

WORTH DYING FOR

**THREE WOMEN WHO
BROKE TRADITION
TO DO THE WILL
OF GOD**



RANDALL J. BREWER

This book is dedicated to Nolim Lukas, whose love and compassion for the less fortunate reveals to us what being a Christian is all about.

WORTH
DYING
FOR

RANDALL J. BREWER

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A dramatic, high-contrast image of a person's silhouette, seen from the side, engulfed in intense orange and yellow flames. The fire is thick and turbulent, surrounding the figure. The background is dark, making the fire and the white text stand out.

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A black and white photograph of a man and a woman in a close embrace. The man is on the left, leaning towards the woman on the right. His hand is gently touching her face. The image has a soft, painterly quality.

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CONTENTS

CLICK ON ANY TITLE OR
PAGE NUMBER TO GO
DIRECTLY TO THAT PAGE

FOREWORD

TAKING THE RISK i

INTRODUCTION

BREAKING TRADITION ii

1. MOTHER KNOWS BEST 1

2. FAITH FOR ANOTHER 10

3. WORTH DYING FOR 22

EPILOGUE 38

TAKING THE RISK

Did you know that you will fail 100% of your opportunities to succeed if you don't take the risk of failing? Many people are so afraid of failing that, they never make the move toward success. They are satisfied to live out the life of complacency, which is in essence social and spiritual disobedience. The unwillingness to get involved and make a difference, means that they are unwilling to mature, evolve, and become much more than what they are. They are satisfied with the half-empty glass of water.

Don't be afraid of failing, but be terrified of never trying. So many successful men and women started their dreams very small. Gaining experience along the way, they wanted more for themselves *and* their society. In all of us, there is this same drive to do more, be more. Some of us answer that call, far too many of us do not.

As spiritually immature as they were in the beginning, the first disciples answered the call to join Christ in His pursuit to make a difference in the lives of men. They wanted to be more and do more than the complacent members of their world. This is why you are reading this book today, because you want to do more by being more, benefitting God and those around you.

Famous author Ralf Waldo Emerson once said, "Do not go where the path may lead, go instead where there is no path and leave a trail." This is the mission statement for everyone that desires to break tradition and follow Christ's example of how to live the Christian lifestyle.

In Randall J. Brewer's book, *Worth Dying For*, we are given three examples of believers who were willing to die for everything that was in accordance to God's will. The call to do what is right is embedded deep within our born-again spirits, and according to the three women highlighted in this book, this call must be answered. Dying to fulfill God's will was the risk they were willing to take.

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

INTRODUCTION

BREAKING TRADITION

by Randall J. Brewer

Tradition. Webster's dictionary defines this word as "a long established custom or practice that has the effect of an unwritten law."

Those who wish to receive the approval of their fellow man must develop an excessive respect for the traditions of others. Along with this, they must also willfully and faithfully follow the standards set up by those from generations past.

A Biblical example of a tradition being enforced is found in Gen. 29, where Jacob is deceived into marrying the older sister of the beautiful and much-loved Rachel. As his father-in-law put it, "It must not be done so in our country, to give the younger before the firstborn" v. 26.

National headlines are made by those who dare to cross the line of traditionalism. Yes, many traditions are good, but at the same time many are bad. Great persecutions and oftentimes threats of death attach themselves to those who come forward and attempt to break the traditions of men.

A young woman was recently scorned by her country when she broke tradition and enrolled in an all-male military academy. Consider the great struggle of women everywhere as they fought for their right to vote. Our nation was thrown into a vicious and bloody civil war when the northern states rebelled against the tradition of slavery that was rampant in the south. The list goes on and on.

How many times have you heard people say that cancer runs in their family, and one day they also expect to inherit this life-threatening disease? Traditionalism is a deadly stronghold, and the chains of bondage that grips the hearts of people everywhere need to be broken at once.

Strangely enough, the breaking of ungodly traditions is what Christianity is all about. One of the greatest stumbling blocks in the Christian camp today is the tradition of religion. Who broke this diabolical tradition more than the Lord Jesus Christ? He came into the world and taught people to love their enemies and give to

the poor. He ate with sinners, and did good deeds on the Sabbath. Heaven forbid! He even claimed to be the Son of God, after which an angry mob tried to throw Him off a cliff. What's more, three days after receiving the fatal wrath of His persecutors, He had the audacity to arise from the dead!

We are taught in the Word to follow in the footsteps of Jesus. To do so, we must be willing to break free from the carnal traditions of man and live a life of faith and loyalty to our Blessed Savior.

The search is on. The Lord is continually searching for a people who will disregard the stronghold of traditionalism and will forever remain faithful to Him. 2 Chronicles 16:9 says,

“For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him.”

Are you one of those for whom the Lord is searching? Are you willing to obey and follow the Lord God, and stand against the carnal traditions of man? Will you be like the prophet Isaiah and say to the Lord,

“Here I am! Send me” ^{Is. 6:8}.

Those who dare to step out in faith and do this can truly be called a risk-taker.

Tales of a trio of brave and daring women who did just that can be found in three of the most exciting stories in the Old Testament. Let's review their stories and see how, at the risk of their own lives, they chose to obey God and stand against the traditions of men.



1 MOTHER KNOWS BEST

Eliezer was on a mission. As the oldest servant of Abraham and ruler over all that his master owned, he had been given one of the most important assignments ever given to any one person.



Rebekah

The Lord God had just created the start of a special race of people out of which the Messiah would one day be born. It was now time to find a wife for the one man through whom this bloodline would continue.

Abraham was old and well advanced in years and his son Isaac was not yet married. In those days, the parents always found wives for their sons, and Abraham wanted his heir to have a wife from his own people instead of from the local Canaanites. To accomplish this, the old patriarch chose his trusted servant, Eliezer, to make the long journey to Mesopotamia to find Isaac's future bride.

Eliezer was a devout man who prayed frequently and was anxious to fulfill the request of his

master. Before leaving on this highly important quest, Eliezer followed the demand of Abraham and made a sacred vow with his master binding him more effectively to the task of finding an acceptable bride for Isaac.

By doing so, Eliezer was assured by Abraham that he would have God's help in his upcoming journey. Gen. 24:7 says,

"The Lord God of heaven, Who took me from my father's house and from the land of my kindred, and Who spoke to me and swore to me saying, 'To your descendants I give this land.' He will send His angel before you, and you shall take a wife for my son from there."

This statement of faith from Abraham gave Eliezer the assurance he needed that the will of God would be done in the matter. Taking ten camels loaded down with great riches, Eliezer began his long journey to Mesopotamia.

When Eliezer reached his

destination, he made his camels kneel down outside the city by a well of water at evening time, when women go out to draw water. This was the moment of truth for Eliezer, and immediately he went to his Lord in prayer.

“Then he said, ‘O Lord God of my master Abraham, please give me success this day, and show kindness to my master Abraham’” Gen. 24:12.

Eliezer next prayed that God would make the woman who should be Isaac’s wife answer him in a special way when he spoke to all the women who would be there. If he asked one of them to let down her jug into the water and give him water to drink, then the right one must not only give water to him, but to his camels as well.

Gen. 24: 15-19 records that Rebekah, the daughter of Bethuel, Abraham’s nephew, came and did just that. Rebekah was a beautiful woman and a virgin not yet given in marriage. She was intelligent, a member of a prominent family, and she answered precisely to every requirement that Eliezer had stipulated. She also had the willing heart of a loyal servant.

One must understand that camels drink gallons upon gallons of water at a time. To draw water for ten thirsty camels must have taken a long time to do, but this

Rebekah did anyway. What makes this act of compassion so amazing was that, Rebekah did this to a man who was a total stranger to her. It is truly a good thing to always take every opportunity to display a humble, courteous, and charitable manner of living to others, because at some time or another, it may turn out more for your honor and benefit than you may realize at the time. Heb. 13:1,2 says,

“Let brotherly love continue. Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some have unwittingly entertained angels.”

This act of doing more than what was required of her brought Rebekah into the blood-line of Christ, and the covenant of blessing God made with Abraham and his descendants.

As the young maiden performed this tedious task, Eliezer watched her closely and remained silent. The Godly man knew in his heart that he had been led by the Lord and that Rebekah was indeed God’s choice to be Isaac’s bride.

When told of the purpose of his journey, Rebekah and her family knew also in their hearts that this was the will of God. Instead of remaining with her family for ten days as they requested, Rebekah instead chose to submit

to the man of God and declared her willingness to leave immediately on the journey that would take them to her future husband.

On the evening they arrived back near Abraham's tent, Isaac was out in the field meditating, and he lifted up his eyes and saw the caravan of camels coming. He went out to meet them and when he and Rebekah saw each other they immediately fell in love. Soon they were married and Abraham and Eliezer had the complete assurance that the will of God had been fulfilled. What they didn't know is that one day Rebekah would be used by God to break a lifelong tradition in order to once again fulfill His will and purpose.

The purpose of the marital coupling between Isaac and Rebekah was to continue the bloodline of what was to become known as the Jewish race. What appeared to be a major problem in this plan arose early in the relationship, when Rebekah, for twenty years, was unable to conceive. Her barrenness was a painful and tragic experience for both of them, but Isaac was well familiar with the God of his father Abraham, the Great Jehovah. Knowing that his own birth had been a miracle, Isaac fervently went before his Lord in prayer.

"Now Isaac pleaded with the Lord for his wife, because

she was barren; and the Lord granted his plea, and Rebekah his wife conceived" Gen. 25:21.

While pregnant, this faithful and obedient mother-to-be received a special word from the Lord telling her that one day tradition would be broken in the lives of the twin boys inside her. Gen. 25:22,23 tells us,

"But the children struggled together within her; and she said, 'If all is well, why am I this way?' So she went to inquire of the Lord. And the Lord said to her: 'Two nations are in your womb. Two peoples shall be separated from your body; One people shall be stronger than the other, And the older shall serve the younger.'"

This struggle between Jacob and Esau in the womb represents the ongoing struggle that is maintained between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of darkness in our everyday lives. No sooner is Christ formed in the hearts of believers that, immediately there begins a conflict between the flesh and spirit.

Because Jesus won the victory over sin and death at Calvary, this struggle should not be a discouragement to us. It is better to have a conflict with our flesh and sin than to tamely submit to it. Rom. 8:37 assures us,

“Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him Who loved us.”

Even at the time of their births there was a contest going on between these totally opposite brothers. The stronger one, Esau, came out first, but Jacob's hand took hold of his heel ^{Gen. 25:26}. This signified Jacob's pursuit of the birthright and blessing that traditionally belonged to the firstborn.

Esau came out red and hairy, and grew up to become a skillful hunter. He had little appreciation for spiritual values, and seemed to be concerned with material matters only. He was a man of the field and this greatly pleased his father.

Isaac grew to love him more, because he often ate of Esau's game killed while hunting. Jacob, on the other hand, was a mild man who dwelt in tents with his mother from whom he derived his inspiration. Rebekah was always mindful that the Lord had given preference to Jacob in the word spoken to her while pregnant, and therefore preferred him in her love.

In ancient times, the oldest son had two advantages. He was entitled to the family birthright and would one day receive the father's blessing. The birthright involved both material and spiritual blessings, and guaranteed the

firstborn a more honorable position than his younger brothers. The birthright granted the firstborn the right to rise to his father's rank and position as head of the family or tribe. He also inherited a double portion of his father's property, the richest land, the best of the estate, as well as the covenant blessings God had promised to Abraham and his descendants.

A birthright could, however, be sold to a younger brother or it might also be forfeited on account of misconduct ^{1 Chron. 5:1}. The Bible tells us that Esau “despised his birthright” ^{Gen. 25:34}, and traded it to Jacob for a bowl of stew on a day when he was hungry and thought he was going to die of starvation.

For most people of that day, the sacred blessing represented a special kind of anointing or power that conveyed prosperity from one generation to the next. In Num. 6:22-27 we are commanded by God to bless one another.

“And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: ‘Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, “This is the way you shall bless the children of Israel. Say to them: ‘The Lord blessed you and keep you; The Lord make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you; The Lord lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace.’”

So they shall put My Name on

the children of Israel, and I will bless them.”

Blessings are to be orally spoken over another individual. A blessing is a spoken release of the many promises of God that is recorded in His holy Word. We bless others by speaking God’s promises over them and by releasing our faith believing that what we have spoken will come to pass.

Words are filled with power and they plant images inside the hearts and minds of people. When you bless someone, what you say is what they will become. Your faith-filled words become your blessing to them. We can cause God’s blessings to come on people by what we say and confess over them. God watches over His Word to perform it, therefore, when one “speaks” the blessing, God will “do” the blessing.

The meaning of the word “blessing” is ‘transmitting good’.

God will bless a certain individual, and they are to turn around and transmit that favorable good fortune by speaking a blessing over someone else.

By principle, this dictates that blessings should increase as each generation passes by. We receive the blessings from the former generation, we receive blessings in our own generation, and then we pass on and transmit all

the blessings to the next generation. Blessings are for future good and benefit ^{Heb. 11:20}, and are not a reward for something already done. And once the father’s blessing was spoken, it could not be reversed ^{Gen. 27:33}.

Isaac was now old and blind, and the time had come for him to speak the blessing over his eldest son. This act soon to be performed represented far more than the traditional blessing a father passes on to his son. What Isaac would be doing is transferring to his son the covenant blessing passed down from his father, Abraham, a blessing that would one day produce a whole nation of God’s favored people, out of which the Messiah would come.

Isaac called Esau to his side and told him to go hunting and cook him some game to eat after which he would pass on to him the father’s blessing. Fortunately, Rebekah overheard this conversation and became alarmed, because she knew that it was the Lord’s will for Jacob to receive the blessing and not Esau.

Immediately she devised a plan to see to it that God’s will be carried out, a course of action for which her name would historically be slandered and associated with the words “trickery” and “deceit”. It was a price she was willing to pay for she knew in her heart

that it is better to obey God rather than man ^{Acts 5:29}, and their sometimes wrongful traditions.

Rebekah went quickly to Jacob and told him what was about to happen. She then sent him to the flock of goats to pick out and kill two kids. She would cook them as Isaac liked and Jacob would take the meat to his father and receive the blessing, while Esau was still out hunting.

To be caught would surely bring a curse to Jacob, and this alarmed him greatly,

“But his mother said to him, ‘Let your curse be on me, my son; only obey my voice, and go, get them for me’” ^{Gen. 27:13}.

Then Rebekah took the choice clothes of her elder son Esau and put them on Jacob. To get the smooth-skinned Jacob to feel like the hairy Esau, Rebekah put the skins of the goats on his hands and the back of his neck.

Jacob then went in to Isaac with the cooked meat and when asked who he was, he said he was Esau. When Isaac had finished eating he placed his hands on Jacob’s head and blessed him thinking all the time that he was Esau.

Bible commentaries and teachers of the Word everywhere condemn Rebekah for this act of deception. They teach that some way or another God would have

worked things out. They say that Jacob was “mama’s boy” and Rebekah was selfish in her thoughts and actions. This is not so! We have already seen that Rebekah was personally chosen by God to be Isaac’s wife.

Success in marriage is more than “finding” the right person, it is a matter of “being” the right person. A selfish and deceiving woman is not the type of person God would have chosen to carry on the covenant bloodline. What was needed was a person full of love, who would do what was right and obey God rather than man.

Rebekah wasn’t trying to deceive Isaac just so she could get her own way. She loved her husband deeply and respected him, too. No, she wasn’t trying to trick and deceive the blind and misguided Isaac. She was trying to fulfill the will of God spoken to her in Gen. 25:23 that,

“the older shall serve the younger.”

And no, she wasn’t playing favorites with her two sons. Isaac was the one playing favorites for he liked Esau the best.

Playing favorites with our children is a dangerous thing to do, because sometimes it clouds our minds when it comes to hearing from God. Why do you think

the Lord spoke to Rebekah concerning His will for these two brothers and not Isaac?

The Bible in several places confirms that Jacob indeed was the one chosen by God to receive the covenant blessing. Heb. 11:9 tells us that Isaac and Jacob were heirs together with Abraham of the same promise. Rom. 9:13 says,

“As it is written, ‘Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated.’”

Consider Heb. 12:16,17,

“Lest there be any fornicator or profane person like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright. For you know that afterward, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, though he sought it diligently with tears.”

Esau was a godless man who despised his birthright and lived for the pleasures of this world. Gen. 28:1,8,9 tells us that later Esau deliberately rebelled against his father, and out of spite married a heathen woman. Is it any wonder that God preferred Jacob over Esau?

Commentators who condemn Rebekah for her actions always say that God would have seen to it that Jacob received the blessing without the use of lying and deceit. The funny thing about it is that, these same commentators can never come up with

a reasonable explanation as to how this could have been accomplished. What these people fail to understand is that, once the blessing was given it was irrevocable. When Esau went to Isaac telling him about what happened, he was told that the blessing must remain on Jacob even though it came by deceit ^{Gen. 27:33-37}.

So was Rebekah wrong in what she did? That is a question each of us must answer for ourselves. But before you decide, consider this very important fact. In the Bible there is always a finality to words that are spoken. Jesus taught in Matt. 5:37a,

“But let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes’ and your ‘No’ ‘No.’”

Once a word was spoken, that was it.

Consider the story in Dan. 6 when King Darius signed a decree saying that any man who prayed to or petitioned any god or man for thirty days other than the king, would be cast into a den of lions. The king was tricked into signing this decree, because the originators of this law hated Daniel and were looking for a way to have him put to death. They knew Daniel prayed faithfully to the one true God three times a day, and when he was caught doing so, the matter was brought before the king.

“And the king, when he heard

these words, was greatly displeased with himself, and set his heart on Daniel to deliver him; and he labored till the going down of the sun to deliver him. Then these men approached the king, and said to the king, 'Know, O king, that it is in the law of the Medes and Persians that no decree or statute which the king establishes may be changed.'"

The king liked Daniel and it displeased him greatly that he was deceived into signing this senseless decree. But even with all his power and authority, Darius was unable to change what was already signed. (The same type of incident also occurred in Esther 1:9 and 8:8.) All King Darius could do is give the command for Daniel to be cast into the den of lions and believe that his God would deliver him.

Of course, we all know the outcome of that story. Daniel's life was spared when God sent an angel to shut the lions mouths, and the originators of the plot to kill Daniel, were themselves thrown into the den of lions and viciously killed.

Another example of the finality of one's spoken word is found in Judges 11:29-40. Jephthah, the son of Gilead, was the leader of the Israelites and one day before a great battle, he did a very

foolish thing. Verses 30, 31 tells us what he did,

"And Jephthah made a vow to the Lord, and said, 'If You will indeed deliver the people of Ammon into my hands, then it will be that whatever comes out of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the people of Ammon, shall surely be the Lord's, and I will offer it up as a burnt offering.'"

The Israelite army went to war and the Ammonites were defeated and driven out of the land. Shortly thereafter, the Israelites returned home in peace, and when Jephthah arrived at his home it was his beloved daughter, his only child, who came out to meet him first. He was greatly upset when he remembered his promise to God.

"And it came to pass, when he saw her, that he tore his clothes, and said, 'Alas, my daughter! You have brought me very low! You are among those who trouble me! For I have given my word to the Lord, and I cannot go back on it'" v. 35.

His daughter was very brave, and like Rebekah she also knew the importance of and the finality of words spoken and promises made.

"So she said to him, 'My father, if you have given your word to

the Lord, do to me according to what has gone out of your mouth, because the Lord has avenged you of your enemies, the people of Ammon”” Judges 11:36.

Jephthah allowed his daughter to spend two months in the mountains with her friends to sorrow over what was to happen, and when she returned he did to her what he had promised to the Lord.

After Jacob received the father’s blessing from Isaac, Rebekah is only mentioned in scripture one other time, and once again she was used by God to fulfill His purpose and preserve the covenant bloodline. Esau was bitterly angry with Jacob and vowed to kill him once Isaac was dead. Rebekah was made aware of his intentions and sent for Jacob and pleaded with him to run away and go to her homeland in Haran to live with her brother Laban.

This Jacob wisely did, and from there his two wives gave him twelve sons who would be the head of the twelve tribes of Israel. From out of one of these tribes, the tribe of Judah, would one day be born the King of kings and Lord of lords. All this happened because one faithful woman was brave enough to stand up to tradition and obey God rather than man.

It is interesting that we are not told what happened to Rebekah after this, as a result of her actions. What we do know is that Isaac finally came around and understood what Rebekah knew from the very beginning.

Before Jacob left on his journey, Isaac listened to the advice of Rebekah and charged his son not to take a heathen wife from the daughters of Canaan, but instead to marry a woman from the household of Laban.

Isaac also had one final blessing for Jacob, one which must have pleased Rebekah immensely, because now she knew that her husband was in agreement with the will of God. Gen. 28:3, 4 records the blessing spoken,

“May God Almighty bless you, and make you fruitful and multiply you, that you may be an assembly of peoples; And give you the blessing of Abraham, to you and your descendants with you, that you may inherit the land in which you are a stranger, which God gave to Abraham.”

2 FAITH FOR ANOTHER

Traditions have always been great motivators. Whether they be good or bad, people everywhere allow their words and actions to be dictated by the standards set in motion by others.

Because of traditional brain washings, people say and do things based solely on what others say and do. Those who act this way often fear being rejected by their peers, and as a result, try to fit in by allowing their words and actions to be motivated by the traditions and standards of those around them.

- How many times does a sweet family man go to work and use profane language just to fit in with the crowd?
- Or how about the new employee who goes out drinking with his co-workers after receiving his paycheck just so he can be considered “one of the boys”?
- Teenagers begin taking drugs, smoking cigarettes, and start engaging in sexual activ-



Rahab

ity just so they won't be considered an outcast by their supposedly close friends.

And why do they engage in such behavior? Because everybody else is doing it. It's the traditional thing to do.

Traditionalism has also worked its way into the local church. How many professing Christians refuse to obey the scripture to “lift up holy hands” ^{1 Tim. 2:8}, because they attend a traditional church that disallows or looks down upon this beautiful form of worship?

During the time of Jesus there was no group of people more bound by wrongful traditions and the legality of the law than the scribes and Pharisees. Webster's dictionary defines “legalism” as a ‘strict, often too strict and literal adherence to law or to a code.’ Legalists believe that salvation is obtained through good works, whereas Eph. 2:8,9 says,

“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift

of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.”

One day a group of these traditionalists came to Jesus when they saw some of His disciples eating bread with unwashed hands. Mark 7:3 says,

“For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash their hands in a special way, holding the tradition of the elders.”

Immediately the Lord rebuked them for being bound by the stronghold of traditionalism.

Mark 7:6-9 gives His response,

“He answered and said to them, ‘Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: “This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.”’

For laying aside the commandment of God you hold the tradition of men - the washing of pitchers and cups, and many other such things you do.’ And He said to them, ‘All too well you reject the commandment of God that you may keep your tradition.”’

Notice the phrase “teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.” That’s precisely what a

wrongful tradition is. A bad tradition is a man-imposed law that is not in line with the entire Word of God which in turn produces “dead works” ^{Heb. 6:1}. Listen to what Paul says in Gal. 1:10-12,

“For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a servant of Christ. But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

More than once Jesus was confronted by traditionalists about work done on the Sabbath. His disciples one day plucked the heads of grain to eat on the Sabbath ^{Mark 2:23-28}, and He healed on the Sabbath and told a man to take up his bed and walk ^{John 5:10-16}. Each time Jesus revealed the wrongful intentions of those confronting Him.

“And He said to them, ‘The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. Therefore, the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath”’ ^{Mark 2:27,28}.

To this the traditionalists did not know how to respond. There is, however, one thing they did do. John 5:16 tells us,

“For this reason the Jews persecuted Jesus, and sought to kill Him, because He had done these things on the Sabbath.”

Paul also had to deal with the cancer of legalism. The entire book of Galatians is written to a church bound by this deceitful disease.

The Galatian church began their Christian walk by faith, but now wanted to live their lives based on the works of the law. They were trying to combine the Old Testament law with the New Testament message of grace. This church, however, was a Gentile church and wasn't even under the law. The Bible clearly states that the law was given to Israel only Ex. 19:3; Lev.26:46; Rom.9:4! It is easy to understand why Paul so boldly begins his letter to this misinformed church in such an authoritative way. He says in Gal. 1:6,7,

“I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him Who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another, but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ.”

At one time Paul speaks these powerful words,

“O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth...?”

Gal. 3:1a

Paul brought the same message of freedom to this Galatian church as Christ did to all of us. He says in Gal.5:1,

“Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.”

Consider Rom. 8:2,

“For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.”

The book of Galatians is the Christian ‘Declaration of Independence.’ The power of the Holy Spirit brings liberty and enables the Christian to enjoy freedom within the law of love.

Paul wrote this epistle to show believers that they are no longer slaves of legalism which is bondage to the law but instead are saved “by grace through faith” Eph. 2:8.

The breaking of legalism and worldly traditions, along with reuniting us with the Heavenly Father, was the reason Christ came to earth in the form of a man. 1 Peter 1:18,19 says,

“Knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received

by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.”

Bad traditions lead to “aimless conduct” and this is what Christ came to redeem us from. In fact, He thought it was worth dying for. Jesus came to win our freedom over traditionalism and give us the liberty to love, serve, and worship the Heavenly Father in a way that is in line with the holy scriptures. He Himself once said,

“Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed” John 8:36.

Amen!

We all know that the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ will soon be upon us. This time, however, when He returns He'll be looking for something specific. Jesus says in Luke 18:8,

“...when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?”

When Jesus returns to catch up His glorious and non-traditional church, He will be looking for a people who are living by faith. And why is that? When Jesus came to earth two thousand years ago, He came to break wrongful traditions and usher in a new covenant between God and man. When He returns for His church,

He'll be looking for a people who walk by faith. Do you see the connection?

Faith in God and His Word is what we use to break free,

...from the bondage of legalism and those bad traditions which lead to sin and “aimless conduct”.

One only has to read the opening verses of the book of Joshua to find a treasure of Godly wisdom for success in daily living. The entire book of Joshua describes the entering, conquering, and occupying of the land of Canaan. This spectacular series of conquests all began with a conversation the Lord had with Joshua which began with these words,

“Moses My servant is dead”
Josh. 1:2a.

One of the wisest and foremost things a person can do to insure success is to forget the past. Moses was called to an extraordinary work and had led the children of Israel out of Egypt and through the wilderness for forty years.

How many times during these many years of wanderings did the Israelites dwell on their past and even desired to go back to the chains of bondage and slavery in heathen Egypt? Moses was plagued by a people who would not forget their past and the Lord did not want Joshua to carry the

same burden. He therefore caused a new generation to rise up in the wilderness, who would join up with the faith of Joshua and Caleb to cross over the Jordan and take possession of the Promised Land.

Yes, the death of Moses was to be mourned and his memory honored. Deut. 34:8 says,

"And the children of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days. So the days of weeping and mourning for Moses ended."

Moses came, he lived, he died. Now it was time to move on.

The Lord said to Joshua,

"Moses My servant is dead. Now therefore, arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving to them - the children of Israel" Josh. 1:2.

Four times in this opening chapter Joshua is told to "be strong and of good courage", three times by the Lord and once by the children of Israel ^{vv. 6, 7, 18}. Moses also told him the same thing in Deut. 31:7.

Joshua had what seemed like an impossible task before him. It was his job to take this nation of people into a land filled with strong enemy warriors who were giants in stature, and had been trained in the art of war all

their lives. And once the land that flowed with milk and honey was taken, Joshua also had the responsibility to divide it up among the two million Israelites. But praise the Lord, what is impossible with man is possible with God ^{Matt. 19:26; Luke 1:37}.

The only thing Joshua was told to do was "be strong and of a good courage". And for what purpose was he told to develop and maintain these qualities? Josh. 1:7,8 tells us,

"Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go. This Book of the Law shall not depart out of 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."

What the Lord did was give Joshua directions on how to live a life of faith, without which it is impossible to please God ^{Heb. 11:6}. God wanted Joshua to build on the faith he already had in Him by meditating on and speaking the Word of God day and night. Rom. 10:17 says,

“So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.”

A few verses earlier Joshua had received a unique promise from the Lord. Josh. 1:5 says,

“No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life; as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you.”

God promised to be with Joshua for as long as there was breath inside him. His presence, however, would only be felt and known as long as Joshua meditated in the Word day and night. James 4:8 says,

“Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.”

This is how Joshua became strong and courageous. He became,

“Strong in the Lord and in the power of His might” Eph. 6:10.

Because the Word of God became the top priority in Joshua’s life, he was able to put the thoughts about his own weaknesses behind him and focus instead on the awesome power and ability of God.

Notice also that Joshua was not only to meditate in the Word day and night but was told “to do” all that was written in it. Reading, memorizing, and meditating upon the Word of God is of little

value without the act of obedience to all that is written therein. James 1:22 says,

“But be doers of the Word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.”

Faith is not just something you believe, it’s something you do. It is a work, an action!

Compare what God said to Joshua with the instructions David gave to his son Solomon who was about to replace his father as king. 1 Chron. 28:20 says,

“And David said to his son Solomon, ‘Be strong and of a good courage, and do it; do not fear nor be dismayed, for the Lord God - my God - will be with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you, until you have finished all the work for the service of the house of the Lord.’”

God knew that Joshua was aware of the giants in the land and since faith involves taking a risk the Lord knew that fear would rise up in the mind of His loyal follower. Thus the need for courage. The Hebrew word for courage means “to be sharp, alert or clear-headed.” The point of fear in a person’s life is their point of failure.

Where fear begins, faith ends. But praise God, listen to what Paul told Timothy in 2 Tim. 1:7,

“For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.”

To be “clear-headed” means to have a ‘sound mind’, and coupled together with the spirit of power and love, a person will then become “strong and of a good courage.” And it takes courage, the ability to be “clear-headed”, to look past the problem and unto the Lord in order to break the stronghold of fear. Rom. 8:15 says,

“For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by Whom we cry out, ‘Abba, Father.’”

It takes faith and courage “to do” what God says to do without focusing on the obstacles that stand in the way. It has been said that faith is not believing in spite of evidence, but rather is obeying in spite of consequence.

Before Joshua and the children of Israel crossed over the Jordan River into the Promised Land they would be shown by a harlot who lived in the sinful city of Jericho that “faith without works is dead” James 2:17.

In the New Testament the book of James is devoted solely to the subject of faith. As the half-brother of the Lord Jesus Christ, James grew up and witnessed first-hand the words and actions

of the one person Who pleased the Heavenly Father totally, by walking daily in complete and perfect faith. And, of course, the greatest observation James made was that “faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead” James 2:17.

James knew by watching Jesus that faith is better seen than heard, and involves doing something about what you believe. He goes on to say,

“But someone will say, ‘You have faith, and I have works.’ Show me your faith without your works, I will show you my faith by my works” James 2:18.

What James is saying here must not be confused with what Paul said in Rom. 3:28,

“Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law.”

Like the Pharisees and Sadducees, many people were so caught up in legalism, they valued so highly their works done according to the law, that they rejected the gospel message of faith Rom. 3: 21-31.

The ritual of circumcision was one issue the apostle Paul had to deal with many, many times Rom. 2:29; 1 Cor 7:19; Gal. 5:6; Col. 2:11.

Paul had to confront those who depended on the merit of their works to please God, whereas James was dealing with people

who relied totally on verbal confessions of faith, and would not allow works to be used as evidence of what they spoke and believed.

If we combine the teachings of James and Paul, we are taught that true faith will always produce works as evidence, but works will never produce true faith.

***Faith is conceived in the heart,
but without works it is never
brought to life.***

Words spoken with faith must be followed by action and personal involvement.

James next goes on and gives the examples of two people in the Old Testament whose faith was demonstrated by their works.

“But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect?” James 2:20-22.

Abraham will always be the frontrunner on any teaching about faith. Heb. 11: 8-19 tells us how Abraham continually obeyed God and put works and actions to his faith.

“By faith Abraham obeyed

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”
v. 8.

“By faith he sojourned in the land of promise as in a foreign country...” v. 9.

“By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac... accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead...” vv. 17a, 19a.

What a great man of faith Abraham was. It is easily understood why James chose him as an example to demonstrate that faith without works is dead.

But what about his second example? Surely James would use a well known person such as Joseph or Moses. Or how about the great prophet Elijah? No, to again demonstrate that “faith without works is dead” James chose instead to use a sinful Canaanite harlot by the name of Rahab.

You could not find two more different people if you tried. Abraham was a Jew and Rahab was a Gentile. Abraham was a godly man, whereas Rahab was a prostitute. Abraham was called “the friend of God” James 2:23, while Rahab belonged to the enemies of God. They both, however, had a saving faith in God which they

demonstrated by their works.

And what did Rahab do that was so great? She broke a tradition! Since the beginning of man's sinful existence on planet earth, it has been a tradition to love your friends and hate your enemies ^{Matt. 5:43}.

This is a tradition Rahab would risk her life to break for the purpose of saving the lives of herself, her family, and two of God's chosen people. By adding works to her faith, Rahab saw to it that the will of God was fulfilled, and like Abraham, was honored by being allowed to be in the bloodline of Christ ^{Matt. 1:5}. Let's review her story.

As Joshua had the people prepare themselves for the crossing of the river Jordan, he sent two men into the city to spy out the land. Forty years earlier he, too, had been a spy sent into this same land, and along with Caleb were the only ones out the twelve sent who came back with a good report. They believed that with the Lord's help the land could be conquered.

Could this be the reason Joshua sent only two spies into Jericho instead of twelve? For sure it is easier for two people to agree on any one thing than it is for twelve. But then again, two is all you need. Jesus Himself said,

“Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven” ^{Matt. 18:19}.

The cursed city of Jericho stood at the foot of a mountain range, and the sin of sexual perversion was rampant. Mercy was not to be shown to the Canaanites and they were to be wiped out and destroyed totally.

The two spies sent out by Joshua swam across the Jordan River and slipped into the city. By divine appointment they found a room in the home of an innkeeper and harlot named Rahab, whose place of dwelling was built right into the wall of the city. Its location was of great benefit to the spies because it provided easy access and a quick escape route. Unbeknown to the two spies, they were observed coming into the city and were followed to the doorway of the home of Rahab.

The next day some of the people went to the king and told him that there were strangers in town who were staying in Rahab's home. Immediately the king sent men to Rahab and demanded that she turn over the two men who were their enemies, for which they must be apprehended and for sure killed. What the king's men did not know is that Rahab had heard about the God of Israel,

faith had entered into her heart, and now it was time for her to act on her faith. Rahab became a doer of the Word and not a hearer only

James 1:22

“Then the woman took the two men and hid them; and she said, ‘Yes, the men came to me, but I did not know where they were from. And it happened as the gate was being shut, when it was dark, that the men went out. Where the men went I do not know; pursue them quickly, for you may overtake them.’ (But she had brought them up to the roof and hidden them with the stalks of flax which she had laid in order on the roof)”

Josh. 2:4-6

Rahab risked her life and lied to get God’s will done. Like Rebekah, Rahab knew that it was better to obey God rather than man ^{Acts 5:29}. Rahab returned to the roof and explained to the two spies the reason for her actions.

“I know that the Lord has given you the land, that the terror of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land are fainthearted because of you. For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were on

the other side of the Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom you utterly destroyed. And as soon as we heard these things, our hearts melted; neither did there remain any more courage because of you, for the Lord your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth below” ^{Josh. 2:9-11}.

In front of the two spies Rahab boldly declared her faith in the God of Israel. All of Jericho had heard the same report but only Rahab believed and acted on her faith. When you realize the small amount of information Rahab had, you can see how truly great and marvelous her faith really was. She did not have the full written Word like we have today, nor was the Holy Spirit dwelling within her to convict and teach her the Word.

***Her faith is an indictment
against the unbelief of
sinners today,***

...as well as those believers who always seem to struggle when it comes to their walk of faith.

The faith of Rahab can clearly be seen in Christ’s teaching on the parable of the mustard seed.

“Another parable He put forth to them, saying: **“The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field, which**

indeed is the least of all the seeds; but when it is grown it is greater than the herbs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches” ^{Matt. 13:31,32}.

Faith works through love ^{Gal. 5:6}, and love is not selfish. As the mustard seed grew and became a great tree and gave protection to the birds of the air, so also must faith be used for the benefit of others.

Rahab's first act of faith was for the benefit and protection of the spies. James 2:25 says,

“Likewise, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out another way?”

After the king's men left her home, Rahab went up to the roof and in front of the two spies boldly declared her faith in the living God.

Next, she used her faith to plead for the lives of her family.

“Now therefore, I beg you, swear to me by the Lord, since I have shown you kindness, that you also will show kindness to my father's house, and give me a true token, and spare my father, my mother, my brothers, my sisters, and all that they have, and deliver our lives from death” ^{Josh. 2:12,13}.

This the spies readily agreed to do, if Rahab would once again put works to her faith by binding a line of scarlet cord in the window through which the spies were let down when they escaped from the city.

“And then she said, ‘According to your words, so be it.’ And she sent them away, and they departed. And she bound the scarlet cord in the window” ^{Josh. 2:21}.

Rahab heard the words of the spies, she believed what was said, and she acted on her faith by binding the cord in the window. Not long afterward the walls of Jericho crumbled to the ground, the city was destroyed, and Rahab and her family were spared. This simple act of faith put Rahab in the Heb. 11 “Hall of Fame” of faith right alongside Joshua.

“By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they were encircled for seven days. By faith the harlot Rahab did not perish with those who did not believe, when she had received the spies with peace” ^{Heb. 11:30,31}.

Rahab's life is an example of what putting actions to your faith can do for you. Rahab and her siblings were adopted into the family of God, and this one-time harlot later became the wife of a prince in Judah named Salmon. She became the mother of Boaz,

who later married Ruth, and was one of David's great-great-grandmothers, thus making her one of the ancestors of the Lord Jesus Christ.

All this happened because Rahab dared to take a stand against the tradition of hatred by putting actions to her faith. How better off our lives would be, and how great the exploits we can do for the Lord if we too, like Rahab, would only say, "According to Your words, so be it."

Because Rahab added works to her faith, the grace of God was able to deliver her from certain death and bring her into one of the highest places of honor in Jewish history.

What God did for Rahab, He desires to do for us all.

If we'd only believe.

3 WORTH DYING FOR

From eternity past to eternity future there have been and always will be three spiritual forces that have ruled supreme throughout the echelons of time.

1 Cor. 13:13a says,

“And now abide faith, hope, love, these three...”

The word “now” means ‘immediately’ and the word “abide” comes from the Greek word ‘meno’, which means ‘to stay, continue, endure, remain, be present, stand.’

All the affairs of heaven and all the Godly affairs of earth are operated by faith, hope and love. They are everlasting in their nature and eternal in their use. They always have been and always will be. Together, they abide forever.

Paul understood the relationship between faith, hope, and love. To the Thessalonian church he wrote,



Esther

“Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of our God and Father”

1 Thess. 1:3

In the same letter this great apostle of God went on to say,

“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” 1 Thess. 5:8.

These three powerful displays of God’s nature are never independent of one another and together form “a threefold cord that is not quickly broken” Eccl. 4:12. Let’s now look at each of these forces individually and see what they are and how they relate to the other two.

FAITH

Faith is the key to everything in the kingdom of God. Rom. 14:23b says,

“...for whatever is not of faith is sin.” Scripture tells us that “The just shall live by faith” ^{Rom. 1:17b}, because

“without faith it is impossible to please God” ^{Heb. 11:6a}.

And just what is faith? It is the ability to believe what you have heard, yet have not seen, based solely on your confidence in the speaker. In other words, faith is believing that God told us the truth and acting on it.

Faith reaches into the unseen and,

“Calls those things which do not exist as though they did”

^{Rom. 4:17b}.

Faith is the “evidence of things not seen” ^{Heb. 11:1b}, thus making it the title-deed to all the promises of God. As important as faith is, it is only one strand in the “threefold cord that is not easily broken.” To totally fulfill the will of God faith has to be coupled together with hope and love.

HOPE

Hope is the spiritual force that binds together faith and love. It is a confident and favorable expectation based solely on the Word of God ^{Phil. 1:20}.

***A person cannot receive by faith
above the expectation
of their hope.***

Hope looks into the future and gives faith something to believe for. Since faith works through love ^{Gal. 5:6}, hope allows faith to give substance to love.

***Faith is love in action and is
“the substance of things
hoped for...”*** ^{Heb. 11:1a}.

It is easy to see how these three forces work together. Rom. 5:5 says,

“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.”

Regarding hope the author of Hebrews exhorts us with these words,

“Therefore do not cast away your confidence (hope) which has great reward” ^{Heb. 10:35}.

And what is hope’s great reward? 1 John 5: 14, 15 tells us,

“Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have

asked of Him.”

Hope’s “great reward” is the manifestation in our lives of a promise from God brought about by faith. This is clearly seen in the life of Abraham, the “father of us all” Rom. 4:16b.

God chose Abraham to be the father of a nation of people through which the Messiah would be born for the purpose of saving the people from the stronghold of sin.

“And not being weak in faith, he did not consider his own body, already dead (since he was about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah’s womb. 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” (Rom. 4:19-21).

How did Abraham get such great faith? Through hope! Remember,

“faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” Heb. 11:1.

Rom. 4:18, speaking of Abraham, tells us the vital secret to walking in great faith,

“Who, contrary to hope, in hope believed, so that he became the father of many nations, according to what was spoken, ‘So shall your descendants be.’”

Notice the phrase “contrary to hope, in hope believed.” The Amplified© translation says Abraham “hoped on in faith.”

One night God took Abraham outside and showed him the stars and told him,

“So shall your descendants be”
Genesis 15:5.

This painted a picture in his mind of what the future would be like. This gave Abraham something to believe for and from that moment on he “hoped on in faith.” It was the spiritual force of hope that allowed Abraham to be “strengthened in faith.” Abraham’s hope was in the Lord, and it caused him to be “fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform.” The “great reward” Abraham received from the coupling together of his hope and faith was the birth of his son, Isaac.

This story about the birthing of the Jewish race clearly shows us how important hope really is. It is so important that God Himself

is called “the God of hope.” 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.”

We have seen how essential hope is to the walk of faith. How, exactly, does one obtain Biblical hope? The answer is simple.

One obtains Biblical hope the same way one obtains Biblical faith.

Rom. 10:17 says,

“So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.”

Faith comes by hearing yourself speak the Word of God, and so does hope. Ps. 119:49 tells us,

“Remember the word to Your servant, upon which You have caused me to hope.”

Verse 14 in the same chapter says,

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

Paul verifies this in Rom. 15:4,

“For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through

the patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.”

Like faith, what we hope for must also be spoken out of our mouths.

“Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He Who promised is faithful. And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works” Heb. 10:23,24.

LOVE

Not only does faith work through love, but the two verses above clearly show that hope is just as important as faith to maintain a walk of love, which we are all commanded to do ^{John 13:34,35}.

There is probably no other person in the Bible who expressed his love for God more than David who, 1 Sam. 13:14 tells us, was a man after God’s own heart. In Ps. 31: 23, 24, he shows us another link between the forces of hope and love.

“Oh, love the Lord, all you his saints. For the Lord preserves the faithful, and fully repays the proud person. Be of good courage and He shall strengthen your heart, all you

who hope in the Lord.”

We have already seen that faith will not work without love. Paul verifies this in 1 Cor. 13:2b,

“...and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.”

Love is the strongest strand in the

“threefold cord that is not quickly broken” because “love never fails” ^{1 Cor. 13:8}.

And why does love never fail? Because “God is love” and God never fails! 1 John 4:16b says,

“God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him.”

Love is the solution to every problem in the world. Paul tells us in Rom. 13:10,

“Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.”

Is it any wonder Paul wrote in 1 Cor. 13:13,

“And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love”?

Before Jesus was arrested, He prayed a special prayer to the Father. In the last verse of that prayer He said something im-

portant concerning the subject of love.

“And I have declared to them Your name, and will declare it, that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them” ^{John 17:26}.

Jesus prayed that the love of God would be in each of us who believe. Can you imagine yourself loving another person with as much love and kindness as God loves them? At the moment of conversion, when a person gets born-again, the love of God gets poured out in their hearts by the Holy Spirit ^{Rom. 5:5}. When we give our lives to Christ, we are to become like Him and take on the nature of God.

The fruit of the Spirit is the natural byproduct of the supernatural life within you, and love is the first fruit that shows up in the recreated born-again human spirit ^{Gal. 5:22,23}.

Love is the proof that we are indeed born-again.

As the song goes, “And they’ll know we are Christians by our love.” 1 John 3:14 says,

“We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother

abides in death.”

This verse tells us that our love for God is demonstrated in our love for other people. Consider 1 John 4:11,12,

“Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us.”

And just how is God’s love perfected in us? By practicing it on one another daily!

It is common knowledge in the teaching of faith that,

“Faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead” James 2:17.

Since this is true, then obviously love must also have works to show that the love of God is resident in the hearts of all believers. This is clearly shown to us in 1 John 3:18,

“My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.”

It is not enough just to have God’s love within your hearts. You have to do something with it. Love has to be put into action! Gal. 6:10 says,

“Therefore, as we have oppor-

tunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.”

To help a person in need is an expression of love. Heb. 13:1 says,

“Let brotherly love continue.”

And what are some of the characteristics of God’s love?

***Simply put,
love is when you stop
thinking of yourself.***

Love focuses on the one loved, with thoughts of self secondary. Love is when the values of another become your own, and is having the sensitivity and responsiveness to each other’s needs and wants. Love is the overwhelming desire and persistent effort of one person, to create for another, the conditions under which each can become the person God meant for them to be.

The love of God is unconditional, never ending, all forgiving and, more times than not, is made of sacrificial actions. Eph. 5:1,2 says,

“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.”

We have now seen how the “threefold cord” of faith, hope, and love work together and their relationship and importance to the lives of every believer. There is a story in the Old Testament of a woman who risked her life by using these three forces to break a tradition that if it were not broken would have met the elimination of the entire Jewish race. Let’s now review how she became an example to us all.

It was a time of celebration. From the far regions of the vast kingdom all the nobles and princes of the 127 provinces came to join in the great drinking feast put on by their boisterous and oftentimes emotional leader and king, Ahasuerus.

For 180 days the king showed the riches of his glorious kingdom and the splendor of his excellent majesty to all who were present. The king’s palace at Shusan was beautifully decorated for the occasion, and he awed his guests with the opulence and grandeur of his court.

“There were white and blue linen curtains fastened with cords of fine linen and silver rods and marble pillars; and

the couches were of gold and silver on a mosaic pavement of alabaster, turquoise, and white and black marble. And they served drinks in golden vessels, each vessel being different from the other, with royal wine in abundance, according to the generosity of the king” ^{Esther 1:6,7}.

Herodotus records that it was during this time of great feasting that Ahasuerus made plans for the invasion of Greece and discussed war strategies with his subordinates.

While this was taking place in the citadel of the king, a special feast was held for the women in the royal palace and was hosted by Queen Vashti. On the seventh day of this feast, when the heart of the king was merry with wine, Ahasuerus ordered seven eunuchs,

“to bring Queen Vashti before the king, wearing her royal crown, in order to show her beauty to the people and the officials, for she was beautiful to behold” ^{Esther 1:11}.

It was the law of the land, a tradition, that no lady was to show herself in such a way to any man except her husband. Fearing for her dignity in the midst of such a group of drunken men, Queen

Vashti decided not to break this tradition and utterly refused to obey the summons brought to her. This made the king furious and his anger burned within him. He felt that he had been put to shame in front of his honored guests, and this provoked his vengeful wrath to burn deep inside him.

Something must be done! He called together his wise men to tell him what to do and he followed the advice of one of his chief princes, Memucan, and had Queen Vashti divorced by a public decree and had her sent away at once. The men reasoned with the king that this course of action would warn all wives throughout the kingdom to honor their husbands.

The ousting of Queen Vashti now completed, a search soon began to find a new wife for the king. This search would bring forth into the kingdom a woman who, unlike her predecessor, would be willing to break a tradition and risk her life for the purpose of fulfilling the will of God.

Although Ahasuerus was king of the Persian empire and reigned from India to Ethiopia, he was not the great leader that his father, Darius, had been. He was too fond of feasting and pleasure

and was not very good at making plans for war. History records that during the next four years when the king was without a wife, he went to war with the Greeks and suffered a terrible and humiliating defeat at the hands of his enemies at Salamis and Plataea.

The historian, Herodotus, tells us that the king sought consolation in his harem of women, but in his thoughts only one person was on his mind.

“After these things...he remembered Vashti” (Esther 2:1).

Realizing that the restoration of Vashti back to her royal position as queen would spell doom for them, the servants of the king suggested that he choose a new queen from among the most beautiful virgins in the empire. They told him,

“‘Then let the young woman who pleases the king be queen instead of Vashti.’ This thing pleased the king, and he did so” *Esther 2:4*.

The servants were well aware of the weakness of their king’s character, and often took full advantage of it for their own greedy purposes. Little did they know the strength of character in the wom-

an about to become their queen.

In the town of Shushan, there lived a certain Jew named Mordecai whose ancestors had been transported to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar. After the conquest of Babylon by Cyrus in 539 B.C., many of the Jews decided not to return to their homeland, but instead moved eastward to Shushan and other cities in the Medo-Persia empire.

Upon the death of his uncle Abihail, Mordecai took his uncle's orphaned daughter, Esther, and brought her up as his own. The young woman was lovely and beautiful and obtained favor in the sight of all who saw her.

When the king's command and decree were heard that all beautiful young virgins be brought to the royal palace, Esther also was taken and placed into the care of Hegai, the custodian of the women. Before leaving, she was charged by Mordecai not to reveal her Jewish ancestry and

"Esther obeyed the command of Mordecai as when she was brought up to him" ^{Esther 2:20b}.

For an entire year, the virgins prepared for their stand before the king. Oil of myrrh, perfumes, and other beautifying processes were

used to make the women as attractive as they could possibly be.

Also, for their visit with the king, each one could bring with her any ornaments, jewelry, or apparel that she wanted. Thus prepared, each young woman went before the king in the evening and in the morning returned to the house where the king's eunuch kept the concubines, thus being added to the king's ever growing harem. Because of a royal law and tradition, each woman hereafter,

"Would not go in to the king again unless the king delighted in her and called her by name" ^{Esther 2:14b}.

When the time came for Esther to go in to see the king, she requested to take nothing with her but what Hegar advised. Esther revealed a unique and confident spirit about her in that she would not let her,

"Beauty be that outward adorning of arranging the hair, of wearing gold, or of putting on fine apparel," but instead by, "the incorruptible ornament of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God" ^{Peter 3:3,4}.

So Esther was taken to King Ahasuerus, into his royal palace, and,

“the king loved Esther more than all the other women, and she obtained grace and favor in his sight more than all the virgins; so he set the royal crown upon her head and made her queen instead of Vashti” ^{Esther 2:17}.

Four years later King Ahasuerus promoted a man named Haman to be second-in-command, and advanced him and set his seat above all the princes who were with him. Knowing that Haman was a very prideful man, the king commanded all the servants who were within the palace gate to bow down and pay homage to the new appointee. All complied with the king’s command but one, Mordecai.

As a faithful Jew, Mordecai would not bow before anyone except the one, true God. When this was reported to Haman, the Agagite was immediately filled with rage. Haman decided then and there that Mordecai must be killed along with all the other Jews in the kingdom. What he did not know was that the new queen herself was also a Jew, because years before, Mordecai had told Esther not to reveal her heritage to anyone.

“Then Haman said to King

Ahasuerus, “There is a certain people scattered and dispersed among the people in all the provinces of your kingdom; their laws are different from all other people’s, and they do not keep the king’s laws. Therefore it is not fitting for the king to let them remain” ^{Esther 3:8}.

Haman next convinced the easily persuaded king to sign a decree calling for the elimination of all the Jews in his vast empire.

When Mordecai and the other Jews heard about the signed decree, there was great mourning among them, with fasting, weeping, and wailing. Mordecai tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and ashes, and went out into the midst of the city. He cried out with a loud and bitter cry. Esther, meanwhile, had not been told about Haman’s evil plot, but her servants came and told her about the way Mordecai was mourning.

Esther became distressed and sent nice clothes to be put on him instead of sackcloth, but he would not have them. When told of Mordecai’s refusal she sent one of her chamberlain’s, Hatach, to go to him and find out the reason for his great sorrow. Mordecai told him the whole story and asked Hatach to explain it to

Esther,

“That he might command her to go in to the king to make supplication to him and plead before him for her people” ^{Es-ther 4:8b}.

Although Esther was the queen, there was a law in the land preventing her or anyone else from going before the king’s presence, unless they were first sent for. Anyone who broke this law could be put to death immediately,

“Except the one to whom the king hold out the golden scepter, that he may live” ^{Esther 4:11}.

Esther’s concern was that she had not been called to go before the king for thirty days, and she was uncertain of his desire or willingness to see her. These words she sent back to Mordecai who told her servants to respond back to their queen his answer,

“Do not think in your heart that you will escape in the king’s palace any more than all the other Jews. For if you remain completely silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father’s house will perish. Yet who knows whether you have

come to the kingdom for such a time as this?” ^{Esther 4:13,14}.

What a powerful statement of faith! The Israelites were taken into Babylonian captivity because of their rebellion against God, but one thing Mordecai knew is that although God disciplines His covenant people He never abandons them. Mordecai knew that with or without Esther’s help, the gracious hand of God would protect and preserve the Jewish people from the threat of annihilation.

Mordecai loved his God and he loved His people, and he considered both to be worth dying for. He had earlier risked his life by willingly and openly refusing to obey the king’s command to bow down to Haman. Because Mordecai had strong faith in his God, he was willing to take a risk and now he was asking Esther to do the same. Although going before the king unannounced might prove fatal to her, Mordecai insisted that this was her responsibility to God.

Esther loved and respected Mordecai with all her heart, and she knew of his great faith in Almighty God. She was confident that Mordecai knew the promises of God and the history of Israel too well to doubt for a single mo-

ment that relief and deliverance would not come. Through him, Esther also grew to have a deep love for the God of Israel and to have faith in His promises. Without a moment's hesitation, she sent word back to Mordecai and promised to go before the king, if he and all the Jews in Shushan would join her in a three day fast.

"My maids and I will fast likewise. And so I will go to the king, which is against the law; and if I perish, I perish!" ^{Esther 4:16}

Like Mordecai, she also thought God and His people were worth dying for.

It was during these three days of fasting that the forces of faith, hope, and love began to build up and energize the spirit and soul of Queen Esther and her people. Too much emphasis is often given to the fact that one abstains from food during times of fasting. One's focus should be instead on what one does during this time and not on what one doesn't do.

Fasting is a time when one diligently gets before God and gives their complete and total attention to Him without any outside distractions, such as eating and what to make for supper.

Even though praying to God is not mentioned here in these verses, it is quite obviously implied. Joel 1:14 says,

"Consecrate a fast, call a sacred assembly; Gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land into the house of the Lord your God, and cry out to the Lord."

In Esther's time, you couldn't walk into the courts of the king without him calling you first, but God says,

"Come on in! Enter My courts with praise!"

Ps. 100:4,5 encourages us to,

"Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise; Be thankful to Him and bless His Name. For the Lord is good; His mercy is everlasting, and His truth endures to all generations."

Esther believed that God's favor was to be obtained through prayer and fasting.

The foundation of faith begins with a thorough knowledge of God and His ways. The more you know God, the greater your potential for faith. One must have a close relationship with God in

order for faith to work, and thus the reason for Esther having Mordecai and the Jewish people diligently seek God for three days of prayer and fasting. Jer. 29: 11-13 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. Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart.”

The more time you spend with God, the more you will get to know Him. The Greek word for “know” is ‘ginosho’ and means,

- To know by experience or effort;
- Knowledge as the result of prolonged practice;
- Knowledge grounded in personal experience;
- To get to know.”

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.

As Queen Esther spent time before the Lord, the force of hope

rose up on the inside of her. Ps. 62:5 says,

“My soul, wait silently for God alone, for my expectation (hope) is from Him.”

Taking three days to pray and fast was important, because hurried faith makes mistakes. Jesus said in Matt. 26:41,

“Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit in-deed is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

For three days Esther got before God and put her mind and body in subjection to what was in her heart.

“Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices; My flesh also will rest in hope” Ps. 16:9.

With her hope in God, came the faith needed for Esther to go unannounced before the king, and this in turn brought peace to her heart.

- Peace gives joy to your faith and causes you to walk boldly and confidently.
- Peace destroys confusion, because it knows that God is a covenant keeping God Who watches over His Word to perform It ^{Jer. 1:12}.

In her private chambers, you can almost hear Esther proclaiming the words later to be spoken by King David,

“Yea, though I walk through the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with Me”

Ps. 23:4

And how about Ps. 138:7?

“Though I walk in the midst of trouble You will revive me; You will stretch out Your hand against the wrath of my enemies, and Your right hand will save me.”

The force of hope invigorated the faith of Esther, and now the force of love was ready to motivate and propel her to do what she had been called into the kingdom to do.

Esther knew from Mordecai's example that there is no place for self-centeredness in love, as she prepared to risk her life and intercede for the people of God, just as Christ would do many years later. Rom. 5:8 says,

“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

Love always gives, and more times than not is expressed and

made of sacrificial actions as demonstrated by Christ hanging on a tree for us all. Eph. 5:1,2 gives us these instructions,

“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.”

It was because of the spirit of God's unfailing love within this young maiden that caused all doubt and fear to flee, and was replaced instead with a spirit of confidence and boldness. 1 John 4:17,18 says,

“Love has been perfected among us in this, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; ***because as He is, so are we in the world.*** There is no fear in love, but perfect love cast out fear...”

Esther knew that she had to be as much a part of the answer to her prayers as she expected God to be.

Knowing this, plus being bold in her God ^{1 Thess. 2:2}, she put on her royal robes and went and stood in the inner court of the king's palace. She immediately found favor in the sight of the

king, and the golden scepter was held out in her direction. When Esther approached the throne, the king offered to grant any request she had, up to half his kingdom.

To further enhance the king's favor, Esther requested that Ahasuerus attend a special feast prepared especially for him and his second-in-command, Haman.

After this special feast and banquet of wine, the king once again asked Esther what her request was. To his surprise he was once again asked that he and Haman attend yet another feast the following day after which her request would be made.

In between these two feasts, the evil Haman had planned to have the unbowing Mordecai hung on a gallows, but because of divine intervention, was ordered by King Ahasuerus to give honor to the man who had once revealed a murder plot against the king.

God's reputation for protecting His own people was known by all, and when Haman returned home from honoring Mordecai in a special parade ceremony, he received this stark warning from his wife, Zeresh,

“If Mordecai, before whom you have begun to fall, is of

Jewish descent, you will not prevail against him but will surely fall before him” *Esther 6:13b*.

No sooner had the words come out of her mouth, that the king's eunuchs came and hastened to bring Haman to the second banquet, which Esther had prepared.

By this time King Ahasuerus was so full of favor for his wife and so proud of her efforts to please him, that he was bound and determined to grant her petition no matter what it may be, up to half his kingdom.

With the eyes of the king and Haman attentively upon her, Queen Esther revealed to her husband the plan to have her people destroyed, killed, and annihilated. When asked by the king who would dare presume in his heart to do such a thing, Esther answered,

“The adversary and enemy is this wicked Haman!” *Esther 7:5,6*.

Filled with rage, Ahasuerus left the room and moments later returned and ordered that the treacherous Haman himself be hung on the same gallows originally intended for Mordecai.

That same day the king gave Esther the house of Haman and

promoted Mordecai to second-in-command after being told of his relationship to the queen. Esther next asked the king to counteract the evil plot of Haman and the scheme which he had devised against the Jews. The king was unable to revoke the decree signed to have the Jews destroyed since it had already been written in his own name and been sealed with his signet ring. (Here is another example of the finality of one's word and laws written in the Old Testament, that is similar to the situation Rebekah faced when she learned Isaac was about to bless Esau.)

What the king was able to do was have Esther and Mordecai write up a new decree allowing the Jews to protect themselves when attacked by their enemies. This they did, and on the day the first decree was executed, the Jews picked up their swords and killed over 75,000 of their enemies. The following day was a time of feasting and rejoicing, and became known as 'The Feast of Purim,' which is celebrated to this very day.

All this happened because a young woman named Esther was propelled by the spiritual forces of faith, hope, and love to stand un-

announced before the king, and break a tradition that had been enforced by law for many, many years.

EPILOGUE

Not all traditions are bad. Paul tells us in 2 Thess. 2:15,

“Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the tradition which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle.”

Because there are good and bad traditions, and since the deceiving counterfeits of the devil are real close to the genuine revelations of God, each born-again believer must develop within themselves a mature spirit so that they will be able to distinguish between the two. Ezek. 44:23 says,

“And they shall teach My people the difference between the holy and the unholy, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean.”

Discernment is the ability to recognize the difference between the,

- Holy and profane,
- True and false,
- Right and wrong,

- Good and evil.
- It means to separate by eye or understanding,
- To discover or distinguish.

It is through discernment that we are able to follow the instructions of 1 Thess. 5:21:22,

“Test all things; hold fast to what is good. Abstain from every form of evil.”

The word “test” comes from the Greek word ‘dokimazo’ and means “to put to the test for the purpose of approving,” and not for the purpose that the thing tested and tried will be found wanting. In other words, look for the good and don’t get caught up in the bad.

Do not get judgmental and point fingers at people, nor become suspicious of what everyone says or does. Do not get accusational like the devil who in Rev. 12:10 is called “the accuser of the brethren.” 1 John 4:1 says,

“Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits,

whether they are of God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.”

False prophets are false teachers ^{2 Peter 2:1}, and wonder workers and the “test” concerns whether the origin of their words and actions are of God or the devil. Jesus said in Matt. 24:24,25,

“For false christs and false prophets will arise and show great signs and wonders, so as to deceive, if possible even the elect. See, I have told you beforehand.”

Isaiah speaks a stark warning to these false teachers in Is. 5:20,

“Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!”

These people are guilty of reversing the standards of morality, but if one has a thorough knowledge and understanding of the Word of God, they will clearly be able to tell right from wrong. 1 Cor. 14:29 says,

“Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others judge.”

To “judge” means to thoroughly discern, to investigate.

And what should one do when they come across one or more of these false teachers? Paul tells us in 2 Thess. 3:6,

“But we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us.”

Discernment helps you to align yourself with what is good and to run away from what is evil.

Spiritual blindness and dullness of hearing comes from a lack of discernment. Jesus 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 Lord said in Jonah 4:11,

“And should I not pity Ninevah, that great city, in which are more than one hundred and twenty thousand persons who cannot discern between their right hand and their left...?”

To walk in discernment one needs to be spiritually sensitive and spiritually disciplined. Heb. 5:14 says,

“But solid food belongs to those who are of full age (mature), that is, those who by reason of use (practice) have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.”

When under constant instruction from the Word, one will be able to discern between truth and error.

Heb. 4:12 says,

“For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discern-er of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”

Always make the Word your final authority and remain sensitive to the Spirit. Know and keep the basic doctrines of the Bible inside of you and continually strive to walk a sin-free life, because sin will dull your ability to discern. Disobedience, unforgiveness, and continual fellowship with carnal people will hinder discernment from operating in your life.

We must all take heed and

follow the words of Ps. 119:9-11,

“How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your Word. With my whole heart I have sought You; Oh, let me not wander from Your commandments! Your Word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You.”

The presence and operation of God’s Word in your life and the absence of sin, are the keys to walking in the perfect will of God, and will give you the ability to discern between good and bad traditions.

You can't start the next chapter of
your walk with Christ if you
keep re-reading the last one.

Try turning the page
and grow strong.

...the
...ned
...man is
...and evil;
...and take
...and live for
...and him forth
...the ground
...and he placed at
...of Eden Cher-u-bims,
...which turned every way,
...the tree of life.
...knew Eve his wife; and she
...and bare Cain, and said, I have
...from the LORD.
...again bare his brother Abel. And
...a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a
...of the ground.
...and in process of time it came to pass, that
...brought of the fruit of the ground an
...offering unto the LORD.
...And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings
...of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the
...LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering;
...But unto Cain and to his offering he had
...not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his
...countenance fell.

WORTH DYING FOR

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 go and teach 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.

