that gets charged up and energized by hope. “Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit Who was given to us” Rom. 5:5.

Understand that hope is the act of believing without the addition of works whereas faith is when you add works to your hope.

Heb. 11:1a says, “Now faith is...” Faith is here “now” while hope is always linked to the future. A person’s dream is always in the future. Through faith, hope, and love, we are always striving and moving forward to the fulfillment of our dreams and heavenly call. And when our dreams get fulfilled, God will give us another.

God intended for people to be dreamers. He built into each of us the capacity to dream. Hopes and dreams are what motivates the body of Christ to keep moving forward in their walk with the Lord.

We should always be content where we are, but never satisfied because satisfaction brings complacency. There should never be enough in the present to make you satisfied. Striving for something better in the future will always place a motivating spirit in the heart of every believer, and this will give them a reason to live.

“Now” hope does not disappoint.

The desire to do bigger and greater things for God should be the heart cry of Christians everywhere. Eph. 3:20 says, “Now to Him Who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us.”

The power that works in us is our faith that gets energized by hope.

Don’t ever set your goals too low. Your goals and your hope are always identical. No goals, no hope. Big goals, big hope.

NEVER BE SATISFIED

Never be satisfied where you

are. You should always be going forward reaching out to the vision God has given you for the direction of your life. The only thing to make up for is the lack you feel today, because you refuse to become complacent is the power of your *hope-energized-faith*.

Faith continually needs to be stirred up. It's like a fire where without a steady supply of new fuel it begins to die. The fuel of faith is the Word. We need to daily hear the Word, read the Word, meditate upon the Word, and confess the Word. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God

Rom. 10:17

Also, faith does not stand still. We walk by faith, and faith not used is no faith at all. Since our hopes and dreams are in the future, it is vitally important that we develop in our lives the fruit of patience.

Heb. 6:12 tells us that it is through faith and patience that we inherit the promises of God. Faith and patience always go together ¹ Thess. 1:4. If it is impossible to please God without faith, then it is impossible to please Him without patience.

Faith opens the door to God's promises for you, and patience keeps it open until

that promise is fulfilled.

When it comes to receiving from God, patience is just as important as faith. Patience supports and sustains faith until the result is manifested. Patience will encourage you to hold steady, because it is the *power twin* of faith. Faith is the brains and patience is the muscle. They work together to see to it that the promises of God get fulfilled in your life.

Some people think of patience as something designed to help us suffer in a meek way. After all, another word for patience is "longsuffering" Gal. 5:22. But according to Heb. 10:35,36 patience will actually put you on the road to success.

The Amplified© Bible says, "Do not, therefore, fling away your fearless confidence, for it carries a great and glorious compensation of reward. For you have need of steadfast patience and endurance, so that you may perform and fully accomplish the will of God, and thus receive and carry away (and enjoy to the full) what is promised." Rom. 12:12 says that we are to be "rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer..."

What does it mean to have

patience? Simply put, patience is the ability to delay gratification. In Greek, patience means “to be consistently constant or to be the same way all the time regardless of what happens.” Even God is the same yesterday, today, and forever” Heb. 13:8.

A person with patience is one who absolutely *cannot* and *will not* be changed by anyone or anything regardless of the circumstances. Patience is the practice of enduring and it always brings a blessing. James 5:11a says, “Indeed we count them blessed who endure.”

The Message© Bible says, “Take the old prophets as your mentors. They put up with anything, went through everything, and never once quit, all the time honoring God. What a gift life is to those who stay the course!”

Heb. 6:15 tells us that after Abraham “had patiently endured he obtained the promise.” The farmer waits patiently for the former and latter rain and at the end of the season his dream of a bountiful harvest is fulfilled.

BE PERFECT AND COMPLETE

James 1:4 says, “But let patience have its perfect work that you may be perfect and complete, lack-

ing nothing.” For sure, the fulfillment of our God-given dreams is a perfect work, thus the need for patience. All believers have patience. It is a fruit of the Spirit Gal. 5:22. Therefore, people who are born-again never run out of patience, they just stop using the patience they have.

Impatience only points out our unwillingness to accept God’s timing. People today simply do not like to wait. This is the age of microwaves and computers, high-speed trains and super-sonic jets. When people want something they want it now. There is nothing that grinds against people’s flesh more than having to wait on something that they desperately need or want.

God, on the other hand, is not concerned with time. 2 Peter 3:8 says, “But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.” In other words, God is not in a hurry.

In the Garden of Eden God told Satan, “...her Seed will bruise your head” Gen. 3:15. It took four thousand years for that to happen. God is not concerned with time and neither should we.

Heb. 12 :1b says “...and let us run with endurance the race that is

*Patience...is a fruit
of the Spirit.*

set before us.” Stop competing with time. Focusing on time will only take your attention away from the faith you have for the fulfillment of your dream. Give patience the opportunity to have its perfect work. Micah 7:7 says, “Therefore I will look to the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation; My God will hear me.”

KEEP BUSY

As you wait for the fulfillment of your dream and heavenly call, keep busy with the works that accompany faith. Eccl. 5:3 says, “For a dream comes through much activity.” We all know that when we are keeping busy and having fun that time seems to go by rather quickly. Therefore, those who are **im**patient are more than likely slacking off on the works that should always accompany faith.

The problem is that many people are sitting around waiting for God to do something while God is waiting around for them to do something.

We must all understand that in the fulfillment of our dreams there is a part we play and there is a part God plays. God will not do your part for you and neither will

He let you do His part. And, more times than not, you must do your part first.

This is clearly illustrated in Josh. 18:2,3, “But there remained among the children of Israel seven tribes which had not yet received their inheritance. Then Joshua said to the children of Israel: ‘How long will you neglect to go and possess the land which the Lord God of your fathers has given you?’” The people who belonged to these seven tribes were probably an impatient and lazy group of people. They were sitting around waiting for God to bring the land He had already given to them and place it in their laps.

Before the fulfillment of their dream could become a reality they had to first do something. They had to *go out and take* possession of the land. Works of obedience always accompany faith. These people could not take any new ground standing still.

Once encouraged by Joshua to put works to their faith, they did what they were told and not long after the land was theirs ^{Josh. 18:4-10}.

Consider what the writer of Hebrews says about father Abraham. “By faith Abraham obeyed

*I will wait for
the God of
my salvation.*

when he was called to go out to the place which he would afterward receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going” Heb. 11:8.

Faith is when you do something about what you believe. If you have a small garage and you’re believing for a Cadillac, then you better build yourself a new and bigger garage.

Faith is better seen than heard. A living faith is a working faith. James 2:18 says, “But someone will say, ‘You have faith, and I have works.’ Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.”

Once you start dreaming from the Word of God, start acting on those dreams and your faith will bring them to pass.

2

THE AUTHENTICITY OF FAITH

“Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith.” 2Cor 13:5a

The apostle Paul knew that his days on planet earth were quickly drawing to a close, and one day he sat down and penned his final epistle to his young associate, Timothy.

Timothy became a convert of Paul when the apostle was in Lystra on his first missionary journey. He later was ordained to the ministry and served as a devoted companion and assistant to Paul in several of his travels.

He often dealt with frequent infirmities, was timid and youthful, but still he was a gifted teacher who was trustworthy and diligent.

During Paul's third missionary journey, Timothy labored with him in Ephesus, Macedonia, and Corinth. Paul later left him in Ephesus to supervise the work there and to become the pastor of the church that

gathered within its borders.

This was not an easy assignment for the young man, and when Paul wrote his two final letters to him, he sought to exhort and encourage Timothy in his efforts to solidify the Ephesian church. Paul

wrote to challenge Timothy to fulfill the task before him and to combat false teachings with sound doctrine. What Paul had learned so thoroughly himself he was now passing on as he endeavored to show Timothy how to develop a leadership style that would be a benefit to him and the local church.

Pauls' final letter before his death is really a combat manual for spiritual warfare, and as he was about to relinquish his heavy burdens, the godly apostle labored to challenge and strengthen his faithful friend.

After much prayer and care-



ful pondering, the apostle Paul sat down to pen his final words and as the anointing flowed through his fingertips he began to write,

“Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus. To Timothy, my beloved son: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. I thank God, whom I serve with a pure conscience, as my forefathers did, as without ceasing I remember you in my prayers night and day, greatly desiring to see you, being mindful of your tears, that I may be filled with joy, when I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am convinced is in you also” 2 Tim. 1:1-5.

UNDERSTANDING FAITH

It was no accident that at the beginning of his final epistle, that the foremost thought in the mind of Paul was the genuine faith of his young protege. The Message© Bible translation calls it “your honest faith - and what a rich faith it is.” It stands to reason that if there is a true, genuine faith then there must also be a pretend faith, a faith that is

false and does not bring into manifestation that which one is believing for.

It is the responsibility of all believers to thoroughly study the subject of faith, and find out for themselves if they truly are walking in faith. This is what Paul told the Corinthian church to do in 2 Cor. 13:5a, “Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith.” The Message© Bible states, “Test yourselves to make sure you are solid in the faith. Don’t drift along taking everything for granted. Give yourself regular checkups.”

*A genuine faith
always gets results.*

As divine truths radiate off the pages of God’s Word, it will be revealed that the major difference between a true faith and a false faith is that, a genuine faith always gets results. There are no faith failures, and a true faith gets results every time. If your faith fails then it wasn’t a true, genuine faith. The Bible teaches us that an authentic faith is a “hearing” faith. Faith does not exist unless there is a message to be heard and believed. Paul told the church in Rome, “But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, ‘Lord, who has believed our report?’ So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God” Rom. 10:16,17. The Message© Bible

says, “before you trust, you have to listen.” The message to be believed, comes by the Word of God and is sent by the command of God. It is His Word, sent by His direction, and if heard attentively, a genuine faith will be produced.

REAL VS. FAILED FAITH

There are different ways to hear from God. The Holy Bible is God’s voice speaking to you in written form. Too many people, unfortunately, teach that this is the only way to hear from God, without mentioning how to hear God’s voice *inside* of you.

Many answers to the trials we face are not found in scripture, but only come as we become more sensitive to God’s still, small voice spoken in our heart. David always inquired of the Lord, and when by faith he obeyed the Lord’s command, the victory was won. Even Jesus said He only did and spoke what He was told by the Father and this is why He had great faith.

Your faith will never rise above your ability to hear from God. Begin to be still before Him and listen to the voice of God and become more sensitive to the leading of His Spirit directing you what

to have faith for.

Faith failures happen when people step out of the realm of hearing from God and attempt to believe for something at their own discretion. They go to the funeral home and try to raise their grandmother from the dead when God didn’t tell them to. Their ignorance will cause the things of God to appear foolish and will bring confusion and reproach to those who witness their ill-advised behavior. A mockery is made unto God, and later less effort

will be made by those who are not saved to draw close unto God for themselves.

Miracles start with hearing from God, and a person

desirous to have a genuine faith should never believe for things on their own. Real faith is not based on need or desire but on the solid foundation of hearing from God. Once you know you’ve heard from Him, you can then be bold and have the confident expectation that you will see the results you were believing for.

TRUSTING THE GOD YOU KNOW

The result of hearing from God is that you will know God, and when you know God you will ex-

*Your faith will
never rise above
your ability to hear
from God.*

perience God. Never trust a person you don't know.

When Paul mentioned the faith of Timothy's mother and grandmother, he was saying it's important who you associate with. He even wrote in 1 Cor. 11:1, "Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ." You become like the people you hang around, so spend quality time with those who will feed you the Word of God and help you come to know Him in a more deep, personal way.

Faith comes as a result of knowing Him and is not based on what you heard about Him. Abraham knew that a genuine faith is a "knowing" faith and for this reason he staggered not at the promise of God. He knew God in such a personal way that he was called the friend of God and this is why he was "fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform" Rom. 4:21.

Having a genuine faith is so important that God even made the stipulation that it's impossible to please Him without it Heb. 11:6.

So vital is the need for faith that God has even given Himself a name that reveals to us the value of this dynamic, spiritual force. In Heb. 3:1 Jesus is called "the Apostle and

High Priest of our confession." An authentic faith, a "speaking faith," and when we confess out loud what we believe, it becomes the responsibility of our High Priest to bring it to pass.

A person with an unfeigned faith is an artist who creates manifested realities with the power of his words. David boldly told Goliath that God would deliver him into his hands and moments later the giant lay dead.

Not long before this happened Goliath also made a confession, but his faith was not in God, but in himself. Paul once said "I know whom I believed" 2 Tim. 1:12 and this solidifies the fact that a *speaking faith* is based on how well you know God.

David was a man after God's own heart whereas the god of the prideful giant was himself. The winner revealed to all who the one, true God really was.

Ps. 116:10a says, "I believed, therefore I spoke." One of the greatest miracles recorded in scripture happened because a man believed and therefore spoke. Joshua and his army were fighting a battle and night time was fast approaching. More daylight was needed and we

*Faith comes as a
result of knowing
God.*

read in Josh. 10:12,13...

“Then Joshua spoke to the Lord in the day when the Lord delivered up the Amorites before the children of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel: ‘Sun, stand still over Gibeon; and Moon, in the valley of Aijalon.’ So the sun stood still, and the moon stopped, till the people had revenge upon their enemies.”

Pay close attention to what is said in vs. 14, “And there had been no day like that, before it or after it, that the Lord heeded the voice of a man; for the Lord fought for Israel.”

Faith is precious ² and when you’re in faith you can say what God will do. What Joshua said came to pass because the Lord heeded his voice. Joshua believed it, he said it, and God did it. This is how a true, genuine faith operates. Everybody has the ability to believe and people should always be creating something with their words.

Always strive to keep your mouth connected to your heart, because in order for faith to work you have to believe what you hear yourself say. Still, a lot of people think they have faith, when in reality they don’t.

FAILURE EQUALS UNBELIEF

Faith failures happen when people say things they don’t really believe. Some people make a lot of noise to cover up for the faith that isn’t there, and this is when pride and arrogance enter in.

Pride always wants to impress, and for this reason some people foolishly try to raise the dead or believe for large sums of money before the sun goes down. Desire and want, mixed with confessing an abundance of empty words, is no sign that a person is walking in faith. Big talk is not a sign of big faith, and the sooner these people put a muzzle over their mouths ^{Ps. 39:1} the better off they’ll be.

A person should never say they’re believing for something without knowing what they’re basing their faith on. You must hear from God! If faith isn’t there, then you must hear, and hear, and hear some more.

OUR WITNESS: THE HOLY SPIRIT

To help us know that we’ve actually heard from God, we’ve been given a Helper and Comforter to indwell us, the Holy Spirit.

1 John 5:6a states, “And it is the Spirit who bears witness, because

*Pride always wants
to impress.*

the Spirit is truth.” Once you believe in your heart and faith comes, the Spirit will bear witness with your spirit ^{Rom. 8:16} that faith is there. You’ll have a divine confirmation down on the inside of you that you’ve actually heard from God, thus giving you a solid foundation on which to base your faith. This will prevent you from making vain confessions that is void of the power needed to bring to pass that which you say.

Always strive to be led by the witness of the Holy Spirit, for this is where your confidence comes from. There is somebody on the inside of you besides yourself, and He is forever ready to lead you and guide you as you travel down the path of life.

1 John 5:9a says, “If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater.” Look for the witness down on the inside of you and don’t act until you know it’s there. A supernatural “knowing” will rise up inside of you and you’ll “know that you know” you are doing the right thing. The witness is not a voice, so don’t go off and start listening for voices. It’s a “knowing”, and with it comes a divine assurance that tells you you’re in the perfect will of God.

At the same time, don’t ignore

the lack of a witness. Many times you can be led by what God doesn’t say, as much as by what He does say. If you don’t have a witness to raise grandma from the dead, then by all means don’t do it. The Holy Spirit bearing witness with your spirit is a sure way to prevent faith failures from happening in your life.

Just as there is natural and spiritual hearing, so also is there natural and spiritual seeing. Peter wrote in 2 Cor. 4:18, “while we do not look at the things which are

seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are

eternal.” The things that are seen is the unbiblical condition we are currently in, and that which is not seen is the rich fulfillment of what we are believing for.

THE “SEEING” FAITH

As one continues to examine themselves, they will find that a genuine faith is a “seeing” faith. Walking in faith will give you the supernatural vision to look at things that are not seen, and this is a major key to fighting the good fight of faith.

Faith comes by hearing and

Always strive to be led by the witness of the Holy Spirit.

when you hear it you will see it. A spiritual artist is somebody who used their words so well that they are able to paint pictures that can be seen with the eyes of faith.

God is one such artist. We read in Ps. 89:19a, “Then You spoke in a vision to Your holy one...” God speaks in visions because He wants His people to see what they’re believing for. God told Abraham to look at the stars in the sky and the sand on the seashore and so shall his descendants be.

God painted a picture for Abraham because he couldn’t receive it by faith until he first saw it.

Another time God told Abraham to look to the north, south, east, and west and all that he saw God would give him.

Faith and vision go together, and this is why Jesus spoke in parables when He taught the people. He said in Matt. 13:13, “**Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.**” The people could not see or understand until Jesus painted a picture for them.

Prov. 29:18a says, “Where there is no revelation, the people

cast off restraint...” Without a vision people run wild and perish, and this is why you have to see in the spirit what you’re believing for.

This will cause your vision to become real to you and will give your faith the foundation it needs to stand on. David saw the giant beheaded, and Joseph had his two God-given dreams telling him he would one day be in a position of authority.

In the New Testament the woman with the issue of blood had a vision that if she touched the hem of Jesus’ garment, she would be healed. Her vision became the blueprint of what she wanted and her faith produced for her what she saw in the spirit.

Likewise, you can have the assurance that God has committed Himself to respond to your faith in the same way. You can have bold confidence that what you see in the spirit you can have in the natural.

CATCH THE VISION

The reason it is so important to verbalize where you see your vision taking you is found in 2 Cor. 3:18, “But we all, with unveiled face,

*God speaks in visions,
because He wants
you to see what you’re
believing for.*

beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory...”

What Paul is telling us is that, you become what you behold. If you want victory in your life, then you must have a vision of victory down on the inside of you. You must see yourself being more than a conqueror in Christ.

Don't base tomorrow on what you see today. Instead, look with spirit eyes into the unseen realm and speak out what you see. When you see your future filled with the blessings of God, the bad things you see happening today won't matter anymore. You don't look at what is seen, but at those things that are unseen.

Before you build a house you need a blueprint and a plan, and this is what your vision is. Your faith will do what your vision has programmed it to do. Your faith will produce what you see. and this is what it means that you become what you behold. You will never rise above your vision, and as your faith increases, so also will the size of your vision.

One person who understood this was Jacob. For fourteen long

years he had worked for his deceitful uncle Laban and the time came when Jacob was ready to return to his homeland. But first he wanted to be compensated for his many years of toil and hard work.

Given the choice to name his wages, Jacob asked for all the speckled and spotted goats and sheep, as well as all the brown lambs. Thinking only the pure white and unblemished livestock was worth anything financially, Laban heartily agreed.

Unbeknown to him, Jacob had a vision that would cause him to surpass all the wealth of his rich uncle. And along with that blueprint was a genuine faith that would bring to pass the plan he had down in his heart.

*Your faith will do
what your vision has
programmed it to do.*

WORK THE VISION

Habakkuk 2:2 tells us to “Write the vision and make it plain on tablets that he may run who reads it.” The Hebrew word for “tablets” is ‘billboards’, and this Jacob must have had on his mind as we read in Gen. 30:37-39,

“Now Jacob took for himself rods of green poplar and of the almond and chestnut trees, peeled white strips in them, and exposed the white which was in the rods.

And the rods which he had peeled, he set before the flocks in the gutters, in the watering troughs where the flocks came to drink, so that they should conceive when they came to drink. So the flocks conceived before the rods, and the flocks brought forth streaked, speckled, and spotted.”

Jacob put up a series of spotted billboards, and an image was planted in both the mind of Jacob and the minds of the animals. And it was this image, this *faith imagination*, that caused Jacob’s faith to grow and eventually the flock became what they beheld. A herd of spotted livestock was produced causing Jacob to become very prosperous and this allowed him to return to his homeland.

Down in the hearts of all believers should be a God-given vision for which we are continually striving to fulfill. The Lord is forever faithful to reveal to each of us His specific plan and purpose for our individual lives. When He does, it then becomes our responsibility to develop in our hearts a strong, genuine faith that has the power to defeat the enemy and cause our vision to come to pass.

God gave Joshua a vision of

victory over every obstacle and enemy, and he was told to keep the Word in his mouth and meditate on it day and night ^{Josh. 1:1-8}. This is the key to success, for it reveals how to have a faith that is authentic. Paul wrote in 2 Cor. 5:7, “For we walk by faith, not by sight.”

The Message© Bible says, “It’s what we trust in but don’t yet see that keeps us going.” This is how the good fight of faith is fought and won. You trust in God and always keep going forward.

*Joshua had a vision
of victory over every
obstacle and enemy.*

Joshua had a genuine faith that caused him to never give up and it brought him victory over all his enemies. His life proves that there are no faith failures when one has a faith that is true and genuine.

3

THE PURSUIT OF FAITH

*“Let us pursue the knowledge
of the Lord.”* Hosea 6:3a

Paul taught Timothy many valuable things in the two letters he wrote to his young and faithful friend just prior to his own death.

Knowing the abundance of trials and persecutions that he himself had been through, Paul encouraged Timothy with these now famous words found in 1 Tim. 6:12,

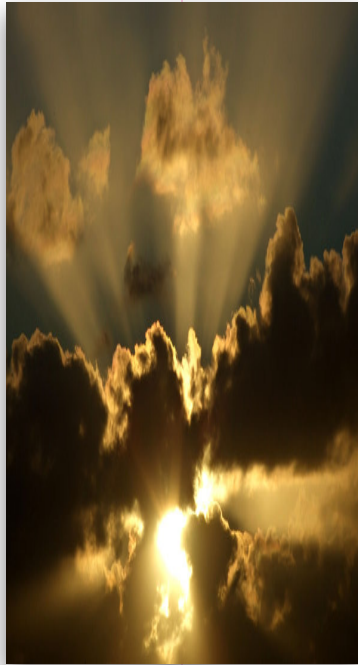
“Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold of eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.”

The Message® Bible says it like this, “Run hard and fast in the faith. Seize the eternal life, the life you were called to, the life you so fervently embraced in the presence of so many witnesses.”

An abundance of books and teachings have been written on the subject of this verse, and Christians everywhere should take heed to these important words from the great apostle Paul. However, equally important are the words in the verse written just prior to this one.

To prepare Timothy to fight the good fight of faith, Paul listed the many sinful trappings he would one day encounter and then wrote in 1 Tim. 6:11, “But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness.”

The Message® Bible says, “But you, Timothy, man of God: run for your life from all this. Pursue a righteous life – a life of wonder, faith, love, steadiness, courtesy. Run hard and fast in the faith.”



A similar verse is written to Timothy in Paul's second letter to his young protégé. "Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart"

2 Tim. 2:22.

How does one aim at *and* pursue faith?

A PURE HEART

First, you must have a pure heart which comes as a result of pursuing righteousness and godliness.

1 Peter 3:11,12 says, "Let him turn away from evil and do good; Let him seek peace and pursue it.

For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and His ears are open to their prayers; But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil."

The Message© Bible puts it this way, "Whoever wants to embrace life and see the day fill up with good, here's what you do: Say nothing evil or hurtful; Snub evil and cultivate good; run after peace for all you're worth. God looks on all this with approval, listening and responding well to what He's asked; But He turns His back on those who do evil things."

It is a given truth that those who tolerate sin in their lives will not be successful in their walk of faith. Num. 15:30 ^{AMP} says, "But the person who does anything wrong willfully and openly shall be cut off from among the people that the atonement made for them may not include him."

This verse precedes a story where God commanded a man to be stoned to death, because he picked up a few sticks to build a fire on the Sabbath day. God hates sin – any sin, whether big or small – and so should we.

Sin separates, destroys, and is the author of death. Paul continually told Timothy to flee the youthful lusts and sinful snares of this world. 1 John 2:15 instructs us, "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him."

A holy and just God cannot be expected to perform His Word ^{Jer. 1:12} for those where sin runs rampant in their lives. Ps.66:18 confirms this, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear." A blind man healed by Jesus testified, "Now we know that God does not hear sinners, but if anyone is a worshipper

*"If I regard iniquity
in my heart, the
Lord will not hear."*

of God and does His will, He hears him” John 9:31.

Consider Prov. 15:29, “The Lord is far from the wicked, but He hears the prayer of the righteous.” Our God is a just God, but He is also a merciful God. A price that we could not pay had to be ransomed for sin, and for that purpose the Heavenly Father sent His only begotten Son into the world. “For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” 2 Cor. 5:21.

THE GREAT EXCHANGE

Called “the great exchange,” Jesus became what we were, so that we might become what He is. Because of what Jesus did, we can consider ourselves to be “dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Therefore, do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts” Rom. 6:11,12.

Although the penalty for sin has been paid for nearly two thousand years, the temptation and opportunity to sin still exists. So what must one do? The same thing Paul told Timothy to do. Flee from sin! 2 Tim. 2:19b says, “Let everyone who names the Name of Christ depart

from iniquity.” Paul told the Roman church to “...hate what is evil (loathe all ungodliness, turn in horror from wickedness), but hold fast to that which is good” Rom. 12:9b AMP.

When was the last time you turned in horror from sin and wickedness? Prov. 28:13 says, “He who covers his sin will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy.”

God said through the prophet Isaiah, “Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; Put away the evil of your doings from before My eyes.

Cease to do evil” Is.

1:16. We are told to flee and forsake all sin because in reality we are the ones responsible for the sin we do and not the

devil.

James 1:14 AMP says, “But every person is tempted when he is drawn away, enticed and baited by his own evil desire (lust, passions).” To prevent this from happening, James goes on to tell us, “Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts you double minded. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord and He will lift you up” James 4:7,8,10.

Jesus became what we were, so that we might become what He is.

Did you notice that when you flee from sin, the devil will flee from you? On the other hand, when you draw near to God, He will draw near to you. Both God and the devil will respond to whatever you choose to do.

HOW TO BE SPIRITUALLY CLEAN

One draws near to God by drawing near to his Word, and it is His Word that will make your heart pure. Ps. 12:6 tells us, “The words of the Lord are pure words, like silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times.” Ps. 119:9 also says, “How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your Word.”

Paul told the Ephesian church that we are cleansed and made pure by “the washing of water by the Word” ^{Eph. 5:26}. Jesus Himself said, **“You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you”** ^{John 15:3}.

Wrong thoughts, words, and actions will keep you from God’s Word, but God’s Word will keep you from having wrong thoughts, words, and actions.

Ps. 119:11 says, “Your Word

I have hidden in my heart that I might not sin against you.” If you will make a quality decision to make the Word of God the “apple of your eye” and the desire of your heart, then the darkness of sin and its fleshly desires will flee from the presence of the light of God’s Word that is within you.

Once the cancer of sin has been dealt with, we must also develop the proper motive for the pursuit of faith. There is a divine calling on the life of each born-again believer, and faith is to be used for the fulfillment of that call. Performing and completing the will of God for our lives should be our top priority and the driving force that propels us forward in life.

Paul wrote in Col. 4:17, “And say to Archippus, ‘Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it.’” He told Timothy, “Do not neglect the gift which is in you, that special inward endowment which was directly imparted to you by the Holy Spirit...” ^{1 Tim. 4:14a AMP}.

Notice what Paul says next, “Practice and cultivate and meditate upon these duties, throw yourself wholly into them (your ministry)...” ^{1 Tim. 4:15a AMP}.

*We are cleansed
and made pure by
the Word of God.*

It will not take long to realize that those things which God calls us to do will be impossible to accomplish by mere human effort. Walls and barriers will arise before us in an effort to block our forward motion. But through each wall there is a door - the door of faith.

It is of paramount importance that we understand that faith is not some “get rich” formula that we selfishly use for our own personal advancement. Instead, it is a tool to be used to bring forth into our lives those things which are necessary for the fulfillment and completion of that which God called us to do.

Faith is a tool to be used in every Christian's life.

SET YOUR MIND ON THINGS ABOVE

Col. 3:2 ^{AMP} instructs us to “set your minds and keep them set on what is above - the higher things - not on the things that are on the earth.” Worldly and fleshly lusts will not bring you true contentment or satisfaction, and that is why we must only seek those things with which we can serve God.

The fourth chapter of James speaks of a lust people have for worldly things and of setting too high a value on worldly pleasures and friendships. James 4:3 ^{AMP} says,

“Or you do ask God for them and yet fail to receive because you ask with wrong purpose and evil, selfish motives. Your intention is, when you get what you desire, to spend it in sensual pleasures.”

These people ask God to give them success in their undertakings, not that they can glorify their Heavenly Father and do good with what they have, but that they may consume it upon their own selfish lusts. They pray for a raise at work, not so they can help support a foreign missionary, but so they can buy a new set of golf clubs. God cannot and will not bless such selfish motives. Prov. 15:27a says, “He who is greedy for gain troubles his own house.”

The matter of our prayer of faith must be agreeable with the declared will of God, and we are not to petition Him for things with wrong intentions brought about by a covetous heart.

God is not against us having and enjoying the luxuries of life, as long as He has first place in our hearts. This is why He said, “You shall have no other gods before Me” ^{Ex. 20:3}. Jesus said, “**But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things will be add-**

ed unto you” Matt. 6:33.

When we put God and the advancement of His glorious kingdom first, then all the blessings of the Lord will be ours to richly enjoy. Paul said in 1 Tim. 6:17 ^{NIV}, “Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, Who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.”

When our hope is in God and not money, then Prov. 10:22 can be applied to our lives, “The blessing of the Lord makes one rich, and He adds no sorrow with it.”

DELIGHT IN THE LORD

David said in Ps. 37:4, “Delight yourself in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of your heart.” What God will do when our delight is in Him is bless us with enough money to support that foreign missionary, with plenty left over to buy that set of golf clubs. What a loving and generous Heavenly Father we have! He is indeed a “rewarder of those who diligently seek Him” ^{Heb. 11:6b}.

John 1:16 ^{NIV} tells us, “From the fullness of His grace we have all received one blessing after another.”

God’s will is always what’s best for His children, and the believer who is in continual fellowship with the Heavenly Father, will not ask anything contrary to His will. It is with this attitude of giving God first place in our lives that we can begin the pursuit of faith.

One does not go from “a measure of faith” ^{Rom. 12:3} to “great faith” ^{Matt. 8:10}, simply because they are a born-again believer.

***Once faith is planted in
your heart at the new birth,
it must be pursued
in order to grow.***

*Don’t be arrogant
nor put your hope
in wealth.*

The word “pursue” means ‘to follow in order to overtake; capture.’ You must crave the increase of your faith with everything that is inside you, *because you will never possess what you’re not willing to pursue.*

Ps. 119:10 says, “With my whole heart I have sought You; Oh let me not wander from Your commandments.”

To pursue faith means to do whatever it takes to get the Word of God into your heart and back out your mouth. We are instructed in James 1:21 to receive the “implanted Word.” Accomplishing this will take more than a simple glancing at

or casual reading of a verse or two from time to time. It will take diligent effort to read, study, and meditate upon the Word on a consistent, daily basis.

MEDITATING DAILY

To do this we must develop within ourselves the attitude of the prophet Jeremiah who said, “Your Words were found and I ate them, and Your Word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart” ^{Jer. 15:16a}.

Compare this with Ezek. 3:1-3, “Moreover He said to me, ‘Son of man, eat what you find; eat this scroll, and go, speak to the house of Israel.’ So I opened my mouth, and He caused me to eat that scroll. And He said to me, ‘Son of man, feed your belly and fill your stomach with the scroll that I give you.’ So I ate it, and it was in my mouth like honey in sweetness.”

Heb. 6:5 speaks of those who “have tasted the good Word of God.” The more of God’s Word you put into your “belly” the more your seed of faith will be watered thus causing it to grow.

Feeding on the Word of God will bring joy to your heart as you put your trust in the Heavenly Father to bring the manifestation of all

His promises into your life.

Trusting God will bring you as much, if not more, joy and blessed fulfillment as you would get receiving from Him. There is an unsurpassed joy that comes on the journey of faith. This is a lesson David richly learned as evidenced in the words of Ps. 34:8, “Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good. Blessed is the man who trusts in Him.”

Prov. 2:1,4,5 says, “My son, if you will receive my words, and treasure my command within you, if you seek her as silver and search for her as for hidden treasure; then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God.”

You will never experience an increase to your faith until you develop a strong passion for God’s Word. The word “passion” is defined as ‘intense, extreme, ardent affection for, strong desire, fanaticism.’

The reason so many Christians are not enjoying God’s best is simply because they have not become a fanatic for the uncompromised Word of God. This is so vital because “faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God” ^{Rom. 10:17}.

“Your Words were found and I ate them.”

A PASSION FOR GOD'S WORD

Luke 10:38-42 tells the story about a young woman who had a “passion” for God’s Word. These verses tell about a time of refreshing Jesus spent in Bethany at the home of Lazarus and his sisters, Mary and Martha. This was not a home where Jesus was treated as a stranger but rather as a member of the family.

It seems that Martha was the owner of the house, and being the older sister was the dominate figure as well. While Martha busied herself with the distracting details of serving her guests, Mary instead chose to sit at the feet of Jesus in the recognized posture of a disciple, and listened to every precious word that her Lord had to say.

She had a “passion” for the Word and her actions depict the attitude of an eager learner, not wanting one morsel of truth spoken from the lips of Jesus to slip past her.

Troubled by her sister’s reluctance to help with the serving, Martha was filled with an inward anxiety, thus causing an outward response. Without thinking, she boldly and bluntly confronted Jesus and said, “Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore tell her to help me.’ And Jesus answered and said to her,

‘Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things.’”

Notice that worry and trouble always go together, and that you can never worry about just one thing. It was not Martha’s service that Jesus rebuked.

Her preoccupation with the preparation of an elaborate meal for Jesus and His disciples was a praiseworthy desire born out of a deep regard for her honored guest. Jesus’ rebuke was her over preoccupation with the material side of her duties, which caused her to have anxiety and a nervous distraction, which eventually led to her jealous outburst of temper.

Jesus continued, “**But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part which will not be taken from her.**” The lesson that is being taught here is that to be occupied “with” Jesus is more important than being occupied “for” Him. To devote oneself to the Word of God is more important than to be busy for Him. Jesus said that one good thing was needed. Not two. Not three. One!! And that good thing is to receive His Word and to treasure them in the deepest caverns of your heart.

*Trouble and worry
always go together.*

WORKING THE FAITH MUSCLES

Nobody has more faith than another. We all have the same amount of faith the same way; we all have the same number of muscles as a body-builder. Faith has no limits but, like the body-builder with his muscles, it too must be developed.

Great faith is developed faith and what you do with the measure of faith you receive at the new birth will determine its ability and activity in your life.

We are given by Peter a divine order in which to pursue and develop great faith. He tells us in 2 Peter 1:5, “But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge.”

Virtue, or moral excellence, must be added to your measure of faith. This means that when you get born-again, you must with all diligence make a conscious effort to get rid of all habitual sin from your life.

At the same time and with the same diligence, you must also strive to obtain a thorough knowledge of God’s Word. This is so vitally important and necessary because we need knowledge of the Word so our faith will know what to believe and confess. For example, how will we know that we can believe for heal-

ing and divine health unless we first know that “by His stripes you were healed” ^{1 Peter 2:24}?

It is a sad but undeniable truth that the majority of believers in the body of Christ today are not living in the fullness of all that God has for them, because of a lack of knowledge pertaining to His Word. God said through the prophet Hosea, “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge” ^{Hos. 4:6}. Notice that this verse does not say that a lack of knowledge will cause you to have a little inconvenience in life.

No, it says you will be destroyed!

A lack of knowledge is more than simply the result of neglect, but in the eyes of God is considered to be a criminal action. This is true, because when you reject the knowledge of the Word, you are in fact rejecting God.

We need to seriously think about these words from the book of Isaiah, “Therefore my people have gone into captivity, because they have no knowledge; Their honorable men are famished and their multitude dried up with thirst. Therefore Sheol has enlarged itself and opened its mouth beyond measure” ^{Is. 5:13,14a}. This is what it means to be destroyed for a lack of knowl-

Great faith is developed faith.

edge.

This only happens because most people are not willing to make the same sacrifices to increase their knowledge of God's Word, as the body-builder makes to develop and increase the size of his muscles.

HIDDEN TREASURES

Jesus once told a parable about a man who had a fanatical passion for the Word of God and was willing to make the ultimate sacrifice. He said, "the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for the joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys the field" ^{Matt. 13:44}. This verse reveals the diligence it takes to get the Word planted within you. Because the Word and the joy it brings was first place in this man's life, he went and sold all he had in order to obtain it.

Nothing should come between you and the time you spend in the Word. Notice also that the treasure is buried in the field. People who do not study the Word but only skim over it maybe once a week are only looking at the surface of the field. The richest mines are often in grounds that appear most barren.

Prov. 15:28a says, "The heart of the righteous studies how to answer..." The word "study" means,

- To apply the mind in acquiring knowledge,
- To examine and search into,
- To memorize,
- To follow a regular course of instruction.

Interestingly, the Greek word for "study" means 'to make an effort, to labor.' Know for certain that time and effort will be required in order to obtain the true riches that are buried in God's Word. Don't just read the Word, study it!

*The lack of knowledge
[of God] is considered
a criminal action.*

Prov. 4:20-22 says, "My son, give attention to my words; Incline your ear to my sayings. Do not let them depart from your eyes; Keep them in the midst of your heart; For they are life to those who find them and health to all their flesh."

SEEK AND FIND

Notice that the words of God are life to those who "find" them. You find the words of God by seeking them out in a consistent and diligent study of the holy scriptures.

Ps. 119:2 tells us, "Blessed are those who keep His testimo-

nies, who seek Him with the whole heart!” God gave His all to us in the person of Jesus Christ and it is now our responsibility, our obligation, and our privilege to give our all to Him.

We cannot seek God halfheartedly and expect to receive in return all the blessings that He has prepared for us. No, the verse says to seek Him with our “whole” heart, and when we diligently do that, we will develop within ourselves a deep, fanatical passion for God’s Word. Great faith will come when we can say with conviction the words of Ps. 119:127, “Therefore I love Your commandments more than gold, yes, than fine gold.”

Deut. 11:18 gives us these important instructions, “Therefore you shall lay up these Words of Mine in your heart and in your soul, and bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes.” For this to happen we must not only read and study the Words of God, but we must also learn to meditate on them.

Ps. 119:15,16 says, “I will meditate on Your precepts and contemplate Your ways. I will delight myself in Your statutes; I will not forget Your Word.”

Ps. 1:2 also says, “But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night.” The word “meditate” means ‘to ponder by talking to oneself.’ God told Joshua, “This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night...” Josh. 1:8a.

Meditation is a spiritual exercise and it means ‘to speak in a low tone with compressed lips, to murmur.’ If you say something often enough it will get planted down in your heart and as a result your faith will grow.

As you go through the normal routines of the day begin to quote the Word over and over again to yourself. Say out loud, “The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want... The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want...” This is what it means to meditate on God’s Word.

BUILD, INCREASE, RECEIVE

Meditation, therefore, will build your faith and will increase your ability to receive. Jesus said in Mark 4:23,24, “If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear. Take heed what you hear. With the same measure you use, it will be measured to you; and to him who hears, more will be

*Hearing the Word
governs receiving
from God.*

given.”

To develop great faith you must learn to listen, because hearing the Word governs receiving from God. Remember, “faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God” Rom. 10:17.

Listening to yourself speak God’s Word produces knowledge and knowledge produces faith. Therefore, the reward you receive will always be in direct proportion to the amount of time you spend hearing yourself speak God’s Word. It’s that simple.

For those who find studying the Word of God a burden, the first thing they should do is read all of Ps. 119.

This is the longest chapter in the Bible and rightfully it should be because in it the author does nothing but give praise to the holy scriptures and the value they have in one’s life.

Consider for example these verses:

“My soul clings to the dust; Revive me according to Your Word” Ps. 119:25.

“My soul melts from heaviness; Strengthen me according to Your Word” v. 28.

“Make me walk in the path of Your commandments, for I delight in it” v. 35.

“And I will delight myself in Your commandments, which I love” v. 47.

“I thought about my ways and turned my feet to Your testimonies. I made haste, and did not delay to keep Your commandments” vv. 59, 60.

“Teach me good judgment and knowledge for I believe Your commandments” v. 66.

“Forever, O Lord, Your Word is settled in heaven” v. 89.

“I will never forget Your precepts for by them You have given me life” v. 93.

“I have more understanding than all my teachers for Your testimonies are my meditation” v. 99.

“You are my hiding place and my shield; I hope in Your Word” v. 114.

“Your testimonies are wonderful; Therefore my soul keeps them” v. 129.

“Direct my steps by Your Word and let no iniquity have dominion over me” v. 133.

“Your Word is very pure, therefore Your servant loves it” v. 140.

“I rejoice at Your Word as one who finds great treasure” v. 162.

And finally, “Great peace have those who love Your law, and nothing causes them to stumble” v. 165.

*We must seek Him
with our “whole”
heart.*

To be led by the Word of God is the only guarantee we'll ever have for a victorious and prosperous life.

The writer of Ps. 119 got hold of this message when he penned these words, "Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" ^{v. 105} and "The entrance of Your Words gives light; It gives understanding to the simple" ^{v. 130}.

HUNGER & THIRST FOR THE WORD

The pursuit of faith is a result of having a hunger and thirst for the Word of God. Prov. 4:5,6 says, "Get wisdom! Get understanding! Do not forget, nor turn away from the words of my mouth. Do not forsake her and she will preserve you; Love her and she will keep you."

Ps. 63:1 describes a thirst David had for God when he was in the wilderness of Judah. "Oh God, You are my God; Early will I seek you; My soul thirsts for You; My flesh longs for You in a dry and thirsty land where there is no water." He goes on to say, "When I remember You on my bed, I meditate on You in the night watches" ^{Ps. 63:6}.

Ps. 119:148 says, "My eyes are awake through the night watches

that I may meditate on Your Word."

Verse 97 reveals the attitude of the heart which we should all strive to obtain, "Oh, how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day."

How often should we study and meditate on God's Word?
Early in the day!

Late in the evening!

In the middle of the night!

All day long!

*"My eyes are awake...
that I may meditate
on Your Word."*

THE SPIRIT OF FAITH

*"I believed and therefore I spoke,
we also believe and therefore speak.*

2 Cor 4:13

By far, faith is the most important subject in all of scripture. It is a Spiritual force given to us by God when we were born-again Rom. 12:3; Eph. 2:8. We are saved by faith and we are to live by faith Rom. 1:17.

The Christian life is a walk of faith and Gal. 6:10 says that all believers "are of the household of faith."

Faith is a journey and not a destination. It is a lifestyle that began in eternity past and will continue through the age in which we now live and into the eternal future.

The Greek word for faith is "pistas" and it means to have 'a firm persuasion or a conviction based on hearing.' Faith is the conviction of the reality of things not seen and is the title-deed to all the promises of God recorded in His Word Heb. 11:1. Faith calls those things that be not as though they

were Rom. 4:17, and continues to call them *until they are*.

Faith is a knowing that you know- that you know, and says "it is finished" before it sees the natural manifestation.



What many Christians do not know is that they do not need a lot of faith to move the hand of God. Jesus said nothing would be impossible to the person who had mountain-moving faith the size of a mustard seed Matt. 17:20.

Since God is a Spirit and we are a spirit, we can be assured that the fullness of God's faith is available to every believer, because God lives in us. The secret to getting our faith to work is not in the quantity of our faith but in learning how to release the faith we already have.

Jesus said in Mark 11:22 to “**Have faith in God**” or, as many teachers have taught, “**have the faith of God.**”

THE GOD-KIND OF FAITH

To see how the God-kind of faith works it is best to go back to the book of beginnings where it all began. Gen. 1:1 says, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” And how did God perform this miraculous display of power? By faith!

Heb. 11:3 says, “By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the Word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible.”

Gen. 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26 all begin with the same three words, “Then God said...” By faith God created the heavens and the earth by speaking words. God puts a high emphasis on words because they are the most important and most powerful things on this planet. This is true because people will believe whatever they hear themselves say. For example, God told Abram that one day his descendents would outnumber the stars in the sky and the sand on the seashore ^{Gen. 22:17}. To

build up the faith of this old man, God changed his name to Abraham which means “father of many nations.” Each time he spoke his new name, Abraham was openly declaring that he was the father of many nations. What he was doing was speaking the Word of God. He continued to do this until finally his faith was built up and Isaac, the son of promise, was born.

In another story, the Angel of the Lord called Gideon a “mighty man of valor” as he was threshing

wheat in a winepress while hiding from the enemy of the people of Israel, the Midianites ^{Judges 6:11,12}. As a result of this confession of faith,

Gideon later went on to defeat the Midianite army with only three hundred faithful men, and his name is now in the Hebrews 11 “Hall of Fame” of faith ^{Heb. 11:32}.

There is power in words spoken. Faith-filled words will overcome the law of sin and death ^{Rom. 8:2}. At the time of creation, the words God spoke gave the guidelines through which His faith went to work. Jesus was teaching us in Mark 11:22 to release our faith the same way God releases His faith. He went on to say in vs. 23, “**For assuredly I say to you, whoever says to this**

*People will believe
whatever they hear
themselves say.*

mountain, 'Be removed and be cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart but believes that those things he says will come to pass, he will have whatever he says." In other words, faith always has something to say.

THE POWER OF SPEECH

When the creation of the heavens and the earth was completed, God next created man in His own image and gave him the job of having dominion over all the earth ^{Gen. 1:26-28}. Since God rules the universe with words, so also did Adam use words to rule and have dominion over that which was entrusted to him.

Adam did not have to hoe a garden or use hay to get a horse to come to him. All he had to do was speak to them. Adam patterned himself after God, and until the time of the fall, used words to perform the calling on his life. Rom. 5:14 says that Adam was "a type of Him who was to come." Jesus is called "the second Adam" ^{1 Cor. 15:45}, and He also ruled with words.

When tempted in the wilderness by Satan, Jesus used the words "It is written..." ^{Matt. 4:4,7,10} and did

what the original Adam could have done in the same situation. Jesus understood the power of words and in John 1: 1,14 He is even called "the Word."

Throughout His earthly ministry, Jesus spoke words into people, storms, sicknesses, fish, a tree, and even into the dead. Jesus always prayed and spoke the end result. Jesus used words to release His faith and so also must we. Eph. 5:1 ^{AMP} says, "Therefore be imitators of God - copy Him and follow His example- as well-beloved children imitate their father."

In order to function in the God-kind of faith we must first come to understand

the importance of the words we speak. Jesus said in Matt. 12:37 ^{AMP}, "For by words you will be justified and acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned and sentenced."

The power of speech is one of the greatest powers God has given us. A person can choose their own destiny by the words they speak out of their mouth. Prov. 18:21 says, "Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit." When Christ walked the earth He was constantly

*God created man
in His own image...
giving him dominion
over the earth.*

measuring the faith of those around Him ^{Matt. 14:31; 15:28}. He did so by listening to the words they spoke. He did it then and He is doing it today.

WORDS KEEP NO SECRETS

Words are containers of faith. They paint pictures of faith. They paint pictures the same way an artist uses paint to express what's on the inside of him. Words can locate where a person stands by the way they speak.

Matt. 12:34b says, "For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks." We are artists with words. We have an image inside us and we turn it into reality by the words we speak. This being so, it only stands to reason that the words a born-again believer should commit to hearing themselves speak is the Word of God.

The good fight of faith is a fight fought with words. Paul told Timothy to "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses" ¹ ^{Tim. 6:12}. Christianity is a confession and Christ Jesus is the Apostle and High Priest of what we confess ^{Heb. 3:1}. Our confessions rule us, and our faith and lives are measured by the

words we speak. To make a confession means to declare openly by way of speaking freely, such confession being the result and effect of deep conviction of facts.

For the born-again Christian, confession was made unto salvation ^{Rom. 10:9,10}, and the same principle is used throughout our walk of faith. Salvation did not come to the repentant sinner until after confession was made. There is no such thing as salvation without confession which, for the believer, is making their words agree and line up with the Word of God.

*Confession means
"to say the same as."*

A person's faith will never grow beyond their confession, which is the affirmation of something they believe. Confession means "to say the same as." Faith's confessions create realities, and what we confess determines who we are and openly declares what or who we have faith in.

A daily confession of what the Heavenly Father means to us, what Jesus is doing for us now at the right hand of God the Father, and what the mighty Holy Spirit is doing in us, will build a solid, positive faith life. Jesus once told His murmuring disciples, "**The words that I speak to you are spirit and they are life**" ^{John 6:63b}.

THE FATHER: *THE AUTHORITY*

And what words did Jesus speak? He tells us in John 12:49,50, “For I have not spoken on My own authority; but the Father Who sent Me gave Me a command, what I should say and what I should speak. And I know that His command is everlasting life. Therefore, whatever I speak, just as the Father has told Me, so I speak.”

Jesus had great faith because He only spoke the words of the Father. He told Satan, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every Word that proceeds from the mouth of God”

Matt. 4:4. Just as Je-

sus always put the Words of His Father in His mouth, we must also do the same.

Is. 59:21 says, “As for Me,’ says the Lord, ‘this is My covenant with them; My Spirit who is upon you, and My Words which I have put in your mouth, shall not depart from your mouth, nor from the mouth of your descendants, nor from the descendant’s descendants,’ says the Lord, ‘from this time and forevermore.’”

There is spirit-life in every Word of God and, when we speak His Words, spiritual life and the God-kind of faith, is directed to and birthed within our own spirit. This

is how we follow Paul’s instructions to “lay hold on eternal life” ¹ Tim. 6:12. Rom. 10:17 says, “So then, faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.” You cannot hear something that is not spoken, and the child of God must realize that they will have more faith in what they hear themselves say, than in what they hear someone else say.

James 1:22 instructs us to “be doers of the Word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.” This verse implies that you cannot “do” the Word unless you first “hear” the

You cannot hear something that is not spoken.

Word. And how does one “hear” the Word? By listening to the words they hear themselves speak. God wants you to hear yourself speak His Word. “For faith comes by hearing...” Rom. 10:8 tells us that the “righteousness of faith” ^{v. 6} speaks these words, “The Word is near you, even in your mouth and in your heart (that is, the word of faith that we preach).” Faith always has something to say.

Notice also that the Word is in your mouth before it gets in your heart. It is in your mouth so that you can confess it continually until it gets down into your heart. This is what it means to make a “good confession” ¹ Tim. 6:12.

FROM THE MOUTH TO THE HEART

Having great faith is a simple concept. You put the Word of God in your mouth and confess it until it gets into your heart. Ps. 45:1 says, “My heart is overflowing with a good theme; I recite my composition concerning the King; My tongue is the pen of a ready writer.” This verse tells us that when we speak, we are writing on the tablets of our heart. Once the Word of God is in our heart, we turn right around and speak it out our mouths.

We confess what God’s Word says to produce faith in our hearts and then we speak faith-filled words out of the abundance of our heart to affect the situations of life that are round about us. When words are spoken from your heart, you will always get results.

Faith is a continuous cycle of speaking the Word into your heart and speaking it out again. Word in, Word out. When you speak out your mouth, you are making a withdrawal from what’s in your heart.

Always remember that a person is only committed to what they confess.

If, therefore, you desire to live a life

that is totally pleasing to God by getting your faith to work all the time, you must maintain a constant confession that is in line with the Word of God.

HAVE FAITH IN THE FAITH

Another important aspect in walking by faith is that you reach a point in your walk with the Lord where you develop *faith in your faith*. First and foremost you are to have faith in God, and because you do you can believe your faith will work just like He said it would. In order to do this you have to practice believing what you say and learn to have faith in the words you

hear yourself speak. Train yourself to believe what you say. A good example of this is found in the story of David and Goliath.

While standing in the presence of King Saul David spoke these faith-filled words, “The Lord, Who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, He will deliver me from the hand of the Philistine” ^{1 Sam. 17:37a}.

Upon receiving the approval of the king to go fight, David drew near to the giant Goliath and boldly proclaimed these words, “You come to me with a sword, with a spear, and

*“My tongue is the
pen of a ready
writer.”*

with a javelin. But I come to you in the Name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the Lord will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you and take your head from you” 1 Sam. 17: 45,46a.

Moments later the champion of the Philistine army lay dead just as David had proclaimed. Every person acts on what they believe in their heart, and David won a great victory for the people of Israel because he had *faith in the faith* that was in his innermost being. Faith is not moved by what it sees, and David knew that you do not ignore the negative circumstances that confront you. Instead, you change them by the power of God’s spoken Word and not your own ability.

Num. 14:28 says, “Say to them, ‘As I live,’ says the Lord, ‘just as you have spoken in My hearing, so I will do to you.’” God will do exactly as you say! This is why David confessed the outcome of the confrontation and then told Goliath “the battle is the Lord’s” 1 Sam. 17:47.

Indeed, there is power in the spoken Word of God when you have faith in your faith. A similar example is found in the story of the three Hebrew children who refused to fall

down and worship a golden image set up by King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon Dan. 3. These three faithful servants of the Most High knew it was better to obey God rather than man Acts 5:29.

When told by the king that they would face the penalty of being thrown into the midst of a burning fiery furnace they replied, “If that is the case, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king” Dan. 3:17.

Like David, the three Hebrew children confessed the outcome of the trial they were now facing. With bold confidence they proclaimed, “Our God will deliver us!”

STAND YOUR GROUND

A vital lesson to learn is, once your faith confession is spoken, let it remain said. Heb. 10:35 says, “Therefore do not cast away your confidence which has great reward.” Hold fast to the confession of your faith Heb. 4:14. When you have done this, like Timothy, you will have made a “good confession” and all the promises of God to you will be “Yes” and “Amen” 1 Cor. 1:20.

Jesus spoke to the fig tree and then went on His way without giv-

*Train yourself to
believe what
you say.*

ing it a second thought. This is what it means to have *faith in your faith*.

David and the three Hebrew children did this but, sad to say, an erroneous teaching is often taught concerning what these three men of faith said next. “But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up” Dan. 3:18.

It is wrongfully taught that these three men said that if God does not save them, let it be known that they still will not commit idolatry. This is not what this verse is saying. Confessing that God may possibly not save them is called “doubt” and for sure would have brought about their death.

James 1:6,7 says, “But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord.”

What these men were saying is “if or if not you throw us into the furnace, neither will we serve the golden image.” They did not consider for one moment that their God might not save them.

Words can work for you or against you, and the proof of what

was said is in the outcome of the situation. Dan. 3:25 tells us what happened when King Nebuchadnezzar looked into the furnace, “Look! I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire; and they are not hurt, and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.” The Hebrew word for “walking” in this verse means to ‘run, march, and twirl.’ What the king saw was a victory celebration going on, because the faith spoken by the three Hebrew children remained said, and as a result, brought about their miraculous deliverance.

*“But let him ask
in faith, with no
doubting...”*

Their faith “quenched the violence of fire” Heb. 11:34, because they knew in their heart when all was said and done, that they would come out victorious. They did not doubt, and because they stood firm in their faith, they were instantly promoted by the king in the province of Babylon. This all happened because they had *faith in their faith* and, if we will do the same, we also will live a victorious life.

LOCATE YOUR FAITH

The quickest way to locate your faith is to listen to yourself talk. If you will diligently do this you may be surprised at the things

that come out of your mouth. If wrong things are said, if anything that comes out of your mouth is contrary to the Word of God, then you will be “snared by the words of your mouth” ^{Prov. 6:2}.

Prov. 18:7 says, “A fool’s mouth is his destruction and his lips are the snare of his soul.” Remember, God will do exactly as you say and this is why we have to make sure that only faith-filled words proceed out of our mouth. A tongue that speaks doubt and fear “is a fire, a world of iniquity. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison” ^{James 3:6a,8b}.

Until the habit of making a good confession over your daily encounters becomes a manifested reality, until you are able to “call those things that be not as though they were,” it is a good thing to develop in your life the vocabulary of silence. David said, “I will guard my ways lest I sin with my tongue; I will restrain my mouth with a muzzle...” ^{Ps. 39:1}.

The story of a man who did not put a muzzle over his mouth is found in Luke 1:5-23. The time for the birth of the Messiah drew near and to prepare the people for His arrival, a forerunner first had to be born. The father of this forerunner was a priest named Zacharias, whose wife Elizabeth, was a descen-

dant of Aaron. One day, as Zacharias was burning incense in the temple of the Lord, the archangel Gabriel appeared to him and announced that his barren wife would give birth to a son who was to be called John.

MORE GOOD NEWS

The angel foretold that the child would be great in the sight of the Lord, and would be filled with the Holy Spirit even from his mother’s womb. The child would bring joy and gladness to his parents and many would rejoice at his birth.

Later called by Jesus as the greatest person up until that time to be born among women, besides Himself ^{Matt. 11:11}, there was a special calling on the life of this soon-to-be-born child, who later came to be known as John the Baptist. “And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah...to make ready a people prepared for the Lord” ^{Luke 1:16,17}.

The response of Zacharias to this great revelation proved that Prov. 21:23 had not yet found a special place in his heart, “Whoever guards his mouth and tongue keeps his soul from troubles.” Zacharias

“I will guard my ways lest I sin with my tongue.” -David

and his wife had been praying for a child ^{Luke 1:13}, but instead of being filled with joy and gladness at the news presented to him, the old priest instead spoke doubt and unbelief. “And Zacharias said to the angel, ‘How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is well advanced in years.’”

Because he was not “swift to hear” and “slow to speak” ^{James 1:19}, the angel Gabriel was forced to respond in this way, “I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, and was sent to speak to you and bring you these glad tidings. But behold, you will be mute and not able to speak until the day these things take place, because you did not believe my words which will be fulfilled in their own time.”

Zacharias had to be stopped from speaking doubt and unbelief, because his words had the power to interfere with God’s redemption plan for man.

Faith always has something to say, but so also does doubt and unbelief. That is why we should pray out loud the words of Ps. 141:3, “Set a guard, O Lord, over my mouth; Keep watch over the door of my lips.”

In contrast to what happened

to Zacharias, six months later Gabriel appeared to the virgin Mary and announced that she would be the person through whom the Son of God would make His entrance into the world. And what was Mary’s response?

“Then Mary said, ‘Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word.’ And the angel departed from her.” What a powerful proclamation of faith! “Let it be to me according to your word.” If we would confess that over all the promises of God, then there would be no limit as to what we could accomplish for the kingdom of God.

Not long after this angelic visitation Mary went to the home of her sister Elizabeth, who was filled with the Holy Spirit and heard these words spoken over her, “Blessed is she who believed, for there will be a fulfillment of those things which were told her from the Lord.”

It was the faith of this young virgin “who believed” that brought Jesus into the world, and it is easy to understand why Zacharias had to be silenced. There is no better example in all of scripture of the working of faith and in the importance of one’s words than in the story of Mary and Zacharias. Both heard the Word of

*Faith, doubt and
unbelief always have
something to say.*

the Lord. One doubted and spoke unbelief, while the other believed and as a result of her “good confession,” conceived within her womb the living Son of God!

It is also interesting to note the last words spoken by Gabriel to Mary before he departed, “For with God nothing will be impossible” ^{Luke 1:37}. Believing that, is the secret to all of life.

SORRY I MISSED YOUR CALL, GOD

I once heard a person say in the midst of their tribulation, “Ok God, what’s the lesson this time so I can hurry up and get on with my life?”

This individual saw his trials and short-lived troubles as two flat tires instead of a rough and bumpy road he was required to navigate. Too many times we as Christians focus a great deal on the trial, rather than the lesson within the trial and the Godly solution.

One of the captivating aspects of the Bible is we find men and women of God in much worse situations than we’ve ever thought of experiencing, and yet God talked to them and they listened, and they were saved from their tragedies. Sometimes we need to be painted into a corner in order to finally hear God’s voice. Sometimes we just need to run out of options, except the One.

In the book, *Taken By Storm*, the faith that overcomes the trials in our lives is explained, which by-the-way troubles aren’t always God’s ideas or the devil’s schemes. Far too frequently we bring trouble on ourselves through bad choices or carnal thinking. Many times we make decisions without checking with God first. But I can promise you He will get blamed, regardless.

If you’re in a situation with no way out and you’re at a loss as what to do, because all seems hopeless and you’re out on a limb with the wolves below waiting for you, guess what: *God is calling you!*

Answer Him.

“First, let me say *thank you* for Your saving grace. And now about my problem... I understand You have solutions. I’m listening.”



5

THE SHIELD OF FAITH

“Above all, taking the shield of faith.” Ephesians 3:16

A student in a Bible college was talking with one of his professors and was excited to tell his mentor how well his life was going, “When I first came here I was so tempted and tested I could barely keep my head above water. But now, praise God, my life at seminary has smoothed out. I’m not being tempted at all!”

The professor looked deeply alarmed and this was not the reaction the student was expecting. “That’s about the worst thing I could have heard,” he told the surprised student. “That shows me that you’re no longer in the battle! Satan isn’t worried about you anymore.”

are instructed by Paul to “Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil” Eph. 6:11.

The Message© Bible says, “God is strong, and He wants you strong. So take everything the Master has set out for you, well-made weapons of the best materials. And put them to use so you will be able to stand up to everything the devil throws your way. This is no afternoon athletic contest that we’ll walk away from and forget in a couple hours. This is for keeps, a life-or-death fight to the finish against the devil and all his angels.”

This equipment is called the armor of “God,” because He both

LIFE OR DEATH FIGHT

Since the enemy only opposes those who are the greatest threat to him, all those anointed by God should forever be prepared to confront spiritual attack. Because our adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour ^{1 Peter 5:8}, we



prepares and bestows it. We have no armor of our own that will be armor of proof on the day of battle. Nothing will hold up under the onslaught of the enemy but the armor of God.

Calling the day the devil attacks you an “evil day” ^{Eph. 6:13}, Paul goes on to list the various items of armor that the believer must put on in order to face and defeat the enemy.

1. THE TRUTH

He says in v. 14a to “Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth...”

Every piece of armor that the Roman soldier wore was fastened to his belt and this signifies that the foundation of all we do is to be based on truth. And what is truth? In Greek the word “truth” is defined as ‘the reality lying at the basis of an appearance; the manifested, veritable essence of a matter.’ In other words, truth is a growing knowledge and understanding of the scriptures and how they apply to life. Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life...” ^{John 14:6a}.

Jesus was the perfect expression of truth, not only in what He said but also in sincerity

and the integrity of His character. Jesus once said that the person who heard and accepted the truthfulness of His Word and trusted totally in Him was likened to a man who built his house on a rock ^{Luke 6:46-49}. When the storms came the house stood up against every attack and test, because it was built on a secure foundation.

On the other hand, the man who built his house on the sand and did not have a proper foundation, found that his house was swept away when the storm came.

The foundation of truth is that which agrees with final reality and the storms of life bring out into the open and prove what your foundation is.

In order to survive the storm and its various tests and trials we must first put on the belt of truth which means to wholeheartedly accept God’s Word and His faithfulness in the fulfillment of His promise as exhibited in Christ.

2. RIGHTEOUSNESS

Paul next says to “put on the breastplate of righteousness” ^{Eph. 6:14b}. The breastplate protects the heart and all the vital organs of the upper body. To win a war a soldier must be

The day the devil attacks you is an “evil day.”

well armed for battle, but if inwardly he has not a good heart, his armor will be of little use to him.

In the Bible the word “heart” represents the center of your innermost being which is your spirit. You are a spirit, you have a soul, and you live in a body. It is from your heart which faith proceeds and allows you to believe the Word of God.

Paul said in 1 Thess. 5:8 to put on the breastplate of faith and love. Faith and love make up the righteousness of God for by faith we are united to Christ and by love to our brethren. Jesus said in Matt. 6:33a, “But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness...” Righteousness is the character or quality of being right or just. It is that which conforms itself to the revealed will of God.

For the most part, righteousness can be defined as that gracious gift of God to man whereby all who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ are brought into a right relationship with God. The person who trusts in Christ becomes “the righteousness of God in Him” ^{2 Cor. 5:21}. In Christ, we become all that God requires us to be, all that we could never be in ourselves because of the bondage of

sin.

3. YOUR FEET

The next piece of armor we are to put on is found in Eph. 6:15, “and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace.”

The Amplified® Bible says, “And having shod your feet in preparation (to face the enemy with the firm footed stability, the promptness and the readiness produced by the good news) of the Gospel of peace.”

*The heart represents
the center of your
innermost being.*

Shoes, or greaves of brass, were part of the military armor of a fighting warrior ^{1 Sam. 17:6} and it's

purpose was to protect the feet from gall-traps and sharp sticks which were laid in the way in order to obstruct the marching of the enemy.

The gospel of peace enables us to walk with a steady pace in the way of the Lord without being hindered or overcome by the difficulties and dangers that may be on the path we are traveling.

To be ready for combat we must not be easily provoked nor prone to be quarrelsome. We must show gentleness and long suffering to all men and this will prevent many temptations and persecutions

from coming our way.

Prov. 15:1a says, “A soft answer turns away wrath” and Ps. 37:7 instructs us to “Cease from anger, and forsake wrath; Do not fret - it only causes harm.”

Webster’s dictionary defines “peace” as ‘an agreement to end hostilities’ and when Jesus calmed the storm He said, **“Peace, be still!”**

Mark 4:39

Peace is a fruit of the Spirit ^{Gal. 5:22} and it comes from Christ. Jesus said in John 14:27, **“Peace I leave with you. My peace I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”**

*Cease from anger,
and forsake wrath...
it only causes harm.*

Peace is the result of the spiritual prosperity that comes with a harmonious walk with God and is also the evidence of faith. If you are walking by faith you will have peace. Heb. 4:3a says, “For we who have believed do enter that rest...”

Peace is that sense of rest and contentment which comes when we believe that God is “able to do exceedingly, abundantly above all that we ask or think” ^{Eph. 3:20}.

4. SALVATION

In Eph. 6:17 we read, “And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.”

The helmet is that piece of armor that protects the head, and salvation must be our helmet.

To wear the helmet of salvation means to know that your salvation is absolutely secure and complete. Jesus said in John 10:27-29, **“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, Who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father’s hand.”**

Paul wrote in 1 Thess. 5:8 to put on “as a helmet the hope of salvation.” A well founded and well built hope will both purify the soul and keep it from being defiled by the enemy.

Isaiah 26:3 ^{AMP} says, “You will guard him and keep him in perfect and constant peace whose mind is stayed on You, because he commits himself to You, leans on You, and hopes confidently in You. So trust in the Lord - commit yourself to

Him, lean on Him, hope confidently in Him - forever; for the Lord God is an everlasting rock - the Rock of ages.”

A good hope will comfort the soul and keep our mind from being troubled and tormented by the storms that come our way.

The desire of the enemy is to attack our mind and tempt us to despair, but a good hope keeps us trusting in God and rejoicing in Him. Heb. 10:35 says, “Therefore, do not cast away your confidence which has great reward.” Hope, therefore, is the confident and favorable expectation of future good. It’s the blueprint of faith.

Jer. 29:11 says, “For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.” Hope is a goal setter and faith is the power to bring what is hoped for into manifestation.

Heb. 11:1a says, “Faith is the substance of things hoped for...” Many people, however, do not use their faith because in their minds they think their storms are bigger than God. It is for this reason that Paul tells us to “be transformed by the renewing of your mind” Rom. 12:2.

This comes about when we use the only offensive weapon in the armor of God called “the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God” Eph. 6:17.

5. THE WORD OF GOD

Heb. 4:12a says, “For the Word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword.”

The Amplified® Bible says the Word is “alive and full of power - making it active, operative, energizing and effective.”

Mans’ mind has been darkened by sin Rom. 8:7 and must be brought to the place where it thinks as God

thinks. To do this we must continually use the sword of the Spirit and say what God says.

This comes about when we study, meditate, feed on, practice, and confess the Word of God. In the wilderness Jesus resisted the temptations of Satan by saying, “It is written...” Matt. 4:4, 7, 10.

When you confess the Word over your storm, the enemy will flee and the rough waters and blowing wind will become peaceful and still.

In the sixth chapter of Ephesians, Paul strives diligently to per-

*Hope is the confident
and favorable expectation
of future good.*

suade his readers to put on the whole armor of God. Truth, righteousness, peace, salvation, and the Word are to be used in the warfare against the forces in the unseen world against which we are powerless except through the aid of Christ.

6. THE GREATEST DEFENSE

There is, however, one piece of armor which Paul seems to give special attention to. In vs. 16 he writes, “above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the enemy.”

The phrase, “above all” literally means ‘in addition to.’ All the armor is important but only this piece can extinguish and put out all the fiery darts of the evil one.

Storms such as disease, financial setbacks, condemnation, fear, and family problems are but a few of the woes that can be quenched with the shield of faith.

In our fight with the devil, we are not in a game of “*win a few, lose a few*.” In the game of life, we play until we win, and Christians everywhere need to develop within themselves a killer instinct when dealing with the devil. His sharp,

pointed arrows are real and they are aimed and shot at the born-again believer with the deadly intention to “kill, steal, and destroy” their life.

Since there is no armor for the back we must not expose ourselves by turning and running away when the enemy’s onslaught begins. In the good fight of faith we must walk headfirst into the storm with the shield of faith ever before us.

It is important to realize that this *shield of faith* is not a small round shield that is held on the arm by two narrow straps thus leaving many parts of the body exposed.

A Roman shield covered the whole body which the soldier could hide behind when the enemy shot their arrows at him.

The best warriors would have another person called an armor-bearer go before them with the shield, and when the onslaught began both would hide behind the shields’ wall of protection.

Likewise, your whole life is to be protected and shielded by faith. It doesn’t take much faith to receive from God, it just takes active faith. Faith is to be a way of living and not just something you use when you get into trouble.

*Man’s mind must
be brought to
the place when
it thinks as God
thinks.*

The born-again believer must...

*sit by faith,
sleep by faith,
eat by faith, and
walk by faith.*

The shield of faith must be kept in front of you at all times. Do not lay it down or sit it aside. Be consistent and take it with you wherever you go. Don't leave home without it.

Rom. 10:17 says, "So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God."

Maintaining a constant confession of what the Word says about you will keep the shield of faith before you at all times.

Do not lay down your shield of faith and wait until a problem arises before you confess the Word in that specific area. Use the shield of faith and confess what you have need of before you need it.

Faith is not to be used only when you get hit by an arrow. On the contrary, faith is to be used before the arrow leaves the enemy's hands. Notice also that the shield protects all the other armor which will not work outside of faith.

For example, Heb. 4:2 says this about the Word which is the belt of truth, "For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them, but the Word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it."

Another example is hope. Hope by itself is only a dream. Hope needs the substance of faith in order for it to do any good ^{Heb. 11:1}.

It also goes without saying that righteousness and peace also need faith before they will be of any benefit to the believer. All the pieces of armor are important to the believer, but for sure the shield of faith needs to be the first thing the enemy sees when he looks your way.

As Christians we are not of this world and the shield of faith is needed, because the world which we are in is involved in unbelief and is under the control of the devil.

1 John 5:19 ^{AMP} says, "We know positively that we are of God, and the whole world around us is under the power of the evil one." The evening news will reveal the negativity of this planet. This world always has a negative report, and all too often Christians pick up on this negative spirit and eventually they

*It takes
active faith to
receive from God.*

too just get plain negative.

Faith, on the other hand, always has a good report. Heb. 11:2 ^{AMP} tells us, “For by faith, and trust and holy fervor born of faith, the men of old had divine testimony borne to them and obtained a good report.” And what is a good report? It’s doing what God does and saying what God says in any given situation.

Faith is a relationship with Jesus, and since Jesus is the Word (John 1:1,14), then faith is a relationship with the Word.

A good report is when we confess faith-filled words based on the holy scriptures. Saying you are dying of cancer is a bad report, whereas confessing “By Jesus’ stripes I’m healed” ^{1 Peter 2:24} is a good report. Always confess that your cup is half full and not half empty.

Jesus said in John 8:31,32, “If you abide in My Word you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.”

Notice the phrase “you shall know the truth.” In the Bible the deep physical intimacy between husband

and wife is defined by the word “know.” Gen. 4:1a says, “Now Adam knew his wife and she conceived...” In order to walk victoriously one must likewise love the Word in the same way a man loves his new bride on their wedding night. They are so much in love and so devoted to one another that nothing could pull them apart or come between them.

Gen. 2:24 says, “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.” You too, must cling to and become united with the Word until the words of God are continually flowing out your mouth.

God told Joshua, “This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success” ^{Josh. 1:8}.

If you also will heed these words of instruction, then and only then will the Word be able to “make you free.”

*The shield of
faith needs to be the
first thing the enemy
sees when he looks
your way.*

6

THE EVIDENCE OF FAITH

*“But thanks be to God, Who gives us the victory
through our Lord Jesus Christ” 1 Cor. 15:57.*

In every fight there is a winner and a loser and in the good fight of faith “we are more than conquerors through Him Who loved us” Rom. 8:37.

GRATFULNESS EQUALS FAITH

Paul writes in 2 Cor. 2:14-16a, “Now thanks be to God Who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us manifests the fragrance of His knowledge in every place. For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing. To one we are the aroma of death to death, and to the other the aroma of life to life.”

God leads you to victory and the steps you take are steps of thankfulness. Giving thanks is the most powerful expression of faith there is and it increases your capacity to receive from God.

The Message® Bible states, “In the Messiah, in Christ, God leads us from place to place in one

perpetual victory parade. Through us, He brings knowledge of Christ. Everywhere we go, people breath in the exquisite fragrance. Because of Christ, we give off a sweet scent rising to God, which is recognized by those on the way to salvation - an aroma redolent with life. But those on the way to destruction treat us more like the stench from a rotting corpse.”

Through-out the Old Testament, priests were commanded to burn incense that would become a sweet fragrance in the nostrils of the Lord. This is what you will become when you develop a lifestyle of giving thanks unto His holy Name.



SPIRITUAL FRAGRANCES

Victory has a smell to it. You can smell the fragrance of victory. Spiritual things have a smell to them and so often we miss out on these vital truths because we're so caught up in the natural, physical world. You need to realize that God intends for His people to be fragrant, to have a heavenly odor radiating out of them, a sweet aroma that is pleasing to the Lord.

You are to smell like life, like victory. Giving thanks will cause a heavenly fragrance to radiate out of you. You can't smell this spiritual fragrance with your natural senses like you would perfume or cologne. No, this is a spiritual smell and it is not imaginary. It is real in the same way that God is spiritual and He is real.

How you smell can affect how well you feel and perform in life. You can smell like depression and defeat or you can smell like victory and newness of life.

It all begins with having a grateful heart that is forever giving thanks unto God. Saying "thank you" is more than a polite response. It's a powerful, spiritual force that will lead you to victory in the good fight of faith.

Giving thanks to God before the manifestation comes, is an expression of faith that releases the power and grace of God into your life.

Jesus set the example when He fed the multitude with five barley loaves and two small fish. John 6:11 states, "And Jesus took the loaves, and when He had given thanks He distributed them to the disciples, and the disciples to those sitting down; and likewise of the wish, as much as they wanted."

Along with giving thanks at the last supper, Jesus also gave thanks to the Father at the tomb of His dear friend Lazarus:

Victory has a smell to it.

"Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead man was lying. And Jesus lifted up His eyes and said, 'Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. And I know that You always hear Me, but because of the people who are standing by I said this, that they may believe that You sent Me.' Now when He had said these things, He cried with a loud voice, 'Lazarus, come forth!' And he who had died came out bound hand and foot with graveclothes, and his face was wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, 'Loose him, and let him go'" John 11:41-44.

THE SPIRIT OF THANKSGIVING

When Jesus encountered these afore mentioned problems, the first thing He did was give thanks to the Heavenly Father. This reveals to us that there is a divine connection between thanksgiving and victory.

Faith will always thank God for things it hasn't received yet. When faith is expressed God will pour out His grace into your situation to bring to pass that which you are believing for. You gain access to God's grace through words of thanksgiving.

Developing a lifestyle of giving thanks won't happen by itself. You must work at it, you must do it day and night, at work, at home, and at play. Make it a habit to say several times a day, "Thank You, Lord!"

Being thankful will keep you focused and connected to God. It's not faith if you wait until your prayer is answered, to thank God. No, thank Him before the manifestation. Let every problem and need you have be a reminder to thank Him more.

The devil is forever roaming around like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour ^{1 Peter 5:8}. He performs his evil schemes by offering to the weak and uninformed

alternate choices and lifestyles that are contrary to the will of God.

- The Lord offers us blessings and prosperity, whereas the devil brings cursings and poverty.
- The opposite of divine health is sickness and disease, and the great enemy of faith is doubt and unbelief.
- There is also an alternate lifestyle to thanksgiving and that is the devilish act of murmuring and complaining.

The root of these "profane and vain babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge" ^{1 Tim. 6:20} is self-pity.

1 Samuel tells the story of a woman anointed in this sometimes suicidal act of desperation and what she had to do to receive from God.

The Book of 1 Samuel describes the transition of leadership in Israel from judges to kings. Samuel was the last judge and first prophet and would be used by God to anoint Saul as the first king of Israel, and later David as the king-elect.

SELF-PITY IS TOXIC

Chapter one describes the

Being thankful will keep you focused and connected to God.

events leading up to his birth. His father's name was Elkanah "and he had two wives: the name of one was Hannah, and the name of the other Peninnah. Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children" ^{v.2}.

Elkanah loved Hannah more, but this brought no comfort to his grieving wife. "And her rival also provoked her severely, to make her miserable, because the Lord had closed her womb.

So it was, year by year, when she (Hannah) went up to the house of the Lord, that she (Peninnah) provoked her; therefore she wept and did not eat" ^{vv. 6,7}.

Hannah cried night and day and was almost suicidal. This is not right. There is no excuse to be this way. The Bible says to come boldly to the throne of grace, not sobbing. God wants to hear words of faith coming out of your mouth, not words of desperation. Hannah was feeling sorry for herself until finally her husband had enough of it. "Then Elkanah her husband said to her, 'Hannah, why do you weep? Why do you not eat? And why is your heart grieved? Am I not better to you than ten sons?'" ^{v.8}. Essentially what Elkanah was saying is that, if you don't thank God for what you already have, you can

lose it all and not receive from Him in the future. At no time did words of thanksgiving escape out of Hannah's lips and her tears of unbelief "limited the Holy One of Israel" ^{Ps. 78:41b}. If you're not thankful you will be unthankful, and waiting to give thanks is an act of unbelief.

"So Hannah arose after they had finished eating and drinking in Shiloh. Now Eli the priest was sitting on the seat by the doorpost of the tabernacle of the Lord. And she was in bitterness of soul, and

prayed to the Lord and wept in anguish" ^{vv. 9,10}. Silently Hannah made a vow unto the Lord that if He would give her a male child, she would give him back to the Lord to be His servant all the days of his life.

Still no comfort came to her heart, and so sorrowful was she when the vow was made that the priest who watched her thought she was drunk. "And Hannah answered and said, 'No, my lord, I am a woman of sorrowful spirit. I have drunk neither wine nor intoxication drink, but have poured out my soul before the Lord'" ^{v.15}.

Upon hearing Hannah's explanation, Eli the priest sent her away and said the Lord would grant

*God wants to hear
words of faith coming
out of your mouth.*

her petition. Hannah heard from the Lord and verses 18b-20a shows the Biblical way to receive from Him...

“So the woman went her way and ate, and her face was no longer sad. Then they rose early in the morning and worshipped before the Lord, and returned and came to their house at Ramah. And Elkanah knew Hannah his wife, and the Lord remembered her. So it came to pass in the process of time that Hannah conceived and bore a son, and called his name Samuel...”

As long as Hannah wept and was sorrowful, she did not receive the answer to her prayer. But when the wailing stopped, and along with her husband she began to worship and thank the Lord, then and only then was she able to conceive the son she so desperately wanted.

Samuel grew up to be one of the greatest prophets in all the Bible, but he may not have even been born had his mother not stopped feeling sorry for herself.

Jesus was once encouraged to bask in self-pity, and His stern rebuke when this happened should be a wake-up call to those desirous to walk by faith.

We read in Matt. 16:21-23, “From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day. Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, ‘Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You.’ But He turned and said to Peter, **‘Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.’**”

*“Get behind Me, Satan!
You are an
offense to Me.”*

The phrase, “far be it from You,” literally means ‘pity yourself,’ and Satan was using Peter to get Jesus to think about Himself and fall into the snare of self-pity.

The timing of Peter’s rebuke could not have come at a worse time. It happened shortly prior to the Lord’s trial in the Garden of Gethsemane where He fought the temptation to have self-pity and quit. His soul was exceedingly sorrowful, even to the point of death, and He fell on His face, and prayed, saying, **“O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will”** Matt. 26:38,39.

Because of the sin of mankind

that He was about to carry to the cross, Jesus knew He would be separated from and forsaken by the Father and this is what made the struggle so severe.

The temptation Jesus faced was whether or not to be led by His feelings and this is precisely what Peter wanted Him to do. The salvation of sinful man was dependent on the Lord winning this battle, thus the harshness of the Lord's rebuke to Peter.

Never feel sorry for yourself. One of the most destructive things you could do is submit to self-pity. This is pride, selfishness, and unbelief, and will cause you to be cut off from the grace of God.

A person who feels sorry for themselves is never thankful, because they feel they deserve whatever is due them. Grace is given to the humble and not to those who think they deserve it.

The main characteristic of a humble person is they are always giving thanks unto God. God "gives us richly all things to enjoy" ^{1 Tim. 6:17} and the humble receive this grace as a personal gift from God. Thanksgiving and grace go hand in hand, so never say that you

deserve anything. Instead, cultivate a lifestyle of thanksgiving and experience victory every day of your life. The more thankful you are, the more the grace will flow.

There is a story in the Bible about a wealthy man who thought he deserved everything even to the exclusion of others.

King Ahab was the husband of the wicked Queen Jezebel and 1 Kings 21 tells the story of how he wanted to own a personal vineyard

next to his palace that belonged to Naboth the Jezreelite. This particular vineyard was Naboth's inheritance from his forefathers and he refused to sell

it to the king. "So Ahab went into his house sullen and displeased because of the word which Naboth the Jezreelite had spoken to him; for he had said, 'I will not give you the inheritance of my fathers.' And he lay down on his bed, and turned away his face, and would eat no food" ^{v.4}.

Ahab was the king and had everything a person could possibly want. He had great wealth and an abundance of land. He had soldiers to fight for him and servants to grant his every wish. Still, he was unthankful for the things he did have and thought he deserved more.

One of the most destructive things you could do is submit to self-pity.

Proverbs 27:20 states, “Hell and Destruction are never full; So the eyes of man are never satisfied.” If a person is not thankful for what they already have, the more they’ll want. They falsely believe they deserve more and will not be satisfied until they obtain even that which belongs to another. Eccl. 5:10 says, “He who loves silver will not be satisfied with silver; Nor he who loves abundance, with increase. This also is vanity.”

SELF-PITY IS A DANGEROUS THING

...and before long an evil plot was made to bring false charges against Naboth for which he would be stoned to death. This plot was devised by Jezebel when she went into her husband’s chamber and fed his self-pity. “But there was no one like Ahab who sold himself to do wickedness in the sight of the Lord, because Jezebel his wife stirred him up” v. 25.

Verses 12-16 tell us the details of this evil plot, “They proclaimed a fast, and seated Naboth with high honor among the people. And two men, scoundrels, came in and sat before him; and the scoundrels witnessed against him, against Naboth, in the presence of the people, say-

ing, ‘Naboth has blasphemed God and the king!’ Then they took him outside the city and stoned him with stones, so that he died. Then they sent to Jezebel, saying, ‘Naboth has been stoned and is dead.’ And it came to pass, when Jezebel heard that Naboth had been stoned and was dead, that Jezebel said to Ahab, ‘Arise, take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, which he refused to give you for money; for Naboth is not alive, but dead.’ So it was, when Ahab heard that

Naboth was dead, that Ahab got up and went down to take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite.”

An innocent man died because Jezebel fed Ahab’s self-pity. The only thought in the mind of her self-centered husband was that he deserved what belonged to another man.

The favorite subject of the carnal mind in one’s self and Rom. 8:5a states, “For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh...” The difference between carnal people and spiritual people is what’s on their mind.

The Message® Bible tells us in verses 8-9, “Obsession with self in these matters is a dead end; at-

If a person is not thankful for what they already have, the more they [will] want.

tention to God leads us out into the open, into a spacious, free life. Focusing on the self is the opposite of focusing on God. Anyone completely absorbed in self ignores God, ends up thinking more about self than God. That person ignores Who God is and what He is doing. And God isn't pleased at being ignored."

So what should Hannah and Ahab have done instead? They should have realized that faith works through love, and so also does thanksgiving. Peninah had her children and Naboth had his vineyard, so words of praise and thanksgiving should have flowed out of their innermost being. Love cares about the other person, and spiritual maturity comes when you can be thankful when another person is blessed.

Rom. 12:15a tells us to "Rejoice with those who rejoice..." and v.14b says "bless and do not curse." How you treat other people reveals how thankful you are for what the Lord has already done for you. Therefore, never be envious or jealous, but forever strive to obey the words of the Apostle Paul recorded in Eph. 5:20, "giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."

When evil thoughts cloud your mind and prevent you from giving thanks unto God, then special attention must be given to the words of the Apostle Paul recorded in 2 Cor. 10:3-5, "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not [what] was according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ."

*Focusing on the self
is the opposite of
focusing on God.*

This is what Jesus was doing when He rebuked Peter. Peter was trying to put an image on the inside of Jesus and He sternly cast it down. This is what Adam and Eve should have done to the serpent in the Garden of Eden.

We don't receive from God according to His power or what His will is. We receive by faith and faith is expressed with praise and thanksgiving.

When you are unthankful, there is a void inside of you and something bad will fill it. Thoughts of jealousy, envy, hatred, and self-pity will try to enter in whose only objective is to destroy your life.

Joseph's brothers were envious

and it led to bitterness and hatred. They didn't know that love envies not, and if another member is honored then all the members should rejoice with him ^{1 Cor. 13:4;12:26b}.

BE THANKFUL, GRATEFUL

Always give thanks unto God both for what He is doing in your life and in the lives of others. This will give you access to God's grace and Col. 1:12 states, "giving thanks to the Father Who qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light."

To be "thankful" means 'to be grateful, to acknowledge, to remember.' David wrote in Ps. 103:2, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits." When you remember all that God has already done for you, praises of thanksgiving will flow out of you. "Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His Name" ^{Heb. 13:15}.

Acknowledge when the Lord does something good for you, express it, tell it, and give thanks for it.

Thanksgiving is an exercise in true humility and will qualify you for greater grace.

Also, "let your conduct be without covetousness, and be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you'" ^{Heb. 13:5}. If you are not thankful and content now, you won't be later.

GOD'S VIEW ON THANKSGIVING

A story recorded in Luke 17 reveals to us the Lord's attitude on the subject of thanksgiving. "Now it happened as He went to Jerusalem that He passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee. Then as He entered a certain village, there met Him ten men who were lepers, who stood afar off. And they lifted their voices and said, 'Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!' So when He saw them, He said to them, '**Go, show yourselves to the priests.**' And so it was that as they went, they were cleansed" ^{vv. 11-14}.

According to Old Testament law, you go and present yourself to the priest after you're healed, not before. When these lepers left to go to the priest they were not yet clean. They acted in faith and as they went, they were cleansed.

"Now one of them, when he

*Acknowledge [Him]
when the Lord does
something good
for you.*

saw that he was healed, returned, and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on his face at His feet, giving Him thanks. And he was a Samaritan. So Jesus answered and said, **‘Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine? Were there not any found who returned to give glory to God except this foreigner?’** And He said to him. **‘Arise, go your way. Your faith has made you whole’** vv. 15-19.

It is commonly taught that a leper who is cleansed means that the disease has stopped growing and no longer eats away the skin of the person. However, the dead skin is still there. A leper who is made whole, however, means that the skin that has rotted away gets restored to its original condition. This is what happened to the man who returned to glorify Jesus and give Him thanks. Thanksgiving qualified this man for greater grace.

The message to be learned here is that you can thank your way out of darkness into the light, out of defeat and into victory. When you give thanks your bondage will be turned into liberty, your poverty into plenty, and your sickness into health.

Thanksgiving is giving glory to God and magnifying His holy Name. David wrote in Ps. 69:30, “I will praise the name of God with a song, and will magnify Him with thanksgiving.” You can thank your way out of any problem you have or you can bask in self-pity and murmur and complain your way into a life of defeat and victory.

The choice is yours. Never let the Lord say of you, “Where are the other nine?”

You can thank your way out of any problem you have.

THE TIMING OF FAITH

“My times are in Your hands.” Ps 31:15a

Paul wrote in 1 Cor. 16:9, “For a great and effective door has opened to me, and there are many adversaries.”

The Message® Bible says, “There is also mushrooming opposition.”

He went on to say in 1 Thess. 3:3,4 “that no one should be shaken by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we are appointed to this. For, in fact, we told you before when we were with you that we would suffer tribulation, just as it happened, and you know.”

When you rise up and set your heart like flint to fulfill the call of God on your life, then you can be certain opposition will come. The Lord said this about the Apostle Paul, “...he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My Name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My Names’ sake.”

All this opposition should not cause you to give up and walk away, but

instead to rise up with a holy determination to do that which the Lord wants you to do. Even Paul said in Phil. 3:7-9a, “But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for Whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him...”

PRESS ON, NEVER GIVING UP

How did Paul respond to all the trials and opposition in his life? Verses 13b-15a says, “but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Therefore let us, as many as



are mature, have this mind..."

What did Paul do? He pressed on! He never gave up and he kept going forward. He then told those who are mature to do the same thing. In Phil. 4:1 he said to "stand fast in the Lord." This means you never give up in the face of opposition.

Remember, being a servant of God is not for the weak hearted, and it is only those who finish the race that receive the prize.

NOW FAITH

Ps. 34:19 says, "Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all." God tells us "what" He is going to do in our lives, but rarely does He tell us "when" He's going to do it. Why is this so? It's because He wants us to keep pressing on. If He told us the answer was soon forthcoming we'd be tempted to slack off in our good fight of faith, and if He revealed we'd be in this season of affliction for a long time to come, we may get discouraged and quit. Not knowing "when" the breakthrough will come keeps hope alive and Heb. 11:1 says, "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

Faith is our handle on what

we can't see and v.6 says that without faith it is impossible to please God. David wrote in Ps. 31:14,15, "But as for me, I trust in You, O Lord; I say, 'You are my God.' My times are in Your hand; Deliver me from the hand of my enemies, and from those who persecute me." He told God "what" he wanted - deliverance from his enemies - but he left the decision of "when" this would happen in the hands of God.

He said, "My times are in Your hand." We must accept God's timing to have peace.

*An attitude of hope
and expectancy grows
only under trial.*

- *Without peace,
there is no
joy.*

- *Without joy, there
is no strength.*

- *Without strength, there is no
breakthrough.*

Let's face it, everybody waits. Waiting is a fact of life and we're all going to do it.

- Moses waited 40 years on the backside of the desert;
- Caleb waited 45 years to get his mountain;
- Abraham waited 25 years for the birth of Isaac;
- Joseph waited 14 years for the fulfillment of his dream, and

- David ran and hid from the evil King Saul for 13 years as he waited to be made king over all of Israel.
- Job, Ruth, and Esther all waited on God to move in their lives.
- Even today Jesus is waiting for His enemies to be made His footstool.

PATIENCE WORKS PERFECTION

As you can see, everybody waits. If the truth be told, we spend more time waiting than we do receiving. For the rest of our lives we'll have to deal with things for which we'll be required to wait. Like it or not, this is the lifestyle we are all required to live. We are always going to have to wait for something so we better get used to it. So, we can do it the right way or we can do it the wrong way. Either way, we're still going to have to wait.

If you do it the wrong way you're going to be miserable, and if you do it the right way you'll live a happy, victorious life. Yes, good things come to those who wait properly. The Bible says that it is through faith and patience that we inherit the promises of God ^{Heb. 6:12},

which of course, includes our much needed breakthrough.

Patience is so important that God is called in Rom. 15:5 “the God of patience and comfort.” Notice that when you wait properly, your life will be filled with comfort.

Understand that patience is not the ability to wait. It's how you act while you wait. It's an attitude of hope and expectancy and it grows only under trial. God determines the timing of things in our life and we chose the attitude.

Waiting is a fact of life and we're all going to do it.

We all need to wait on God with a good attitude. As you endure the trials of life with a good attitude, patience is given and developed. The more you wait the better your patience will be.

James 1:4 says, “But let patience have it's perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.” That's a powerful promise!

The Message® Bible says, “So don't try to get out of anything prematurely. Let it do it's work so you become mature and well-developed, not deficient in any way.”

We read in vs. 12, “Anyone who meets a testing challenge head-on and manages to stick it out is

mighty fortunate. For such persons loyally in love with God, the reward is life and more life.”

ATTITUDE IS EVERYTHING

Wait with a good attitude and don't murmur and complain. You don't have patience if you have a bad attitude. We should not shun patience but instead should embrace it as if it were our best friend.

Jesus said, “In your patience possess your souls” ^{Luke 21:19}. One way to possess your soul is to understand that God is different from us. He sees things and does things in a way that is different from our choosing and understanding. Is. 55:8,9 says “For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,” says the Lord. “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts.”

God made us in His image, but since the fall in the Garden of Eden, man has set out to do things his own way. As evidenced in scripture and each of our own private lives, things almost never turn out the way we want then to when we get stubborn and insist on doing things according to how we want them done. Thankfully God, in His

infinite mercy, sent Jesus to earth for the purpose of getting man back on track and in line with God's perfect will.

In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus set the example for all of us to follow when He prayed “... **nevertheless, not My will but Yours be done**” ^{Luke 22:42b}. In the Lord's prayer Jesus taught us to pray to the Father and say, “**Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven**” ^{Matt. 6:10}.

Later in the same chapter He tells us what we must do in order to transfer the priority of doing things our way to the submissive action of allowing God to have His way in our lives. Matt. 6:33a says, “**But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness...**” What does it mean to “seek first the kingdom of God”? It means to seek God's way of doing things.

“Do not forget this one thing...”

UNDERSTANDING TIME

Remember, His ways are above our ways. There are certain things involved with Christian growth and development that if not understood, can cause a believer to get discouraged and walk away from their faith. One of these areas is the subject of time. 2 Peter 3:8 says, “But beloved, do not forget this one

thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day.”

Notice the importance Peter puts on us learning this concept. He says “do not forget this one thing...” What he is saying must therefore be important. A similar passage of scripture is found in Ps. 90:4, “For a thousand years in Your sight are like yesterday when it is past and like a watch in the night.” These scriptures verify that God does not see time in the same light as people do.

For example, in Rev. 22:7a Jesus said, “Behold, I am coming quickly!” This was spoken two thousand years ago and Jesus calls this time frame “quickly”.

Here is another example.

After the rapture of the church, all believers will attend a reward ceremony called “The Marriage Supper of the Lamb,” which will take place during the seven year tribulation period on earth. The deeds of all believers will be reviewed at this time and rewards will be given out for service done unto the Lord during one’s lifetime.

It has been estimated that if each believer stood before the Lord for only one minute, this ceremony would still take thousands of years

to complete. But in time as we know it, the event will take place in seven short years.

These scriptures make it clear that what time means to God and what it means to people are as opposite as night and day. It would benefit us all to search the scriptures and seek out God’s way of measuring time and apply the same principle to our every day lives.

Man measures his existence on planet earth in quantities of time commonly known as seconds, minutes, hours, days, weeks, months, years, decades, centuries and millenniums, whereas God measures time in seasons. Eccl. 3:1 says, “To everything there is a sea-

son, a time for every purpose under heaven.” Webster’s dictionary defines “season” as ‘a time characterized by a particular circumstance or feature.’ A season also has a beginning and an end. In nature there are four seasons that we go through in a calendar year. There is winter, spring, summer and fall. Each one has particular features and different characteristics from the others, but it is important that we go through each and every season.

Likewise, in the realm of the Spirit it is also important that we

*Christian maturity
is developed and
not received.*

experience all of God's seasons and go through the different things we go through, so that we develop and grow and mature properly in the things of God. Some things just don't happen instantly in the Christian life.

Christian maturity is developed and not received and this takes time. Yes, you do receive the fruit of the Spirit when you get born-again, but none of these qualities begin to operate fully and automatically when you get saved. These are developed and this takes time. It takes growth and this is a process.

Any farmer will testify that in order to receive a crop from his efforts, the seeds he sows must go through a planting season, a watering season, a growth and development season, and finally there is the harvest season. All these seasons have different characteristics and features that surround the different stages of growth that the plant is in. A full-grown plant doesn't mature instantly, therefore, it is vitally important for that plant to go through each and every season in its growth and development.

It is the same way with those in the body of Christ. 2 Cor. 6:2 tells

us, "For He says, 'In an acceptable time I have helped you.' Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation."

There was a time when people could not get born-again, because Jesus had not come to earth yet. There was a time for Jesus to come, a season for Him to walk the earth.

Thankfully, now is the time. Today is the day of salvation. You can get saved now, healed now, and delivered now. At the same time we are told in Phil. 2:12b to

"work out your own salvation with fear and trembling."

The Word must be planted and given time to grow. Since

God is a "now" God, people think that if the answer to their prayer is not manifested immediately, then something is wrong. This is not necessarily so. There is a process of time involved in walking in the things of God. The Bible says it is through faith and patience that we inherit the promises of God ^{Heb. 6:12}.

Patience is a vital ingredient in the walk of faith and is only developed by remaining strong and steadfast in the season of tests and trials ^{James 1:2-4}.

If things are not going right for you at this time, then you can

Don't forget, every season has a beginning and an end.

rejoice knowing that your time of trial is but for a season. And don't forget, every season has a beginning and an end. With confidence you can look at your problem and say, "This, too, shall pass."

With every Godly principle that you try to inhabit into your life, comes with it a season of testing and growth. God will take you through different seasons that will have particular features designed to change your life into His image. Learn to recognize the seasons in your spiritual life. Many times you'll grow rapidly, but other times you'll go through a longer period of stabilizing and growth.

*With God, a delay is
not a denial.*

With God a delay is not a denial. When He wants to make a mushroom, He does it overnight, but when He wants to make a giant oak tree He takes a hundred years.

The best things in life take time.

You gave your life to God, now give Him your time also. Pray as the psalmist did in Ps. 31:15a, "My times are in your hand..." Then stand back and watch the blessings come.

THE CRUCIBLE OF FAITH

"In the world you will have tribulation." John 16:33

Did you know that there is a way to tell how strong you are in the Lord? There is. If you want to know how much you weigh, you go step on a scale. Right? If you want to know how tall you are you go get a tape measure. If you want to know how strong you are physically you go to the weight room and see how many pounds you can lift over your head. But what about spiritually? How can you tell how strong you are spiritually? The answer is found in the trials we face.

God promises that there will be no trial in our life that we can't overcome.

In other words, we are stronger in the Lord than anything the devil throws our way. A baby Christian will have "baby" trials. As one grows in the Lord, the trials also will grow and increase. "New level, new devil." So if you're having big, hard trials then that means you are big and strong

spiritually. A baby Christian can defeat and overcome baby trials, and a strong Christian can have a breakthrough over strong trials.

God says that in Him we are all stronger than any trial that comes our way. And it's the size and intensity of the trial that indicates how strong you are spiritually.

During those times when it seems like your world is falling apart, then rise up and rejoice, because in Jesus you are stronger and mightier than that trial.

Hallelujah!

SPIRITUAL STRENGTH METER

A trial is your "strength



indicator.” Don’t fret or worry during hard times. Rejoice! The enemy just showed you how strong you are in the Lord. If it’s a big trial then say, “Thank you, devil, for recognizing how strong I am in the Lord.”

Yes, there is a limit on how much he can attack you. He cannot attack you beyond your level of spiritual strength.

You cannot be overcome by the enemy unless, of course, *you let him*. Daily confess out loud, “Greater is He that is in me than he that is in the world.” ^{1 John 4:4}

Paul tells us what to do when trials come knocking on our door. Eph. 6:16 says, “above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.”

Faith is taught throughout the Bible and is the thread of the fabric of God’s Word. It is a spiritual force that is established in the heart and is based on the Word of God. It is a substance from heaven that like the wind, cannot be seen, but the results thereof can be.

- Faith is everlasting in its nature and eternal in its operation and use.
- Faith is the ability to believe

what you have heard, yet have not seen, based solely on your confidence in the speaker.

- It means to have confidence in the testimony of another. The obvious question to be asked then is, “Who’s doing the speaking?” Is the person speaking reliable and dependable? God is!

Mal. 3:6a says, “For I am the Lord, I do not change.”

- Faith, therefore, means to have a confidence in the absolute truthfulness of every word that comes from the mouth of God.

The devil cannot attack you beyond your level of spiritual strength.

SPIRITUAL METER READING

The level of your faith is determined by how well you trust the Creator of the universe. The basis of that trust begins with a thorough knowledge of God, Who is revealed in and throughout His Holy Word. The more you read and study the Bible the greater you will come to know Him, thus increasing your potential for faith.

Daniel, for instance, had more knowledge of God than he did of lions. Three times a day he diligently knelt before the Heavenly Father and communed with the King of

kings and Lord of lords. As a result of this, Daniel had a God Who was larger than all the lions in the world. The more you know somebody and see what their character is, like the more you'll be willing to put your trust in them and what they say.

GOD HAS NO RESTRICTIONS

Trusting in the Lord, therefore, is a sure thing because He is an absolute. He never changes. People everywhere, no matter who they are, have the capability of letting you down. This is not so with God.

- God is love ^{1 John 4:8} and,
- Love never fails ^{1 Cor. 13:8}.

When we put our trust in the Lord we soon discover that He is more than worthy of our confidence. Every human being is born into the world with the ability to exercise a natural kind of faith. People crave for the opportunity to put their trust in someone other than themselves.

People want to believe, they need to believe. They want to be able to put their confidence in someone that will not let them down or bring disappointment to their lives. The problem is they believe in people who are always changing and going

through various mood swings, thus are not always dependable. Still, people continue to believe in them because they are tangible and can be related to with the five physical senses. You can "see" your doctor or the mechanic down the street who promises to have your car repaired by the end of the day, but rarely does.

True Biblical faith, however, is to believe in the unseen. *Natural* faith says "I'll believe it when I see it" whereas *Biblical* faith says "You'll

see it when you believe it." You cannot please God by believing what you can see. Even the heathen do that.

In reality, natural faith is nothing more than wishful thinking. The God kind of faith, to be sure, is not based on feelings or the five physical senses, but on the written and revealed Word of God.

A familiar passage of scripture concerning faith is Rom.10:17, "So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God."

To better understand faith and how it comes and how it works, one must go back to their first encounter with faith, the day they got born-again. Rom. 10:8-10 says, "But what does it say? 'The Word is

*"So then faith comes
by hearing, and
hearing by
the Word of God."*

near you, even in your mouth and in your heart (that is, the word of faith which we preach): that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes to righteousness and with the mouth confession is made to salvation.”

THE MECHANICS OF FAITH

This is how faith comes and works.

1. You hear the Word by confessing it out loud with your mouth.
2. Eventually, if you will do this long enough, you will come to believe in your heart those same words you’ve been hearing yourself speak.
3. The moment you do, the exact moment you believe in your heart what you’ve been confessing with your mouth, God will bless you by giving you the faith you need to receive from Him that which you’ve been believing for. *It’s that simple.*

Eph. 2:8 says, “For by grace you have been saved through faith,

and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God.”

What is the gift of God? Faith!

Rom. 12:3 says that “God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.” It goes without saying that whoever gives a gift must first own and possess the gift before they can give it away. The faith God gifts you as a gift is the same faith that He possesses! It’s His faith! Hallelujah!

1 John 5:4 says, “For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world - our faith.” The faith you now have

as a born-again believer is “born of God,” and is the same faith God used to create the universe. This is what is meant by saying faith is a heavenly substance ^{Heb. 11:1}. It comes from heaven! It comes from God! It’s His faith and He gives it to you as a gift when you believe.

GOD IS A RESPONSIBLE GOD

If giving us His faith were not enough, God has also taken on the responsibility of performing His Word when the believer applies their faith to any given situation.

*People crave for the
opportunity to put their
trust in someone other
than themselves.*

God is faithful and the integrity of the Lord is unquestionable to those who know Him.

Num. 23:19 says, “God is not a man that He should lie, nor a son of man that He should repent. Has He said, and will He not make it good?” Faith is when you trust God enough to believe that He will perform that which He promised in His Word.

Jer. 1:12 says, “Then the Lord said to me, ‘You have seen well, for I am ready to perform My Word.’” Abraham, the father of our faith, had a strong conviction in his heart concerning the faithfulness of God to perform His Word. Rom. 4:20,21 says, “He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith giving glory to God, and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform.”

In other words, God has given us His personal guarantee that He will cause to happen whatever it is we are believing Him for, based solely on the Word of God.

Our faith moves the hand of God “Who is able to do exceedingly above all that we ask or think” ^{Eph. 3:20}. The Amplified® Bible says God will “do super-abundantly, far over and above all that we dare ask or

think - infinitely beyond our highest prayers, desires, thoughts, hopes or dreams.” This is what is meant when Jesus is called “the finisher of our faith” ^{Heb. 12:2}. We do the believing and He does the performing. Plus, it’s His faith! What more could anyone ask?

We must forever be armed with the shield of faith, because without exception tests and trials come into the lives of every born-again believer. Oftentimes they come when you least expect it, when everything seems to be going good for you. They come and will continue to come until we all go home to be with the Lord.

Tests and trials are not easy and were never meant to be.

Jesus said, “**In the world you will have tribulation, but be of good cheer for I have overcome the world**” ^{John 16:33}. Since tests and trials will always come our way, the attitude we have when they do come and what we decide to do about them, will be the deciding factor as to whether or not we live a victorious Christian life.

Tests and trials are not easy and were never meant to be. They do, however serve a purpose. Jer. 9:7 ^{AMP} says, “Therefore, thus says the Lord of hosts, ‘Behold, I will melt them by the process of affliction to remove the dross and test them;

for how else should I deal with the daughters of My people?"

Ps. 66:10-12 tells us, "For You, O God, have proved us, You have refined us as silver is refined. You brought us into the net, You laid affliction on our backs. You have caused men to ride over our heads; we went through fire and through water, but You brought us out to rich fulfillment."

IN THE FIRE IS STRENGTH

The Bible talks of God's children being refined as silver and gold. This metaphor is borrowed from the technology of refining precious metals, which included heating them in a crucible to see if all impurities had been removed. These metals pass repeatedly through the furnace until all the dross (the melted impurities found in raw ore metal) breaks away and floats to the top. The refiner then removes all the impurities and disposes of them. It is said that the refiner knows the process is completed when he is able to see his image reflected in the precious metal purified.

God is compared to a refiner of silver and gold, which means *He allows* His people to be cast into the furnace of affliction ^{Is. 48:10} until

they are purified and clearly reflect His image in their lives. Dan. 12:10a says, "Many shall be purified, made spotless and white, and be tried, smelted and refined."

Job, a man who definitely passed through the fire when Satan brought several tests and trials into his life, tells us, "But He knows the way that I take. When He has tested me, I shall come forth as gold, pure and luminous" ^{Job 23:10}.

Indeed, fire is a blessing if you know how to use it. From one point of view, times of distress constitute a testing of God's people as to their trust in and loyalty to God.

Sometimes the best place to be is in a position where there is nothing else you can do but sit back and trust God.

With the Red Sea before them and the Egyptian army behind them, Moses told the people of Israel, "Do not be afraid. Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord which He will accomplish for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall see no more forever. The Lord will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace" ^{Ex. 14:13,14}.

Passing through the fire is a sign of your commitment to God.

*And this is the
victory that has
overcome the world -
our faith."*

If you run away from every test and trial that comes your way, “if you faint in the day of adversity, then your strength is small” Prov. 24:10.

COMMITMENT EQUALS RESPONSIBILITY

Many people run away from making a commitment to God or anybody else, because with it comes responsibility. In the day and age in which we now live, people do not want to be responsible for anything. They “don’t want to get involved” or they’re “too busy.” Tests and trials that come as a result of being anointed to serve God will bring change into your life, and many people don’t like or want to change. They run away from change and responsibility as if it were some incurable plague. They run away from the effort, work, and pain that the changes to serve God and to become Christlike require.

Daily they avoid the challenges of improving themselves with spiritual growth and are content to lay back and live the easy life. Tests and trials will require work on their part and most people don’t like to work. They want to take the path of least resistance. They enjoy living in their comfort zone and they crave the quiet life with as little distrac-

tions as possible.

They like microwaves and remote control switches. They wouldn’t think of getting out of their easy-chair and walking across the room to turn on the television set themselves. These people are not workers, they are floaters. They float through life and take whatever this world throws at them. Whatever will be will be.

It is these lazy people who will never gain prominence in the kingdom of God. They are satisfied at being where they’re at, wherever that might be, and will never rise above the level of being mediocre believers.

These are the people who back away from the heat of walking through the fire of spiritual growth. They pull back and become only “half-baked.” The Bible calls these people “lukewarm” and says that God will spew them out of His mouth Rev. 3:16. This statement is hard but true and the sooner the decision is made to face our trials head on and not run away from them, the better off we’ll be.

When a test or trial comes our way the first thing we should do is determine the cause of the fire. God does not ordain all fire and it’s not always the devil’s fault either. Many

Tests and trials are not easy and were never meant to be.

times we bring fire into our own lives. We cannot blame God or the devil if we are facing a financial crisis, because we violated the proper use of credit cards at Christmas time. We need to accept responsibility for our circumstances, because where we're at today is a result of the decisions we've made throughout our lives.

We need to be teachable and learn from our mistakes, because Satan will fight and attack you through your lack of knowledge. If we will refuse to panic when the tests and trials come, if we stay connected to Jesus through the fire, then ultimately spiritual growth will come.

Pain always precedes promotion. Many Christians fail to grow, because they never see the connection between their problems and their future dreams and victories. A crisis is a signal for you to learn and grow, not lose.

Your problem is your promotion. A problem will introduce you to yourself and cause you to find out what you're made of. Every obstacle will bring change into your life. You'll either be stronger because of it, or you'll be weaker.

Great leaders are those who

refuse to quit, but instead will rise above their problems. All born-again believers should view the tests and trials that come their way as opportunities for their lives to be built up and molded until they become mature in the Lord. This is how holiness comes and God Himself said, "Be holy, for I am holy" (1 Peter 1:16).

Do not let your head hang low and confess that you're walking through the valley. In Christ there are no valley experiences. Some mountains are just higher than others.

*"Do not be afraid.
Stand still and see
the salvation of the
Lord..."*

OUR PRIMARY DESIRE

The primary desire for believers should not be to live a trouble free life, but rather to develop inside themselves those qualities that will mold and shape them into the very image of Christ. Surprisingly, this is the purpose hardships serve. No pain, no gain. Maturity and strength of character always comes to the believer when they respond to the tests and trials of life in the proper way.

It is faith that causes one to rise up in triumph over their troubles and to rejoice in the midst of their sufferings. Pressure, hardship, and affliction produces patience inside

of you, and as you put your hope in Jesus, unwavering endurance will create in you the character needed to stand tall as you walk through the pitfalls of life.

This in turn produces joy, and the strength you receive from this spiritual fruit will give you the confidence and hope to put your faith in God “Who always leads us to triumph in Christ” ^{2 Cor. 2:14}.

God never promised us an easy life, but He did say in Jesus we could have a victorious life. Life is what you make it, whether good or bad, therefore, on the evil day when calamity strikes, go to Ps. 91 and meditate therein day and night. As you do you will come to realize that like the three Hebrew children you can be in the midst of the refiner’s fire and not be burned.

And when you exit the furnace of affliction you will come out smelling like a rose.

*Pain always
precedes promotion.*

CALLING ALL TO ACTIVE DUTY

Our enemies, Satan and his demons, are violent creatures. They hate God and all creation, including those made in the image of God, because like God... we too are on every continent. Their anger and hatred cannot be measured.

It's hard for us to wrap our head around the concept that such creatures could exist. Their anger runs deep. They lost the war in heaven against God and His angels, and were exiled to the third planet from the Sun to eventually fall under the control of the ruling creature, man.

He doesn't know what peace is, because he's never wanted it. He wants strife in the church, war across the planet, and death to all human life, especially those recreated into the image of God. He wants war and he's going to drag you into one, like it or not.

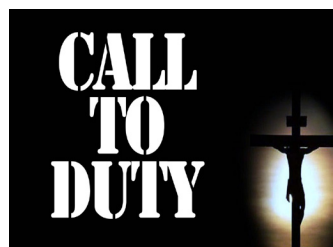
In Randall J. Brewer's book, *Taken By Storm*, he stresses our need to get into the fight with Satan and stay there. When we've won one battle, we need to rest only long enough to regain our strength and...

- Sharpen our swords with the knowledge of the Bible;
- Strengthen our shields of faith through prayer and,
- Go find another fight with Satan.

Don't wait for him to bring the fight to you. Take the storm to him. He's making a noise in your family and community today. Run to the noise.

The only alternative is to purposefully live the life of passive prey in the crosshairs of a skilled hunter.

There is no choice C.



THE FIGHT OF FAITH

“The kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force.” ^{Matthew 11:12}

God is proclaiming a special message to the body of Christ here in the last days. In fact, it’s the same message He’s been proclaiming since the dawn of time.

Christians today are not living up to the potential that their faith would allow, and God is saying simply, “Use your faith!” If the truth be told, a sick Christian should be unheard of in the kingdom of God, because Jesus bore our sins on the tree and “by Whose stripes you were healed” ^{1 Peter 2:24}.

Poverty and lack should not be mentioned in the same breath as a Christian, because as Paul says, “And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus” ^{Phil. 4:19}.

JESUS FREED THE SLAVES

Depression and bondage of any kind should have no place in the life of a born again believer. The Word instructs us to “Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ

has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage” ^{Gal. 5:1}. The Message® Bible states, “Christ has set us free to live a free life. So take your stand! Never again let anyone put a harness of slavery on you.” Jesus Himself said, “Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed” ^{John 8:36}.

Christians everywhere should be living on the high clouds of victory, success, and spiritual fulfillment, because all this has been made available to them.

2 Peter 1:2-4 boldly proclaims, “Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, as His divine power has given us all things that pertain to life and godliness through



the knowledge of Him Who called us to glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.”

Since God has already given us all things that pertain to life and godliness, a question must now be asked to all those in the kingdom of God. “How determined are you to receive what God has already provided for you? How determined are you? Are you willing “to contend earnestly for the faith which was once and for all delivered to the saints” ^{Jude 3?} Are you willing to stand up and “fight the good fight of faith” ^{1 Tim. 6:12?}

WINNING IS EVERYTHING

A “good fight” is a fight you win! 1 Cor. 15:57 says that God always causes us to triumph through the Lord Jesus Christ! There is no failure or defeat in “the good fight of faith.” Most people do not fail, they simply give up trying. They lay back and expect God to do all the fighting for them. Too often people are waiting for God to do something, while *He’s waiting for them* to do

something. People need to understand that they have as much to do with the answer to their prayers as they expect God to be.

There is a sign on the Colorado River which instructs white water rafters: “If you fall overboard, you must be an active participant in your own rescue!” For those who have the misfortune of falling into the swirling waters of the raging Colorado River, they must take charge of the situation, even though thousands of gallons of water are flooding over them. They must participate in their own rescue and cannot lay back and let the rescuers do all the work. There is a part they have to play, and so it is in the believer’s walk of faith.

Faith comes by hearing the Word of God, and Jesus said in Mark 4:17 that tribulation and persecution would arise for the Word’s sake.

A TIME FOR ACTION & RESOLUTION

The day will come when the rain will descend, the floods will come, and the wind will blow and beat upon your spiritual house ^{Matt. 7:25}. It is times like these when

There’s no failure or defeat in the “good fight of faith.”

the born-again believer must take charge of their situation and rise up in their authority and anointing. It is time for action and resolve.

Before entering the Promised Land God told Joshua, “Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given you, as I said to Moses” ^{Josh. 1:3}.

God gave the people of Israel the land, but wars would have to be fought before they could possess it. Likewise, God gives us things, but we still have to go get them. There is a part we have to play. God told Jeremiah, “Hear the words of this covenant and do them” ^{Jer. 11:6}. James 1:22 says, “But be doers of the Word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.”

DON'T JUST HEAR IT, DO IT

The problem in the body of Christ today is that we are not as much of a “doer” of the Word as we think we are. We think that because we have an abundance of knowledge from the Word of God, and we know what the Bible says about any given situation and we believe what it says, then automatically we become a “doer” of the Word.

This is how people deceive

themselves. You have to do more than believe the Word, you have to put actions to your faith and “do” the Word. To fight the good fight of faith, we must “press in” to the things of God with a persistence and determination that will not rest satisfied until it receives what is desired. Heb. 10:35,36 ^{AMP} says, “Do not, therefore, fling away your fearless confidence for it carries a great and glorious compensation of reward. For you have need of steadfast patience and endurance, so that you may perform and fully accomplish the will of God, and thus receive and carry away [and enjoy to the full] what is promised.”

Isaiah 53 foretells the redemptive work of Christ on the cross and the things He suffered on our behalf. Afterward, when the work on Calvary is completed, v. 12a tells us, “Therefore I will divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong...” The Amplified® translation says that “He shall divide the spoil with the mighty...” This verse clearly tells us that we must become strong and mighty in order to partake of the abundant riches of the spoil that is available to us.

There is strength to be had in being a Christian and it is faith,

*You have to do more
than [just] believe
the Word.*

and our faith in God that makes us strong. Eph. 3:20 says, “Now to Him Who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us...” And what is that strength and power to be used for?

Phil. 4:13 ^{AMP} gives us the answer, “I have strength for all things in Christ Who empowers me - I am ready for anything and equal to anything through Him Who infuses inner strength into me, [that is, I am self-sufficient in Christ’s sufficiency].”

PREPARE TO STAND AND FIGHT

Are you “ready for anything”? Are you prepared to stand and fight for those things that rightfully belong to you? Matt. 11:12 ^{AMP} tells us, “And from the days of John the Baptist until the present time the kingdom of heaven had endured violent assault, and violent men seize it by force [as a precious prize] - a share in the heavenly kingdom is sought for with most ardent zeal and intense exertion.”

This verse could also be rendered, “The kingdom of heaven is being taken by storm and the strong and forceful ones claim it for themselves eagerly.” It is the responsibility of every Christian who seeks to

live a victorious life to storm into the kingdom and take it by force.

Know for certain that there is no place on the victory platform for laid back and easy going Christians. The only place where “success” comes before “work” is in the dictionary.

Phil. 2:12b clearly tells believers to “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.” In order to live up to the potential that our faith would allow, we must go to work, pick up our sword, and fight the good fight of faith. There is no other way.

Paul, in the final chapter of his first letter to Timothy, tells his young and faithful friend to “fight the good fight of faith” ^{1 Tim. 6:12}.

In the opening verses of his second letter to Timothy, Paul once again deals with the same subject. First, he commends Timothy for the “genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also” ^{2 Tim. 1:5}.

Two verses later Paul tells his friend what is needed to fight the good fight of faith. He says, “For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a

*The kingdom of
heaven is being
taken by storm...*

sound mind” 2 Tim. 1:7.

The discipline and self-control of a sound mind is needed to win the good fight of faith. 3 John 2 speaks of prosperity of the soul while Paul boldly proclaims in 1 Cor. 2:16b that “...we have the mind of Christ.” Paul tells the church in Rome, “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God”

Rom. 12:2

HOW TO RENEW YOUR MIND

Our minds are renewed when we study, feed on, practice, and become doers of the Word.

Phil. 4:8 gives us valuable instructions on how to renew our minds so that we can have the mind of Christ, “Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of a good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy - meditate on these things.”

The Amplified® translation says to “think on and weigh and

take account of these things - fix your minds on them.” When we keep our minds focused on these things and on the Word of God, we become prosperous in our soul and receive strength in our spirit to fight the good fight of faith.

Is. 26:3,4 says, “You will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You. Trust in the Lord forever, for in Yah, the Lord, is everlasting strength.”

*...love is also needed to
fight the good fight of
faith.*

Power and love is also needed to fight the good fight of faith. Faith works through love Gal. 5:6, but it is the power of

God that brings us the victory when the thief comes to steal, kill, and destroy John 10:10.

Peter says that during tests and trials we “are being guarded (garrisoned) by Gods’ power through [your] faith...” 1 Peter 1:5a AMP. Eph. 3:20 says, “Now to Him Who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us.”

The power that works in us is our faith and this is what brings the power of God on the scene. Jer. 1:12 assures us, “Then the Lord said to me, ‘You have seen well, for

I am ready to perform My Word.”
The word “ready” means to ‘hasten, stand behind, back up, watch over, protect, enforce.’

All the Lord needs to perform and enforce His Word is our faith.

IMITATE OUR FATHER ABRAHAM

We all must become like Abraham who was “fully satisfied and assured that God was able and mighty to keep His Word and to do what He had promised” Rom. 4:21 AMP.

And since it is through our faith and patience that we inherit the promises of God, it goes without saying that our faith will be an open target for the attacks of the enemy.

James 1:2, 3 says, “My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience.”

Peter says, “In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ” 1 Peter

1:6, 7.

The Message® Bible says, “I know how great this makes you feel, even though you have to put up with every kind of aggravation in the meantime. Pure gold put in the fire comes out of it proved pure; genuine faith put through this suffering comes out proved genuine. When Jesus wraps this all up, it’s your faith, not your gold, that God will have on display as evidence of his victory.”

*It’s your faith, not
your gold, that
God will have on
display.*

Since faith comes by hearing the Word of God, the enemy’s purpose for bringing tests and trials into your life is to steal the Word of God out of your heart. It is at this time that we must stand up and fight the good fight of faith. Jude 3b says, “... I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.”

God is looking for a faith that is genuine, and if we don’t go through the tests and trials that come our way for the Word’s sake, then all we’ll be in the kingdom of God is a pretender.

In the parable of the sower Jesus teaches, “**And the sower sows the Word. These likewise are the ones**

sown on stony ground who, when they hear the Word, immediately receive it with gladness; and they have no root in themselves, and so they endure only for a time. Afterward, when tribulations or persecution arises for the Word's sake, immediately they stumble" Mark 4:14, 16, 17.

Members in the body of Christ must wake up and realize that the days of passive Christianity are over. This Christian life we've been called to is no Sunday picnic and neither is it all peaches and cream. It is a war and we have been called to battle. We cannot ignore the devil, because the devil will not ignore us.

1 Peter 5:8 ^{AMP} says, "Be well-balanced, temperate, sober-minded; be vigilant and cautious at all times, for that enemy of yours, the devil, roams around like a lion roaring [in fierce hunger], seeking someone to seize upon and devour." So what are we to do when we are attacked by the enemy?

Peter tells us in v. 9a, "Withstand him; be firm in faith [against his onset], - rooted, established, strong, immovable and determined..." This is what it means to fight the good fight of faith.

The availability of the bless-

ings of God are abundant on the earth here in the last days, but instead of growing stronger, the Church has instead become complacent, indifferent, and unassertive. A lot of people know the Word but only quote it in peace time.

THE GRASHOPPER SYNDROME

Churches are to train people to be an army and fight, but it's sad to say most of them only go through the motions and don't produce anything.

*The days of
passive Christianity
are over.*

*When God led the
Israelites out of
Egypt, He got the
people to cross
through the Red Sea, but He
couldn't get them over the
narrow Jordan River.*

The wilderness experience was to be a type of boot camp, preparing the people for war. Instead of believing and adhering to the positive report of Joshua and Caleb, the people instead believed the negative report of the ten other spies and refused to cross over.

The bad report the ten spies brought back from Canaan is that they were like grasshoppers in comparison to the giants in the land Num.13:32, 33. The children of Israel were

held in bondage by the negative words that came out of their mouth.

A person will believe whatever they hear themselves say. The giants didn't keep the Israelites out of Canaan, the grasshoppers did. If we are weak in our own eyes, so will we be weak in the eyes of others.

God got the Israelites out of the bondage of Egypt and into the comfort of the wilderness, but He couldn't get them from the place of comfort into the Promised Land which was a place of war. God assured the people that victory would be theirs, but it wouldn't come automatically. There was a part they had to play.

Years before, when God told Moses to lift up his rod and split the Red Sea He first told him to "tell the people of Israel to go forward" Ex. 14:15. God demands participation! Faith without works is dead James 2:17! Moses had to lift up the rod and the people had to go forward!

Faith never backs up. It only goes forward. When the time came for the children of Israel to enter the Promised Land, they refused to do their part and "go forward" and cross the Jordan River.

The result of their disobe-

dience is that with the exception of Joshua and Caleb that entire generation died off in the wilderness. And why could they not enter in? Because of unbelief Heb. 3:19. If our faith is to be genuine we must persistently heed the words of Heb. 10:39 NIV which says, "But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who believe and are saved."

Satan has mounted an all out assault against the faith of the brethren, which means we've got to fight for our faith. God never intended for us to run from the devil and his cohorts. Why run from an enemy who was defeated two thousand years ago on Calvary's tree?

Although his future is forever sealed in scripture, the devil still continues his onslaught against the body of Christ, against which we must fight the good fight of faith.

By using the armor of God we must stand up and defend that which is ours. This is what it means to have a warrior spirit. The armor of God Eph. 6:13-17 gives us equipment for our head, our chest, our loins, and our feet. There is a sword in one hand and a shield in the other. There is no protection for the back, because we are to face the enemy

*Faith never backs up.
It only goes forward.*

head-on and put him under our feet where he belongs.

WE ARE A MIGHTY PEOPLE

Speaking of the house of Judah, of which we are if we are born-again, Zech. 10:5 ^{AMP} says, “And they shall be as mighty men, treading down their enemies in the mire of the streets in the battle and they shall fight because the Lord is with them, and the [oppressors’] riders on horses shall be confounded and put to shame.”

David says in Ps. 18:39, “For You have armed me with strength for the battle; You have subdued under me those who rose up against me.” Our soon coming King is coming back not for a defeated church, but for a victorious body of believers who are “more than conquerors through Him Who loved us” ^{Rom. 8:37}.

Jesus came to earth as the Lamb of God, but will return with His followers as the Lion of Judah. Is. 43:12 says, “The Lord shall go forth like a mighty man; He shall stir up His zeal like a man of war. He shall cry out, yes, shout aloud; He shall prevail against His enemies.”

Jesus was, is, and always will be a winner! The problem with

those believers who refuse to “go forward” is that many of them still see Jesus hanging on the cross and have developed a mentality of Him as a dead man who was a loser.

It is time these people start building within themselves a picture of a resurrected Christ Who now sits at the right hand of the Heavenly Father clothed with power and majesty!

The good news is that God wants this same power demonstrated in- and through our lives. The avenue through which He desires to do this is our faith. It is essential, therefore, that we develop a deep hunger and thirst for the Word of God and keep our eyes focused on the “King of kings and Lord of lords” ^{Rev. 19:16}.

Jesus said, “**I am the way, the truth, and the life...**” ^{John 14:6a}. Satan will bring persecutions, trials, and afflictions into your life and try to take away from you your hunger for the Word. It is the enemy’s purpose to take your attention away from God and His eternal Word and have you focus on natural things. Do not allow him to prosper in this evil endeavor. Jesus said in John 16:33, “**These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In**

“You have armed me with strength for the battle.”

the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”

If you are in a struggle then take courage and rejoice because that means you haven’t been defeated yet. Nahum 1:7 says, “The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; and He knows those who trust in Him!” With Jesus as the center of your life you can’t get lost, you can’t be deceived, and the devil can’t kill you.

Those whom God calls, God will defend. He is called El Shaddai, the Almighty One! With Jesus as our King, we can indeed rule in the midst of our enemies.

We must continually force our way into the kingdom and take it by storm.

All this being said, and true, we must not forget that there is still a battle to be fought. It is called *the good fight of faith*.

Until the day we go home to be with Jesus, we must continually force our way into the kingdom and take it by storm. We need to boldly face our enemy and claim for ourselves the benefits of eternal life in greater fullness.

Eternal life is the crown prepared for us and is to be our encouragement for war.

10

THE ASSURANCE OF FAITH

*“Let us draw near with a true heart
in full assurance of faith.” Heb. 10:22*

Prison is the last place from which to expect a letter of encouragement, but that is where Paul’s second letter to Timothy originates.

This was Paul’s last epistle before his death and he begins by assuring Timothy of his continuing love and prayers. He reminds his young protege of his spiritual heritage and responsibilities, and that only the one who fights the good fight of faith and perseveres will reap the reward, whether it be a soldier, athlete, farmer, or minister of Jesus Christ.

Fortunately, Timothy had Paul’s example to guide him and God’s Word to fortify him as he faced the challenges and growing opposition of serving the Lord his God. To win the good fight of faith one must pay close attention to what Paul said in v. 12 of the first chapter,

“For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know Whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep

what I have committed to Him until that day.”

Jesus said in Mark 11:22, **“Have faith in God”** and Paul says “I know Whom I have believed...” The heart of Paul’s message here is that people put too much emphasis on “what” they believe and not enough on “Who” they believe. This makes all the difference in the world as to whether or not you stand strong on that evil day when the enemy comes and knocks on the door of your life.

How well you know God will determine how well you receive from Him. Indeed, there is a difference between knowing God and knowing about Him. Jesus prayed



to the Father in John 17 and said in v. 3,

“And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ Whom You have sent.”

KNOWING GOD IS EVERYTHING

You don't have eternal life until you “know” God. The Lord said in Jeremiah 9:23,24, “Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, let not the mighty man glory in his might, nor let the rich man glory in his riches; But let him who glories glory in this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the Lord, exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight.”

In John 4 Jesus witnessed to the woman at the well, and so astonished was she at what He said, she immediately left and told the men of the city what had happened. “And many of the Samaritans of that city believed in Him because of the word of the woman who testified, ‘He told me all that I ever did.’ So when the Samaritans had come to Him, they urged Him to stay with them; and He stayed there two days. And many more believed because of His own word. Then they said to the

woman, ‘Now we believe, not because of what you said, for we have heard for ourselves and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world’” vv. 39-42.

For faith to come, you have to hear from God for yourself. Eph. 1:13 says, “In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in Whom also having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.”

*There is a difference
between knowing
God and knowing
about Him.*

Our life depends on us hearing from God, and so often we need His assistance in doing this. For this reason we were sealed with the Holy Spirit Who is the Comforter, the Revealer of Truth. It is He who enables you to hear from God and this is how faith comes. Just like those Samaritans who believed the testimony of the woman at the well, so also will the Holy Spirit put His anointing on gifted preachers who proclaim the good news all over the world.

Paul says in Romans 10:14, “How then shall they call on Him in Whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of Whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a

preacher?”

Never minimize the value of good preaching. Isaiah 52:7 says, “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who proclaims peace, who brings glad tidings of good things, who proclaims salvation, who says to Zion, ‘Your God reigns!’” It is for this reason that we are taught in Hebrews 10:25 to not forsake the assembling of ourselves together.

FAITH... HOW TO GET IT

A popular verse that instructs us how to get faith is Romans 10:17, “So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.” We should always hear ourselves confess the Word of God and when we believe what we hear ourselves say, faith will come.

However, let’s not overlook the context in which this verse was written. Verse 14b says, “And how shall they hear without a preacher?” and v. 17 says, “faith comes by hearing.” A preacher is a “proclaimer” and with the call comes the anointing that will allow you to hear things you wouldn’t normally hear. Faith comes by hearing the anointed preaching of the Word, and this

is why Jesus said in Matt. 11:15, “**He who has ears to hear, let him hear.**”

The “anointing” can be described as ‘God on flesh doing only what God can do’ and it isn’t given just so preachers can say nice spiritual things. More than that, it is given so the listener can “hear” and properly discern what’s being said.

An example of this not happening is found in Mark 16. Jesus had just risen from the dead and we read in vv. 9-11,

*There is a difference
between knowing
God and knowing
about Him.*

“Now when He rose early on the first day of the week, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven demons. She

went and told those who had been with Him, as they mourned and wept. And when they heard that He was alive and had been seen by her, they did not believe.”

Mary Magdalene was no stranger to these mourning disciples and there was no reason for them not to believe her. God, however, in His infinite mercy, was willing to give them another chance to believe. Verses 12, 13 in the same chapter says, “After that, He appeared in another form to two of them as they walked and went into the country. And they went and told

it to the rest, but they did not believe them either.”

These two men were on the road to Emmaus (see also Luke 24:13-48) and notice that scripture says they were “of them” who had been with Jesus. They also were not strangers to all the others. Still, the disciples did not believe their report.

Let’s also not forget the famous story of doubting Thomas John 20:24, 25 who also did not believe the others whom the Lord appeared to and talked with. What was the Lord’s response to all this? Mark 16:14 tells us, “Afterward He appeared to the eleven as they sat at the table; and He rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they did not believe those who had seen Him after He had risen.”

The Message® Bible says “He appeared and took them to task most severely for their stubborn unbelief, refusing to believe those who had seen Him raised up.”

Why does Jesus rebuke unbelief in such a harsh way? Because He “knows” you and He wants you to “know” Him. It is only by grace through faith that you can “know” Him in a deep, personal, and inti-

mate way.

INTIMACY WITH GOD IS FAITH IN GOD

God has a plan and purpose for your life when you truly “know” Him as Lord and Master. Heb. 4:14-16 ^{MSG} states, “Now that we know what we have - Jesus, this great High Priest with ready access to God - let’s not let it slip through our fingers. We don’t have a priest who is out of touch with our reality. He’s been through weakness and testing, experienced it all - all but the sin. So let’s walk right up to Him and get what He is ready to give. Take the mercy, accept the help.”

King James says in v. 16, “Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” Boldness is needed to fight the good fight of faith and it comes when you know God in an intimate way. David was a man after God’s own heart and you can hear the boldness in what he told the giant Goliath...

“You come to me with a sword, with a spear, and with a javelin. But I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Is-

*Do not forsake
the assembling of
ourselves together.*

rael, whom you have defied.

This day the Lord will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you and take your head from you.

And this day I will give the carcasses of the camp of the Philistines to the birds of the air and the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel”

1 Samuel 17:45,46

Concerning God, Paul wrote to the Ephesian church, “in Whom we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him” Eph. 3:12. Having confidence eliminates all doubt from your life and allows you to forever walk in faith. When you’re confident, you’re bold, and when you’re bold you’ll be sure that God will do what He says He will do. Just as it is impossible to please God without faith Heb. 11:6, so also is it impossible to please Him without confidence and boldness.

Put your wavering and questioning aside.

Don’t wonder any more and don’t try to believe. Just do it! If you are in faith, you will have confidence and you will know- that you know- that you know. If you are not sure that God will move on your behalf,

then you are in trouble. You win the good fight of faith by being sure.

The word “faith” means ‘to be firm, stable, to build up and support.’ Faith will build under you a firm foundation and is something to stand on without fear of falling. It is a spiritual force that you can lean on, depend on, and rest your weight upon without concern that it will collapse under you or let you down. It means ‘to be certain, to be true, permanent, established, to believe in or to trust.’

*Jesus knows you
and wants you to
know Him.*

A person of faith is a bold person, and because your confidence is in God you can speak openly and freely. There will be no uncertainty in your heart, thus allowing you to speak plainly without reservation and hesitation. This is what David did when he faced the giant in the Valley of Elah. When you are bold and have confidence in God, you are unstoppable and no enemy can prevent you from going all the way with God.

BE FREE OF DOUBT

When you fight the good fight of faith, you must finish the same way you began. Matthew 14:22-32 tells the story of how Peter and the other disciples were on the sea

in the midst of a storm and Jesus was not with them. In the fourth watch of the night they saw Jesus walking on the water and they were troubled and cried out in fear. Jesus immediately spoke out to them saying, “**Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid.**” And Peter answered Him and said, “Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water.” When Jesus told him to “**come,**” Peter, with boldness and reckless abandon, went down out of the boat and walked on the water to go to Jesus. Notice what happened next. Verse 30 says, “But when he saw that the wind was boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink he cried out, saying, ‘Lord, save me!’”

Peter began with boldness but ended in fear and unbelief. Jesus always responded to the disciple’s unbelief and we read in verse 31, “And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him, and said to him, ‘**O you of little faith, why did you doubt?**’”

Doubt is the lack of confidence that God will do what He said He would do, and will cause boldness to flee from your life. Do not fall into the trap of believing that, to walk in faith all you have to do is make faith confessions. You can

confess something all day long and not believe in your heart that it will come to pass. Never say something out of desperation, because chances are you won’t believe it anyway.

To walk in faith you must confess the Word and not doubt in your heart. If you don’t truly believe it down in your heart, then it’s best not to say anything at all.

James 1:5,6 says, “If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, Who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed

by the wind.”

The word “doubt” comes from the word ‘double’ and James continues in verses 7,8, “For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.”

Doubt will make your words powerless, null and void. You may be saying the right things but are not fully convinced down in your heart that it will come to pass.

***People who waver can’t
make up their minds what***

*...so also is it impossible
to please [God] without
confidence and boldness.*

they believe.

Like a wind tossed wave they'll be up one minute and down the next. One minute they believe and the next they don't. You can't travel in two different directions at once. Doubt is a serious enemy to your faith and it will prevent you from receiving the will and provision of the Lord.

THE SOLUTION TO DOUBT

The solution to doubt is to be single-minded. Ephesians 4:4-6 says, "There is...

ONE *one body* and *one Spirit*, just as you were called in, *one hope* of your calling; *one Lord*, *one faith*, *one baptism*, *one God and Father of all*, Who is above all, and through all, and in you all."

Not two! **One!** Faith begins where the will of God is known, so you must refuse to consider anything else.

Romans 15:5 says, "Let each one be fully convinced in his own mind." You've got to be stable. Stop

being of two minds and become settled and unmoved in your faith in God. Continue to study and pray until confidence rises up inside of you.

If you are single-minded, the Word of God has to come to pass in your life. When you believe without a doubt, you will receive without delay, without fail. God said you would receive what you say if you doubt not ^{Acts 8:37}.

WORRY STOPS FORWARD MOTION

You must finish the fight the same way you began the fight.

When you cast doubt out of your life, you will not fret or have anxiety about anything ^{Phil. 4:6}. If you are worrying, then you are doubting, and the Bible states in Matthew 6:25, "Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?" Worry is worldly and it will get you no where. In fact, it only makes the situation worse.

The more you worry, the worse it gets. Peter learned this lesson well when he began to sink in his quest to walk out to Jesus on the water. Worry chokes the Word and

will choke Jesus out of your life.

The devil is the author of alternate choices. In the Garden of Eden he offered Adam and Eve a different lifestyle than the one God intended. Likewise, he wants you to live a life of worry and doubt instead of a life of faith and confidence. Therefore, never worry about anything.

Instead, cast all your care on Jesus ^{1 Peter 5:7,8} and fight the good fight of faith. The Amplified® Bible says, “casting the whole of your care, all of your anxieties, all your worries, all your concerns, once and for all on Him, for He cares for you affectionately and He cares about you watchfully.”

“...and having a high priest over the house of God, let us draw near...”

The Living Bible® translates Peter’s words this way, “Let Him have all your worries and cares for He’s always thinking about you, and watching everything that concerns you.” When you do this, confidence will come and with it the boldness to fight and win the good fight of faith. Remember, Jesus never worried about anything and neither should we.

The author of Hebrews tells us, “Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us,

through the veil, that is, His flesh, and having a High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful” (Hebrews 10:19-23).

We then read in verse 35 of the same chapter, “Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward.” You can boldly have confidence that good things will happen in your life. Faith draws near, so never draw back and play it safe. Live confidently and always encourage yourself in the Lord knowing that He cares for you.

DON’T BE PASSIVE, BE POSSESSIVE!

Paul told Timothy, “Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life...” ^{1 Tim. 6:12a}.

The Message® Bible says, “Run hard and fast in the faith. Seize the eternal life, the life you were called to...”

The Greek word for “lay hold” is ‘take,’ so stand up and take what

God says you can have.

Consider the woman with the issue of blood. She didn't stand in the back of the crowd and do nothing. No, with boldness she pushed through the crowd, pressed in, and *took* her healing. She had confidence and the full assurance of faith that if she could but touch the hem of His garment she would be healed. She fought and won the good fight of faith and was completely set free from her ailment.

You, too, can receive from God. With confidence that is sure and bold you must believe that you take what belongs to you. You have to lay hold! People who possess the promises are not weak and passive, they're bold and aggressive. God gave the people the promised land, but they had to go in and possess it. God provides what you want and need, but you must rise up and possess it.

***You must possess
your possessions.***

Nehemiah 9 tells us, "Moreover You gave them kingdoms and nations, and divided them into districts. So they took possession of the land..." v. 22. "So the people went in and possessed the land" v. 24. "And they took strong cities and a rich

land, and possessed houses full of all goods, cisterns already dug, vineyards, olive groves, and fruit trees in abundance. So they ate and were filled and grew fat, and delighted themselves in Your great goodness"

v. 25.

The blessings of God are forever available, but they won't fall on you from out of nowhere. No, you must go and possess them. When the manna fell in the wilderness, the people still had to go pick it up. They learned that if you don't take it, you won't get it.

*Worry is worldly
and it will get you
nowhere.*

It is interesting to note that the word "possess" is used over 300 times in scripture with none as meaningful as Numbers 13:30, "Then Caleb quieted the people before Moses, and said, 'Let us go up at once and take possession, for we are well able to overcome it.'"

Caleb knew what it took to fight the good fight of faith. He knew that God provides His blessings by grace but you must go in and possess them with the full assurance of faith, a faith that is bold and confident. Likewise, if you know what belongs to you, then it's time to rise up and go get it. Like Caleb, take possession of what is yours.

THE PERSISTENCE OF FAITH

"In due season will reap if we do not lose heart." Gal. 6:9a

Veteran newscaster Paul Harvey once said, "You can tell when you're on the road to success, because it's usually uphill all the way."

And so it is with the believer who has been anointed by God to be co-laborers with Him. Know with certainty that your trial is no accident. Satan has issued an assault against the beloved children of God and it's going to get worse the closer we get to the end of the age.

The good news is that, in the midst of a mega-storm, Jesus can give you a mega-calm. We read in 1 Peter 1:6-10, "In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, Whom having not

seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith - the salvation of your souls."

To the early church Peter was a breath of fresh air and his influence was enormous and acknowledged by all. His letters reveal to us the qualities of Jesus that the Holy Spirit wants to shape in all of us. God wants all believers to have a readiness to embrace suffering rather than prestige, wisdom developed from experience rather than a book, and a humility that lacks nothing in vigor and imagination.

*He cares for you
affectionately and
He cares for you
watchfully.*



Peter had all these qualities and was so humble that, when he was put to death by crucifixion, he asked to be hung upside down instead of upright like the Lord had been. And it was this same apostle who tells us that our faith will be “tested by fire.”

THE MEASURE OF GOD

The Message® Bible records Peter’s words this way, “What a God we have! And how fortunate we are to have Him, this Father of our Master Jesus! Because Jesus was raised from the dead, we’ve been given a brand new life and have everything to live for, including a future in heaven - and the future starts now! God is keeping careful watch over us and the future.

“The Day is coming when you’ll have it all - life healed and whole. I know how great this makes you feel, even though you have to put up with every kind of aggravation in the meantime. Pure gold put in the fire comes out proved pure; genuine faith put through their suffering comes out proved genuine.

“When Jesus wraps this all up, it’s your faith, not your gold, that God will have on display as evidence of His victory. You never

saw Him, yet you love Him. You still don’t see Him, yet you trust Him - with laughter and singing. Because you kept on believing, you’ll get what you’re looking forward to: total salvation” ^{1 Peter 1:3-9}.

This epistle presents Christ as the believer’s example and hope in times of suffering in a spiritually hostile world. Jesus is the basis for the Christian’s “living hope” and “inheritance” ^{1 Peter 1:3, 4}, and the love relationship available with Him by faith is a source of inexpressible joy ^{v. 8}.

*God’s evidence of
victory will be
your faith.*

His suffering and death provide redemption for all who trust in Him. He is the Chief Shepherd and Overseer of all believers, and when He appears, those who know Him will be glorified.

PERSECUTION OF CHRISTIANS INCREASING

Peter addresses this epistle to those believers who are pilgrims in a world that is growing increasingly hostile to those anointed by God. Knowing that his readers will be facing more persecution than ever before, Peter writes this letter to give them a divine perspective on these trials so that they will be able to endure them without wavering in

their faith.

They should not be surprised at their ordeal, because Jesus also suffered and died and they should count it a privilege to share in the sufferings of Christ.

He goes on to exhort them to be sure their hardships are not being caused by their own wrongdoings, but rather for their Christian testimony. Peter wants all of us to not be overcome with attitudes of bitterness and anxiety, but instead replace those negative feelings with confidence in God. By standing firm in the grace of God through faith, we'll all be able to endure the fiery trials that all of us are sure to face.

Yes, you've got to fight for your faith, and Paul told Timothy that if you don't, you'll suffer shipwreck in your ability to believe God. 1 Tim. 1:18b,19 ^{MSG} says, "All those prayers are coming together now so you will do this well, fearless in your struggle, keeping a firm grip on your faith and on yourself. After all, this is a fight we're in. There are some, you know, who by relaxing their grip and thinking anything goes have made a thorough mess of their faith."

A stern warning is given in

Heb. 3:12, "Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God." In this verse faith that has been shipwrecked is called "an evil heart of unbelief."

The Message® Bible says, "So watch your step, friends. Make sure there's no evil unbelief lying around that will trip you up and throw you off course, diverting you from the living God."

AVOIDING THE PROMISED LAND

This verse was written in response to the story of those who refused to enter into the Prom-

ised Land after being rescued from the bonds of slavery in Egypt. They could not enter into the rest of God because of unbelief. When their faith got tested, their hearts got hardened. They suffered shipwreck with their faith.

They did not understand that having faith is not the absence of distress, trials, or heaviness of heart. Faith is about whether or not you'll go forward with Jesus and cross over into your own personal Promised Land. God wants to bring you into a place of total dependence on Jesus, where all your confidence is in Him and not your own ability.

*Jesus is the basis for
the Christian's living
hope and inheritance.*

Num. 13:30,31 tells what was said when the twelve spies returned from the land of promise and shows a stark contrast between faith and unbelief. “Then Caleb quieted the people before Moses, and said, ‘Let us go up at once and take possession, for we are well able to overcome it.’ But the men who had gone up with him said, ‘We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we.’”

Unbelief says “we are not able” whereas faith says “we are well able.” If you are weak in your own eyes, so will you be weak in the devil’s eyes.

GOLIATHS EVERYWHERE

The Christian life is full of giants, and there are strongholds and walled cities everywhere you look. This is what the battle of faith is all about. Don’t let the giants in your life scare you and cause you to run away. People who want to take the easy route don’t enter in. Understand that...

Your problems are not there to keep you down, but instead are there to keep you out of that place where you have absolute confidence in Jesus.

Faith is a daring, reckless aban-

don to the absolute, ultimate power of Jesus Christ to keep you and sustain you in this present age. It brings you to a place where you’re resting in His faithfulness, and you’ll have no doubt that God’s eternal purpose for your life will be fulfilled.

We all have dreams, desires, and visions to take us beyond where we’re at now, but those dreams don’t come to pass immediately. The desire to quit will be one of the major temptations the enemy will bring against you but God says to enter in to your promised land. Press on and never give up! Trust Jesus and be determined to press through to the end.

You have to fight for your faith.

INHERIT THE PROMISES WITH PATIENCE

You were not anointed with the power of God so you could quit. The journey is not easy but it’s worth the challenges that go along with it. And remember, it’s those who finish the race that get the prize. When you have a passion for what you’re doing it will override the negative circumstances that rise up against you. Is. 41:10 says, “Fear not, for I am with you; Be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, Yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.”

Probably the first thing a person learns when they make a quality decision to live by faith is that, the answer to their prayers is almost never manifested immediately. The Bible says that it is through faith and patience that we inherit the promises of God ^{Heb. 6:12}. Timing is of the utmost importance when it comes to receiving from God.

All believers need the confident assurance that God is never late when it comes to answering our prayers. On the other hand, neither is He early. Patience, therefore, is what God uses to keep us in His timing and faith is our positive response to His ability to perform what He has promised ^{Rom. 4:21}.

Jesus, when informed of the sickness of His friend Lazarus, stayed two more days in the place where He was. His explanation for His delay in going to the scene of His friend's eventual death is found in John 11:14,15a, "Then Jesus said to them plainly, 'Lazarus is dead. And I am glad for your sake that I was not there, that you may believe.'"

LEARNING THE WALK OF FAITH

Going through a phase of waiting from the time you first believe to the time of manifestation, will build your faith and help you to

believe to a greater degree. It is during this time of waiting that persistence and tenacity needs to be built up in the life of all believers who sincerely wish to walk by faith.

Faith that is persistent, is faith that gets the job done. It is a quality of faith that forces it's way into the kingdom, takes it by storm, and remains there and does not rest satisfied until it receives what it is believing for.

Persistence is the power of continuing in some effort of course of action in spite of difficulty or opposition.

TENACIOUS

It means to be...

Steadfast in purpose;

To pursue to an end;

To go on stubbornly;

To remain unchanged in the repetition of a test or trial;

To stay fixed on a character;

To hang on tenaciously.

The word "tenacious" means 'to be tough.' Persistent faith is tough faith and doesn't look at the failures of the past, but at the promises of the Word of God. It is a faith that refuses to be denied.

The story of Caleb going in to the Promised Land is a tale of a man who did not let go of a promise made to him many years before.

TAKING POSSESSION

With possessive boldness the old man Caleb stood before his long time friend Joshua who was now leader of the Israeli people and made the proclamation, “Give me this mountain!”

Like Joshua, Caleb had been one of the twelve spies Moses sent into the Promised Land to spy out the land of Canaan. Caleb reminds Joshua of this in Josh. 14:7, “I was forty years old when Moses the servant of the Lord sent me from Kadesh Barnea to spy out the land, and I brought back word to him as it was in my heart.” Ten of the twelve spies brought back an evil report saying, “We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we” Num. 13:31.

They later said in v. 33, “We were like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight.” Caleb and Joshua, however, came back with a good report. “Then Caleb quieted the people before Moses and said, ‘Let us go up at once and take possession for we are well able to overcome it’” Num. 13:30.

Because of his good report, Caleb now reminds Joshua of a promise made to him by Moses,

“So Moses swore on that day saying, ‘Surely the land where your foot has trodden shall be your inheritance and your children’s forever, because you have wholly followed the Lord my God’” Josh. 14:9.

The old generation of murmuring and disbelieving Israelites had died off in the wilderness, and now the new generation, along with Joshua and Caleb, were ready to take possession of the Promised Land.

Caleb was now eighty-five years old and he felt he was still just as strong as he had been when he went into Canaan as a spy. The land now had rest from war and Caleb was ready to go on with his life. Before Joshua divided the Promised and among the other tribes, he would give his faithful friend first choice of what land he wanted.

*Persistent faith is tough
faith and doesn't look at
the failures of the past.*

FIGHT FOR THE PROMISES

As his inheritance, Caleb had chosen Mount Hebron where a race of giants called the Anakims still had control of the land. Moses had promised him a place of his own and now he wanted to take over that land.

Josh. 14 tells us, “Then the children of Judah came to Joshua in

Gilgal and Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite said to him, ‘You know the word which the Lord said to Moses the man of God concerning you and me in Kadesh Barnea. As yet, I am as strong this day as I was on the day Moses sent me; just as my strength was then, so now is my strength for war, both for going out and for coming in. Now therefore, give me this mountain of which the Lord spoke in that day; for you heard in that day how the Anakim were there, and that the cities were great and fortified. It may be that the Lord will be with me, and I shall be able to drive them out as the Lord said.’ And Joshua blessed him and gave Hebron to Caleb the son of Jephunneh as an inheritance” Josh 14:6, 11-13.

In order for Caleb to take possession of his inheritance, he would have to once again go to war and risk his life and those of his men. To gain what was rightfully his, Caleb would have to force his way onto the mountain and *take it by storm*. Josh. 15 goes on to tell us that this is precisely what he did.

For those of us living today under the new covenant, Mount Hebron might symbolize any one of the many blessings God promises us in His Word. The promises available

to us today are greater than those in the day of Joshua and Caleb.

2 Peter 1:4a says, ‘by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises.’ We may not be living in the Promised Land but we are living in the land of promises. The good news is found in 2 Cor. 1:20 which says, “For all the promises of God in Him are yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us.” Notice that God gets glory when we partake of His promised blessings. Because of this

*Faith that is persistent,
is faith that gets the job
done.*

verse and our relationship with Jesus Christ, we can boldly go before the throne of God and say, “Give me this mountain! It’s mine! Your Word promised it to me and I take possession of it now! In the Name of Jesus Christ I believe I receive! So be it!” Hallelujah!

All faith needs is “Thus saith the Lord...” Caleb held on to the promise of God and waited forty-five years to receive his inheritance. Sad to say, most people give up if they have to wait forty-five days, or for that matter forty-five hours.

Like Caleb, we must all learn Paul’s message in Gal. 6:9. “And let us not grow weary while doing

good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.”

The Message® Bible states, “So let’s not allow ourselves to get fatigued doing good. At the right time we will harvest a good crop if we don’t give up, or quit.”

The mountain is yours! Do not lose possession of it because of a simple thing called “time”. Be like David who said in Ps. 31:14,15a, “But as for me, I trust in You, O Lord; I say, You are my God. My times are in your hand...”

If you have made Jesus the Lord of your life, then also make Him the Lord of your time. You can trust Him. He will not let you down.

And if you do not lose heart you can count on Him to give you your mountain. Receive it today!

THE STAND OF FAITH

“...and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore...” Eph 6:13a, 14a

Satan is a despicable foe and he doesn't fight fair. If given the chance, he'll stab you in the back and kick you when you're down. He hates faith and he'll do anything and everything he can to make it ineffective in your life.

Rev. 12:1-4 teaches us the ways of this fallen angel, “Now a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a garland of twelve stars.

“Then being with Child, she cried out in labor and in pain to give birth. And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads.

“His tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth.

“And the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to give birth, to devour her Child as soon as it was born.”

The Message® Bi-

ble translation says, “The dragon crouched before the woman in childbirth, poised to eat up the Child when it came.”

Likewise, the devil wants to eat you up! Anytime a person tries to give birth to a God-given vision by using their faith, Satan will be right there trying to devour the “Child.”

In the parable of the sower Jesus said, *“The sower sows the Word. And these are the ones by the wayside where the Word is sown. And when they hear, Satan comes immediately and takes away the Word that was sown in their hearts”* Mark 4:14,15. When does the enemy come to steal your vision and your faith? Im-



mediately!

THE ENEMY COMES ONLY TO STEAL, KILL, AND DESTROY

An example of this happening is seen in the old testament book of Ezra. This book continues where Second Chronicles ends and shows how God fulfilled His promise to return His people to the land of promise after seventy years of exile.

Ezra was a godly man marked by a strong trust in the Lord, moral integrity, and a deep grief over sin. He knew God was with His people and although their days of glory seem to be over, their spiritual heritage still remained.

The basic theme of Ezra is the restoration of the temple and the spiritual, moral, and social restoration of the returned remnant in Jerusalem. We read in Ezra 4:1,2, “Now when the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard that the descendants of the captivity were building the temple of the Lord God of Israel, they came to Zerubbabel and the heads of the fathers’ houses, and said to them, ‘Let us build with you, for we seek your God as you do; and we have sacrificed to Him since the days of Esarhaddon king of Assyria, who brought us here.’”

Deception is one of Satan’s most often used tactics, as he tries to eat you up and if he can’t hinder you directly he’ll try to sneak in through the back door. Jesus exposed this evil scheme of the enemy in the parable of the wheat and tares.

He said in Matt. 13:24, 25, “The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field; but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way.”

Caleb would have to force his way into [what was rightfully his] and take it by storm.

This is what happened here in the story of Ezra. Immediately Satan sent the adversaries of God’s people to get involved with what *they* wanted to do. Satan always opposes you when you’re birthing or building. If you’re doing nothing for God he’ll leave you alone, because you are not a threat to him.

We read in Gal. 5:9, “A little leaven leavens the whole lump.” The Message© Bible says, “It only takes a minute amount of yeast, you know, to permeate an entire loaf of bread.” In the Bible leaven is never used to symbolize anything good see ^{Mark 8:15}.

What Paul is telling us is that

one bad apple will indeed spoil an entire basket of good apples. The leaders in Ezra's time knew this and responded in v. 3,

"But Zerubbabel and Jeshua and the rest of the heads of the fathers' houses of Israel said to them, 'You may do nothing with us to build a house for our God; but we alone will build to the Lord God of Israel, as King Cyrus the king of Persia has commanded us.'"

These leaders knew that yeast may be a small thing but it works its way through a whole batch of bread pretty fast. It's the small foxes that spoil the vine. 1 Cor.. 15:33 says, "Do not be deceived: Evil company corrupts good habits." If they would have accepted the offer of their adversaries, it is a sure reality that the temple of God would not have been rebuilt.

The devil won't appear to be opposing you if you let him get involved, but do not be deceived. He is a thief who comes to kill, steal, and destroy and he did not stop his efforts to hinder the work of God's people:

"Then the people of the land tried to discourage the people of Judah. They troubled them in building, and hired counselors against them to

frustrate their purpose all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius king of Persia"

Ezra 4:4,5

Jesus said in Rev. 3:20, "Be-hold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me."

People everywhere love this verse and the sentimental value it brings, but they also need to realize that *Satan is saying the exact same thing.*

The devil is also knocking on the door of your life. The devil don't bother folks who don't bother him, however, if you and your faith are a threat to him, for sure he'll come knocking at your door. Believe it. Expect it.

Deception is one of Satan's most often used tactics.

THE COLOR OF EVIL

Jesus said of the devil, "He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it" John 8:44.

Satan is the master of deception, he comes as an angel of light, and we are to never, ever let him get involved in our personal

lives and that which we desire to do for the Lord.

James 4:7 says, “Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.” We need to steadfastly resist the enemy, but you’re not going to be able to exercise any power and authority over Satan until you first submit yourself to God.

We need to be radically and outrageously obedient to God and His Word. Phil. 2:8 says Jesus humbled Himself and became extremely obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.

Don’t let the devil steal your vision and the faith you have.

“Do not be deceived: Evil company corrupts good habits.”

Overcome him by the power of the Word and the word of your testimony.

Paul tells us to “Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong” ^{1 Cor. 16:13}. The Message[©] Bible says, “Keep your eyes open, hold tight to your convictions, give it all you’ve got, be resolute, and love without stopping.”

STAND YOUR GROUND

Yes, sometimes it is lonely at

the top, but you and Jesus will always be a majority. If God be for us, who can be against us ^{Romans 8:31}? ***So stand your ground!*** Protect what is yours!

Eph. 6:13b, 14a says, “...and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore...” David had three mighty warriors who did just that. Soldiers in the time of David were professional warriors whose job it was to protect and defend the honor of the king. His wish was their command.

Once, when David was driven out of the city of Bethlehem and forced to live in the stronghold of the cave of Adullam, he said in longing, “Oh, that someone would give me a drink of water from the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate!” ^{2 Sam. 23:15}.

At the time, Bethlehem was the garrison of the evil Philistine army. Nevertheless, when three of David’s men heard the desire of their king, they went down and broke through the enemy’s camp, drew water from the well, and brought it back to David. Because these three brave men risked their lives to satisfy the thirst of their king, David refused to drink the water and instead poured it out as an offering to the Lord ^{2 Sam. 23:16}.

Just who were these three men who served under David? What was the special quality in their character that earned them eternal recognition as David's "mighty men"? As we shall see, each of these three men performed heroic feats in battle with tenacious determination that allowed each of them to come out victorious and receive the honor of being called "mighty."

THE STANDARD OF GOD

They refused to run when the going got tough, as the children of Israel did when challenged by the giant Goliath. They stood their ground and fought a good fight, because the honor of their king would be determined by the outcome of their battle.

One of these men was called Adino the Eznite and he was chief among the captains of David's army of mighty men. One day he went to war and killed eight hundred men at one time ^{2 Sam. 23:8}. With unrelenting tenacity and aggressiveness, he vigorously fought on until the last enemy was overtaken and destroyed. The magnitude and vastness of this great victory is beyond human comprehension.

Adino was a true warrior and

for him defeat was not an option. Like Gideon, this man can also be called "a mighty man of valor."

The word "might" means to 'have the ability to do anything,' and any man who can stand his ground and kill eight hundred men at one time has earned the right to be called "mighty."

In a similar story, King Jehoshaphat once went to war and was outnumbered by great proportions, and this is what the Lord said to him, "Do not be afraid nor dismayed because of this great multitude, for the battle is not yours, but God's" ^{2 Chron. 20:15}.

"Resist the devil and he will flee from you."

Another time a wicked king once sent horses and chariots and a great army to surround a city occupied by the prophet Elisha. When informed by his servant of this evil deed, the man of God said, "Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them" ^{2 Kings 6:16}. The great prophet then asked the Lord to open the eyes of his young servant who then saw that the mountains were full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.

The battle indeed is the Lord's. Is 59:19b ^{AMP} assures us, "When the enemy shall come in,

like a flood the Spirit of the Lord will lift up a standard against him and put him to flight - for He will come like a rushing stream which the breath of the Lord drives.”

2 Sam. 23:9, 10 gives the description of another of David’s mighty men, “And after him was Eleazar the son of Dodo, the Ahohite, one of the three mighty men with David when they defied the Philistines who were gathered there for battle, and the men of Israel had retreated. He arose and attacked the Philistines until his hand was weary, and his hand stuck to the sword. The Lord brought about a great victory that day; and the people returned after him only to plunder.”

Notice in v. 9 that when the time for battle came, the men of Israel retreated. They ran away and refused to fight for their king and for what rightfully belonged to them. In Ps. 78:9-11 we read, “The children of Ephraim, being armed and carrying bows, turned back in the day of battle. They did not keep the covenant of God; they refused to walk in His law, and forgot His works and His wonders that He had shown them.”

These people, just like the men with Eleazar, were well able to be victorious, but instead of fighting they turned back.

Likewise, those who try to live a lifestyle of faith will oftentimes, in the face of contradictory circumstances, waver in their faith and give up, thus forfeiting the victory and promise of God that rightfully belongs to them.

PANIC: A DEADLY REACTION

We need to be radically and outrageously obedient to God and His Word.

The thing that causes people to retreat and not “go forward” when tests and trials come for the Word’s sake is panic. Panic is nothing more than distrust, which is the exact opposite of faith. It is a sudden, unreasonable, overpowering fear.

When overtaken by panic, a person will begin to react and respond in the natural rather than in the spiritual. Peter panicked when he was walking on the water toward Jesus and began to sink. He took his eyes off Jesus, Who is the Living Word, and focused instead on the stormy circumstances around him.

People who panic will retreat in the day of battle and will not “go

forward.” What, then, should a person do? The same thing Eleazar did! He grabbed onto his sword and wouldn’t let go. He was tired from all the fighting and his hand was weary, but still, he wouldn’t let go of the one thing that, for him, represented the difference between life and death, victory and defeat.

Eph. 6:17 tells us that the sword of the Spirit is the Word of God. The worst thing you can do when the pressure is on is throw down your sword and retreat. Ps. 68:1a says, “Let God arise, let His enemies be scattered...” Since God is represented by His Word, this verse can also be rendered, “Let the Word of God arise, let the enemies of His Word be scattered.”

Eleazar refused to drop his sword. He was so determined that he was going to be victorious that his hand clung to his sword until God had given him a great victory. When it was all over, his comrades had to pry his hand off his sword.

If we are to live a victorious life as a successful believer, where we force our way into the kingdom of God and take it by storm, we must have the same attitude and determination as Eleazar. We need to

grab hold of the Word of God and refuse to let go of our faith. This persistence will give us the ability and strength to “go forward” and not panic in the day of battle.

And if we will stand our ground and fight the good fight of faith God, like He did with Eleazar, will bring about a great victory in our day of battle.

The last of David’s three mighty men is described in 2 Sam. 11,12, “And after him was Sham-

mah the son of Agee the Hararite. The Philistines had gathered together into a troop where there was a piece of ground full of lentils. Then the people

fled from the Philistines. But he stationed himself in the middle of the field, defended it, and killed the Philistines. And the Lord brought about a great victory.”

Once again we see the Philistine army arrayed in battle against the people of Israel. This time the enemy had gathered near a field of beans and the people of Israel, as they had done with Eleazar, had fled at the time of battle.

*“Like a flood the Spirit
of the Lord will lift
up a standard against
[your enemy].”*

IF IT’S YOURS, FIGHT FOR IT

One man, however, decided to stand his ground and fight for what was his. Shammah stationed himself in the middle of the field, and boldly proclaimed, “This bean patch is mine! This harvest belongs to me!” Shammah made up his mind that this bean patch belonged to him and no man or army was going to take it away from him. Shammah stood his ground and single-handedly fought the enemy until the Lord gave him a great victory.

God made a special promise to the children of Israel in Deut. 20:1, “When you go to battle against your enemies, and see horses and chariots and people more numerous than you, do not be afraid of them; for the Lord your God is with you, Who brought you up from the land of Egypt.”

Verse 4 of the same chapter says, “for the Lord your God is He Who goes with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you.”

Shammah understood this and he won his war, because he decided that he was going to keep what was his and that he would not panic.

Knowing that the battle was the Lord's, Shammah fought a good

fight and won. His bean field, like the mountain that belonged to Caleb, represents all the blessings and promises of God that are available to all who will believe. When one commits themselves to live and walk by faith, it does not take them long to realize that, like Shammah, sometimes you have to fight for the things that already belong to you.

For certain, the day will come when you will have to stand your ground and fight the good fight of faith.

Panic is nothing more than distrust, the opposite of faith.

It would be interesting to find out what happened to those people who ran away the day Eleazar and Sham-

mah went to war. Jesus said in Luke 9:62, “No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.”

Like those who were in the company of David's three mighty men, all too often many Christians will run away and give up on something the minute their faith is tried. They fall by the wayside and relinquish their faith, because they fail to recognize that it is Satan who is trying to keep them from receiving the blessings God has promised in His Word.

THE REWARD OF RETREAT

Prov. 24:10 says, “If you faint in the day of adversity your strength is small.” The sad part is that the answer to their prayers and confessions of faith is usually waiting on their doorstep ready to be received when they decide to give up and run away on the day of battle.

So what happened to those Israelites who decided to retreat instead of heeding the call to “go forward”? Perhaps the answer can be found when we consider what happened to the people of Ephraim who also ran away on the day of battle ^{Ps. 78:9}.

The book of Hosea says, “Ephraim shall be desolate in the day of rebuke. Ephraim is oppressed and broken in judgment, because he willingly walked by human precept” ^{Hosea 5:9a,11}.

- “O Ephraim, what shall I do to you?... For your faithfulness is like a morning cloud and like the early dew it goes away” ^{Hosea 6:4}.
- “Ephraim also is like a silly dove, without sense...” ^{Hosea 7:11a}.
- “Woe to them, for they have fled from Me! Destruction to them, because they have transgressed against Me! Though I redeemed

them, they have spoken lies against Me” ^{Hosea 7:13}.

So what happens to those who run away on the day of battle? Need anymore be said?

To the surprise of many, there are several fighting warriors listed in the Hebrews 11 “Hall of Fame” of faith. Names such as Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthab, and David ^{v. 32} grace the pages of this chapter to be an example to us all. These are men who fought a good fight and did not run away on the day of battle.

These are warriors “who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths

of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens” ^{Heb. 11:33,34}.

THE WARRIOR SPIRIT

Make no mistake about it, Christianity is a confrontation and we must all realize that there are no victories when there are no wars! We must, therefore, develop within ourselves a warrior spirit so that we can force our way into the kingdom and take it by storm.

*“This harvest
belongs to me.”*

With determined confidence we can boldly proclaim,

- “I can do all things through Christ Who strengthens me” ^{Phil. 4:13}.
- “Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him Who loved us” ^{Rom. 8:37}.
- “The things which are impossible with men are possible with God” ^{Luke 18:27}.
- “Greater is He Who is in me than he who is in the world” ^{1 John 4:4}.

The day of battle means greater victories, because as 1 Cor. 15:57 says, “But thanks be to God Who gives us the victory in Christ Jesus.”

We are told in Is. 54:17 that “no weapon formed against you shall prosper.” Rom. 8:31b says, “If God be for us, who can be against us?”

Because of who we are in Christ, the persistent believer with a warrior spirit can just as easily say, “If God be for us, who cares who is against us?” Unlike those mighty men from the Old Testament, we are today engaged in a different type of battle. Eph. 6:12 ^{AMP} says, “For we not wrestling with flesh and blood

- contending only with physical opponents - but against the powers, against [the master spirits who are] the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly (supernatural) sphere.”

UNCONVENTIONAL WEAPONS

Neither do we use natural weapons such as a sword, spear, or the jawbone of an ass. 2 Cor. 10:3-5 says, “For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.”

The battle is still the Lord’s and our weapons today consist of the mighty Name of Jesus, His shed blood, and the Word of God. The good news is that the victory has already been won. In His death, burial, and resurrection, Christ “disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it” ^{Cor. 2:15}.

All too often many Christians will run away and give up.

Christ did not run away on the day of battle, although He was tempted to do so in the Garden of Gethsemane. Heb. 12:3 says, “For consider Him Who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls.”

Christ faced the enemy and reduced them to nothing ^{1 Cor. 2:6} and as a result of His obedience to the point of death, even the death of the cross, God has highly exalted Him and given Him the Name which is above every name ^{Phil. 2:8,9}.

Today, He is seated at the right hand of God waiting for us to do the same thing He did. Christ is “waiting till His enemies are made His footstool” ^{Heb. 10:13}, and this happens when we stand our ground and fight the good fight of faith.

It is encouraging to know that we are fighting a defeated foe and one day we will gaze at the devil, consider him, and say, “Is this the man who made the earth tremble, who shook kingdoms, who made the world as a wilderness and destroyed its cities, who did not open the house of his prisoners?” ^{Is. 14:16,17}.

Because the battle has already

been won, then victory is assured every time we fight the good fight of faith. If we will trust God and “go forward,” there is no way we can lose.

So, what are we waiting for?
Let the battle begin!

*For the weapons of
our warfare are not
carnal, but mighty
in God.*

REST FOR THE FAITHFUL

Have you ever heard the phrase, “Life is only a dress rehearsal?” In a sense that statement is true. If eternity exists, and I believe it does, then this life on Earth cannot measure up to the quantum expanse of the never ending day.

Imagine, if you can, time without end; life with the assurance that its flame will never go out. Life in eternity is the dream that the dreams of man are made of.

But there is a tragedy connected to this dream. Billions of people will never see the shores of Heaven, because walking the narrow road of faith and righteousness is far too difficult for them. A pastor was once heard saying that the majority of mankind will certainly make it into heaven. Really? Is that why Hell has widened its borders? ^{Isa. 5:14} The Bible talks about the wide path and its gate that leads to destruction, and the many that will follow it; and the few that take the narrow road, passing through its gate into life eternal. ^{Matthew 7:13-14}

Randall Brewer continues to coach us on how to faithfully live this dress rehearsal in the *Taken By Storm* collection. Faith is trust, believing, honor, and devotion to the One True God.

Carefully and methodically begin *your* journey back to the Holy City from whence you came. The reunion celebration is going to be held off planet in our Father’s mansion, and by invitation only: the call to Salvation.



13

THE COMPASSION OF FAITH

"Faith works through love." Galatians 5:6

The time drew near for Jesus to fulfill His calling and purpose for coming to planet Earth in human form. Within a few short hours He would be beaten, ridiculed, spat upon, and shamefully hung naked on a cross between two thieves. And for what reason did He come to die for you and me?

In the upper room during the last supper, Jesus prayed these words, **"I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You, that they also may be one in Us..."** John 17:20,21a.

The Message® Bible says, "The goal is for all of them to become one heart and mind - just as you, Father, are in me and I in you, so they might be one heart and mind with us."

Jesus came to bridge the gap of sin between us and the Father, and to bring unity amongst ourselves. Jesus came to make us into one big happy family, and unity in the body of Christ begins when we realize

that we are all individual members of God's household.

Paul says in Eph. 3:14,15, "For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ from Whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named."

We are all one family in Christ. He is the vine, we are the branches John 15:5. Together as joint heirs with Christ we are to become "like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind" Phil. 2:2. This is called the "law of unity" and is so vital today in the body of Christ. Jesus Himself said, **"Every kingdom divided against**



itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand” ^{Matt. 12:25}.

We are joined together in a covenant relationship with one another, because of the shed blood of Jesus and the bonding element that holds and binds us together is love, the “bond of perfection” ^{Col. 3:14}. Jesus came to make us a family, and Paul tells us that as a member of the family of God, we need to be “rooted and grounded in love” ^{Eph. 3:17}. This is the foundation of our walk with Christ and will cause us to be filled with the fullness of God. If we are rooted in love, we are rooted in God, for God is love ^{1 John 4:8}.

We are all one family in Christ. He is the vine and we are the branches.

GOD IS NOT ORDINARY

The love of God is no ordinary love. It is a love that continues loving no matter what. The love of God will always focus on the one loved with thought of self secondary.

Jude 21 says to “keep yourself in the love of God.” If we will do this, the body of Christ will be undivided, because the love of God always seeks and desires unity. “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity” ^{Ps. 133:1}. Dwelling together in unity means to have a “continual

courtship” with one another. When we are courting somebody in the natural, we are always on our best behavior and we will do anything to win the affection of the other person.

Likewise, we need to delight to be in the presence of one another and strive to promote and further each others welfare and calling in life. Paul says, “Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others” ^{Phil. 2:4}.

It is God’s desire that we dwell together as a holy family having one heart, one soul, and one interest. To do this is a rare thing and is therefore admirable. It is “good” and it is “pleasant.” It is heaven on earth and is agreeable to the will of God.

People who love are a blessed people and it brings constant delight and comfort to those who are living in harmony and unity with one another. Ps. 133:2 says dwelling together in unity “...is like the precious oil upon the head, running down the beard, the beard of Aaron, running down on the edge of his garments.”

Believers are taught by God to love one another ^{1 Thess. 4:9}, and it is His

grace working through us. It is like the precious oil running down the beard of Aaron. This ointment was holy and was not made for common use.

BROTHERLY LOVE IS UNITY

So must our brotherly love be. To dwell together in unity we must love with a pure heart that is solely devoted to God and the fulfillment of His will.

As with the anointing oil, holy love is also of great price and is precious indeed. It is like ointment and perfume which will rejoice the heart. It is the “oil of gladness” that brings exaltation, celebration, and exceeding joy.

Jesus said, “**This is My commandment, that you love one another**” John 15:12. If we will take the time to develop a love relationship with one another, then dwelling together in unity will be “like the dew of Hermon, descending upon the mountains of Zion” Ps. 133:3.

The morning dew represents fertility and growth. 1 John 4:12 says, “If we love one another, God abides in us and His love has been perfected in us.” And how is God’s love perfected in us? By practicing love and hospitality on one another.

This causes love to grow. Love is not selfish and we are to manifest the love of God and His nature to others. Jesus said we are to love “**as I have loved you**” John 13:34. Peter says, “Above all things have intense and unfailing love for one another” 1 Peter 4:8.

Love is a Spiritual force that takes residence in the hearts of every believer. Rom. 5:5 tells us that “the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit Who was given to us.” Love is a commandment and it must be foremost in the center of our will.

As believers, our first responsibility is to draw close to God and develop a love relationship with Him. You will quickly realize that...

The love you have for others will always be in direct proportion to your love for God.

The way you love God is the same way you will love others. You can always tell where a person is in their walk with the Lord by the way they love and treat others. 1 John 4:7 says, “...everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.” Do you want to know the love of God more? Then practice loving one another more. This will help us to build up

To dwell together in unity we must love with a pure heart.

a greater degree and measure of love for God, which in turn helps us to love one another more. It is a continuous cycle of love.

God is love and His greatest desire is for us to love Him with all our hearts, and in turn to love one another. This is how unity comes to the body of Christ.

“Therefore be followers of God as dear children. And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma” Eph. 5:1,2.

As born-again believers we are to be imitators of God, as dear children imitate their parents.

Jesus came to lay down His life for us and we ought to do the same. John 15:13 says, “Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends.” Become to others “a friend who sticks closer than a brother” Prov. 18:24.

COVENANT LOVE

Our God is a covenant God, and we need to begin to love one another with a covenant love that comes as a result of knowing Him. We need to become “zealous for good works” Titus 2:14. So what

does covenant love do? How does covenant love act? The entire Bible is a book of love and throughout its pages are recorded several principles of covenant love that should govern the thoughts, words, and actions of every born-again child of God.

One of the first things we learn about the love of God is that it always gives. John 3:16, probably the most famous verse in all of scripture, begins by saying, “**For God so loved the world that He gave...**” Our God is a giving God and there is no better indicator of His presence

in our hearts than in the attitude we develop about giving. Love always gives and we need to make a

quality decision to become a quality giver. 1 Tim. 6:18 says, “Let them do good that they may be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share.” Giving should be the lifestyle of every born-again believer. Giving is what we do. Jesus said, “**Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away**” Matt. 5:42.

The love of God always gives.

NO MAN IS AN ISLAND¹

2 Cor. 9:7 says that “God loves, cherishes above all things, a cheerful giver.” Even though this verse is referring to money, the principle

is the same in all areas of giving. Before money can be given, we need to first be willing to cheerfully give of ourselves. We need to get involved in the lives of other people. When we do, we'll quickly realize that there is always something we can give to promote the lives of others.

Love always gives. And what precisely does love give? Whatever is needed. Money is only a small part of giving. We can give people our love, time, fellowship, counsel, prayers, and any natural resource we have at our disposal.

Also, we need to be consistent in our giving. Daily look for ways to give and enrich those around you. You were born to love, and can develop in your life the ministry of being nice to other people.

Buy a coworker a cup of coffee or bake a dozen cookies and give them to a neighbor. Give somebody you know a phone call and tell them how blessed you are to have them as a friend. Offer to baby sit for a mother of six children who never gets a chance to be by herself and do the things she likes to do. Take an elderly person to the shopping mall with you, or a fatherless child to a

ballgame. And if nothing else, you can always give somebody a smile and a friendly "hello."

Let people see the joy that is within you. And who knows? These acts of kindness may birth in them the desire to know the same God you know. What more can a person offer another than the opportunity to receive eternal life?

Covenant love treats people as God treats us. Rom. 5:8 says, "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

In 1 John 3:16 we're told, "By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." Love is not selfish, and we too need to die to ourselves so we can have the freedom to love and bless others.

We need to engage our time and effort into what others like to do and get involved in what interests them. If we are willing, God will see to it that we will always have the resources from which to give and He will also provide the opportunities to do so. Daily look for those opportunities. Surely they are there.

*We need to get
involved in the lives of
other people.*

PRAISE: THE SIGN OF ACCEPTANCE

“But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him” John 4:23.

Everybody likes praise. God likes praise. People like praise. Cats and dogs like praise. Praise is a sign of acceptance. Is not acceptance the primary need of all people?

Throughout history people have gone to great lengths to accomplish great deeds all for the sole purpose of being noticed and accepted by others. People have a craving to be received willingly and favorably. They want to be approved of and believed in. We need to learn to accept people not based on our preference or their performance, but because God has accepted them Rom. 14:3.

Paul says in Rom. 15:7, “Therefore receive one another, just as Christ also received us, to the glory of God.” As we praise and worship God for His worthiness, so must we also compliment and lift up one another. Eph. 4:29 tells us, “Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification that it may impart grace to the hearers.”

Compliments make a person feel good about themselves, and

births in them the desire to respond back to the person giving the compliment. This leads to unity. A compliment spoken from the heart can “break the ice” between strangers and can open up the doorway to a life of love, fellowship, and faithful service to our Heavenly Father.

The Bible in Phil. 4:8 even tells us what types of compliments we are to give people, “Finally, brethren,

- Whatever things are true,
- Whatever things are noble,
- Whatever things are just,
- Whatever things are pure,
- Whatever things are lovely,
- Whatever things are of good report,
- If there is any virtue and,
- If there is anything praise-worthy,

meditate on these things.”

If you will meditate on these type of things concerning other people it will eventually get down into your heart and Jesus said, “For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks” (Matt. 12:34). If you will take the time and make the effort you will always be able to find something good in the lives of other people to compliment them

about. And, by all means, be sincere in your praise giving. Nobody likes false praise. Nobody likes to be lied to.

Covenant love means you will be real and sincere in your relationships. Let your compliments come from a conviction in your heart that you really believe what you're saying. And if you will remain honest and sincere, you also will be blessed as you heap praises upon those around you. "A man has joy by the answer of his mouth, and a word spoken in due season, how good it is" ^{Prov. 15:23}.

Blessing and ministering to one another is what "loving thy neighbor" is all about.

But if we are to please God in our quest for unity, then we will have to get our faith involved, for "without faith it is impossible to please Him..." ^{Heb. 11:6}. The household of God ^{Eph 2:19} is called the "household of faith" ^{Gal.6:10}, and to please God we need to be actively engaged in the lifestyle of faith. Faith is the confidence of knowing *that you know*. It is a firm conviction based upon hearing, and in the confidence you have in the speaker.

WALKING BY FAITH

The first step in walking by faith is to develop faith in the faith you have.

Too many people focus on the mountain in front of them instead of using their faith to focus on the mountain-mover, Jesus Christ.

When faced with the privilege and opportunity to use their faith, people should realize that their faith produced in them the greatest miracle of all when they got born-again. And if their faith can snatch them out of the jaws of spiritual death and get them born-again, then that same faith can get for them anything else.

Realize and believe that the faith already inside of you can produce the desired results for which you are believing.

"And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love" ^{1 Cor.13:13}. Love is the answer to every problem we face and faith works by the same love that has been shed abroad in our hearts ^{Gal. 5:6}.

Love is not selfish. It does not seek its own ^{1 Cor. 13:5}. Likewise, God did not give us faith to consume it all on ourselves. We all too often use our faith to get our own needs met with no regard for the needs of

Be real and sincere in your relationships.

others. If a problem or an obstacle arises in our lives we immediately put our faith to work on it. But if this is all we do with our faith, then we have missed the heartbeat of God.

Faith always used on oneself is called *immature faith*. We need to grow beyond that and use our faith to help others. Gal. 6:2 says, “Bear one another’s burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ,” which is the law of love. “And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are in the household of faith” Gal.6:9,10.

WORK IT, OR IT DIES

Faith always proves itself by works. James 2:26 tells us that “faith without works is dead.” We need to believe and confess the Word of God concerning the needs of others and also provide works and actions to help meet those needs. John the Baptist, the forerunner of Christ, said, “He who has two tunics, let him give to him who has none; and he who has food, let him do likewise” Luke 3:11.

James asks what does it profit

if a brother or sister who is naked and destitute of daily food comes to you and all you do is pray for them and send them on their way James 2: 14-17? The answer is obvious. It profits nothing! 1 John 3: 17,18 says, “But whoever has this world’s goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him? My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.”

True Biblical faith and Godly love will feed and clothe those in need, and will find shelter for them and help them find a job. This is faith and love in action. Yes, we were born to love but we are called to serve. For sure, faith without works is dead, and dead faith is definitely not pleasing to God.

Jesus taught that the kingdom of God is like a mustard seed that is planted in the ground. And when it is sown “it grows up and becomes greater than all the herbs, and shoots out large branches, so that the birds of the air may nest under its shade” Mark 4:32. As the mustard seed of faith grows up, it will reach out beyond itself and help provide shelter for the birds of the air. Likewise, our faith should be used to help sustain

We need to grow beyond immature faith.

life in others.

If our faith is not being used to help other people, then it has not yet grown up to maturity. As with the birds of the air, the ultimate goal of our faith should be to help produce positive results in the lives of other people.

One example is when we give by faith. We don't give of our resources to get our own needs met. No, we give to help other people get their needs met. Rom. 15:1,2 says, "We then who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves.

Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, leading to edification." Doing this on a consistent basis will bring great joy to the body of Christ and unity among those in the household of faith.

*My little children,
let us not love in
word or in tongue,
but in deed and in
truth.*

14

THE JOY OF FAITH

“My brethren, count it all joy when you fall in to various trials.” James 1:2

Do you know what a trial is? It's a distraction. That's all it is, plain and simple. A trial is the devil's attempt to distract you from doing what God has called you to do. How can a person focus on fulfilling their dreams if all they do is sit around all the time and worry about their problems? The answer is they can't. This is why many are called but few are chosen.

The hardest part of faith is the final half hour, and the closer a person gets to the fulfillment of their dream, the bigger and more consistent the distractions will be. This is why the servants of God so desperately need to learn to cast all their care onto the Lord.

It is so easy to get distracted. You're trying so hard to serve the Lord when you hear that a major layoff is about to happen at your job. Your children get sick, your spouse is mad at you, the in-laws come for a visit, your car breaks down. These are all distractions. Nothing more, nothing less.

What should you do?

1. Press on!
2. Remain focused on the call.
3. Do what you can in the natural and leave the rest in God's very capable hands. Let Him lead you beside the still waters.

As you rest and lay down in green pastures you'll sense a song rising up from the inside of you. It's a song of praise and worship and thanksgiving. It's a new song. It's a song of joy.

All during David's reign over Israel, the Philistines were continually a thorn in his flesh. 2 Sam. 21:15 says, “When the



Philistines were at war again with Israel, David and his servants with him went down and fought against the Philistines; and David grew faint.” David is now old and he had been a man of war his entire life. Almost non-stop he had been in battle, after battle, after battle. At this time in his life his nation was in famine, his son had been killed, and once again he was at war with the Philistines.

SING A NEW SONG

The Bible says David grew faint. He became weary and exhausted. Does this passage describe you? Do you need a miracle right now? If so, then consider what David did in 2 Sam. 22:1a, “Then David spoke to the Lord the words of this song...” David sang a new song to the Lord, and when you read and study the entire chapter you will see that it is indeed a song of joy. It was a psalm of thanksgiving.

Verses 2-4 says, “The Lord is my rock, my fortress, and my deliverer; The God of my strength, in Him I will trust, my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold and my refuge; My Savior, You save me from violence. I will call upon the Lord, Who is worthy to be praised; So

shall I be saved from my enemies.”

When you sing a new song to the Lord, a song of joy, you also shall be saved from your enemies.

In Ps. 144:9,10 David wrote, “I will sing a new song to You, O God; on a harp of ten strings I will sing praises to You, the One Who gives salvation to kings, Who delivers David His servant from the deadly sword.”

David was a man after God’s own heart and often he labeled himself the Lord’s servant. He knew that his God was a covenant-keeping God and this is why he was able to rise up and sing a song of joy during times of peril.

*The hardest part of faith
is the final half hour.*

Ps. 89:34, 37
says, “My covenant

I will not break, nor alter the word that has gone out of My lips. Once I have sworn by My holiness; I will not lie to David; His seed shall endure forever, and his throne as the sun before Me; It shall be established forever like the moon, even like the faithful witness in the sky.”

David knew that God is not a man that He should lie ^{Num. 23:19}, so he was able to stand firm on what God had said to him. Over and over again God had delivered David from his enemies and he remembered

these victories often. Before he faced Goliath he told Saul how the Lord had delivered him from the lion and the bear ^{1 Sam. 17:34-37}. He was saying that he had seen God work before. If he delivered him once, He can do it again. And again. And again.

THE DEVIL IS STILL THERE

The devil wants us to have tunnel vision and see only the problem, but like David we need to broaden the horizon of our vision and see the God Who is more than enough.

Habakkuk put his trust in the same God David served when he wrote, “Though the fig tree may not blossom, nor fruit be on the vine; Though the labor of the olive may fail, and the fields yield no food; Though the flock be cut off from the fold, and there be no herd in the stalls - Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation. The Lord God is my strength; He will make my feet like deer’s feet, and He will make me walk on my high hills” ^{Hab. 3:17-19}.

This was Habakkuk’s song of joy. We need to sing a song of joy during times of trial and not only when things are going good. We can have the confidence that God will

never leave us or forsake us. He is always there. He is the great “I AM”! He does not take His children out on a limb and leave them there. No, He is an ever present help in time of need.

David wrote in Ps. 27:9,10, “Do not hide Your face from me; Do not turn Your servant away in anger; You have been my help; Do not leave me nor forsake me, O God of my salvation. When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take care of me.” This was why David was always singing songs of joy unto His Lord. We should also do the same.

Paul wrote, “Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!” ^{Phil. 4:4}. James said, “My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials...” ^{James 1:2}. Even Jesus said, “**These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you will have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world**” ^{John 16:33}.

Do you think God is trying to tell us something here? He is! He is saying that your breakthrough doesn’t come when the storm clouds pass from over your head. No, it comes when you learn to sing and

*The devil wants
us to see only the
problem.*

dance in the rain. During times of trial we need to lie down beside the still waters and sing unto the Lord a song of joy. In other words, calm down and cheer up!

Rest assured, it is not the will of God for His servants to suffer defeat.

Just as He leads us beside the still waters, we can sing a song of joy because He “always leads us in triumph in Christ” ^{2 Cor. 2:14}. Ps. 23:3 says, “He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His Name’s sake.” Yes, David grew faint but he was able to sing a song of joy because the words he wrote in Ps. 37:23, 24 were burning in his heart,

“The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, and He delights in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; For the Lord upholds him with His hand.”

This is why David could write in Ps. 40:1-3,

“I waited patiently for the Lord; And He inclined to me, and heard my cry. He also brought me up out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and sit my feet upon a rock, and established my steps. He has put a new song in my mouth - Praise to

our God; Many will see it and fear, and will trust in the Lord.”

THE CHRISTIAN WALK IS DIFFICULT

Never forget that Satan is a thief and like a roaring lion he roams about seeking whom he may devour. He’s after...

- The Word in your heart,
- Your joy and power,
- Your peace,
- Courage
- Comfort,
- Your physical belongings

and, more than anything else...

- The call of God that is on your life.

This is why when the Philistines

heard that David was anointed king over all Israel, they rose up in battle against him ^{1 Chron. 14:8}.

The devil is trying to discourage you, and if he can’t defeat you in the spiritual realm, he’ll attack you in the natural realm. Read what the writer of Hebrews says in Heb. 10:32-35,

THE JOY OF THE LORD IS A MIGHTY POWER

“But recall the former days in which, after you were illuminated,

The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord.

you endured a great struggle with sufferings: partly while you were made a spectacle both by reproaches and tribulations, and partly while you became companions of those who were so treated; for you had compassion on me in my chains, and joyfully accepted the plundering of your goods, knowing that you have a better and an enduring possession for yourselves in heaven.”

The Message® Bible bears even more light on what the writer is saying, “Remember those early days after you first saw the light? Those were the hard times! Kicked around in public, targets of every kind of abuse - some days it was you, other days your friends. If some friends went to prison, you stuck by them. If some enemies broke in and seized your goods, you let them go with a smile, knowing they couldn’t touch your real treasure. Nothing they did bothered you, nothing set you back. So don’t throw it all away now. You were sure of yourselves then. It’s still a sure thing! But you need to stick it out, staying with God’s plan so you’ll be there for the promised completion.”

In the midst of this long passage of scriptures is the key to having victory in your life. Verse 34 says they “joyfully accepted the

plundering” of their goods. When the enemy broke into their homes and took everything they had, a song of joy rose up on the inside of them. The only way Satan can defeat you and stop you from going forward is to prevent you from singing your song of joy.

Neh. 8:10b says, “Do not sorrow, for the joy of the Lord is your strength.”

The devil can’t beat a believer who is joyful.

He wants you weak and powerless, so he attacks your joy because there is no power without it. Jesus spoke to the Heavenly Father in John 17:13, 14a, “But now I come to You, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have My joy fulfilled in themselves. I have given them Your Word...” Jesus also said in John 15:11, “These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.”

The Word of God produces joy. His Word is good news and good news produces joy. When you’ve been robbed of your joy you’ve been robbed of the Word, because it’s the Word that produces joy. So be of good cheer. The Word of God and the joy of the Lord gives you

The devil can’t beat a believer who is joyful.

the strength to secure for yourself victory every time the devil attacks you.

Jesus came from the tribe of Judah and this word means “praise.” We are joint-heirs with Jesus, so all of us should shout praises unto our God and sing to Him a song of joy. For sure, God can work in the lives of those who praise Him. The game’s not over as long as you’re still praising Him.

The Message® Bible says in 1 Thess. 1:5,6, “When the Message we preached came to you, it wasn’t just words. Something happened in you. The Holy Spirit put steel in your convictions. You paid careful attention to the way we lived among you, and determined to live that way yourselves. In imitating us, you imitated the Master. Although great trouble accompanied the Word you were able to take great joy from the Holy Spirit! - taking the trouble with the joy, the joy with the trouble.”

Paul went on to say in 1 Thess. 2:1,2, “So, friends, it’s obvious that our visit to you was no waste of time. We had just been given rough treatment in Philippi, as you know, but that didn’t slow us down. We were sure of ourselves in God, and

went right ahead and said our piece, presenting God’s message to you, defiant of the opposition.”

How is it that Paul was able to write these words? Because he continually had a song of joy in his heart. Acts 16:25 says, “But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them.” Joy has a voice. It can’t be kept quiet.

Jer.33:11 talks about “the voice of joy and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the voice of those who will say: ‘Praise the Lord of hosts, for the Lord is good, for His mercy endures forever’ - and of those who will bring the sacrifice of praise into the house of the Lord.” ^{Jer. 33:11}

*[Satan] attacks
your joy because
there is no power
without it.*

David wrote in Ps. 16:11, “In Your presence is fullness of joy.” Joy must be expressed! Paul and Silas sang praises at the midnight hour. In 2 Sam. 6 David brought the ark to Jerusalem, and verses 14 & 15 says, “Then David danced before the Lord with all his might; and David was wearing a linen ephod. So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the Lord with shouting and with the sound of the

trumpet.” Verse 16 says David was “leaping and whirling before the Lord.”

Ps. 33:1-3 says, “Rejoice in the Lord, O you righteous! For praise from the upright is beautiful. Praise the Lord with the harp; Make melody to Him with an instrument of ten strings. Sing to Him a new song; Play skillfully with a shout of joy.”

A crippled man received a healing miracle and Acts 3:8,9 says, “So he, leaping up, stood and walked and entered the temple with them - walking, leaping, and praising God. And all the people saw him walking and praising God.”

These are all expressions of joy. Even Jesus said in the Beatitudes, “Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh. Blessed are you when men hate you, and when they exclude you, and revile you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of Man’s sake. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy! For indeed your reward is great in heaven...” Luke 6:21b-23a. If you will follow these examples and give expressions to your joy, there is no way the devil or anybody else can defeat you. That is good news.

Ps. 2:11 says, “Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with

trembling.” The Amplified® Bible adds, “lest you displease Him.” God does not want you down and depressed. He’s the glory and the lifter of your head and it displeases Him when you don’t give expression to joy. So be happy on purpose, because you can’t have strength without rejoicing.

Joy has nothing to do with how you feel so don’t wait for some emotion to bring you goosebumps. Paul said in Rom. 5:3 that we are to “glory in tribulations” and the Amplified® Bible says to do it “NOW!” The Message® Bible says, “We continue to shout our praise even when we’re hemmed in with troubles.” Be joyful at all times!

From a jail cell filled with raw sewage Paul wrote, “Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I say rejoice!” Phil. 4:4. You must keep your joy or you won’t win your battle. You don’t win being depressed or negative-minded. No, you win by being filled with the joy of the Lord. Job 5:22 says, “You shall laugh at destruction and famine, and you shall not be afraid of the beasts of the earth.”

You laugh so you don’t lose your joy. Laughter releases joy and joy is a spiritual force that makes

*In [God’s] presence is
the fullness of joy.*

you unafraid of what the enemy can do to you. It gives you the courage to run through a troop and leap over a wall. God shows up with power and might when you give expression to joy. And when God shows up, problems leave. Is. 64:5 says, “For since the beginning of the world men have not heard or perceived by the ear, nor has the eye seen any God besides You, Who acts for the one who waits for Him. You meet him who rejoices and does righteousness.” God will meet you where you’re at when you rejoice and sing unto Him a song of joy.

JOY: A MAJOR SPIRITUAL FORCE

1 Cor. 4:20 says “For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power.” Joy is a major spiritual force and the joy of the Lord is your strength. Joy causes you to be “strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man” Eph. 3:16 and this translates into having the ability to do anything. Phil. 1:25 talks about the “joy of faith.”

Trusting God should make you happy and full of good cheer. Faith is the dynamite that defeats the enemy, but joy is the fuse. Joy comes from having the confidence that your faith is working and this

confidence comes from knowing God.

Paul wrote in 2 Tim. 1:12, “... for I know Whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that day.”

Paul was fully persuaded, because he knew God. Knowing God comes from fellowship with Him on a daily basis, and fellowship in turn produces fullness of joy. A wealth of spiritual might and power to overcome the enemy is available to you through the joy of the Lord.

Understand that joy is not the same thing as happiness.

Happiness is a state of well-being and contentment. It is dependent upon the condition of the circumstances that surround you. If things are going good for you, you’re happy. If they’re not, you’re not happy.

Joy, on the other hand, has very little to do with how happy you are.

You can be joyful in the midst of the most adverse circumstances. The joy of the Lord is one of the fruits of the Spirit Gal. 5:22,23 and is the one fruit from which we get our strength. Joy is not a state of mind.

Joy has nothing to do with how you feel.

It is a force that gives strength to all the other fruit. It is the strength of peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and of temperance.

Joy will cause you to have a proper attitude when trials come your way. It will keep you out of self-pity so you can be strong in the Lord and the power of His might. Whatever circumstances you face, you can always be full of the joy of the Lord.

Be confident knowing that the devil can't oppose you with anything powerful enough to defeat you when you are walking in the joy of the Lord.

Happiness is a state of wellbeing and contentment.

Remember always that *Jesus is everything!* He's the...

- *Origin of life,*
- *The essence of life,*
- *The aim of life, and*
- *The reward of life.*

In His presence is fullness of joy. And it is Jesus Who will bless you every day of the week. In Him you'll have a happy Monday, a blessed Tuesday, a joyful Wednesday, a delightful Thursday, a good Friday, a glorious Saturday, and a heavenly Sunday.

This is what your life will be

like when you sing to the Lord a new song, a song of joy.

15

THE TRANQUILITY OF FAITH

“Be still, and know that I am God.” Psalm 46:1

The pastor of a large church told his congregation that one day the burdens of life and the ministry were bearing down on him, so he decided to go jogging to help relieve some of the stress.

It was the fall season and the route he was on brought him to a park where all the trees were dropping their colorful leaves in majestic splendor. It was a sight to behold, so the pastor stopped running so he could take it all in.

He then decided to try to catch one of the falling leaves so he jumped and stretched and did everything he could but the light breeze kept blowing them out of his reach. Becoming more determined he tried harder and harder to catch one to no avail, and frustration began to set in. “This isn’t right,” he said. “I come out here to get rid of my stress but instead I’m getting more stressed out than I was before.”

He stopped his efforts and stood still for a moment, when something on the inside of him told him to stick out his hand

with his palm upward. He obeyed and in almost no time at all a single leaf fell and landed dead center in the palm of his hand. He stood there amazed and down in his heart he heard God say, “Be still, and know that I am God” Ps. 46:1.

LET GO AND LET GOD

This story illustrates what it means to “let go and let God.” Jesus said in John 15:5, **“I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit, for without Me you can do nothing.”**

We must all learn to live by grace through faith and when we do, the struggle is over. Works of the flesh are when we try to do God’s job with our own power and abilities, and it is impossible to



accomplish anything worthwhile this way. God's grace, however, along with His divine anointing, is supernatural power coming to us free of charge enabling us with ease to do what we could never do with struggle and effort.

BE AT PEACE

John 15:7 says, "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire and it shall be done for you." We must put God first in everything we do and make ourselves at home in His loving presence.

Daily we need prayer, fellowship, and a consistent study of His holy Word. When we give our all to God,

He will give His all to us. God's grace will always be there for us when we step out in faith and do what He tells us to do.

Jesus said in John 15:11, "**These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.**" In other words, enjoy the journey. Relax, lighten up, and don't be so rigid. Receive grace and mercy to help in time of need. Act like a receptacle and take in all that's being offered. Be still and know that He is God.

Everybody, it seems, is frus-

trated and stressed out. People are always in a hurry and get worn out trying to solve their own problems. For reasons hard to understand they refuse to take heed to the Lord's instructions to "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" ^{Matt. 11:28}.

The Message® Bible says, "Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to Me. Get away with Me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with Me and work with Me - watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't

lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with Me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly."

That is an offer you can't refuse. He says if you'll only but come to Him, He will lead you out of frustration and doubt and into the land of rest and belief.

WHAT IS PEACE?

David wrote in Ps. 23:2, "He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters." He later wrote in vs. 4, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil for You are with me..."

*"Get away with Me
and you'll recover
your life."*

This verse is a source of great comfort, but it only applies when we dwell beside the still waters. It is when we are in a peaceful calm that we come under the protection of God, and receive from Him divine direction.

Jesus is called the “Prince of Peace” *Is. 9:6*, and the word “peace” means ‘a deep, inner silence.’ The rest (i.e., the peace) of God is spiritual warfare and if you’re peaceful on the inside, you can be peaceful on the outside.

1 Peter 3:4 says that a quiet spirit is very precious in the sight of God. To remain calm and not panic in times of adversity is a sign that you are wholly trusting God for your breakthrough. *Heb. 4:3a* says, “For we who have believed do enter that rest...”

Resting in God is the evidence of faith, and it is faith alone that will see you through the trial.

- You enter into rest, because you’re no longer struggling, murmuring, and complaining.
- You are committed to God;
- Your soul is at rest; and
- You are no longer trying to figure everything out.

There is a quiet assurance on the inside of you, a spiritual peace. A heavenly tranquility gives you relief and freedom from anything that worries, troubles and disturbs you. You are not walking in faith unless you come to a place where there is no anxiety, no worry, no frets, no looking at circumstances, and no feeling of being overwhelmed by the impossibilities of life. *Is. 26:3* says, “You will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on You, because He trusts in You.”

If you’re going to walk by faith, you have to forever remove from your vocabulary the words “why” and “when”. You have to trust God completely and resist the temptation to tell God how to fix your problem.

A powerful life is one that can face and deal with whatever happens in life and still remain the same. A calm spirit destroys evil. It’s how you win the battle. It’s how you have breakthrough in your life.

PEACE IS REST AND COURAGE

The prophet Isaiah knew something about entering into the rest of God. *Is. 7:4* says, “Take heed, and be quiet; do not fear or be fainthearted...” We also read in *Is. 28:12*, “To whom He said, ‘This

*“I will fear no evil
for You are with
me...”*

is the rest with which You may cause the weary to rest.' And, 'This is the refreshing.'" God also said in Is. 30:15, "In returning and rest you shall be saved; In quietness and confidence shall be your strength..."

No matter what's going on, always stay calm during your storm. Don't let the devil scare you. Paul says in Phil. 1:28 that we are to be "not in any way terrified by your adversaries, which is to them a proof of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that from God."

The Message® Bible says we are "not flinching or dodging in the slightest before the opposition. Your courage and unity will show them what they're up against: defeat for them, victory for you - and both because of God."

Staying calm is a sign that the devil is defeated. This is why we need to be addicted to peace. It is part of the armor of God ^{Eph. 6:15} and Phil. 4:7 says, "and the peace of God, which passes all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

The Message® Bible says, "Don't fret or worry. Instead of worrying, pray. Let petitions and praises shape your worries into prayers, letting God know your concerns. Before

you know it, a sense of God's wholeness, everything coming together for good, will come and settle you down. It's wonderful what happens when Christ displaces worry at the center of your life."

In verse 9 God is called "the God of peace" and we read in Is. 41:10, "Fear not, for I am with you; Be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, Yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand." Col. 3:15a says, "And let the peace of God rule in your heart..."

Satan sets you up to try to get you upset. When you're upset you are not able to walk and flow in the anointing that is necessary to fulfill your call. Thankfully, the God of peace gives us peace that passes all understanding.

He leads us beside the still waters. It is there that He'll speak to us and give us divine direction.

God told Elijah, "Go out, and stand on the mountain before the Lord.' And behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind tore into the mountains and broke the rocks in pieces before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but

Remove from your vocabulary the words "why" and "when."

the Lord was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice. So it was, when Elijah heard it..." 1 Kings 19:11-13a

PEACE IS THE QUIET LIFE

God speaks in a soft, delicate whisper and we must be peaceful and still in order to hear it. When we get still, He speaks, and what He says will reveal to us that He indeed is God.

If you don't follow God as He leads you beside the still waters, you'll never go any further in your walk with the Lord. So many people want God to listen to them, but they don't want to slow down to the point where they can listen to God. This is sad because the secret things belong to God ^{Deut. 29:29} and He reveals them to us in a whisper, a gentle stillness.

1 Thess. 4:11 tells us to study to lead a quiet life. Why does Paul say this? So we can hear from God! Prov. 4:20 says, "My sons, give attention to my words; Incline your ear to my sayings." You are to incline your ear and not engage your mouth. It is hard to listen if you're always talking. Yes, God reveals secrets, but in order to hear what they are, you

must first get quiet. Be still, calm down, have peace, keep quiet and know that He is God.

David wrote in Ps. 29:11, "The Lord will give strength to His people; The Lord will bless His people with peace." There is strength to be found when you dwell beside the still waters. Ps. 119:165 says, "Great peace have those who love Your law, and nothing causes them to stumble."

PEACE IS PROTECTION & PROVISION

Peace is a place of protection. If we remain peaceful in the time of adversity, the devil can't harm us. It renders him ineffective. Ps. 94:12,13 tells us, "Blessed is the man whom You instruct, O Lord, and teach out of Your law, that You may give him rest from the days of adversity, until the pit is dug for the wicked."

Stop looking for solutions all the time. Be still and let God work on your problem. Stay cool, calm, and collected. Before you do anything, wait on God and give Him an opportunity to lead you beside the still waters.

The God of peace gives us peace that passes all understanding.

Waiting on God means you're expecting Him to do something. Expect Him to move at any minute.

Look for and long for Him to provide for you the victory that only He can give. Get excited and stay excited for what God has planned for your life. Get out of bed and say, "Something good is going to happen to me today." If you remain hopeful and get still before the Lord, then you can be sure that He will do something special for you.

God is waiting, looking, and longing to show favor to those who are waiting, looking, and longing for Him. Ps. 25:1-3 records these words of David, a man who was led beside the still waters, "To You, O Lord, I lift up my soul. O my God, I trust in You; Let me not be ashamed; Let not my enemies triumph over me. Indeed, let no one who waits on You be ashamed; Let those be ashamed who deal treacherously without cause."

It is important to understand that having the peace of God in your heart does not mean that all your problems will instantly go away. No, peace is not the absence of conflict, but instead is the presence of God in your life. Jesus said in John 14:27,

"Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

Why does Jesus want us to dwell in His peace? Because peace precedes power!! Jesus was sleeping peacefully in the boat while the storm raged around Him. When awakened by the fearful disciples, He had the power to calm the storm. He said, "Peace! Be still!" ^{Mark 4:39}. Jesus had authority *over* the storm, because He had peace *in* the storm.

It is hard to listen if you're always talking.

PEACE PRECEDES POWER

Everything we do should be centered around peace. Matt. 10:1 says, "And when He had called His twelve disciples to Him, He gave them power over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease." Jesus gave them power to perform mighty miracles, but notice what He said in vs. 11,12, ***"And when you go into a household, greet it. If the household is worthy, let your peace come upon it. But if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you."***

In other words, peace precedes power! This is why God wants us to have peace in the midst of the storm. It is wonderful to have a problem

and not have to care or worry about it. So learn to enter into the rest of God. For sure, there is not a more wonderful place to be.

Moses knew that peace precedes power. When the Egyptian army was closing in on the children of Israel he said, “Do not be afraid. Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will accomplish for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall see again no more forever. The Lord will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace” Ex. 14:13,14.

Moses was saying to...

Be still;

Be firm;

Be confident;

Not dismayed.

He said to hold your peace and remain at rest. This tells God that you're trusting Him. The battle is the Lord's and Rom. 16:20a says, “And the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet...” Ps. 34:14b says, “Seek peace, and pursue it.”

Stop trying to figure everything out. Instead, “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths” Prov. 3:5, 6.

At the Red Sea God told Moses, “Why do you cry to Me? Tell the children of Israel to go forward.” Direction came when they got still and held their peace.

God can do in a single moment what we can't do in fifty years. So why try? Instead, lie down in green pastures and rest beside the still waters. Be peaceful on purpose. Seek, pursue, and crave peace as a vital necessity to your well being.

Is. 40:31 says, “But those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; They shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.”

Consider also what David said in Ps. 62:1,2, “Truly my soul silently waits for God; From Him comes my salvation. He only is my rock and my salvation; He is my defense; I shall not be greatly moved.” Strength comes when you silently wait on God beside the still waters.

Ps. 33:20-22 says, “Our soul waits for the Lord; He is our help and our shield. For our heart shall rejoice in Him, because we have trusted in His holy name. Let Your mercy, O Lord, be upon us, just as we hope in You.”

Wait hopefully and put your

Stop trying to figure everything out.

trust in God. Get passionate once again with your faith. Let a holy fervor rise up on the inside of you. Refuse to live without passion and enthusiasm. Get white hot for God. Fan your flame and don't let your fire go out.

Paul told Timothy to “stir up the gift of God which is in you” ^{2 Tim. 1:6}. Get sick and tired of being sick and tired. Get the fire back.

Don't just do something for God, enjoy it! Don't let your problems get you down and cause you to give God a half-hearted effort. No, rest beside the still waters and give God everything you've got, and do it with passion.

Be peaceful on purpose.

God put a need and a desire in your heart for freshness, so don't let the things of God in your life get dull and stale. Instead, stir yourself up and get out of the boat. Take a risk and watch what God will do.

Rom. 12:11 says we are “not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.” Zeal is a driving force, an intense joy, eagerness and ardent interest. Zeal motivates you to keep going forward and to never give up.

Serving God is so much easier and more fun if you enjoy what

you're doing. All this happens when you get quiet and rest beside the still waters.

16

THE DIRECTION OF FAITH

“Do not look behind you...” Genesis 19:17b

It has been said that if there were no problems, there would be no solutions. Finding solutions can be very rewarding, but sometimes you reach a point where you would gladly give up the reward if the problem would only go away by itself. But such is not the case and this is how it is in life as well.

Problems come and they cannot be ignored. The worst thing a person can do is sit back and do nothing, for this gives the enemy free reign to wreck havoc in your life. No, to win the battle of life and the good fight of faith, one must forever be moving forward.

The trials of life are often compared to storms. Many times we encounter hurricane type conditions such as what was described by the apostle Paul in 2 Cor. 1:8 when he said he was “burdened beyond measure, above strength, so that we despaired even of life.”

One thing to learn in the midst of all these trials is, life goes on. The

clock is always ticking and any meteorologist will tell you that all storms move forward as well. In the center of all hurricanes is a peaceful, calm harbor of rest known as the “eye of the hurricane” and this is where you will find the throne room of God. You see, as long as we are here in this earth-suit we will have problems that will not go away on their own but thankfully we can go to Jesus Who is our “refuge and strength”. And where do we find Him? In the eye of the hurricane.

You will always find Jesus in the center of your storm. The problem many people have is, once they’ve taken refuge in this “eye”, they want to strip themselves of their armor



and rest awhile. This is not bad in and of itself, because we all need a season of rest from time to time. However, we cannot set up camp here and discontinue the good fight of faith, because our enemy does not know what the word “rest” means.

REMAIN AWAKE, ALERT

That storm is always moving and with it so is its peaceful center. If we remain still in our comfort zone and don't move forward also, then the eye of the hurricane will pass over us and the turbulent winds of the violent storm will hit us from behind when we least expect it.

If we would all take inventory of those times when we've been wounded in battle, we would realize that it happened when our shield of faith was so full of arrows that we just had to lay it down, and we rested longer than we should have.

Resting too long brings with it the temptation to fall asleep on our watch, and this we cannot do. To remain in the center of the eye of the hurricane we must continue to confess God's Word and always keep going forward.

In World War II, the great

General George S. Patton was known for his relentless drive to keep going forward even in the heat of battle. “No retreat, no surrender” was his motto and this must be ours as well. There is, of course, a reason for this.

Shortly after Paul wrote of his hardships at the beginning of his second letter to the Corinthian church, he went on to write these encouraging words, “Now thanks be to God Who always leads us in triumph in Christ...” ^{2 Cor. 2:14a}. This verse doesn't say that God will take a victory and instantly drop it in your lap. No, it says that God will “lead” you to that victory.

The reason we must keep going forward is because that's where our victory is. It's out there in front of us. Even while Jesus was hanging on the cross He was looking forward to the victory that would be His and ours at the resurrection.

Therefore, don't look at what you're going “through,” but focus on where you're going “to.”

Don't look at what it is, but look at what it is going to become.

Being led to victory can be

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in Christ...”*

compared to when you ask a taxi driver to take you someplace. There are many routes he can take to get you to the proper destination, but you don't concern yourself with that. You know where you want to go and you trust the driver to get you there.

THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW OF DEATH

This is how it is when God “leads us in triumph” and likewise we must put our total trust in Him to get us where we want to go. If a trial comes our way and we find ourselves in “the valley of the shadow of death,” then we must trust God and realize that this valley is on the route that leads to our victory.

Sometimes you may feel like you're on a rugged obstacle course going through a maze of difficulties, and the end to your problem is nowhere in sight. Once again, the only thing you can do is put your total trust in the One Who is leading you. This may seem confusing at times, but thankfully we don't have to understand it in our mind in order to believe it in our heart.

Prov. 20:24 says, “A man's steps are of the Lord; how then can a man

understand his own way?” Nobody said this journey was easy. It's not. We are in a war and even Jesus said to “**count the cost.**” What He also said is that He would never leave us or forsake us.

A valley is not a bad place to be if you and Jesus are going through it together. Ps. 37:23,24 tells us, “The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord and He delights in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down for the Lord upholds him with His hand.”

The “valley of the shadow of death” is on the route that leads to our victory.

At all times you must believe that you are on the road to victory and are being led every step of the way by the One you call your Lord. Remember, the only way out of the valley is to march forward and go through the valley.

Someone once said that “*great people are ordinary people with extra ordinary amounts of determination.*” Obey the Lord's command to “Rise up!” and never allow that trial to keep you idle.

Doing nothing only increases the opportunity for you to feel sorry for yourself and we all know that will get you nowhere. Keep going forward and take hold of that victory that rightfully belongs to you. And

where is that victory at? It's on the path you're already on, so keep your head held high knowing that trials and hardships are on the road to your miracle. And, by all means, never look back and always keep your eyes in front of you, because that is where your victory is.

ADJUST YOUR THINKING

A pastor once told his congregation, "When you've had a setback...don't take a step back...get ready for a comeback."

Though the wind may blow and the rain will fall, we find comfort in the eye of the hurricane by putting our confidence in the words spoken in Nahum 1:3, "But the Lord has His way in the whirlwind and in the storm." Rest assured, the victory is there but you must march forward to get it. Put one foot in front of the other and go after it. Shout aloud the battle cry of the overcomer, "Onward!"

The Word of God is powerful. It is sharper than any two-edged sword and will turn you into the type of person who believes that, whatever you do, will prosper and succeed. The Bible says you can do all things in Christ ^{Philippians} 4:13, but first you must adjust your

thinking to line up and agree with the thoughts of God. Rom. 12:2a says, "And do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind..." The way you think can either cause you to press forward in the midst of a trial, or it can become a roadblock that prevents your advancement in life.

Thomas Edison once performed ten thousand experiments in his quest to invent the light bulb, and none produced the results he wanted. "I have not failed," he said. "I have successfully found ten thousand ways that will not work." When you think like that, there is no way the enemy can stop you from accomplishing what you set out to do.

Paul said in 2 Cor. 4:8,9, "We are hard pressed on every side yet not crushed; we are perplexed but not in despair; persecuted but not forsaken; struck down but not destroyed."

The Message® Bible puts it this way, "We've been surrounded and battered by troubles, but we're not demoralized; we're not sure what to do, but we know that God knows what to do; we've been spiritually terrorized, but God hasn't left our

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side; we've been thrown down, but we haven't broken."

A winner is not a person who has never suffered a setback. A winner is someone who knows that when the setback comes he or she must rise to the occasion and continue forward.

The thoughts, words, and actions of a winner will always be in agreement with the Word of God. This, in turn, will determine whether you will be a success or failure because what happens "in" you is more important than what happens "to" you.

You can have the attitude that God is bigger than any obstacle you face or you can believe that He's not. The former will allow you to release the power of God into your situation through faith, whereas the latter will confine you to a life of fear and failure.

This truth is illustrated in Num. 13, which tells the story of when Moses sent twelve people to spy out the Promised Land. After being gone for several weeks the spies came back and told of seeing huge fortified cities there and strong giants dwelling in the land. Everything the spies said about the

land was true, the difference being Joshua and Caleb came back with a good report while the remaining ten returned bearing a bad report.

Num 13:30,31 says, "Then Caleb quieted the people before Moses and said, 'Let us go up at once and take possession for we are well able to overcome it.' But the men who had gone up with him said, 'We are not able to go up against the people for they are stronger than we are.'"

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to you.*

*We need to
understand
that faith is not
a denial of the
circumstances.*

Joshua and Caleb saw the same giants as the other spies, but they knew God had given them the land and refused to allow the circumstances to dictate to them how things were going to be. This is called faith and faith always has a good report.

GIVE A GOOD REPORT

To walk victorious we need to feed on the Word of God continually and maintain a good report on the evil day when circumstantial giants block our path. Num. 14:36-38 tells us that because the ten spies brought

back a bad report, they immediately died by the plague before the Lord, whereas Joshua and Caleb were the only members of their evil generation who entered into the Promised Land. This reward was given to Joshua and Caleb because they believed God in spite of the circumstances, and as a result brought back to the people a good report.

There is another story in the Bible where under grave circumstances a woman overlooked a tragic event in her life and won a major victory by confessing a good report and going forward with her faith. Her story is found in 2 Kings 4:8-37.

One day Elisha traveled to the city of Shunem where he met a woman who constrained him to come into her home and eat some food. This happened regularly and this same woman persuaded her husband to build an upper bedroom onto their house so that the prophet of God could have a comfortable dwelling place whenever he traveled to that region.

During one of his visits, Elisha decided to bless the family for their kindness and upon hearing that the

woman and her elderly husband had no children, he foretold that in about a year's time they would have and embrace a baby son. In time the child grew, and one day he ran out into the field to be with his father and immediately complained of a pain in his head. The boy was taken to his mother where he sat on her lap and eventually died. Now was the moment of truth for this woman who longed to be in the presence of the man of God.

A person's faith is most tested when all they have is taken away.

A person's faith is most tested when all they have is taken away. Oftentimes a person is required to use their faith when they are drained emotionally, mentally, and physically. The young boy's mother did this by not preparing her son for burial, but instead went and laid him on the bed of the prophet. She immediately got ready to run to the man of God, and when asked why she was going, all she said was, "It is well." She made a good report in spite of the loss a mother is sure to feel at the death of one of her children.

For this mother there was no turning back, and without delay she departed and went to Mount Carmel to see the man of God. Elisha instructed his servant when

he saw her approaching, "Please run now to meet her, and say to her, 'Is it well with you? Is it well with your husband? Is it well with the child?' And she answered, 'It is well.'" For the second time this woman gave a good report and confessed, "It is well."

FAITH IS NOW FAITH

It is interesting to compare what this mother said to Elisha to what Martha said to Jesus at the death of her brother, Lazarus. Jesus was not present when Lazarus passed away, and the first thing Martha said was, "Lord, if You had been here my brother would not have died." When Jesus responded that her brother would rise again Martha said, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day."

Martha had faith for the past and for the future, whereas the dead boy's mother displayed a "now" faith by twice saying "It is well." The timing of faith is vitally important to those who desire to live a victorious life that is pleasing to God.

To walk by faith you must forget about yesterday and look beyond tomorrow in order to focus on today. Faith is a present tense reality and the first three words of

Heb. 11:1 say, "Now faith is..."

When Moses asked God what His Name was, He said "I Am Who I Am." Our God is a "now" God, and so also is His faith which He gives us when we confess and believe His Word.

Knowing this is what compelled the young boy's mother to confess "It is well" and as a result of her "now" faith the prophet went and ministered the miracle-working power of God into the body of her lifeless son. The lad was raised up and went on to live a rich full life, and it all began when his mother gave a good report in the face of adversity.

It is well with my soul.

sity.

The ten spies who brought back the evil report and Martha walked by sight, while the young boy's mother was able to walk by faith because of the commitment she made to be in the presence of the man of God.

On the other hand, it was Martha's younger sister Mary who sat at the feet of Jesus and listened to everything He said, while Martha chose instead to busy herself with the task of serving her guests. It is this commitment to the Word of God what will enable you to give a good report on the evil day and

will cause you to rise up and boldly proclaim, “It is well!”

When God told Moses to lift up his rod and split the Red Sea, He first told him to “tell the children of Israel to go forward” ^{Ex. 14:15}. God demands participation! Faith without works is dead ^{James 2:17}. Moses had to lift up the rod, but the people had to go forward. Faith never backs up, it only goes forward.

When the time came to enter the Promised Land, the people refused to go forward and cross over the Jordan River. The result of their disobedience is that with the exception of Joshua and Caleb, that entire generation died off in the wilderness. They refused to fight the good fight of faith and take the land by storm, and did not enter in because of unbelief ^{Heb. 3:19}.

On the contrary, if our faith is genuine, then we must persistently heed the words of Heb. 10:39 ^{NIV}, “But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed but of those who believe and are saved.”

NOTHING MYSTERIOUS ABOUT FAITH

True Biblical faith is simply believing God and acting on what

you believe. Although people may fail you, faith in God is a sure thing, but in the natural it does involve taking a risk, because faith deals with the unseen. In fact, faith is the “evidence of things not seen” ^{Heb. 11:1}.

The problem many people have is that they live in a type of comfort zone and, like doubting Thomas, only believe and feel secure in what they can see, taste, smell, hear, and touch. To walk by faith, however, one must be willing to let go of what looks like security to them and take what appears to be a risk. People

who walk by faith must be willing to burn the bridges they cross over, because in the good fight of faith there is no turning back.

Julius Ceasar once sent explorers to a foreign land, and to assure the mission’s success, he gave the command for the ships to be burned once his men arrived at their destination. For him, there was no turning back. The farmer Elisha, when called to follow Elijah, went back to his farm and slaughtered his oxen and burned his plowing equipment ^{1 Kings 19:21}. He destroyed his means of income, because he was not willing to start something for God that he was not willing to finish. For him, there was no turning back.

Mark 10:50 tells how blind

God demands participation!

Bartimaeus threw aside his garment when called by Jesus, to Whom he had cried out for mercy. This piece of cloth signified that he was legitimately blind and was his license to be a legal beggar. Bartimaeus, however, had faith in his Lord and he knew he would no longer need his garment so he threw it aside. This blind beggar stepped out in faith and for him there was no turning back.

God has put in the hearts of all His children a burning desire to do something in and for the kingdom of God. As one grows in their walk with the Lord, they will find that the things God tells them to do will more than likely be impossible by human standards.

This is so, because if it were possible in the natural realm, then it wouldn't require any faith, and Heb. 11:6 says it is impossible to please God without it. In order to please God we must be willing to face the impossible and take a risk. Even a farmer who has faith in his crop must take a risk and hire laborers to reap his fields before he receives payment for his harvest.

A risk taker is a person who doesn't consider the circumstances surrounding them, but instead

is able to use their faith to hook up with the supernatural power of God. They are the ones willing to burn the bridges behind them and put their trust in God and His Word, even when the odds seem to be against them. Jesus said in Mark 9:23, **"If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes."**

The question is, do you believe and do you trust God? Down in your heart do you really, truly trust Him? If so, then take that match and turn around and set fire to that bridge you just crossed over, because in the good fight of faith...

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Randall J. Brewer has been faithfully serving the Lord since the day he first bowed his knees before Him in the summer of 1974.

Since that time Randall has stepped through every door that the Lord has opened for him and over time he has been involved with a children's ministry, a teenage street ministry, and has led a Christian singles ministry. He has been involved with an outreach to those in prison and many inmates have been blessed as the result of his efforts.

Randall has also managed a church bookstore, has been the substitute host of a three hour Christian radio program, and has taught Bible classes at church and hosted many home cell groups.

Recently the Lord had him write the eye opening story "Heaven: The Great Adventure" with the promise that it would open doors all over the world, giving those who read the message the incentive to grow closer and stronger in their own personal walk with the Lord. Since the completion of this book, Randall's work has been translated into several languages, and invitations have come in to teach all over the world.



Randall and his beautiful wife Anne Marie have been bonded together by one God, with one love, for one purpose. They know firsthand the trials and pain that come with having a sincere desire to serve the Lord.

The result of going through many harsh battles is that the Lord has anointed them to lift up and exhort those who are also serving the Lord and going through similar circumstances.

Their mission in life is to encourage all believers to rise up in the midst of their adversity and become all they were meant to be in and through the Lord Jesus Christ. Their heartfelt prayer is that once you read this book, your life will never be the same.