

Manley Beasley

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EDITOR'S NOTE

This quarterly is the answer to a number of requests that Manley Beasley's messages on faith be put into a form that could be used in Sunday School and Church Training, as well as in other study groups.

We have designed this quarterly with flexibility in mind. The lessons are undated and can be used for any kind of study at any time during the year.

As this quarterly goes out, it is our desire that it will not just be a means of passing along information about faith. We pray that God will use it to change the lives of individuals and churches as Christians learn how to step out on the Word of God and move a miracle-working God into action.

Richard L. Love
Editor

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LESSON ONE

The Bible says that "without faith it is impossible to please God" (Hebrews 11:6). The first step in seeking to discover the life of faith is to ask the question,

What is Faith?

Scripture Background

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

So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. (Romans 10:17)

Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith (Hebrews 12:2)

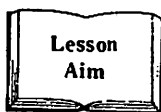
I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. (Galatians 2:20)

By faith he (Moses) forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible. (Hebrews 11:27)

As the living Father hath sent me and I live by the Father; so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me. (John 6:57)

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth in me hath everlasting life. (John 6:47)

I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the Land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not. (Jude 5)



To set forth some of the basic truths about faith and stimulate a desire for faith to become real and operative in the life.

FAITH IS

There is no brief or comprehensive definition of faith. The following statements, however, give us a glimpse of the kind of faith that is pleasing to God:

- Faith is calling those things which are not as though they are.

- "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin." Any walk that is less than the walk of faith is a sinful walk.

- Faith is a reason at rest with God.

- Faith grows exceedingly fast—not by a glimpse, not by a look, but by a gaze upon Him.

- Faith is dependency upon God, and this God-dependency begins only when self dependency ends.

- Faith does not always take you out of the storm; faith calms you in the storm.

- There can be no spiritual reality apart from an active faith in Christ. Therefore, no salvation, no holiness, no peace, no calmness, no power, no witness, no victory. So at all cost learn to trust Christ.

- Faith is the confidence and active trust that brings a child of God into the "sixth sense" which enables him to apprehend the invisible and spiritual things of God. He can hear God speak and see God in a way that he knows it is God without the assistance of his physical faculties.

- Faith bids eternal truth to become present fact.

- Continually revise your relationship to God until the only certainty you have is the certainty that God is faithful not you.

- There is not a normal, healthy human being apart from religious faith.

•“Faith claims the whole man, and all God’s grace can make him.” (Forsyth)

•Faith is not a faculty; faith is the whole man rightly related to God by the Spirit of Jesus.

•Faith enables the believing soul to treat the future as present and the invisible as visible.

•Faith is as much at home in the realm of the impossible as it is in the realm of the possible.

THE SOURCE AND OBJECTIVE OF FAITH

The source and objective of the faith life is Jesus Christ. The Scriptures point to Jesus as the source of all our faith. Romans 10:17 states: “So then faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.” Christ is the Living Word. Hebrews 12:2 says: “Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.” The rendering of Mark 11:22 in the margin of some Bibles is “Have the faith of God.” In Galatians 2:22 Paul affirms, “And the life I now live in the flesh I live,” not by faith ON the Son of God, but “by the faith of the Son of God.”

Peter’s walking on the water illustrates the same principle. Peter said, “Lord, bid me come to you,” and the Lord said, “Come.” As he stepped out onto the water with his eyes fixed on Jesus, the Lord was able to operate through faith. The moment Peter took his eyes off Jesus, God ceased to operate, revealing that the “source” of his faith was found in the person of Jesus. Similarly, Hebrews 11:27 tells us that “By faith he (Moses) forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible.” Notice that he left Egypt, “Not fearing.” The opposite of fear is faith. Obviously he received faith! I believe the source is indicated

by the phrase, “seeing him who is invisible.”

The “object” of our faith is the same as the “source”—Jesus. Jesus taught His disciples that they must walk in faith in Him just as He walked in faith in His Father. In John 6:57 He says, “As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father; so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me.” Notice, Jesus lived “by the Father.” Consequently, He was teaching His disciples to live “by Him.”

When Jesus was faced with a situation, He trusted in, relied on, put his entire weight “upon the Father;” thus He made it possible for the Father to take care of the situation. His objective was to teach His disciples that when facing life’s situations, they were to trust in, rely on, and to put their entire weight on “Him.” He was teaching them how to trust and rely on Him as He trusted in and relied on the Father.

THE MEANING OF BELIEVING

John 6:47 reads, “Verily, verily I say unto you, He that believeth (and to believe means to trust in, or rely on, or completely commit oneself to) on me has (that is he now possesses) eternal life.” The objective of faith is so beautifully brought out by the phrases “trust in” and “rely on.” Jesus used human experiences to illustrate spiritual truths. Often these illustrations help us to understand and apply spiritual truths to our lives. The objective of faith can be illustrated by the experience of flying in an airplane. You can believe the airplane will carry you somewhere, but that plane will never “get you there” until you rely on, trust in, and put your weight in it.

The sign language used by the deaf offers a beautiful picture of the same truth. In singing the hymn “Only Trust Him,” they picture the idea of trust by making motions as though they are rocking a baby in their arms. The objective of faith is that we will likewise place ourselves in complete

reliance upon the person of Jesus Christ, trusting Him without reservation and placing our entire weight upon Him. He longs for us to do this so we can know experientially the joys of resting upon Him as the Lord and Master of our lives.

The fifth verse of the one chapter of Jude says: "I will therefore put you in remembrance, though once ye knew this, how that the Lord having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterwards destroyed them that believed not." Isn't that amazing? God had saved the people out of Egypt, but they would not believe Him to deliver them into Canaan. There is only one way to get saved, and that is by grace through faith. God saved the Israelites out of Egypt (which pictures salvation in the life of the individual) but afterwards destroyed the same group because of one sin—unbelief. Likewise, you can be saved from hell, but if you do not go on with God in faith and obedience, you can be destroyed. Your soul will not be destroyed, but your life can be shortened, shipwrecked, and ruined. There is no neutral ground. There is no turning back.

Let's think about the faith that will get us into the land of Canaan. Entering into Canaan represents the filling of the Holy Spirit, the entering into the fulness of Christ. We refer to this as the abundant life, the victorious life, the Spirit-filled life, the life of rest, or the life of victory. On one occasion I counted about thirty different phrases which are used to refer to the same work of the Holy Spirit.

After we meet Jesus we want to be like Him. We have a sincere desire for the Word. In fact, a man without an appetite for God's Word causes us to wonder if he is saved. There should be only one explanation for our lives. "God" is the only explanation for what we are and for what we are doing. If we can explain our lives in any other way, we are a failure. Most

Christians will have to confess that much about their lives can be explained by something other than the working of God. They have not learned how to enter into Canaan by faith.

FAITH IS SUBSTANCE

One of the most basic truths about faith was made real to me when at one point in my life God placed me in an impossible predicament. It was then that I realized that there was something missing in my faith. I asked God what was wrong with me. He showed me that I had done everything He has asked me to do but trust Him. I replied, "Lord, I have faith. You know I trust You."

At that point I learned something about God. He says something and then shuts up. He did not say another word. I kept telling Him that I had faith. I guess I thought He was hard of hearing.

I reminded the Lord of the time that I needed a tent and He immediately provided it. Then I needed a tractor and trailer with which to move the tent. I laid the need before the Lord, and He sent a man 60 miles to my house. He had never been there before, but God had told him that I needed a tractor and trailer. He gave me the keys to his tractor-trailer and a credit card to pay for the gas. I also reminded the Lord of three or four other instances in my life when He had performed miracles. I kept telling the Lord that I had faith. But most of those miracles were three or four years apart. They were just too old for God.

I told the Lord that what I really needed was substance. I could not even get to my next meeting unless I had some substance. I was willing to hitch-hike. The Lord said, "Go ahead, but you cannot get there until the meeting is half over." It would have taken half a week to get there. I was willing to ride the bus. The Lord said,

"Go ahead, but you cannot get there on time." I was shut up to the fact that I had to fly or not go. I was willing to walk, fly, or anything—whatever He wanted. Something had to happen; I had to trust God or else.

At that time I was helping some men write a book. We had been compiling a work on salvation, and in the course of this study I ran across some things about faith that I had never seen before. In my time of crisis the Holy Spirit brought these things back to me. I turned to Hebrews 11:1—"Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Three words in that verse popped out at me: "Faith is substance." But I still did not see the truth that God wanted to show me through that verse: Faith IS substance.

I said, "Lord, you know I need substance. In fact, Lord, if you don't give me substance, I am sunk. I am done for." But God does not bow to our attempts to get His sympathy.

I said, "Lord, if you will give me that substance that I need, I promise you that I will never get into this mess again." But God does not bow to bargaining either.

I kept looking at those three little words, "Faith is substance." And I said, "Lord, if you will just give me that substance I will be all right. You know I have faith." Then He showed me that "Faith IS substance," and that I would have substance if I had faith. Faith IS (present tense)—not "was" or "will be." It is right now.

I looked at that and said, "Lord, do you mean that when faith really is faith it is substance?" I couldn't feel it, smell it, taste it, or understand it.

I said, "Lord, do you mean that my problem is not really a lack of substance but a lack of faith?" If faith IS substance, and if I did not have

substance, it was obvious that I did not have faith.

I finally said, "Lord, I don't even know what faith is." When you get honest God will talk with you. When I confessed my lack of faith, God began to show me how faith could become operative in my life.

SUGGESTIONS FOR THOUGHT AND DISCUSSION

1. After reading and studying the various statements about faith in the light of the Scriptures given, try to express in your own words a "definition" of faith that the Lord gives to you. Several in the class may wish to share their "definitions" and discuss them in the light of the Scriptures.

2. In our society today we often hear people talk about "having faith." Is it possible to have real faith apart from a personal relationship to Jesus Christ? Why?

3. What would you expect to see happening in the life for which the powerful working of God is the only explanation? What areas of your life are explainable by something other than the work of God? How would you like for this to be different? Are there areas of your life that are unexplainable? How did this come about?

4. Is there a need in your life? Has the need been met—do you have the "substance"? If not, why not? How do you think this can be changed?

Next Week:

In the next lesson we shall consider the three elements of true faith. This "three-dimensional" faith is the only kind of faith that IS substance. If your faith has been defective, you will be eager to move on and perhaps discover where the problem is.

LESSON TWO

Do you believe that God is able to do things that He is not doing for you? Perhaps your faith is defective because you have never seen

The Three - Fold Nature Of Faith

Scripture Background

Then they said unto him, What shall we do that we might work the works of God?

Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom He hath sent. (John 6:28,29)

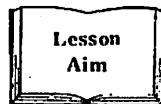
Then touched he their eyes, saying, According to your faith be it unto you. (Matthew 9:29)

Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them. (Mark 11:24)

And it came to pass, as he went to Jerusalem, that he passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee.

And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off: and they lifted up the voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.

And when he saw them, he said unto them, Go show yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed. (Luke 17:11-14)



To expose defective faith and to discover the kind of faith that moves a God of miracles into action to keep His word.

In John 6:28 the disciples asked Jesus the question, "What shall we do that we might work the works of God?" Certainly there is no greater blessing in this world than to work the works of God. When you enter heaven there is nothing greater that could be said about you than that you have worked the works of God. Jesus

Himself worked the works of God. He said on one occasion, "What I see my Father do I do." Jesus moved heaven into earth, and you and I are to move heaven into earth by our lives. This is one of the reasons we're left here.

If today you were to ask the question that the disciples asked, you would receive many different answers. Some would say that the works of God are to read your Bible and pray every day. Others would say that the works of God are to go to church and tithe and visit. But let's look at Jesus' answer to the question which we find in the next verse. "Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." The whole Christian life can be explained and described by one word—JESUS. Someone asked Watchman Nee, "What was God saying to the world?" He answered, "Jesus." Everything that can be said about faith or trusting God must be centered in Jesus. If we are to work the works of God, we must be totally occupied with believing on Him whom the Father has sent. If right now you were asked the question, "Are you believing in him whom the Father has sent?", what would you say? Let's examine your answer by asking the questions, "What is believing?" "What is real faith?" "What does it mean to believe on Him whom the Father has sent?"

PERSONAL TESTIMONY

In seeking to answer these questions I would like to share with you a part of my personal testimony. On one occasion in my life, which we referred to briefly in last week's lesson, God placed me in a situation in which I

discovered some things about faith that I had never known before. At that time I had fallen into a pattern of justifying failure in my ministry. For example, I would come home from a week of meetings and my wife would say, "What kind of meeting did you have?" I would say, "Praise God, we had a great one." When she would ask more detailed questions, I hesitantly told her about the meetings. They weren't really so great at all. But I would quickly explain that things would have been much better if only the church had prepared better, or if one of the deacons hadn't been full of the devil, or if two ladies in the church hadn't been so involved in gossip and slander. I would justify and excuse my failure by blaming someone else.

At that time God was merciful enough to throw me into a dilemma in which I had to face the NOW. Most of us relegate the blessings of now to a tomorrow that never comes. We live either in the future or in the past. Because I was rationalizing my way out of the failure that I experienced in every meeting, God gave me a problem that would bring me to the now. The Lord allowed the devil to bring a problem to me, but it was the Lord who was leading every step of the way through the problem. God knew that I had to face the now, because it is only when we start living in the now that God is now to us personally. He doesn't work as He can and as He desires to in our lives because we are not living in the now.

God gave me a problem that involved material needs. After we had obeyed God in making a move that He had told us to make, we found ourselves in a situation in which we had to come up with \$9,500 in two weeks. I prayed and said, "Oh God, if you'll just give me \$9,500, I promise that I won't ever bother you again." I wanted a once-for-all experience in which God would meet my needs in a spectacular way. But I learned that God would rather give it out piece by piece so that we will learn to trust Him day by day. He is not particularly interested in giving us a one-time

spectacular experience that we can spend the rest of our lives looking back on and talking about.

God didn't "give" me the \$9,500; instead he laid it on someone's heart to loan me the money. Then He engineered a further series of circumstances (He even allowed my only car to burn up in a rainstorm!) which resulted in a need for \$30,000—immediately! There came a reckoning day when I had to come up with something—and that something was substance. In talking with my wife about my meetings I could blame failure on the church or a deacon or two ladies in the church. But it was a different story when a note was due and I had to face the bankers. I knew that they weren't about to accept my excuses as a substitute for payment. I cried out to God and asked Him what was wrong with me. He told me that I'd done everything He asked me to but trust Him. I argued and tried to tell Him that I had faith. But He made it clear to me that I didn't even know what faith was all about, because "faith IS substance," and I had no substance.

When I got honest with God and confessed my failure, He began to show me some things about faith that I'd never seen before. I saw that faith had three elements: INTELLECTUAL, EMOTIONAL, AND VOLITIONAL.

FAITH IS INTELLECTUAL

It wasn't hard to see that I had intellectual faith. Intellectual faith believes that God is, that God can do anything, and that God is a rewarder of those that diligently seek Him. I had that kind of faith; I believed that God could do anything. You probably have that kind of faith too.

The Bible says, "according to thy faith be it unto you," or in a freer translation, "according to thy faith God is working." (Matthew 9:29) Isn't it true that you believe that God can do a lot of things that He is not doing for you right now? If faith is just believing that God can do something,

then God should be doing everything you believe that He can do. And I'm sure you know that He isn't. If you do believe that God can do some things for you that He is not doing, it is an indication that your faith is incomplete.

In my critical situation I not only believed that God could solve my problems, but in searching the Scriptures I discovered that He wanted to solve them. And I realized that he had already made provision so that they could be solved. In fact, from His point of view they had already been solved. I had intellectual faith, but God was obviously not working in meeting my needs. This intellectual element of faith is necessary. You've got to believe that God is, and that God can do anything. But that is only a part of real faith. Even the devil has that kind of faith; he and his demons believe that God can do anything.

FAITH IS EMOTIONAL

Not only did I believe that God could meet my need, I desperately wanted him to. I wished. I hoped. I anticipated. I planned. I prayed. I fasted. I begged. I was so intense in my desire that I said, "God, if you don't solve my problem, you're going to lose a good evangelist. If you'll just do something, I'll never get in this predicament again." At that point I didn't have enough sense to know that God had arranged the predicament. I tried to bargain with God, and I tried to play on His sympathy—but God doesn't respond to either of those approaches. He doesn't make bargains with us; He knows us too well. And he doesn't bow to our appeals for sympathy.

I believed that God could, and I wanted Him to so badly that I could hardly stand it. You can wish, hope, want, desire, and anticipate but not have "substance". This is about as far as most of us get in our faith life. We get to those first two areas where we know He can, and we want Him to, so

we give mental assent and pray and sometimes even fast. Then we wish and hope, and very seldom does anything happen. This is emotional faith, and emotional faith does not move God into action.

I told God that if He would just solve my problem, I'd never doubt Him again. I was trying to get Him to meet my need so that I could then believe. But anyone can believe after he receives; that is not faith.

FAITH IS VOLITIONAL

I finally saw that faith has a third element, the volitional. God has given to each of us a will, and the will has the ability to make a choice. The will can accept or reject a given situation. And your whole human body responds to that act of the will. When your will acts, your whole body re-acts. For example, if you should choose to sit on a pew in your church, your body responds to that choice. The pew will not hold you up so long as you only believe that it can or desire that it should. It holds you up only after you make a choice to which your whole body responds by placing its weight upon the pew. You had to make a choice that put you at the disposal of the pew before it could do for you what it was designed to do.

I began to realize that in order for God to do something I had to act on His revealed truth. Faith is acting on the Word of God. The Lord revealed to me that I not only must believe that He can meet a need and want Him to do so, but when I can't see it, feel it, smell it, taste it, hear it, or understand it, I have got to step out on His Word and act like a thing is so when it is not so in order for it to be so. According to the Word of God my needs were supplied. That meant that in my situation I had to act like I had \$30,000 when I didn't have \$30,000 in order to have \$30,000. I said, "Lord I don't understand it." He said, "That's none of your business." I said, "How are you going to do it?" He said, "That's not your business either." I

said, "Lord, what if I fail?" He said, "Who said you are a success?" I was already a failure, and I knew it. I knew that sink or swim, live or die, I was going to have to trust God.

God had promised to supply my needs, I found that promise in my Bible (Phillipians 4:19) and over it wrote the words: "God HAS solved my problem." I found a preacher friend who knew my problem and told him, "God has and is solving my problem right now." He said "How?" I said, "Don't confuse me." That was not my business; my business was to trust. How did I feel? Like a fool. What did I think? I'd be afraid to say. My thinker and my feelings went all out of whack. But I do know that two hours later the problem was solved.

I saw that faith is intellectual, emotional, and volitional. Faith not only believes that God can and wants Him to, but when God gives His word, on the basis of that word faith acts as though a thing is so when it is not so in order for it to be so. BELIEVING is ACTING on the revealed truth of God. Mark 11:24 says, "Therefore I say unto you, what things soever you desire when ye pray, believe (act) that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." If you've been praying for God to do something, when are you going to believe that your prayers are answered? You may be saying in your mind, "I'll believe they're answered when I see the answer." Anyone can believe then; that's not faith. You must believe when you don't see the answer so that you can see the answer. You must act on the living word of God as though it's absolutely so in reality even when it's not so. It's that act that puts you completely in the arms of Jesus and acknowledges Jesus as Lord. And He's not Lord even though you say He is unless you are actively trusting Him.

You believed on Jesus Christ when you got saved; there was a total commitment based on your knowledge of Christ. You put yourself in His arms. And when you acted, He performed in you what the Word of

God said He would do. He converted the truth into reality in your life. But most of us after we were saved began to learn a few things and became self-confident and got up out of His arms—not in the sense that we became lost but in the sense that we began running our own lives. And many of us have trusted the Lord only when we got in trouble and had to. That's not the way that God intends for us to live the Christian life. Only when you are so stepping out on His revealed truth that He has to perform a miracle to keep His word and keep you from being a fool are you actively resting in His arms and is He actively ruling as Lord of your life. Are you so acting on His promises right now that God has got to perform a miracle for you to keep His word and keep you from being an utter fool? What are you believing God for right now? Whatever you are believing Him for He is doing.

When the ten lepers came to Jesus and asked for healing, He gave them what may on the surface seem to be a strange answer. He said, "Go show yourselves to the priests;" (Luke 17:14). Lepers who had been healed were required to go before the priests for inspection before they could return to their normal lives. When Jesus spoke these words to the lepers, they had not yet been healed. They obviously believed that Jesus could heal them or they would not have come to Him (intellectual faith). And certainly they wanted to be healed (emotional faith). But the Bible says that they were healed "AS THEY WENT" to the priests. They were healed only when at the word of Jesus they acted as though they had been healed (volitional faith). It didn't look or feel or smell like they were healed. But when they acted like it was so it became so! Only when the will moved them to obedient and believing action did God move into action and grant their request.

What are you believing God for right now? Are you acting on His word to the extent that He has got to perform

a miracle to keep His word? When on the basis of God's word you act like a thing is so even when it isn't so, God will move all the power of Heaven into action to make it so. That's what faith is all about. And that is what it means to "work the works of God."

**SUGGESTIONS FOR THOUGHT
AND DISCUSSION**

1. Can you think of failures in your life that you have been justifying or rationalizing? Perhaps you would feel free to share some of these with the group.

2. Are you facing crises in your life in which you desperately need for God to do a work (these may or may not be material crises)? Do you believe

that He can meet your need? Do you want Him to? Why, then, do you think your needs are not met?

3. As you think of your particular need, has God given you a promise that He will meet that need? Have you acted on that promise? How can you right now step out on a limb in response to God's promise and act like your need is met? You may want to share this with the group.

Next Week:

Did you know that a Christian lives in two worlds at the same time—the sense world and the spirit world? One of the greatest hindrances to faith is the fact that most of us focus our attention on the wrong world. Next week we will see which world is the real world.

LESSON THREE

If you are defeated in your Christian life, and if everything you can see and understand says the situation is hopeless, you need to find a new answer to the critical question

What Is Truth

SCRIPTURE BACKGROUND

There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews:

The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest except God be with him.

Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?

Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. (John 3:1-7)

Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world. (1 John 4:4)

Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. (Romans 6:6)



To affirm that truth is based upon the revealed Word of God, not what

we perceive with our senses or understand with our reason; to challenge to action based on God's word.

When Nicodemus came to Jesus and asked Him how to get to heaven, Jesus gave him a most unusual answer. In fact, Jesus introduced a new world to this very religious man. He informed Nicodemus that there are two worlds. There is a physical world that you have been born into by the flesh. There is also a spiritual world, and you are born into that world by the spirit. Jesus did not try to explain these two worlds; He only proclaimed that they exist. In fact what Jesus had to say to Nicodemus makes it clear that the mind cannot comprehend the spirit world. It is beyond our human understanding, but that does not make it any less real.

SENSE WORLD AND SPIRIT WORLD

We are familiar with the sense world. Most of us are able to feel, smell, see, taste, and hear. All of us have the use of at least some of these senses. And it is through these senses that we perceive the sense world. When you were born, you were born by the flesh into a sense world. Ever since then your faculties have been educated to live in a sense world. People sometimes wonder why a little child can believe Christ, take God at

His word, and move in the realm of the supernatural more easily than an adult. It is because they have not become as thoroughly oriented to the sense world. Mel Tari, the author of **LIKE A MIGHTY WIND**, a book telling of the Indonesian revival, said that the problem with the people in America is that we have too much "sense." He said that we ought to put our brains on one of these rockets and send them to the moon so that then we might be in a position to believe God. On the surface that may sound like a trite statement, but it is true that your "sense" life, which includes your reasoning ability, is the number one factor in denying God the privilege of being God in this world. Of course He is God regardless of whether or not we acknowledge Him as God. But He has chosen to use man as an instrument through which He demonstrates His authority and power. And often our reason, which is so completely oriented to the sense world, hinders God from doing what He wants to do in our lives.

When a man is born again his spirit comes alive to God. Until that time although his spirit is alive, it is dead to God. With the new birth his life takes on a whole new dimension. With his spiritual eyes he is able to perceive truth that he could never know of through his physical senses or his reason. This is what Paul had in mind when he spoke of walking by faith rather than by sight (II Corinthians 5:7). He also said that we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen (II Corinthians 4:18). For Paul the real world was not the world that he could see with his physical eyes but that world which God revealed to him through his spiritual eyes. And if we are to experience victory in our Christian lives, we cannot allow our involvement in the sense world or physical world to blind us to the more important realities of the spirit world.

When we speak of the spirit world we think first of the three persons of the Godhead—God the Father, God the

Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Other beings in the spirit world are the archangels (Gabriel, Michael, and Lucifer), the seraphim, the cherubim, and the angels. Lucifer, who was cast out of heaven after leading a revolt against God, now continues to oppose the purposes of God upon the earth. And in his opposition against God he controls legions of supernatural beings whose purpose it is to carry out his will. So, in one sense of the word, we might say that there is a good spirit world and a bad spirit world.

THE BIBLE AND THE TWO WORLDS

An understanding of the sense world—spirit world concept is of utmost importance in describing how God uses the Bible in making His truth real to us. The Bible is a spirit world book in a sense world language. The sense world language communicates spiritual truth, but that truth becomes real and vital in our experience only as the Holy Spirit makes it alive to us. And when the Holy Spirit makes the truth of God real to us through the words of Scripture, those words can be trusted and acted upon just as if God had spoken them audibly out of heaven. God by the Spirit can speak to me out of the Bible just as definitely as He spoke to Moses from the burning bush. Have you ever wished that you lived in the days of Joshua or Elijah or some of the other prophets so that you could actually hear the voice of God giving clear guidance? Although that might have been a thrilling experience, through the Scriptures God can speak to us just as definitely as He spoke to any of them. But if the Bible is to come alive to us, it will not be because of our ability to understand or comprehend it; it will be because the Holy Spirit takes the truths of Scripture and makes them real to our hearts. The Bible is not to be mentally comprehended; it is to be divinely revealed.

This principle is illustrated in the exchange between Jesus and Peter recorded in Matthew 16:15-17. After Peter had made his now famous confession concerning Jesus ("Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.") Jesus said to him, "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." Peter did not make his statement on the basis of human understanding; it was given to him by Divine revelation. How does this relate to the Christian as he lives in the sense world and the spirit world at the same time? Here is a principle that is foundational in the life of victory: You must come to the absolute conviction that the Word of God when made alive and personal by Divine revelation is truth regardless of what the sense world might say.

HOW TO DETERMINE TRUTH

Let me illustrate this from my own experience. At one point in my life I was confronted with the fact that I was dying. Three different terminal illnesses plagued my body. There was absolutely no reason for me to believe that there was any possibility that I would live. Then one night I slipped out of my bed about 1:30 in the morning, and I said, "God, do you have anything in this world to say to me?" At that time I was reading the Bible, and out of the pages of Scripture God said to me, "Thou shalt see thy children's children." I said, "Thank you, Lord." That was an encouraging word because at that time my oldest child was seventeen, and her main interest was horses. When I received that word I weighed 219; only a few months later my weight had dropped to 144. The muscles of my body were so collapsed that I could not walk across the floor. I couldn't even sit up in the bed, and I was unable to swallow anything. Many of the involuntary muscles of my body had ceased to function. The doctors thought that it was all over.

The sense world said that I was dying. I felt like I was dying. I could see that I was dying. Every major organ in my body was completely out of whack. Again and again the sense world said, "You're dying. You're dying." And each time I was confronted with a choice. All the doctors who were caring for me, with the exception of one, said that I'd never make it. Everything said that I was dying. The only dissenting opinions came from my wife, one doctor who wasn't even saved, and God. Several months before God had said, "You'll see your children's children." What was I to do? I said, "Lord, regardless of what I can understand, feel, or see, your word is truth, and I believe it." If you are to experience victory in your Christian life, you must make a decision as to what is truth. Until you reach the point at which you believe that the revealed word of God is true regardless of what your reason and your senses tell you, you cannot live the life of victory.

This is what faith is all about. Faith is an act of man on the revealed truth of God that converts the doctrines of the Scripture into reality in his life. This principle holds true in the case of the lost man who comes to Christ for salvation. When God has spoken to him, he knows that he is a sinner and is on the road to hell. He also realizes that nearly 2000 years ago Jesus became his substitute and took his sins upon Himself and fully paid the penalty for his sin. All he has to do as a lost sinner is to act upon that truth. In many instances he will express amazement that this could be true. It just doesn't make sense. He cannot begin to understand how He can be forgiven simply by an act of his will in which he invites Jesus Christ to come in and control his life. But this is exactly what this man is being called upon to do. He is to forsake everything he sees, smells, tastes, feels, and hears and everything that he can reason. You ask him to make a decision on the basis of truths that are not reasonable and are certainly not

understandable to the natural mind. He is to accept the truth of God regardless of what his reason or senses tell him and by an act of faith to convert that truth into reality.

TRUTH AND THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

This same principle must also become operative in the life of the Christian if he is to experience victory. For example, in I John 4:4 we read: "Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world." But so many Christians are anything but what this verse pictures. Much of the time they are inconsistent and defeated—constantly up and down. They are grateful that they are headed to heaven, and they are delighted that Jesus is real to them, but their Christian life involves trying and striving and struggling and doing the best that they can. And they live in almost continual frustration because they are constantly failing in their struggle. They long to have victory, but only occasionally do they experience it. Does this by any chance describe your experience?

What does truth say? The Word of God says that you have already overcome. You say, "What do you mean I'm an overcomer? If I were an overcomer, my life wouldn't be like it is! I need victory!" But the Lord says that you are an overcomer. And you say that your experience proves that you are not an overcomer. What is truth—your experience or the revealed truth of God? You may be saying, "How can you tell me that I'm an overcomer when I know good and well that I'm not an overcomer?" That is exactly why you are not an overcomer in your experience. You have chosen not to believe the truth of God's Word. You have never really answered the question, "What is truth?" When you are willing to take a stand upon the truth of God's word and believe that you are an overcomer because God

says so, you will be an overcomer in your daily experience. You do not have to work for it. You do not have to try. It's already yours now just as salvation was already yours when you reached out and received it by faith.

When you decide that the Word of God is truth regardless of your sense world experience, God will convert that truth into reality. And at that instant you will be an overcomer in your experience.

VICTORY OVER SIN

Let's look at one other illustration of this principle. Romans 6:6 says: "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." Many Christians find that in their daily lives they are at least in some measure slaves to sin. They may at one time or another have had some very deep experiences with God. Some of these Christians may have even discovered in their experience what it means to be filled with the Holy Spirit. For a period of time these Christians may experience a measure of victory. Perhaps in a meeting they rededicate their lives and go home determined as never before that they are going to live a Christian life. This commitment may last for a few days, but soon they find themselves back in a place of utter defeat, desperately hanging on until the next meeting when they will once again rededicate their lives. And they keep on and on, trying somehow to make out until Jesus comes—all the while praying, "Even so come, Lord Jesus. I'm in a mess and the world is in bad shape." Some will try to escape this dilemma by saying, "Oh well, no one is perfect, and all God asks is that we do the best we can." This is the devil's own lie.

But the Bible tells us that our old man, which gives the devil the ability to move in and out of our lives to defeat us and drag us down, is "crucified." The Bible says that our old man is already dead. And Satan cannot have access into our lives to

defeat us and lead us into sin unless he can so deceive us that we will deny the truth of God and refuse to believe that the old man is dead. When we choose to stand by faith upon the truth of God regardless of what our sense world faculties tell us, we are new men in our daily experience. The old man is not eradicated; but by faith he is held in the position of death. And when the old man is in the position of death, Satan is rendered powerless to enter the life and bring sin and defeat. Only as he is able to deceive me and cause me to believe my senses rather than the truth of God is he able to enter and do his work:

The Bible tells you that the old man is dead. Your experience says that he is not dead. Which are you going to believe and act upon? You may say, "But when is he dead experientially?" When you believe that he is. He is put in the position of death and is held there until you begin to doubt the truth and cease to reckon it so. When you cease to reckon it so, he becomes alive again in your experience. Why? Because you are not actively trusting. There is only one permanent experience in the Christian life, and that is redemption. The rest of it is conditional, and the condition is a constant and active faith. What is truth as far as you are concerned—what God reveals to you through His Word, or what you perceive with your senses? It is my desire for those who study these lessons that God will bring you to the place where He will have to perform a miracle for you personally to convert the truth of the Bible into

reality in your life. Then you yourself will have experienced Jesus Christ coming out of heaven and making the truth of the Word reality in your life.

SUGGESTIONS FOR THOUGHT AND DISCUSSION

1. Can you think of instances in your life when your preoccupation with the sense world has blinded you to the truths of God's word? Do you think Mel Tari was right in saying that Americans have too much "sense"?

2. Do you recall times when a familiar passage of Scripture suddenly came alive to you? Do you know of brilliant people who simply cannot understand what the Bible is all about? How do you account for these phenomena? What does this say about our dependence upon the Holy Spirit both in our study and our witnessing?

3. Can you think of a truth that God has clearly spoken to you through His word? With your senses and your reason can you perceive things that tell you that what God said to you is impossible? What is the truth in your specific set of circumstances? What do you by your action profess to be true?

Next Week:

Perhaps the question that Christians ask more than any other is, "How can I know the will of God?" Next week we will look at some important truths that may help you to answer that question in your own life.

LESSON FOUR

Before we can step out in faith we must know what God want us to do. Now we turn to that all important issue

How To Know The Will Of God

Scripture Background

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

For by it the elders obtained a good report.

These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

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

Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called:

Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure.

By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment.

By faith he (Moses) forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king, for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible. (Hebrews 11:1,2,13,17-19, 23,27)



To show that it is possible for a Christian through the Word of God to look into heaven and see the will of God and then by faith to move the will of God into earth.

One of the most important questions that a Christian will ever face is the question, "How can I know the will of

God?" How do we know when God is speaking to us? Some of us feel that if only we knew the will of God, we could believe Him for absolutely anything necessary to carry out His will. A knowledge of the will of God is of utmost importance in the life of the believer because the key to actively believing God is knowing the will of God. Someone has said that faith is a leap into the dark. I do not believe that. I believe that the Bible teaches that faith is a leap into the light. God never calls on you to jump without His promise or without a word from Him. And when you have that word, you can stand on it. God does call on you to act without understanding, and when you do act, you understand. But the acting always precedes the understanding. So if all I need is a word from God, how do I get that word?

RECEIVING DIVINE REVELATION

In Hebrews 11:2 we read: "For by it (faith) the elders obtained a good report." For some time this verse disturbed me; I felt that there must be more to it than I was seeing. I asked the Lord to show me all that that verse had to say to me. And the results amazed me. Most of my life that verse meant to me that the great men of God mentioned in Hebrews 11 were by faith given a good report by God. I thought that they had received a "good grade" from God because they were men who lived by faith, but this verse reveals a much more significant truth. The original Greek text indicates that there is a two-fold experience involved: a testimony or a witness is given and a report is received. In order to understand what

it means to be given a good report we must first see what it means to receive understanding by divine revelation through the eyes of the heart. We must be aware of the fact that we can see the truth and hear the truth with something beyond these physical eyes. In studying this week's lesson it will be important for us to keep in mind what we studied last week regarding the sense world and the spirit world. If you have not studied the preceding lesson, you will want to do so before going further in this lesson. The fact that there is another world beyond that which the senses can perceive or the reason can understand is one of the most important truths in the Christian life.

What is the greatest thing that happens to you when you are saved? It is not the fact that you are going to miss hell and go to heaven; it is that you have a capacity to know God! You don't take on the capacity to understand Him, but you can know Him in the most intimate and personal sense of the word. Many of today's young people are on drugs because they want to "take a trip;" they want to escape the reality of this world and find some other kind of existence that will be satisfying to them. They just don't understand that people who have been truly born again have been taking trips for years. Ever since you got saved you have had the capacity to know God, and there is no greater privilege in this world. When you are born again by the Spirit of God you have the ability to live in two worlds at the same time. The Bible tells us that we are seated in heavenly places (Ephesians 2:6) even though we are conscious of the fact that we are here on this earth. And when you by faith take God at His word and believe that you are seated in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, you will be able to hear some things and see some things that only God can reveal to you.

This is what happens when a familiar passage of Scripture suddenly becomes alive to us. This is what Paul was talking about when he said that he looked at the things which were not

seen rather than at the things which were seen. This is why Job could say, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee." (Job 42:5) After all that he had been through he was finally able to see God with his spiritual eyes. Elisha's servant woke up early one morning and saw a great army encamped around the city. When with great fear he reported the news to his master, Elisha said, "Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them." (II Kings 6:16) He then prayed that the Lord would open the eyes of the servant. When the servant looked again he saw the whole place filled with horses and chariots of fire. The first time he looked, he saw with his physical eyes; the second time God revealed to him through his spiritual eyes another world. And indeed the armies of God were greater than the armies of the Syrians which he had seen with his physical eyes. When John on the Isle of Patmos was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, he saw something. In fact he saw so much that theologians are still trying to figure it out!

We could point to other passages which would confirm the believer's privilege of seeing things which are beyond the physical world, but these that we have mentioned will suffice. My prayer for you is that which Paul prayed for the Ephesians: that you might have knowledge . . . and that it might be revealed to your spiritual eyes that they might be opened.

Not only do we have the capacity to see and hear spiritually if we are genuinely born again, but there are things to be seen and heard, and they are all told about in the Bible. They are to be spiritually revealed and made applicable to you personally by the Holy Spirit. God speaks to you by the Holy Spirit through the Word.

MOVING HEAVEN INTO EARTH

One of the greatest examples that there are some things to be "seen" which are not seen and to be "heard"

which are not heard is in the familiar prayer: "Hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done in earth as it is (being done) in heaven." (Matthew 6:10) Does this mean that something is going on in Heaven that God wants to do in earth? Yes, there is. The will of God that is being carried out in heaven is to be moved into earth. Jesus tells us to pray that what's going on up there might start going on down here. There is something up there to be seen and heard—the will of God about every given situation. God's perfect will is already determined, and he has made provision for it to be carried out. He is waiting for someone to believe and obey so that He can transfer it out of Heaven into earth. Our business is to be the instrument by which it is transferred. And this is where we have failed.

Matthew 16:19 in the King James reads: "And I will give unto thee the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." But the original text reveals a very significant difference. The verse should be translated something like this: "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven and whatever you bind on earth must have already been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth must have already been loosed in heaven." Jesus says when you see things on earth that are unlawful, ungodly, and contrary to the will of God, look into heaven and see what heaven says about it. If it is already bound in heaven, then you bind it here. And be sure that what you allow on earth has already been permitted in heaven. One reason that we so often get ourselves into the messes that we do is that fact that our approach is all wrong. We come up with a plan and ask God to bless it. We ought to look into heaven to see what His plan is and then transfer it out of heaven into earth. We are to look into heaven and see what is bound in heaven and then bind it on earth. We are to look into heaven and

see what is loosed in heaven and then loose it on earth. In other words, our job is to move heaven into earth. Do you know how to be a successful Christian? FIND OUT WHAT GOD IS DOING IN HEAVEN, AND JOIN HIM. That is what being a Christian is all about. Jesus was God, but even He checked in with heaven because His purpose was to do the will of His father. We get so busy doing things for God, but that is not God's way. The world is not impressed with what you are doing for God; the world is impressed with what God is doing for you. The whole matter of doing the will of God begins when the child of God sees what the will of God is as it is being done in heaven and then responds in faith and obedience to bring it down to earth. The moment that you can know what God's mind is, you have no trouble with faith.

MEN WHO GOT A REPORT

Let's see how this principle has been carried out in the lives of men of faith in days gone by. Elijah saw the desperate situation in Israel and did not know what to do. He checked into heaven, and God showed him a plan. God had planned three and a half years of drought for the land. Elijah believed God and announced to the people what God was going to do. And it happened just as Elijah said. But the plan did not originate with Elijah. He did not get off under a bush somewhere and say, "Now, God, I have got a plan that will shake this bunch of devils up, and we will have a revival if you will just send them a drought for three and a half years." He was in such a state of desperation that he got with God and while he was still in earth, the spirit of God showed him the plan of God in heaven. He saw it; he believed it; he embraced it; he confessed it. What you confess, God performs.

The men of faith who "obtained a good report" were not men who were free from problems. But in their troubles they went out and worshiped

God. In that experience of worship they sought the will, plan, purpose and provision of God. And when they saw it, they were persuaded of it. They embraced it. They confessed it. And God performed it.

When the Bible says that these men got a report, it means that they saw something. Look at Hebrews 11:13: "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off . . ." These men saw something. Through a revelation from God, they saw the will of God in heaven. An when they saw it, they were persuaded of it, and they embraced it. They acted on it and counted it so. They confessed it; and what we confess, God brings to pass. Once you have "seen" something you can believe it. "Natural" faith is based on sight. If you walked into a church building and you were blind, you would not see the pews and know that they could hold you up. But the moment that you could see them, you would know that they could hold you. Your faith in the pews would be based on your sight. When you "see" something in the spiritual realm, you can believe that it is so and act as though it is so. Spiritual faith is based on spiritual sight. Jesus knew that Lazarus would be raised from the dead. He had already seen him alive on the basis of revelation. John is not worried about me getting to heaven. When he looked in up there that day on the Isle of Patmos, he saw me. He knows I am on the way. That is one reason God gave us the book of Revelation. He wanted to let us know how it all ends so that we can be confident and praise Him in the meantime.

ABRAHAM'S REPORT

For a beautiful example of what it means to get a report, let's look at the account of Abraham beginning in Hebrews 11:17. Abraham had a tremendous problem. After twenty years of waiting and believing God for

a son (he was around a hundred years old), God told Abraham to sacrifice that son. It seemed that God was contradicting Himself. According to all the evidence at the disposal of human reason, God was going against His promise to Abraham. But there is never a contradiction in God; it only seems to us that there is because sometimes we cannot see the end.

God allowed Abraham to see the end. And we are told that Abraham offered up his son "accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure." (Hebrews 11:19). When Abraham was tested he went to God. He was desperate. He had to have a word from heaven, and when he worshiped God, God showed him something. Abraham saw the will of God; he saw his son in a figure. In fact, he saw even more than that. In John 8:56 Jesus made an amazing statement. He said that Abraham "rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad." Do you see the implications of what Jesus said? When Abraham was called upon to sacrifice Isaac, he turned to God in worship. And when he did, he saw the incarnation of Jesus Christ thousands of years before Jesus came into the world. And when he saw Jesus, he knew that his son had to live because it was through his seed that Jesus would come into the world! He knew that God could raise up his son—even from the ashes after he had been offered as a sacrifice. He was so confident that when he and Isaac headed to the place of sacrifice, he said to the servants, "WE shall return."

Where did he get that kind of faith? He had gotten the report! He was not worried about a ram because he had seen the Lamb. We worry about the ram. How is God going to do it? Do you realize that God had a ram headed up the other side? Abraham was acting on the basis of the report that he had received by revelation from God. That is where he got his faith.

THE REPORT ABOUT MOSES

The same principle can be illustrated from the life of Moses. We read that "by faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment." (Hebrews 11:23) In spite of the king's determination to kill all of the babies Moses' age, his parents were not afraid because they had seen something. They saw that he was a "proper" child. Whatever may be the exact meaning of that word, it is clear that God showed them who Moses was. And they believed what God showed them to the extent that they were not afraid of the king. They had gotten the report.

When Moses' parents saw something, they were persuaded of it, they embraced it, they confessed it, they acted upon it, and God performed a miracle in order to bring the will of God, which is being done in heaven, down to earth! Moses' mother's faith was so great that she fixed a little basket, put it down in that snake and crocodile infested river, and they could not touch him. Then God made an Egyptian love a Jew. He made the devil's daughter love that baby and then caused her to hire the baby's own mother as the baby-sitter. God made the devil pay the diaper bill, the milk bill, and the grocery bill; and he even paid for Moses' education. And Moses went through the university of hell and still came out glorifying God. And it all began when his parents saw something. And then Moses himself saw something. He "by faith" forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as **SEEING HIM WHO IS INVISIBLE.**" (Hebrews 11:27) This was the secret of all that God did through Moses.

Study the other examples in Hebrews 11, and you will see the same principle in operation. Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. These men of God heard and

believed. They saw . . . , they were persuaded . . . , they embraced the promises . . . , and then they confessed. And as Jesus Himself indicated, "Whosoever shall say . . . shall have whatsoever he saith." (Mark 11:23) This is the kind of faith that will change the world.

SUGGESTIONS FOR THOUGHT AND DISCUSSION

1. Can you remember times in your life when you came to God in a spirit of worship and obedience and He revealed something to you through His Word? Perhaps you could share this with the group. Is God continuing to make His will clear to you? If not, where do you think the problem is?

2. What part do the Scriptures play in your coming to a knowledge of God's will? Can you expect God to make His will known to you if you neglect the Bible? What does it mean to you personally that as a Christian you have the capacity to know God?

3. Have you been exerting a great deal of effort in trying to do something for God? In relationship to your own life think about the statement: "Find out what God is doing and join Him."

4. Can you think of examples that confirm the truth: "The world is not impressed with what you are doing for God; it is impressed with what God is doing for you." What miracles are you trusting God to perform right now in order that He might fulfill a promise that He has made to you through His word? Perhaps you can share this with the group.

Next Week:

Sometimes our faith doesn't work because our actions contradict what we say we are believing God for. Next week we will think about the necessity of actions that correspond with our faith.

LESSON FIVE

Much that goes by the name of faith is not really faith at all. And part of the problem results from the fact that there has not been a clear understanding of the relationship between

Faith And Action

Scripture Background

But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. (James 1:22)

What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith save him?

Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. (James 2:14, 17)

Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock:

And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon the house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock.

And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand:

And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it. (Matthew 7:24-27)



To expose the inadequacy of a faith which does not produce corresponding actions and to point the way toward a faith that acts.

In Matthew 8:13 Jesus said to the centurion, "Go thy way; as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee." In other words, he was saying, "I will work according to your faith." And we know that the centurion had real faith because we are told that "his servant was healed the selfsame hour." In Matthew 9 we find the story of the

woman with the issue of blood who touched the hem of Jesus' garment. When Jesus turned to her, He said, "Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole." And the woman was made whole from that hour. (Matthew 9:22) And in the same chapter Jesus in responding to the two blind men who asked Him to heal them, touched their eyes and said, "According to your faith be it unto you." (Matthew 9:29)

Faith is the key that moves God out of heaven into earth. It is the only principle by which God works. God does not respond to an appeal for sympathy. He is full of compassion but not sympathy. Sympathy is the soulish element of man. God will not bow because you are in trouble and need sympathy. God moves into action only in response to faith. Every time you see God move out of heaven into earth, it is because He has found someone that believed.

As we have already seen, the nature of faith is three-fold: intellectual, emotional, and volitional. The volitional act of faith (acting as a thing is so, when it is not so, in order for it to be so) places you at the disposal of Jesus Christ. Only when you are at His disposal are you allowing Him to be the Lord and Master of your life. This is why it is absolutely necessary that faith be a day by day action. All that we may understand or profess about faith will accomplish nothing until that faith becomes so genuine as to move us into action.

DEFECTIVE FAITH

On one occasion a woman told me that she had great faith; in fact, she

said that she just had all the faith in the world. We talked for a few minutes, and before she left she said, "Please pray for my son that he might be saved." Her desire was certainly a legitimate one, but it was obvious that she did not have all the faith in the world. If she had been a person of great faith, she would not have been asking me to pray for her son. She would have been asking me to pray for her that she would not doubt until he got saved. Her actions were not consistent with the faith that she claimed to have.

Faith is that act on your part that places you at God's disposal. The works that result from being at God's disposal will be there naturally and spontaneously because they are energized by the Holy Spirit. You will have to backslide to keep from doing them.

When you see this principle of the working of faith, you will realize that every sin that you have in your life is the result of unbelief. You sin because you have removed yourself from the position of trusting Christ, and therefore He cannot fill you. You then cannot work the works of God because you are not at His disposal. The only person who is pleasing to God and through whom God can work is the person who by faith is standing on the Word of God. Find a promise; then act on that promise, and you will see God work. You cannot always find a promise, but the Holy Spirit will give you such a witness that you will know beyond any shadow of a doubt what God is saying to you. Until you are actively stepping out on the revealed truth of God, you are not a pleasure to God.

The Word of God says that signs shall follow them that believe. Are there signs and wonders following you? Faith is not what God is going to do, or what He has done, but it is what He is doing! What are you personally believing God for right now? You may say for food, or clothing, or shelter. But that is not the kind of faith I am talking about. Some of the biggest devils in town have these things; in

fact, some of them have these things in more abundance than you do. That is simply a matter of the mercy of God.

The point that I am trying to make is this: Faith is so acting on the revealed Word of God that God has to perform a miracle to keep it. When people around you see miracles of God, then they are going to say that there is only one explanation for your life, and that is God. Then you will have a testimony. Until then you might as well keep your mouth shut. You are like the woman who said, "I have all the faith in the world; pray for my children."

FAITH THAT WORKS

Let me illustrate by sharing with you an incident that occurred some time ago. I was in Jackson, Mississippi, and a lawyer's wife came to me and said, "A long time friend of mine is in this town, and I am deeply burdened for her salvation. I have been calling her everyday, and the maid says that she is not in, but I know she is. She won't even talk to me on the phone, and I want her to be saved so badly that I cannot stand it. She and her husband owned a big casino in Las Vegas. I prayed for her and God burned that thing down and brought her back here to Jackson. Her husband is a big gambler and is involved in politics. What do you think I ought to do?"

I said, "I'm going to tell you two things. First, you ought to go home and make sure you are right with God. When you know that there is nothing between your life and God, you come back to see me." When she came in the next morning, her eyes were swollen, and I could tell that she had been weeping. She came to me after the service and said, "Preacher, as far as I know there is nothing between my soul and the Saviour. What is next?"

I put out my hand and said, "Sister, the Bible says where two agree touching anything, God will do it. Will you agree with me that God is saying

her soul right now?" She pulled back and said, "Right now? I can't even get her to church." I said, "That's not your business; your business is to believe God." She said, "How is God going to do it?" "That's not your business either; your business is to believe God. Will you agree with me that God is saving her now?"

She could not understand it. I said, "Lady, HOW God saves that woman is not your business. WHEN He saves her is not your business. Once you come to the place of faith, you enjoy it just like it is already done. But until you believe it, God cannot do it." She shook my hand, and her attitude was much like that of the man who said, "I believe, Lord; help thou mine unbelief." That was Thursday morning. On Thursday night and Friday night there was no sign of the gambler's wife. I sought to encourage the lawyer's wife by saying, "It is happening right now." I don't know how she felt, but she said, "Yes sir, Yes sir."

Saturday morning I thought about that lady. I said, "Lord, you know that woman needs to get saved, and I know the principle of trusting Jesus. I am not about to doubt you. Here is a baby in Christ who needs to learn this, and I am trusting you and praising you for saving that gambler's wife." That night in that big old church I saw that lawyer, his wife, and children. Right behind them was a woman with a big hat on. The Holy Spirit told me that it was the lady we were praying for. I preached on hell that night until you could smell it. Then God said, "No invitation." I said, "Wait, Lord! That woman, that woman!" I begged God to let me give an invitation, and He said no. I'm sure that lawyer's wife didn't know what to think.

Sunday morning came, and the church was packed. Once again I saw the lady in the big hat. I preached about fifteen minutes of an evangelistic sermon, and here she came. I stepped down out of the pulpit, and met her at the front of the church. She said, "I can't stand it. Since Thursday God has been killing me. I've been

about to die. How can I know Jesus?" By that time the lawyer's wife was down there, and I asked her what happened. She said, "Yesterday my friend called me and said that she didn't know what was wrong with her. Since Thursday she had been dreaming that she was going to hell. She asked me to take her to a preacher. She came last night, and you didn't give an invitation."

The day the lawyer's wife began to believe, she began to receive. The same thing can happen for you. Write down today what you are believing God for, and commit yourself to the fact that God is meeting that need. If you don't begin to put this into practice, all that you have done is to enlarge your mind on some things that were stated about faith. If you can't make contact with Christ and let Him do something for you personally, there is no point in talking about faith. "Faith without works, is dead."

CORRESPONDING ACTIONS

In James 2:14 we are confronted with the fact that our faith is of no value unless it is accompanied by corresponding actions. One of the gravest mistakes that many believers make is to confess their faith in the Word and at the same time contradict their confession by wrong actions. We say that we trust the Father for our finances, and at the same time we are worrying about how we are going to pay our bills. One minute we confess that no word from God can ever be forfeited, and the next moment we are repudiating all that we have confessed. James says that there must be corresponding action. "Be ye doers of the Word, and not hearers only, deceiving you own selves." (James 1:22) The actions of a "doer of the Word" coincide with his confession.

Jesus likened the man who heard and obeyed His sayings to the wise man who built his house upon the rock. The man who hears his sayings and "Doeth them not" is like the fool

who built his house upon the sand. When the storms came, that house fell. (Matthew 7:24-27) So many who profess Christ and who enthusiastically declare that they believe the Word from Genesis to Revelation are not doers of the Word. They are talkers about the Word. They have mentally assented to the fact that the Word is true. It does them no good. They are not making it their own.

I may confess as loudly as I please that God is the strength of my life, and at the same time tell about my weakness, my inability, and my lack of faith. There is no corresponding action here. In John 6:47 Jesus said, "He that believeth hath eternal life." "Believing" is "having." It is possession. Mental assent admires the Word, confesses that the Word is true and very desirable, but it does not possess. Believing ends in the glad confession, "It is mine. I have it." How little real acting on the Word we see today!

When the palsied man was brought to Jesus by four of his friends, Jesus said to him, "Rise, take up thy bed and walk." Had he not acted on the Master's words, he never would have been healed; but because he acted, he was healed. (Mark 2:1-12) Peter had spent a whole night fishing without any results. But when Jesus told him to let down his net, Peter's response was, "Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net." (Luke 5:5) What a change would come into our lives if we would say, "At thy word I will." We give mental assent to the integrity and the reality of the Word; but we do not act upon it.

You may say that you know God's Word is good, but you will never really know until you have acted on it and reaped the results of it. This is what faith is. Faith is giving substance to that which is hoped for. Hope does not have any substance, but faith gives substance to it. "Well, I hope God heard my prayer." If that is all you do, He did not, and there will not be

any answer. But your faith can make the answer to your prayer a reality. Hope says, "I will have it sometime." Faith says, "I have it now."

John Wesley once said that the devil has given to the church a substitute for faith that looks and sounds so much like faith that people cannot tell the difference. He called it "mental assent". Many people see what God's Word says and say that it is true, but they are agreeing only with their minds. That will not get the job done. It is heart faith that receives from God. Jesus said in Mark 11:23, "For whosoever shall say unto this mountain, be thou removed and be cast into the sea, and shall not doubt in his heart (it doesn't say a word about his head), but shall believe (in his heart) that those things which he saith shall come to pass, he shall have whatsoever he saith."

Someone asked me, "How can I tell whether I have faith or whether it is just mental assent. I know God's Word is true. I know God promises me healing and God promises me the Holy Spirit, but for some reason I cannot receive and I don't understand." This person had only mental assent, not real faith. Real faith says, "If God's Word says it is so, then it is so. It is mine; I have it now." And faith says, "I have it even though I cannot see it." Until we act upon it, it does not become a reality.

You may hold the truth of the resurrection as a great doctrine, but it will not mean anything to you until you say, "He died for me. He conquered death and hell for me. He arose for me, and because of His resurrection I am a conqueror of Satan today. Satan has no dominion over me. I am free." Then the Word becomes something more than a doctrine or a theory. It becomes a reality. People who act on the Word receive things. You act faith and talk faith; your actions and your words agree. Struggling or begging or crying do not bring results; results come when I ACT on what God has spoken.

FAITH IS ACTING

As you come to the conclusion of this lesson dealing with the activity of faith, by way of review, study the following statements and relate them to your own life right now:

- Every true act of faith is followed by an activity of faith.
- When a man is rightly related to the Holy Ghost who works through him, and when he maintains the will to believe, the will to receive, and the will to obey, the life of Jesus is manifest in his mortal flesh.
- When God speaks and there is a point of hesitancy, there is a point of self-interest that will not submit to God.
- The business of faith is to convert truth into reality.
- If you have real faith, prove it by your life. Experience is never the ground of faith. Experience is the evidence of faith.
- We believe that Jesus Christ can do certain things for us. Has He done them?
- Do we proclaim by our talk or by our experiences (faith in God) that Jesus Christ is sufficient for every problem life can present?
- Faith is an act, and an affirmation of that act, that bids eternal truth to become present fact.
- Faith is not believing that God can, or wanting God to, but it is acting upon God's Word as it is being done now.

Faith is an active principle of trust in Jesus which is ready to venture out on every word He speaks. The Holy Spirit will bring that word, of Jesus to our remembrance and apply it to the circumstances we are in.

Faith must be tested in conflict to see if it is only head faith or true heart faith, which brings living reality.

You may say, "I am not the witness that I should be. I do not have the patience that I'm supposed to have. I

am not as kind or compassionate as I should be." But your real problem lies at a deeper level. Your problem is actually a faith problem. When your faith is right, your practice will also be right.

Our faith is never according to our experience. Our experiences are according to our faith. Existence of faith in the heart is manifest by works in the life. The works will always equate the faith.

A faith which does not walk may soon become too weak to stand.

SUGGESTIONS FOR THOUGHT AND DISCUSSION

1. Can you think of things that you have prayed for that you have not seen become reality? Has your faith shown itself in corresponding actions? What could you do to change this?
2. Are there certain problems or inadequacies in your life over which you have not been able to get any victory? Can you see that the basic problem is one of unbelief? What do you think God would have you do in order that these inadequacies might be overcome?
3. How would you describe your attitude toward the Scriptures? If you would say enthusiastically that you believe everything that the Scriptures say, can you point to areas of your life in which you are so stepping out on the truth of Scriptures that God will have to perform a miracle for you in order to keep His word? Is anything less than this pleasing to God? Why?

Next Week:

Do you feel like a failure in your Christian life? Are you defeated? Next week we are going to consider how faith can move us from defeat to victory in our lives.

LESSON SIX

We do not need to go on being defeated in our Christian lives. God has made adequate provision for us to take the all important step

From Defeat To Victory

Scripture Background

Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place. (II Corinthians 2:14)

Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loves us. (Romans 8:37)

And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work. (II Corinthians 9:8)

Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain. (John 15:16)

How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality. (II Corinthians 8:2)

Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give unto your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again. (Luke 6:38)



To encourage appropriation of the provision which has already been made through which it is possible to move out of turmoil and defeat and into abundance and victory in daily Christian living.

Some of you who are studying this lesson are right now undergoing a period of discouragement and defeat

in your lives. In this lesson we will discuss one of the most important things that faith can accomplish in the life of a Christian. We will discover how to go from poverty to riches, from defeat to victory, from failure to success. The Word of God reveals only one key. Some people get the idea that victory is based on the amount of praying that a person might do. But when you read Hebrews 11 you find that victory is not the result of praying prayers; it comes by faith. Some people think that they fail because of their lack of prayer. This is not the root cause of the problem. You can pray until you are blue in the face, but if you do not believe, you will continue to fail.

Some people believe that success depends upon the amount of work that you do. But this is not the answer either. If you do not have faith, you will fail no matter how hard you may work for God. It is faith that makes it possible for God to operate. And unless God operates, man's operation is in vain. This world is not interested in what you are doing for God; it is interested in what God is doing for you. I'm interested in learning how to get God to operate; only in a secondary sense is man's operating important. If God ever starts operating like He wants to, you will not have to worry about man's operating.

On one occasion while preaching in Norman, Oklahoma, I said to a lady on the first row, "Sister, do you believe in God?" She replied, "Yes." I continued questioning, "Do you believe He can do anything?" Again her answer was, "Yes." "What are you believing Him for right now?" She replied, "For food, clothing, shelter —

things of that nature." I wasn't talking about that sort of thing. Some of the biggest devils in town have all those things; in fact, some of them seem to have more than many Christians. I questioned her again: "What are you believing God for right now that would take a miracle for Him to keep His word? What promise are you standing on?" She turned as white as a sheet; she did not know. One by one I asked everyone in the church a similar question. There was only one woman in that church that day who had any faith. She stood up and said, "I may seem foolish, but I am believing that God is saving somebody right now." Before three minutes had passed a woman left her seat screaming and crying, "I have got to be saved!" But God did not operate until someone believed.

BECOMING CONQUERING CHRISTIANS

There is a verse of Scripture that bothered me for some time. It says, "Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place." (II Corinthians 2:14) Do you know why that verse bothered me? It says, "Thanks be unto God which ALWAYS causeth us to triumph." We need to face the reality that there are some areas of our lives in which we are not triumphant Christians. We are not conquering Christians. We are not really having victory; we are failing.

Don't start comparing yourself with someone else. There is always the chance that you can find someone alongside of whom you appear to be a pretty good person. Compare yourself to the Word of God. Here is God's Word saying that He always is causing us to triumph. Some people feel that God will somehow eventually work everything out for them. But that is not what God is talking about. In this verse God promises that in all of our circumstances He will cause us to be victorious. Does your life measure up to that verse of Scripture?

Romans 8:37 says: "In all these

things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us." Are you more than a conqueror in everything? Here is a promise: Paul said, "We are more than conquerors in everything." Right here in the midst of all our troubles we are more than conquerors. Paul himself was an example of this fact; these were not just empty words to him. He knew what it meant to be a conqueror in all sorts of trials and adverse circumstances.

I looked at my life, and I looked at those two verses of scripture: "more than conquerors" and "always causing us to triumph." Those verses caused me a great deal of distress. It seemed that rather than being a conqueror who was always in triumph, I was the conquered and was always in trouble. I was especially plagued by troubles in the area of finances.

What I saw in the lives of many other Christians wasn't really much help either. I remember one occasion when I went to visit a missionary. When we went into his house, I was shocked to see his furniture. When we sat down to the table to eat, we had to be seated on nail kegs. I thought to myself that I was with a very sacrificial man. I just knew that he gave away all his money to people who were in need so that he just didn't have anything left with which to provide for his own needs. So I finally said to him, "Sir how do you get your financial support?" He answered, "I trust God." Immediately I said, "When you get it, what do you do? Do you just give it away and distribute it among people?" He said, "No, I trust God, and all that I receive barely gets us by." What kind of opinion do you think I had of his God?

A WAY OUT OF "POVERTY"

In II Corinthians 9:8 Paul makes it clear that God is able to make every earthly blessing come to us in abundance so that whenever someone has a need we will be able out of the abundance that God supplies to give those who are in need. This just

wasn't happening in my life. I could hardly pay my bills. I would borrow from one in order to pay the other. That verse really bothered me. It said that God's grace is able to make you abound in such a supply that whenever there is a need, you will have money on hand to give. You could not possibly do that and owe people.

I was also bothered by another verse of scripture: "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain." (John 15:16) God says that we will bear fruit and that our fruit will remain. I used to brag that if I could not have a man on his knees making a profession of faith in ten minutes, I would quit preaching. I can still do it, but that does not mean that he will get saved. The Bible does not say that we will know men by their professions, but by their fruits. And the fruit that the Holy Spirit produces will remain.

In John 15:5 Jesus talked about our abiding in Him and bringing forth "much fruit." Does it bother you that today God did not in some way use you to bear fruit? If there is anything in life that I want to be, it is a fruit-bearing Christian. I don't want to be a fruit-producing Christian—a Christian doesn't produce the fruit; the Holy Spirit produces it. Man is just the instrument. He simply bears the fruit; God does the producing.

As we look at the challenge found in these verses, and as we desire that all of these promises become reality in our lives, let's remember that Jesus said that He would work according to faith. God does not bow to appeals for sympathy. Nor does He bow to bargaining. God moves only in accordance with faith. God honors faith.

A child of God can, and will be, more than a conqueror and will be caused to triumph when he comes to the place of faith. You will not only be made a conqueror and a triumphant Christian, but the grace of God will so

abound in your life that every need that you have will be met. I get tired of hearing people say that God has only offered to supply our needs. He said that he would give you the desires of your heart. Your faith is in Christ, the living Word; He is the object of your faith.

RECEIVING THROUGH GIVING

If we ever believe right, then everything else will be right. Our only job is to believe. God had to teach me that He would rather let me fail than to let me get by with doubting His word. The fact that God loves you does not mean that He will not let you fail. But when I began to stand on the promises of God and depend upon the faithfulness of Jesus Christ, and when I demonstrated my faith by my actions, I saw defeat turned into victory. I saw failure turned into success. I started seeing my needs not only met but exceeded. I had money to give away; I was no longer just getting by by the skin of my teeth. When you start believing, standing on the promises, and acting on the faithfulness of the person of Jesus Christ, He will lift you up and make you more than a conqueror.

In the supplying of our material needs, God operates in response to faith. And one way that faith will show itself is by obedience to certain principles set forth in the Scripture. We are told that the man who sows sparingly shall reap sparingly, and the man who sows bountifully shall reap bountifully. At one point of financial difficulty when I had nothing to give, I saw the truth of II Corinthians 8:2: "How that in a great trial of affliction, the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded into the riches of their liberality." These people did not have anything to give, and they gave out of their poverty. And they did so after having first given their own selves to the Lord. (II Corinthians 8:5) They first gave themselves and then gave, not out of their abundance, but they gave out of poverty.

Luke tells us that if we will give to God, God will press it down, shake it

together and cause men to give back to us. (Luke 6:38) It is perfectly within God's will for us to give in order to receive. God Himself did so. He gave His Son in order to get us. When I give in love and in obedience to the leading of the Holy Spirit, I can be sure that God will give back faster than I can give. When I saw this truth, I started giving, and the faster I gave, the faster it came back.

If you are not experiencing the victories that we have spoken about, it is because of the sin of unbelief in your life. Failure to act on the Word of God calls God a liar and makes it impossible for Jesus to do many mighty works among us. There is no sin that you can commit — including drunkenness, murder, adultery — that so humiliates and infuriates the nature of God as unbelief. There is no sin that you can commit that is as hideous as the sin of procrastination when you need to get active and start believing God.

When you fail to claim God's promises, that is doubt. When the father of John the Baptist doubted God, he became deaf and dumb. That is why so many people are deaf to God's Word today. When you haven't heard from God, you haven't heard anything. Have you heard from God that faith causes us to always triumph? If so, then be a doer of the word and not a hearer only.

BENEFITS OF THE LIFE OF FAITH

The life of faith brings the Christian from a life of defeat to a life of victory, always causing us to triumph and making us conquerors in all things. Praise the Lord that the life of faith brings us from defeat to victory, but there are other benefits which cause the Christian life to be even more victorious.

Study the following benefits of the life of faith:

The life of liberty from slavery: where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. (II Corinthians 3:17)

The life of rest in warfare from disturbance in warfare: there remaineth, therefore a rest to the people of God. (Hebrews 4:9)

Life of joyfulness instead of lifelessness: that your joy might be full (John 15:11), that you might have life more abundantly. (John 10:10)

Life of abundant provision and freedom from material and spiritual poverty: according as His divine power hath given unto us ALL THINGS that pertain unto life and godliness. (II Peter 1:3)

The life of faith equips you with the armour to stand against and withstand Satan: that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all to stand. (Ephesians 6:10-17)

The life of fruitfulness from barrenness: every branch that beareth fruit He purgeth it that it may bring forth fruit. As the branch cannot bear fruit except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. (John 15:2-4)

The life of faith is a conquering life, an abundant life, a fruitful life, a joyful life, a life of rest, and a life of liberty. If your life is anything but what has been described here, then your faith is not right. These provisions have already been made for you by the Lord, and He is waiting for you to claim these provisions by faith. Remember, the just shall live by faith.

THE GIFT OF FAITH AND THE GRACE OF FAITH

In Romans 12:3 we read: "For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith." In the sixth verse of that same chapter Paul says, "Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy

according to the proportion of faith."

Every person has the grace of faith. It is my opinion that even lost people have the grace of faith. The laws of faith even work for lost people. For example, Napoleon Hill, who became the first writer of the motivation movement, got his information out of the Bible. His book offers some good insights into the matter of faith. He made a study for years on how men became successful and found that they did it on a faith principle.

I do not believe that God could condemn you for not believing if you did not have the capacity to believe. Everybody has the grace of faith. The grace of faith is an innate ability given to you which leaves you without excuse before God, if you do not exercise that faith. The only prerequisite for the operation of the grace of faith is a word from God. When God gives you a promise concerning your need, you are obligated to believe Him and act on that promise.

There are three types of people: the disbeliever, the unbeliever, and the believer. The disbeliever is the person that doesn't believe anything about God. The unbeliever is the person that may love Him devotedly, but somehow, they just never get around to believing God to the extent that He actually does something for them. The believer is the man who says, "God said it, and I'm going to experience it if I die. I am going to see God convert His truth into reality." Faith converts the truth of the Bible into reality. If you call yourself a believer and the truth of the Bible is not being converted into reality, you are not really a believer. You are just fooling yourself. We all have a measure of the grace of faith, and it is up to us to exercise it.

The gift of faith comes and goes. For example, God may give the gift of faith regarding the healing of a certain individual. You absolutely know that they are healed. You do not go through the "fight of faith." There is absolute confidence; you are at rest. I have been called to relatives of mine to whom I was soulishly at-

tached. I would beg. I would plead. I would pray. I would act, but there was no healing. The gift of faith was not there. When that gift is there, people get healed. One of our big mistakes is that we sit around waiting for the gift of faith, when we should be working out the grace of faith. On the other hand, we try to have the gift of faith on the basis of grace, when we should wait for it.

Right now it is the will of God for you that you exercise the grace of faith and step out in faith and obedience to the Word of God in order that you might discover in your daily lives what it means to be a mighty conqueror who is always victorious.

SUGGESTIONS FOR THOUGHT AND DISCUSSION

1. How would you describe your Christian life — as a life of victory or defeat? If you are in a period of defeat, what is the reason for failure according to what we have just studied? What steps can you take to break loose from defeat?

2. Do you believe that God's word says that you are more than a conqueror? (Romans 8:37) Do you feel like a conqueror? Do circumstances indicate that you are a conqueror? What is true — God's word or what you see in your circumstances? How can God's truth become a reality in your circumstances?

3. Can you think of any sin or failure in your life which does not spring from unbelief? What does this say to you about dealing with the matter of unbelief.

4. Study the list of the "Benefits of Faith." Can you share how God has allowed you to experience some of these benefits in your life?

Next Week:

Perhaps you have been brought to a point of faith about something in your life, but it seems that nothing has happened. Maybe you've given up too soon. Next week we're going to see how to keep on believing until you have the answer in your hands.

LESSON SEVEN

Many Christians stop short of experiencing all that God has for them because they have never understood that there is such a thing as

Perseverance In Faith

Scripture Background

For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. (Romans 10:10)

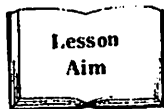
So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. (Romans 10:17)

And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God.

For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith.

Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them. (Mark 11:22-24)

O our God, wilt thou not judge them? for we have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon thee. . . Thus saith the Lord unto you, Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude, for the battle is not yours, but God's. (II Chronicles 20:12,15)



To lead beyond the first steps of faith and into the kind of faith that does battle with the devil and causes the promises of God to become tangible reality in the life.

The kind of faith that honors God and that brings heaven into earth is a

faith that comes as the result of growth. In considering how a man grows in faith and comes to the place of real Bible faith, we must begin at the point at which faith is initiated. God takes the first step in leading men along the road of faith; He is the one who initiates faith. God is concerned that His will be done on earth as it is being done in heaven. God is working even before a man ever realizes that it is God. As we consider the steps of faith, we will see how God is constantly working in man to bring him to a point of faith. God brings a man to the place where God is able to move into his life as that man learns to simply and actively trust Jesus Christ.

STEPS OF FAITH

We will begin our study of the steps of faith by looking at the relationship between need and provision in the life of the Christian. Then we will see some of the steps to faith: persuasion by revelation, embracing by action, confession by declaration, and the conflict or the fight of faith. Then comes thanksgiving, the taking of the spoils, and victory.

First, let's think about the matter of need and provision. Man and God see things from vastly different perspectives. Even though the Christian has the capacity to live in both the spiritual and sense worlds at the same time, most Christians live mainly in the sense world. And even though the Christian, through the working of the Holy Spirit, can see things from God's point of view, most Christians tend to look at things from a human point of view. For example, when a man has a

need, he begins to look around to find a supply. But God does not begin with a need; He begins with the supply. Then He allows a man to come to a point of need in order that he might come to God and find the supply that God has for him.

God may at times even use Satan to work for Him as the delivery boy by allowing Satan to bring God's children to a point of desperate need in their lives. That need is then used to bring God's people to the place where they will seek the solution to their problem in Jesus Christ alone. When they do, God pours out the supply which He had there all along. When you as a child of God have a need, it is nothing more than a telegram from God that He has the supply. He had something that He wanted to give to you, and He allowed the need so that you would come to Him for the supply. From God's point of view the supply always precedes the need. This principle is consistently demonstrated in the Scriptures as well as in the lives of God's people.

Let's look at this principle a little more closely. Which came into existence first—the first Adam or the last Adam? The last Adam, Jesus Christ, existed from "before the foundation of the world;" He was before the first Adam was ever created. In fact, we are told that in the plan and purpose He was crucified before the foundation of the world. When the first Adam fell into sin, he had a need for redemption. But Jesus Christ, the God of atonement, grace, and redemption, was already the supply for that need. The fall was not a slip-up. God is, and lives in the eternal now, and He knew what was going to happen. Before the first Adam and Eve ever had a need, the supply was already on hand to meet that need.

This same principle can be seen in other areas also. For example, which came first—air for your lungs to breathe or lungs which needed air? Air came before lungs—the supply was there before the need. If you are going to move out in faith and move

with God and come to a position of Bible faith, you must establish in your heart that a need is the evidence that God already has the supply. If this truth is fixed in your heart, every time a need arises you should be able to say immediately, "God has the supply."

REVELATION THROUGH THE WORD

Next we must see the Word of God as the basis for our faith. The Bible says, "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." (Romans 10:17) Three things are necessary if a man is to enter into real Bible faith: (1) He must have a need; (2) He must have a Bible promise to stand on; (3) He must make a choice of faith. The choice of faith brings the need and the promise together.

If the above principles are established in a man's heart, when he is confronted with a need, he will begin looking to the Lord. In looking to the Lord, he will turn to the Word of God. In the Word of God he will find promises, and in these promises he will find revelation. Do not overlook the importance of revelation. Revelation happens when the Holy Spirit takes the Word of God and so impresses it upon the heart that it becomes as real and personal as if God were speaking audibly. God is speaking to me in the particular situation in which I find myself. Sometimes this revelation may seem completely ridiculous to the natural mind. But when God speaks, it will do to stand on regardless of what the human mind may think.

The next step in coming to faith is the matter of persuasion. Somehow, some way, through the desires of the heart, the pressure of the need, the working of the Holy Spirit, or the warfare with Satan, a person is brought to the place where he feels that no matter what, he must take God at His word. Refusal to take God at His word is to call God a liar and to

prohibit Him from breaking in upon the situation to meet the need. In this matter of taking God at His word, there will usually be a struggle. The struggle within you will rage on until you come to that point at which you determine that sink or swim, live or die, you are going to take God at His word.

When we are truly persuaded, we are going to act. We will embrace the truth of God's word and act upon it by a choice of the will. And that choice of the will is based upon our conviction concerning the ability of God, the supply of God, and the will of God. Our needs may bring pressure from the outside, and our desire to please God may create pressure on the inside; but only as we embrace the promises of God and act upon them are we in a position of faith. By acting on the revealed truth of God and stepping out on the promises, we render present that which we hope for. When we choose to act, something happens.

CONFESSING YOUR FAITH

According to Romans 10:10, when a man believes in his heart, he also confesses with his mouth. This brings us to the matter of confession or declaration. This confession is basically three-fold. We confess to God by our words and our actions. We also confess (or make a declaration) both to man and to Satan. Such confession may appear to be presumption, and it would be presumption if it were not based upon the Word of God. But it is not presumption. What a man has need of, God has already supplied and has given promises concerning that supply in the Word of God. When a man is persuaded of the truth of that promise, and when he acts upon it and confesses it, God will bring it to pass.

Once a man makes this confession of what he has really embraced, then he will find himself in a conflict, the fight of faith. When a man comes to the point of genuine faith and has

taken his stand upon the Word of God and has made a declaration based upon that word, that man is in such a position that if God does not work a miracle to keep His word, God's word is a lie and that man is a fool. At this point Satan will attack and seek to cause that man to retreat from his position of faith. In this conflict a man must refuse to doubt. He must keep choosing to keep taking God at His word. In my own experience I found that the fight of faith brought on all sorts of doubt which constantly had to be brought into obedience to Jesus Christ.

After the conflict, there will come the rest of faith. This does not mean that we passively sit down. It means that there is a rest within the spirit. Though there may be a raging battle outside, there is real peace in the spirit. The victory has been won. Of course, you must still act in obedience to the will of God in order to see the need met. For example, you may plant a crop of wheat. And you may be at rest on the inside, confident that you are going to have a harvest. But you must cultivate and plant and care for the crop before you can enjoy the harvest. And during that whole period you have complete peace within because you are certain about the harvest.

This brings us to the praise of faith in which we praise the Lord for our victories. Soon after we enter into the praise of faith, we begin to enjoy the spoils of faith. That means we have come to the place where God can convert the truth of His word into tangible reality.

Let me give one illustration of these steps to faith. I am reminded of a girl who heard a message similar to that which we have set forth in this lesson. When she returned home after the Monday morning service, her mother asked how the service went. The girl replied, "Fine." Her mother said, "Well, did anything happen?" She replied, "Yes, I got a job today. I heard the preacher say that if you knew a thing to be the will of God, you should go ahead and step out on the

Word of God and act as though a thing is so when it is not so in order for it to be so." So she insisted, "I got a job today."

Because of her excellent grades in a certain field this young lady had been encouraged by a local plant to get special training and had been promised a job when she finished. She finished her training and took the physical, but she did not get the job. Yet she was certain that it was God's will for her to have the job. So she stepped out in faith and said, "I got a job today." Tuesday her mother asked about the job. She said, "I got the job yesterday." Wednesday her mother questioned her again in an attitude of obvious doubt. But the girl stood firm, "I got the job Monday." On Wednesday afternoon a man from the plant called and said something like this: "Young lady, I owe you an apology. Monday we realized our need for someone with your qualifications, and I was to call and offer you a job. I failed to do so, and I've been out of town until just now. If you will begin work tomorrow, we will start your pay from Monday." God had not only given her the job when she believed, but He let her start with a three day paid vacation!

HOW TO COME TO THE PLACE OF FAITH

Jesus promised that "What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe (act) that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." (Mark 11:24) Many people will progress in the faith life to the place where they realize that they must find the will of God for the salvation of souls, for healing, for revival, for finances, or for any number of things. They find out the will of God, they get a promise from God, they step out on faith, and they find themselves in warfare. In this fight many people feel that they do not have enough faith to endure. But the issue is not the amount of faith that you have; it is the choice of faith that you make.

Different kinds of faith are mentioned in the Scriptures—little faith, great faith, perfect faith, etc. But the important thing is not the amount; it is the choice to believe God, or to put it another way, the refusal to doubt God. When I find myself in this fight of faith, I make this choice. I either speak audibly or write out on paper, "I refuse to doubt you, Lord. I refuse to doubt you." No matter what the devil may try to say to me, I just say, "I refuse to doubt. I choose to believe." After the warfare comes the rest, and in that rest you get the assurance that it is settled.

It is at this point that the devil throws people a curve. After the act of faith the activity of faith must follow. Even when you have the assurance that it is settled, that does not mean that you have gotten the answer in your hands physically, that it is tangible. Daniel prayed and received the answer in his hands physically 21 days after he prayed. But when did God answer that prayer? The first day he prayed. But for 21 days he had a satanic hindrance. But he did not quit; he remained in that position of faith for 21 days. Because Satan will do his best to stop the answer, you must learn to undertake the "activity of faith"—you must keep on acting on the report that God gave you and must by your cooperating and corresponding works constantly affirm your faith.

KEEP ON BELIEVING

Thus far we have dealt mainly with the act of faith. But it is important to realize that there must be an affirmation of that act. You keep on moving with this active faith until that thing for which you are believing God becomes a reality. If you die, you die affirming the fact that the answer is yours. George Mueller died affirming the salvation of some who had not yet visibly come through. As far as he was concerned it was settled, and within six months after his death they openly accepted Christ.

Look at the story of Jehoshaphat in II Chronicles 20. When faced with insurmountable odds, he turned to the Lord to seek the Lord's will. God gave him a word: "Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle is not yours, but God's." (II Chronicles 20:15) He believed God, but his faith did not stop there. He entered into the fight of faith and experienced the rest of faith. But he did not see the results until he appointed singers to praise the Lord for the victory that He had promised, and God began to fight for Judah just as He had said He would do. Only as Jehoshaphat continued to act in faith did he actually see the victory that God had promised.

Another illustration is found in the account of the battle between Joshua and Amalek in Exodus 17. So long as Moses continued to lift his hands to heaven, Joshua was winning. When he let his hands down, the battle began to go the other way. Faith is not a once-for-all action; you must continue to act. You must continue to act in order to remind yourself of God's promise. And you also need to keep on reminding the devil because he is a little stubborn. I don't think that you really need to remind God, but He is certainly pleased with your praise as you move along in faith. Some of you, if you are not careful to continue the activity of faith, will stop short of what God wants to do for you.

There are three things that will probably happen after you step out on faith. First, the devil will come and say, "that's not the will of God." You cannot doubt what God has shown you to be His will. If you become double minded, you forfeit the blessing. If you pass that test, the devil will then say, "You are so low down, so sorry, so wicked, and so filthy that you don't deserve that God should hear your prayers." If Satan can get you so preoccupied with your own rottenness so that you will become double minded, you will begin to doubt and

thus forfeit the blessing. Don't try to defend yourself. Agree with him about your rottenness, and then inform him that your sins are under the blood. The devil can't stand that kind of talk. Keep on affirming your faith that God's word is true, that the blood of Jesus is sufficient for your sins, and that you will die standing on the Word of God. Refuse to doubt. Never stop confessing what you have believed by faith. Once you step out and believe God for something, never quit until you see the reality in your hands. See it face to face in reality, and if you die, die confessing it!

This is the area where the devil trips a lot of people. Many of you have come to the act of faith already about a number of things. In the days ahead the devil will do everything he can to make you doubt. Jesus said to Peter, "I am praying that your faith fail not." Jesus is praying today that your faith will not fail. If it does fail, do not let the devil keep you down. Confess it, and come back to the place of faith as soon as possible. Keep affirming that act of faith in the devil's face until he is made powerless. Keep looking at Jesus until you become strong. You will see the glory much sooner than you expected.

It is not enough to get the report, that is to know what God's will is. It is not enough to confess it so and call those things which are not as though they are. You must "keep on" confessing it so; by that you keep reminding the devil that he is a defeated foe. Say unto that mountain "be thou removed." It will come to pass. Keep on saying it, and the Lord will send Gabriel or Micheal to care for your problem. He did that for Daniel, and He has no favorites. Daniel refused to doubt God's word. He overcame all the accusations that the devil threw at him. And in 21 days the answer finally came! Your answer is on the way—keep on confessing.

**SUGGESTIONS FOR THOUGHT
AND DISCUSSION**

1. Do you have any kind of need right now? What does that tell you about the supply for that need? Where are you looking for the supply? Where should you be looking? How can the supply before need concept make us truly thankful for the needs that arise in our lives?

2. Has God given you a promise concerning a certain need in your life? (If not, He will if you will go to His word.) How can you step out on that promise in such a way that God will have to perform a miracle to keep His word and keep you from being a fool? What are you believing God for right now? Perhaps you might want to share this with the group.

3. Have you stepped out on a promise of God which has not yet become tangible reality in your life? Have you experienced the questionings and accusations of Satan? Are you continuing to confess your faith, or have you thrown in the towel and missed the blessing? How can you get back into the warfare and see the victory?

Next Week:

The Scriptures tell us that "without faith it is impossible to please God." Next week we are going to take a closer look at the faith that pleases God and discover some of the effects that such a faith will have upon our lives.

LESSON EIGHT

Whenever God finds a faith that is pleasing to Him, He moves into action and performs great things in response to that faith. Let's take a closer look at

The Faith That Pleases God

Scripture Background

But without faith it is impossible to please him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. (Hebrews 11:6)

Then Nebuchadnezzar in his rage and fury commanded to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Then they brought these men before the king.

Nebuchadnezzar spoke and said unto them, Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, do not ye serve my gods, nor worship the golden image which I have set up?

Now, if ye be ready that at that time that ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of music, ye fall down and worship the image which I have made; well: but if ye worship not, ye shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace; and who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter.

If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king.

But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up. (Daniel 3:13-18—For the full story read the entire chapter.)



To challenge to a life lived in the

kind of faith that pleases God by pointing out both the demands and the rewards of such a faith.

In Hebrews 11:6 we read, "But without faith it is impossible to please God." During the earthly ministry of Jesus there were times when He was obviously pleased with the faith of some whom He encountered. On other occasions he rebuked people for their lack of faith. When He was pleased with the faith of those with whom He came in contact, He always moved into action to grant their requests. What kind of faith pleases God? What kind of faith moves God into action? One of the most striking examples of the faith that pleases God is found in the story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego as recorded in Daniel 3.

In Daniel 2 we find the account of Nebuchadnezzar's dream and Daniel's interpretation of that dream. Because of the interpretation which God gave to Daniel, Nebuchadnezzar had promoted Daniel to a very high position in the government of Babylon. When Daniel found himself in a position of power, he requested that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego also be promoted to important positions; and his request was granted. Shortly after that the king had a golden statue made and required that upon the sounding of certain instruments all should fall down in worship before the statue.

When the signal was given, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused to bow and worship. Some folks got upset because they did not

bow down to the king. And when they looked into the matter a little bit, they found out that these three young men were not about to bow to the king's statue. So they got a little committee together and went to see the king to let him know that there were three fellows who did not have enough respect to bow down and, in effect, to worship the king.

In anger Nebuchadnezzar summoned the three young men and questioned them about their failure to bow down. He was prepared to give them a second chance, but they let him know in no uncertain terms that they would go to the fire before they would bow to his statue. They knew that God was able to save them from the fire, but even if He did not choose to do so, they were prepared to face death by fire rather than to bow down and worship any other God. The king was furious and commanded that they be thrown into a fire heated seven times hotter than usual. The fire was so hot that it consumed the men who got close enough to throw them into it. But when Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego came out of that fire a short time later, they did not even have the smell of smoke on them. In fact, the only thing about them that the fire touched was what the world put on them—the ropes by which they were bound. And not only that, but the king looked into the fire and acknowledged the deity of Jesus Christ! He saw four men instead of three, and the fourth was the Son of God. And to top it all off, the king recognized the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego as the living God and once again promoted the three young men. A fantastic revival came out of that fiery furnace.

A RECKLESS FAITH

This story demonstrates several characteristics which must be present in a faith that is truly pleasing to God. First, the faith that pleases God is reckless. These three young men had a faith that was so reckless that they

were willing to stand against a whole nation in refusing to bow down to the idol which the king had set up. They stood against the tide of public opinion. The fact that "everybody is doing it" did not affect them one bit. Not only did they stand against the public, but when commanded to do something which they knew to be directly contradictory to the will of God, they stood against the king himself. They looked him in the eye and in this matter rejected his authority over them. They informed him that they were not under his control even if it meant death in the fiery furnace. Not only did they stand against the people and the king himself, but their faith was so reckless that it enabled them to face the fire without any fear whatsoever because they knew that no matter what happened to them God would be glorified. When we come to the place in our lives where we have no fear of the opinions of man and where our only fear is the fear of a holy God, we will begin to experience the blessings of a faith that pleases God. One of the greatest needs of this hour is that we be brought into that dimension of faith where we fear no one but God Himself. To fear man is total defeat, but the fear of God will bring us to the place where we have a faith that will stand.

God wants to bring every one of us to the point at which we can stand against all the pulls and pressures of public opinion and be willing to say powerfully and fearlessly to the forces of hell itself with these three young men of long ago, "Our God is able to deliver us from any blow you might deliver, but even if He does not choose to do so we will walk to death singing glory to His name." Those early Christians who were torn to shreds by the lions and burned at the stake displayed something of this reckless faith that we are talking about. Some of those early martyrs counted it all joy that they could give their lives and sang praises to God even as they were devoured by beasts or as the flames began to sear their flesh. God gave

them a supernatural strength to enable them to be triumphant even in the worst of circumstances. Sometimes when you believe God right, He will deliver you out of the storm. But many times He does not deliver you out of the storm; He simply delivers you in it. But God is pleased with the kind of faith that does not care whether God delivers or not; with reckless abandon it is determined that the name of God shall be glorified no matter what the cost.

FAITH MUST BE TESTED

Faith that pleases God is not only reckless; it also endures the fires of testing. Faith is never faith until it is tested. There is no way to know that it is real until it is tested. These three men were tested. They were promoted to a position of authority, and as soon as they were promoted, they ran into a test. As soon as they got into a position of victory, they had a test. Faith always requires a test. One of the things that so often confuses people about the Spirit-filled life or the life of faith is the fact that things so often seem to go wrong just when they have been most greatly blessed and have made their deepest commitment to Jesus Christ as Lord. They feel that everything should go right, but if it doesn't go wrong, it is not according to the Word of God. Faith must be tested, and faith that is real will endure the test. Faith that fizzles had a flaw from the beginning. The test did not cause the flaw; it merely exposed it.

FAITH ACTS

Another mark of real faith is that it acts. A faith that pleases God is not some passive state of mind. It is not some intellectual concept of God. It is not some emotional stirring that causes you to sit around talking about how much you believe that God can do. It is a faith that causes you to trust the ability of God and stand on the promises of God and act as if a

thing is so when it is not so in order for it to be so, that the glory of God might be manifested. So often we talk about how much faith we have but we do not have any works that prove our faith. And the Bible is very clear in saying that without works your faith is dead. Faith that pleases God requires action. These three young men acted. They stood before the king and confessed what they believed. They informed the king that they were not under his control, and they acted as though they were not under his control even when all the circumstances seemed to say that they were. Faith that pleases God not only believes in the heart; it confesses with the mouth and with the life. You don't confess that God can or that God will; you confess that God is. He is doing it now. Real faith is rebellion. It rebels against everything that is human nature. It rebels against everything that is Satanic and against everything that was included in the fall. It rebels against everything that circumstances say to be true. It rebels against everything that you see, smell, taste, feel and hear. It steps out on the truth of God's word and confesses that truth and acts on that truth.

FAITH AND THE WORD

The faith that pleases God is a faith that finds its resources in the Word of God. The Bible says that "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." (Romans 10:17) Faith is born when a man has a need (whether that need be positive or negative—it could be called an opportunity) and comes to the Book and discovers what it means for the Holy Spirit to breathe upon that Word. When the Word and the Holy Spirit breathe together upon the spirit of man, out of that springs forth a living faith that can shake hell, change nations, move souls for the glory of God, and do whatever else God intends to do.

Faith finds its resources in the Word of God, but there are two facets of the Word. There is the written Word, and

there is the living Word. The Word of God will mean to you all that God intends for it to mean only when you begin to look beyond the Word to the Word-Giver. You must look beyond the promise and focus your eyes upon the Promiser. The significance of the promises of the Scriptures for your life is determined by the Promiser. When you get your eyes on the Promiser, you won't have any trouble whatsoever believing the promise. Most people who slip up in the faith life do so because they have taken their eyes off the Promiser and have focused on the promises. If you are having trouble taking God at His word regarding a certain promise for your life, start gazing at the Promiser, and it won't be long until you can believe God. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego said, "The Lord Himself is able." Their confidence was in the Lord. They found the resources for their faith in Him.

THE REWARDS OF FAITH

This story also points us to the rewards of faith. When they were thrown into that fiery furnace, that fire did not touch them. When you have a faith that pleases God, your faith is rewarded, and one of the rewards is this: It does not make any difference whether you are in the fire or in the glory, you are still in the glory. It does not make any difference whether you are on the mountain top or in the valley, you are still in the glory. One of the rewards of faith is that you control your circumstances. Your circumstances do not dictate to you; you dictate to them.

One of the rewards of a faith that pleases God is that your garbage will be consumed. The only things that burned off of these men were the ropes that were put on them; everything else was left alone. When you have a faith that pleases God, you will be put through experiences that will burn off all the garbage of your life. You will be "sanctified holy."

What does that mean? It means that you will be full of Jesus. And that is all that it means.

Another reward of the kind of faith that pleases God is the fact that when you have that kind of faith, you have companionship with the Son. He got into the fire with them! That old king said, "I see four men down there, and one of them looks like the Son of God." When you have a faith that pleases God, you will have the companionship of God Himself. And I want you to know that there comes a time—regardless of who you live with and how sweet and wonderful he or she may be—when the only person in the world that can satisfy the longings of a man's heart is God Himself. Man was made to walk with God, and he cannot be truly satisfied until he knows what it means to have the companionship of God. There are some valleys where your wife can't go. There are some mountains of transfiguration where your closest friends can't go. But God can go with you, and He will go with you when you have a faith that pleases Him. Whatever the fire, you can have a companion. God Himself in the person of the Holy Spirit will come down and be that companion.

Not only did they experience the companionship of the Son, but they witnessed the consuming of their enemies. You don't have to fight your battles; Jesus will fight them for you. No where does God tell you that you'll have to fight the devil. He tells you like he told Jehoshaphat, "This is my battle, not yours; you just obey me." (See II Chronicles 20:15) When you walk in obedience to the will of God, and when your life is controlled by a faith that pleases God, God will take care of all your enemies.

There was one other reward of the faith of these three Hebrew young men. They were commissioned to a higher office. When they had been through all that God called them to do, they were promoted (Daniel 3:30). If you're looking for a promotion, here's how to get one—trust Jesus. If you do, He will promote you.

Do you want to have the kind of faith that pleases God, the kind of faith that moves him into action? That faith must be reckless; it must be willing to stand against all the pulls and pressures of this world. It must be tested. When testing comes, do not think that it comes because you have no faith. Faith that is real must be tested. It also must act; faith that does not lead to action is not faith at all. And this kind of faith finds its resources in the Word of God—not only does it look to the written word, but it looks beyond the promises and focuses on the Promiser. And the faith that pleases God leads to abundant rewards: The fire can't touch you. Your garbage will be consumed. You'll have the companionship of the Son of God. God will take care of your enemies. And you'll be promoted. Are you willing to settle for anything less than this kind of faith?

SUGGESTIONS FOR THOUGHT AND DISCUSSION

1. Are you aware of something which God would have you to do but which you have not done because of a fear of what people might think or of what the consequences of your obedience might be? How would a reckless faith act in your situation?

Do you believe that God would honor such a faith on your part? Is it worth it to continue to disobey?

2. Is there some point at which your faith is being tested right now? Has it surprised you that testing has come? Why should testing not be a surprise? What would you say to encourage someone else who is going through a time of testing?

3. Think of some specific ways in your own life in which faith could show itself as rebellion. Perhaps you can share some of these with the group.

4. Can you think of ways in your own life in which you have experienced the rewards of a faith that pleases God (e.g. victory in circumstances, garbage done away with, companionship of Jesus in the midst of the fire, seeing God deal with enemies, promotion) You might want to share some of these in the group.

Next Week:

Some times we find it hard to believe God not so much because of the things that we see as because of the things that we fail to see. As an example of this, next week we're going to look at the ten spies who checked out the land of Canaan. We're going to see what they saw—and what they didn't see.

LESSON NINE

Many Christians live in constant defeat because they're looking at the wrong things. Ten men who spied out the land of Canaan were defeated because of what they saw—and what they didn't see. Be sure your eyes are in the right place because

What You See Is What You Are

Scripture Background

I cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom, and revelation in the knowledge of him:

The eyes of your understanding (heart) being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints. (Ephesians 1:16–18)

And they told him (Moses), and said, We came unto the land whither thou sentest us, and surely it floweth with milk and honey; and this is the fruit of it.

Nevertheless the people be strong that dwell in the land, and the cities are walled, and very great: and moreover we saw the children of Anak there.

And Caleb stilled the people before Moses, and said, Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it.

But the men that went up with him said, We be not able to go up against the people; for they are stronger than we.

And they brought up an evil report of the land which they had searched unto the children of Israel, saying, The land, through which we have gone to search it, is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof; and all the people that we saw in it are men of a great stature.

And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, which come of the giants: and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight. (Numbers 13:27,28,30-33. Read chapters 13 and 14 for the whole story.)



To discover how looking at the wrong things can lead to discouragement and defeat and how looking at the right things can lead to peace and victory.

One of the best ways to be sure that your prayers will be answered is to pray the prayers of the Bible. And one of the most significant prayers in the Bible is found in Ephesians 1:17–23. Here Paul shares with us what he prayed for the church at Ephesus, and, no doubt, what he would also pray for us. In verse 18 he prays that “the eyes of your heart (the King James Version says “understanding,” but the better translation is “heart”) be enlightened.” Whether we realize it or not, we are, to some extent, a reproduction of what we see. Someone has well said that a glimpse of Jesus will save you, but a gaze will sanctify you.

There are several ways in which we can “see”. We see with our physical eyes. We see with our imagination. We also see with our spiritual eyes—the eyes of our heart. Paul here prays that our spiritual eyes might be opened. He wanted these Ephesians to see some things because he knew that what we see affects what we are. This is especially obvious in children. We have all seen a young child acting out in his life what he sees with his imagination. In a much less obvious way what an adult becomes is determined by that which he “sees,” that which he focuses his attention

upon. It is vital that we see what God wants us to see. The Bible says that people without a vision perish.

Because of this basic importance of what a man sees, we are going to use this lesson to study one example of how some men were affected by what they saw. Let's look at the story of the twelve spies as recorded in Numbers 13. After the twelve had spent forty days in the land of Canaan checking it out, they came back and reported to Moses and Aaron and all the people of Israel. In their report they talked about what they saw. And it is obvious that Caleb and Joshua saw something that the other ten spies did not see. We are going to ask two very important questions as we study this event.

First, what did the twelve spies see? And, secondly, what did Caleb and Joshua see that the other ten did not see? And this is not just an academic study. Keep in mind that right now what you are "seeing" is probably determining whether or not you are living in victory.

THE BLESSINGS OR THE BLESSER?

First, they saw that it was a land that flowed with milk and honey. The ten saw the blessings and the benefits, but they did not see the Blesser. The tragedy of this hour in the lives of many people is the fact that they are seeking the blessings of Canaan, but they are not seeking the Blesser of Canaan. There are many professing Christians who spend all their time and energy seeking spiritual gifts. They are unscriptural and deceived by the devil. God gives the gifts as He in His sovereignty wills to. We are told only to seek the Giver. Gifts and the benefits and blessings of Canaan will come and go but the Blesser will never change.

What would have happened if this bunch of people had gone into the land (and incidentally, because of their disobedience this group never did go into the land) under the leadership of Joshua (and Joshua means "Jesus" or "Saviour") and had begun to go off in every direction seeking the benefits and blessings of the land? Absolute

chaos would have been the result. And today in our churches when people start seeking the gifts and focusing their attention on the gifts, chaos results—churches are torn to pieces. As long as the children of Israel followed Joshua, they got more benefits and blessings than they could take.

Only babies look for gifts; mature people look for the Giver. When I used to call home after being gone for several weeks, my two youngest children would say, "Daddy, what are you going to bring me?" My two older children would say, "Daddy, when are you coming home?" And then when I would get home those two young ones would give me a peck on the cheek, and they'd head for the suitcases. They would dig into the suitcases and find their little gifts. And then the next thing I knew they would be on the telephone telling some of their friends about their gifts and saying, "Guess what I've got that you don't have. You need what I've got. Come and see what I've got." Then I'd see them off in a corner playing with those gifts. And while they were playing with those gifts, I'd walk out to the barn to look at the horses, and then I'd look around the yard. And as I walked around, my two oldest children were by my side. They were interested in having some time with the giver.

When my oldest child, my daughter, began to drive, I gave her a credit card and said, "It's yours. Use it as you will." She still has it, and she doesn't abuse it. And I find myself trying to figure out what she needs even before she realizes what it is and asks for it. If I can beat her to the draw, she never has to ask for it. Why? Because she is taken up with the giver. She's learned something—when she is properly related to the giver, she gets all the gifts that he knows that she needs.

When these ten spies looked into the land, they saw the milk and honey. They saw all the gifts, all the benefits and blessings. But they did not see the Giver. He was the one who knew the way; He knew every blessing that the

land had to offer. They needed to be attached to Him. But they didn't see Him. They saw only the gifts, and usually the gifts come and go. The Giver never changes. Whether a storm is raging or the sun is shining, it is always glory with Him because He never changes. He said, "Lo I am with you alway." Whether you feel it or not, He's with you. What do you have your eyes on right now—the benefits and the blessings or the Blesser? As you study this lesson, are you seeking the Blesser—or just a blessing? If your eyes are only on the blessings, you're robbing yourself of the joy of being all wrapped up in the Blesser. When you're rightly related to Him, He'll pour out more blessings than you can receive.

TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE

The second thing that the spies saw was the fact that the land was a land "that eateth up the inhabitants thereof." (verse 32) But they did not see that the land didn't have to be worked for or fought for because it was already theirs. They were so accustomed to all the unpleasantness of Egypt that they simply could not believe what they saw. And it was all free. They just couldn't believe it; it just swallowed them up. "It's just too good to be true. I have to fight for it or work for it. No one could be that good to me. I'm not worthy of any such thing." They were so overwhelmed with the land that they could not receive the idea that it was theirs. And not only was it theirs then; it had been theirs for over 400 years! It had just been sitting there waiting for them to come along and take it.

People will respond to the kind of preaching that tells them to do their best. People like to think that they can be saved as a result of some effort that they put forth. But when you try to tell people that salvation is a free gift, often they shake their heads and say, "I just can't see that." And then when you tell them that not only is salvation from hell a free gift but that

everything they need to continue as a Christian is already theirs as a free gift, they cannot accept the idea. Everything that you need for sanctification is a free gift just as is everything you need for salvation. But most folks still want to work for it. In fact, much preaching tells people to be saved by grace through faith but then goes on to tell them to work their hardest and try their best to live like Christians.

When the ten spies saw the greatness of the land, it worked fear in their hearts rather than faith. They had never seen that the land was already theirs and that if they would simply take, God would undertake and fight for them. Because of this they doubted. But Caleb and Joshua saw that the land was already theirs and that all they had to do was to obey God and step out and take what was already theirs.

Now, let's apply this principle to our lives. Did you know that if you have a need right now, that need has already been met? You already have the supply. However great the need may be and however desperate the circumstances, your needs have already been met. What is your response to that statement? Most of us tend to say, "That's too good to be true". But it is true. Everything that you need is already yours in Jesus Christ. In fact, as we saw in an earlier lesson, in God's order the supply always comes before the need. When you have a need, it is nothing but an invitation to come to God for the supply which is already there. Needs are simply God's way of letting you know that He has something for you.

Many of us are like the ten spies. We feel that it's just too good to be true. God would probably like to be a greater God to you than you will allow Him to be. You may have refused to take what is yours in Jesus Christ just because it is so overwhelming that you simply can't believe that it's true. Most of us spend much of our time in discouragement and defeat because we see our needs and problems as coming from the devil. He may be the

delivery boy, but the problems are simply God's way of letting us know that the solution is already there. Many of us are defeated because we look at our poverty rather than His provision. The Bible tells us that God "hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue". (II Peter 1:3) God has already provided everything that we need both for our material needs and for our spiritual needs. The provision is there just waiting for someone to take God at His word—just like the land of Canaan was sitting there waiting for those to whom it had belonged for 400 years to take it. And if we're not careful we, just like the Israelites, will turn around and walk off and leave what God has for us just because we believe that it's too good to be true.

A DEFEATED FOE

The next thing that the ten spies saw was the fact that the cities in the land were walled and well fortified. But they did not see the fact that the land had no defense. The defenses were all gone. When Jesus Christ died on the cross of Calvary, He literally stripped the devil of his power and so arranged things that when we act right in response to the truth of God, the devil is rendered totally inoperative. Many people look forward to the time when the devil will be chained for a thousand years. You can chain him today in any given situation. The devil is a defeated foe, and he is defeated now. You may feel like saying, "But, he surely has put up some mighty big walls that certainly seem impossible to overcome." He's making fun of your ignorance—he is defeated!

Let me share with you a beautiful little story that illustrates this truth. Two little birds were sitting on the fence beside a strawberry patch. One said to the other, "Boy, I'd love to have a strawberry." The other said, "I would too. But do you see that

fellow out there? He'll kill you. He is out to destroy you." But the first bird insisted, "I believe one of those strawberries belongs to me. It's mine, and I'd like to have it." "Go ahead, but I'm not fooling with it. That man will kill you." So they kept talking, and finally the first little bird decided that the man in the strawberry patch would just have to kill him, but he was just going to have to get a strawberry. He flew down off the fence and hopped over to a big, juicy strawberry and began to feast on it. He looked over to the other bird and said, "Come on." "Oh no, that fellow will get you." Then the bird who was enjoying his strawberry said, "Don't worry about him. He's just a scarecrow." How do you look at the devil? Do you see him as a defeated foe, or do you see the walled cities? Are you afraid of the threat that he seems to be? It's what you see that will determine what you are. When we begin to see the devil as a scarecrow, our lives will change. When you walk with God, the devil cannot do anything that God doesn't allow him to do, and everything that he is allowed to do will turn out for God's glory and your benefit.

Whatever the walls the devil may try to show you, those walls are not there. You say, are you asking me to believe something contrary to my eyesight? I certainly am. God wants you to learn to look at things from his point of view. Those things that the devil may point out to you as obstacles to prevent your receiving the blessings of God are, from God's point of view, nothing more than opportunities for the glory of God to be manifested in your life. Caleb and Joshua saw that the walls were already down from God's point of view. And when they obeyed God and went into that land as if there were no walls to hinder them, God brought the walls tumbling down.

THANKING GOD FOR BREAD

Another thing that the ten spies saw was the fact that the land was inhabited by giants. But they didn't

see what Caleb and Joshua saw. Notice what Caleb and Joshua had to say: "Only rebel not ye against the Lord, neither fear ye the people of the land; for they are bread for us: their defense is departed from them, and the Lord is with us; fear them not." (Numbers 14:9) The ten saw the giants as creatures to destroy them and keep them out of the land. Caleb and Joshua saw them as bread.

Have you ever prayed that God would enlarge you and make you more like Jesus? In the physical realm how does a person grow? By eating. Sometimes we ask God to help us to grow spiritually, and then we do not understand it when he sends along the bread which is necessary for our growth. When he sends the bread, we start running from it. And when we start running we get lean. What are we supposed to do when God sends along the "bread" that is necessary for our growth? We are supposed to eat it. In fact, even before that, we should bow our heads and give thanks to God for the bread. Then take the instruments that God has given you and dig in.

Caleb and Joshua saw the giants that inhabited the land as bread—as opportunities for them to grow and to be enlarged—rather than as instruments of destruction. How you look upon your problems today is going to determine what you become tomorrow. God has probably allowed a few giants to come your way today. Did you bow your head and thank God for them and dig in? Or did you run and hide? God does not allow problems in order that they might defeat and destroy you. He sends them along to be bread for you in order that you might praise God for them and allow Him to use them to make you grow more and more like Jesus.

GOD USES A NOTHING

There was one other thing that the ten spies saw. They saw themselves as grasshoppers in their own sight and in the sight of the giants who lived in the

land. They saw themselves as totally unfit, as nothing. That's the first step to victory. But what they didn't see caused them to miss it. They didn't see that Jesus takes a nothing and does something with it. A grasshopper is about as near nothing as anything you'll ever see. He can't do much of anything. The ten spies didn't realize that the fact that they were like grasshoppers was a prerequisite to their being used of God. Caleb and Joshua saw it. They realized that God must reduce a man to nothing before he can be something.

It took God forty years to teach Moses this lesson. One day Moses, in fulfillment of the calling of God, stepped out as the deliverer of Israel. But his timing was off, because his life was off. He stepped out to deliver his people in the energy of the flesh. When the flesh works, the result is death. Moses killed a man. God's sovereign wind exposed that murder, and Moses ran for his life. For forty years he stayed in the wilderness. Then God called on him to go to Egypt and deliver Israel. Moses said, "I can't". In fact he said "I can't" seven times. Moses perfectly understood that he couldn't do it. God knew that all along. He had just been waiting for Moses to find it out. When Moses finally realized that he couldn't, then God could use him.

If you haven't come to the place where you realize that you are nothing and that God expects nothing from you, God cannot use you. All He asks is that you give yourself to Him in simple surrender so that He can show you what He can do through a nothing. Until you know this, all your other knowledge (including your knowledge of the theology of victorious Christian living) is in vain. But if you know this truth, you don't have to worry about knowing the theology of victory or anything else. When you know that you are nothing and that He will take nothing and use it, and when you know that so adequately that you will never do a thing on the basis that you can do it, you'll be walking in victory whether or not you ever understand the

theology of victory. When God allows you to see your nothingness, don't be like the ten spies and allow it to lead to unbelief and defeat. Like Caleb and Joshua, turn your nothingness over to Him and see the victory that He will bring out of it.

What do you see right now? The blessings or the Blesser? A land that eateth up the inhabitants or a land that is already yours waiting to be taken? Walled cities or a defenseless enemy? Giants or bread? Yourself as a hopeless nothing or as a nothing which Jesus can use in a mighty way? What you see determines what you are. My prayer is that the eyes of your heart might be enlightened so that you will see what God wants you to see.

SUGGESTIONS FOR THOUGHT AND DISCUSSION

1. Which are you really more interested in—the blessings or the Blesser? How would your life be different if you were consistently keeping your eyes upon the Blesser Himself? How would churches be different if the people in the churches were looking at the Blesser?

2. Do you have a need right now? Do you really believe that that need has

already been supplied? Are you acting like you believe that? How does the principle of supply before need apply to your particular circumstances?

3. If you were really convinced that the devil is a defeated foe and can do nothing to you except what God allows him to do, what specific and definite effects would this have upon your present circumstances and your attitudes toward those circumstances?

4. Are you faced with any giants right now? How did you react to the giants when they came your way? How would you have reacted if you had seen the giants as bread?

5. Do you feel like there are things that you are able to do for God if you try real hard? Or do you really feel like a nothing? How does God want you to see yourself? In your own individual set of circumstances, what does God want you to do so that He can do things through you?

Next Week:

The devil is the biggest liar that the world has ever known. Right now many Christians are living in defeat because they are believing his lies rather than the truth of God. Next week we're going to study about a man who lived in misery for twenty years because he believed the devil's lie.

LESSON TEN

If you are living in defeat right now, part of the problem may be that you have taken your eyes off the truth of God and have listened to the lies of the devil. As Christians we must beware of

The Danger Of Believing A Lie

Scripture Background

And they took Joseph's coat, and killed a kid of the goats, and dipped the coat in the blood;

And they sent the coat of many colours, and they brought it to their father; and said, This have we found: know now whether it be thy son's coat or no.

And he knew it, and said, It is my son's coat; an evil beast hath devoured him; Joseph is without doubt rent in pieces.

And Jacob rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his loins, and mourned for his son many days.

And all his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted and he said, For I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning. Thus his father wept for him. (Genesis 37:31-35)

And they went up out of Egypt, and came into the land of Canaan unto Jacob their father,

And told him, saying, Joseph is yet alive, and he is governor over all the land of Egypt. And Jacob's heart fainted, for he believed them not.

And they told him all the words of Joseph, which he had said unto them: and when he saw the wagons which Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of Jacob their father revived. (Genesis 45:25-27)



To expose the devil as a liar who seeks to lead Christians to defeat by causing them to believe his lies and to show that the most effective way to resist the devil's lies is to stand firm on the truth of God.

One of the saddest stories in the Bible is found in Genesis 37. It is the story of a man whose heart was broken and who spent twenty years in mourning and defeat because he believed a lie. Jacob spent twenty years believing that his son Joseph was dead, and all the while Joseph was alive. Let's look at this story and see what God has to say to us about the danger of believing a lie.

Joseph was at home with his father Jacob while his brothers were away from home tending their father's flocks. Jacob decided to send Joseph to find his brothers so that he could report to Jacob concerning their welfare and the condition of the flocks. At first Joseph had a little difficulty in finding his brothers, but he was finally able to locate them. They saw him coming, and while he was still a long way off, they decided that they were going to kill him. Reuben rejected the idea of killing Joseph and suggested instead that they should throw him into a pit in the wilderness. They agreed to do as Reuben suggested. Reuben's intention was to return later and free Joseph from the pit so that he could go back home. But in the meantime the other brothers sold Joseph to an Ishmaelite caravan en route to Egypt.

No doubt this awful act was motivated by a tremendous resentment and jealousy which the brothers harbored in their hearts against Joseph. There were probably several reasons for the jealousy, and we won't seek to go into all those reasons now. But surely one of the reasons for their bitterness was the fact that Joseph had had a dream through which it was

revealed to him by God that the day would come when his brothers would bow down to Joseph because he would be in authority over them. People don't like the idea of submitting to anyone else, especially to a younger brother! Perhaps another reason for their jealousy was the fact that their father had given Joseph a great deal of attention. Whatever the reasons, they hated him and were determined to be rid of him.

Reuben returned to the pit in order to free Joseph, but he was not to be found. In the meantime the brothers had taken Joseph's coat, which they had kept when they sent him on his way to Egypt, and had dipped the coat in the goat's blood. They then presented the blood-soaked coat to their father with the intention that he would recognize it and assume that Joseph had been killed by a wild beast. Their plan worked, and Jacob entered into a time of intense mourning. No one could comfort him; in fact he vowed to go to his grave in mourning over his son.

THE DEVIL'S LIE

When Jacob saw the blood-stained robe, he believed that his son was dead. He assumed the death of Joseph to be a fact, and Joseph's brothers never told him otherwise. But the story doesn't end there. For the next twenty years Joseph was in the hands of God, and God was uniquely molding a man to fit him into a specific place in His eternal plan. We cannot go into it now, but you can study Joseph's life as a beautiful example of the sovereignty of God.

The tragic thing about this story is the fact that during those years when Joseph was very much alive in the land of Egypt, Jacob was mourning because he was convinced that his son was dead. While Jacob was living in defeat, Joseph was experiencing the victory that comes to every man who will turn the control of his life over to a sovereign, gracious God.

But God wasn't finished with Jacob. One day by the sovereign act of God a famine came along. The devil may have been the delivery boy, but God

planned that famine in order that His purposes might be carried out. That famine brought on a condition that caused the brothers of Joseph to go to Egypt for help. And when they got to Egypt they found help—from the hand of Joseph (although at first they didn't recognize that it was Joseph). Through a series of circumstances which we cannot consider here, Joseph finally revealed who he was and sent word back to his father that he was alive and that he wanted his father and all his family to come and live off the fat of the land in Egypt. Not only did he send this good news, but he sent along with it wagons for their journey and good things from the land of Egypt.

The brothers then returned to their father and proclaimed the good news that Joseph was yet alive. (Genesis 45:25-28) Joseph had been alive all the time, but Jacob did not know it. Not only did they announce to Jacob that Joseph was alive; they informed him that Joseph was governor over all the land of Egypt. "And Jacob's heart fainted, for he believed them not." (Genesis 45:26) For twenty years Jacob had believed a lie, and he couldn't believe the truth when he heard it. That's the way that it is with many of us. When we hear the truth, we can't believe it. And as is too often true with most of us, something else had to happen before he would believe the truth. So the Bible tells us that they "told him all the words of Joseph, which he had said unto them: and when he saw the wagons which Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of Jacob their father revived." (Genesis 45:27) When he saw those wagons come rolling in, he believed and he was revived. He had been mourning and dying and living in defeat for twenty years, but when he saw wagons, he had a revival. And do you know why he had been living in defeat all that time? Because he had believed a lie. Do you know when he had revival? When he believed the truth. The truth was that his son was alive all of those twenty years.

What a tragedy! All those years

Joseph had been alive, but it didn't do Jacob any good because he was believing a lie. And Jacob continued to reject the truth until he saw the wagons. It's too bad that we have to have wagons before we believe. Sometimes God has to almost force us to believe before we will believe. And in His grace and mercy He does so.

JESUS IS ALIVE

It's no wonder that Jacob had a revival when he saw the wagons. Those wagons revealed three very important truths to the heart of Jacob. As we study these truths it is my prayer that God will reveal some truths to your heart that will overcome the lies of the devil and bring revival to your life. The first thing that those wagons told Jacob was that Joseph was alive. The wagons confirmed what Joseph's brothers had reported. Jacob knew that Joseph was alive.

One of the greatest needs of this hour is for you to know that Jesus is alive. Most of us don't really believe that. I don't think that we really believe that Jesus Christ is not in that tomb. But He isn't there. That grave could not hold Him. He's alive! All the demon forces of the universe couldn't keep Him in that tomb. And all of the sin of mankind from the beginning to the end could not hold Him in that grave. All the natural laws that God Himself created could not keep Him captive. He came out of the tomb, and He is alive even as you read these words. And when God makes this truth real to our hearts by Divine revelation it will revolutionize our lives. This is what the world is wanting to see Jesus Christ alive. You say, "The Bible says that He's alive." That's not what they need to see. They need to see the resurrection life of Jesus Christ in you. If He's alive, He's alive to be alive in you. The very Christ that the grave, sin and the laws of nature could not hold is alive right inside of your body right now. And nothing can hold Him. The omnipotent eternal God is alive in you right now.

For many of us the truth that Jesus is alive doesn't mean what it should because we are trying to understand it intellectually. But when the Holy Spirit reveals to us everything that the resurrection of Jesus Christ can mean in our lives, we'll find ourselves in revival. We could go on indefinitely talking about this great truth. But we're going to leave it right there. I would challenge you to ask God by His Holy Spirit to make real to your heart the truth that Jesus Christ is alive.

JESUS IS LORD

The second thing that those wagons told Jacob was that Joseph was lord. He was obviously in a place of authority; he was governor of the land, second in power only to Pharaoh. He was running the show in the land of Egypt. He has the key to the corn crib, and the man who has the key to the crib runs the country.

Another great need of this hour is for believers to realize that Jesus Christ is absolute and eternal Lord. He's Lord of the living and of the dead. It is very difficult for us to believe that there is not one thing going on in this world that is out from under the control of Jesus Christ and that will not ultimately fit into the perfect and eternal plan and purpose of God for this universe. John Wesley was so convinced of the Lordship of Jesus that he said when he wanted to find out what God was doing in the world, he read the newspaper. We need to be so totally certain that Jesus Christ is Lord that we can say with Job, "I know that Thou canst do all things, and that no purpose of Thine can be thwarted." (Job 42:2) Job was confident that nothing in this world or even in hell itself could in any way hinder or restrain the purpose of God. He saw God as God. He saw the Lord as Lord. He saw God in everything that happened.

Until you get to the place where you can see God in everything and praise Him for it, He's not Lord insofar as you're concerned. Can you see Him in everything? You may say, "But what are you going to do with the devil?"

The same thing Job did—he never mentioned him. In the whole book of Job he never mentioned the devil. Why didn't he? Because he knew that God was running the show. To realize in all circumstances that Jesus is Lord is one of the hardest things in the world to do. But I do not know of anything that will revive your heart more quickly. It revived Jacob when he realized that Joseph was lord.

JESUS HAS MET OUR NEEDS

The third thing that the wagons told Jacob was that Joseph had the supply for his needs. He not only had the keys to the corn crib; he had the corn crib. He had everything at his disposal.

Another great need of this hour is for Christians to realize that Jesus Christ has the supply for their every need. He doesn't have to make it, and He doesn't have to go out and hunt for it when you have need for it. He has it already stored up, waiting for you to have need of it. In fact, according to the book of Hebrews, He's had the corn crib ready for you from before the foundation of the world, waiting for you to have a need so that you could come and get what He has for you. In fact, He's so much the Lord over this whole business that He allows the devil to send the famine so that you'll want the corn that He has waiting for you in the crib. When Jacob saw the wagons, he was revived. He knew that his son was alive, that he was Lord, and that he had an abundant supply for every need.

PROVE ME, SAITH THE LORD

There's something else to notice in this story. Joseph sent for his father, and the wagons were there to pick him up, and he got revived when he believed the truth. But he didn't meet his son in person to person contact until he got in the wagon and went to Egypt. There's an important point here that we'll miss if we're not careful. The point is this: we may often surrender to the Lord without trusting Him. Let me expand this idea

a little bit by pointing to Malachi 3:10. It says, "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it." This is one of the greatest promises in the Bible concerning revival. There are two facets to this promise. God said to bring all the tithes and offerings into the storehouse—that's surrender. Then He says, "Prove me now." God will pour out the blessing when you not only surrender but also believe. For years and years I surrendered and surrendered. I did not realize that there was another aspect to the promise that I'd never seen. I had surrendered, but I had never proved Him. I had never believed Him. One day I saw it, and it revolutionized my life. Not only must you surrender to God; you must also believe God. You can surrender to God again and again, but until you believe that what you have surrendered has actually been accepted, consumed and commissioned by God, nothing will ever happen.

What does God mean when He says, "Prove me now"? In plain, simple language it means that you are supposed to obey God. You are to obey God's word in such a way that you are proving God. You are to obey God to the extent that you get so far out beyond your own resources that God has the opportunity to do something for you. The reason that God isn't doing more than He is doing for most people is simply the fact that they won't give Him the opportunity. Until you get out and give God an opportunity to do something for you, you're not proving Him. Most of us are sitting around in unbelief waiting for the wagons to come. When you're willing to step out and trust God to work miracles in order to keep His word, you'll not be able to contain the blessings that He will pour out upon you.

What you believe does make a difference. You can believe a lie. And

the devil will not only tell you a lie, he will show you things that appear to confirm his lie. He'll bring a coat covered in blood. He'll do everything in his power to get you to believe a lie. And if you believe his lie, you'll die inside. But if you'll believe the truth, you'll be revived. Don't only surrender everything you've got to God. Go that all important step further and believe the truth. Reject what the devil says. He'll tell you a lie and then perform a miracle to make you believe it.

KEEP YOUR EYES ON THE TRUTH

Jacob should never have believed that lie. If he had believed the truth that God had revealed to him through Joseph's dream, he could not have believed the devil's lie. God had told Joseph that his brothers would bow down to him and be subject to his authority. And Joseph had shared that promise with Jacob. And God kept his word. The very thing that the devil did was to keep God's promise from coming true—the sale of Joseph into slavery—God used to fulfill his promise to Joseph. The devil was working for God all along! Had Jacob kept his eyes on the truth, he could not have believed the lie. But he took his eyes off the truth of God and looked at the evidence, the circumstances, and he believed a lie. And for twenty years he was in mourning.

Right now many Christians are in mourning because they are not believing the truth. When we take our eyes off the truth of God and begin to look at the sense world, we open ourselves up to all kinds of lies from the devil. When we are saturated with the truth of God, and when we are standing on that truth, all the blood-stained coats that Satan may bring to us cannot cause us to believe a lie. When we stand on the truth of God and prove Him, when we obey Him and step out on the truth of His word—then there will not be room enough to receive all the blessings that God will pour out. And that is true regardless of the size of your room. You may feel that your need is

too great for God to meet. But if you feel that way, you don't know God. All the forces of hell can't create a need that God can't meet.

Are you right now living in victory? You can be if you'll prove God by believing His truth and stepping out on that truth regardless of what everything in the sense world may tell you. The devil will do all that he can to make you believe a lie so that you, like Jacob, will live in mourning and defeat. The wagons will come rolling in—but you don't have to wait until then to be revived. You can believe the truth and be revived right now. Jesus is alive. Jesus is Lord. Jesus already has the supply for your every need. These statements are God's truth. You can reject anything contrary to these truths of God as a lie from the devil—no matter what the evidence. And when you get hold of these truths—or when they get hold of you—you'll be living in revival instead of defeat.

SUGGESTIONS FOR THOUGHT AND DISCUSSION

1. Are you aware of any attempts by the devil right now to get you to believe a lie? Can you think of a truth from the Word of God that exposes the lie? What can you do in order to step out on that truth and prove God?

2. Are there circumstances in your life which seem to say that Jesus is not really alive, that he isn't in control of the circumstances, or that he doesn't have the supply for your needs?

3. Can you think of times in your life when you have been absolutely miserable because you have believed the devil's lie rather than the truth of God?

Next Week:

Repeatedly the Scriptures make it clear that all God has to offer us can be appropriated only by faith. Next week we survey some of the passages of Scripture that teach us that faith is the key to experiencing God's best—and we will also take a brief look at those things which may hinder our faith.

LESSON ELEVEN

In the teaching of the Word of God faith is given a place of priority. A survey of the Scriptures makes it clear that if we are ever to discover all that God has for us

Faith Is The Key

Scripture Background

Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. (Hebrews 10:38) (See also Romans 1:17 and Habukkuk 2:4)

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. (Galatians 2:20)

To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me. (Acts 26:18)

And Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me.

And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe, that thou hast sent me. (John 11:41, 42)

Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. (John 20:21)



To show, through a variety of scriptural teachings regarding faith, that faith is the key to experiencing all that God has to offer and that no matter what "good things" we may do, without faith it is impossible to please God.

Faith is the key to the Christian life. Faith has such a prominent place in the Bible and is so tied in with the whole economy of God that a person must know how to actively believe God if he is ever to grow in his Christian life. Wouldn't it change your life today if, when a need arose, you would be able to say, "Praise God: The Lord is talking to me and the answer is here." You do not look to Him so that He will come up with an answer. He's already taken care of it; it is already done insofar as He is concerned.

In this lesson we want to look at several different truths, each of which points to the place of utmost importance given to faith in the Bible. First, the Scriptures make it clear that everything you need must come by faith. If you want to be a just person, the philosophy of the world is, "Do the best you can." But the Lord says that to be a just person you must walk by faith. To be a pleasure to God you must walk by faith. Sanctification (which refers to the Christian being set apart for the purposes of God) is not achieved by Bible study or prayer. It also must come by faith. If your faith is right, you will read your Bible. If your faith is right, you will pray. But I know people who pray four hours a day who are as mean as the devil. I have seen people spend ten hours in prayer and go home and in ten minutes ruin the whole day by getting mad over some insignificant issue. Prayer doesn't sanctify you. According to the Word of God, you are sanctified by faith (Acts 26:18).

FAITH IS THE WAY TO GOD

There is only one way to have access to God, and that is by faith. You can be clean morally, but if you do not have faith, you do not have access to God. The way to become a steadfast person, according to the Word of God, is by faith. The Christian "walk" is by faith. Paul said the only way he could live was by faith. He said that the life that he now lived as a Christian he lived "by the faith of the Son of God." (Galatians 2:20) The way for Christ to dwell in your hearts in His fulness is by faith.

The heathen are justified through faith. The promise of the Spirit is through faith. There is no way to pray down the Holy Spirit. You can pray until you are blue in the face, but until you can come to the place of faith, you can never receive the promise of the Spirit. We are raised up by faith. We get our understanding by faith. We are able to subdue kingdoms by faith. We get our power from God through faith. The Bible says that we are made whole by faith.

Everything that God has for us has already been provided. There is just one key by which we get God's provisions into life manifestations, and that is by faith. We will do everything, try every little gimmick in the world, to keep from trusting the Lord. There is not one need that God has not already supplied. But we will never have our needs fulfilled until we by faith appropriate the supply that God has waiting. In Hebrews 4:1 we are told that they did not enter into the land because, when they heard the word, they did not mix it with faith.

Faith is the only law placed at your disposal that supersedes the laws of nature. When God can find a man that will believe, the laws of nature are superseded. Peter walked on the water. Sarah had a baby at 100 years of age. When God created the universe, he established certain laws which control the activity of the whole

thing. Faith, when it is necessary to accomplish God's purpose, can overcome every natural law in the universe.

"Lack of faith" grieves the heart of the God of love to such an extent that it moves Him to wrath. When His own people refused to believe, His wrath fell on them. Over one million Jews died in the wilderness because of unbelief. God performed at least ten miracles for those Jews. He brought them out of Egypt, showing them that if they would believe God would deliver. He got them right to the day for graduation into a victorious life (ready to go into Canaan, which represents the fulness of Christ), and they backed off. This may seem insignificant, but it angered God. He told them that they would never go into the land. Some of them, after deciding that they had made a wrong decision, tried to go in, but they were defeated. God let His people wander and die in the wilderness because of their unbelief.

People have the idea that faith is the "right attitude." It is the right attitude combined with the right action. Nothing in this world besides faith can move God. Every time God moves, somebody has believed.

FAITH IN THE LIFE OF JESUS

Perhaps the most significant thing about faith is the fact that it was the whole ministry and teaching of Jesus Christ. He taught His disciples to believe. Jesus desired to teach them that, as He lived by the Father, they could live by Him. He told them, "as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you." (John 20:21) On every occasion that Jesus performed a miracle, He allowed God to work the miracle through Him.

Notice three important things about the life of Jesus. First, He was absolutely submissive. He said, "My meat is to do the will of Him who sent Me." Not only was He submissive; He

totally renounced His own ability. He said, "Of myself I can do nothing." The third important factor about His life was the fact that He was a man of faith. Every time Jesus Christ came face to face with a problem, He did not try to tackle it Himself; in utter submission to the will of His Father He made Himself available so that the Father could work through Him. In every problem situation He acted in such a way that the Father had to perform a miracle in his behalf. If He had not done so, the whole economy of God would have gone down the drain.

WORKS OR FAITH?

When we are confronted with problem situations, there are two principles by which we can operate—works or faith. Recall the story of Philip at the feeding of the five thousand. He was put to a test. Jesus said, "Philip, I am going to see if you are going to 'work it out' or 'faith it out'." Philip checked his wallet and found only about forty dollars. He acted just like an atheist. If Jesus had asked an atheist, "Mr. Atheist, how are we going to feed all these people?", how would he have responded? He would have checked his bank account. Philip flunked the test.

Andrew did not do much better. He did say, "I've found a fellow out here with a few loaves and fishes, but Lord, what is that among so many?" They both flunked the test. Jesus constantly brought these men into predicaments in which they could respond in the "faith way" or the "work way." Notice what Jesus did. He took the loaves and gave thanks. He did not break the bread and then give thanks after He was sure that the miracle was going to work. He got the people ready, then looked up to Heaven and said, "Thank you," and started breaking the bread. Faith is so acting on the Word of God and the revealed will of God that God has to perform a miracle to keep His word.

What did Jesus do at Lazarus'

tomb? He said, "Father, I know that thou hearest Me always." He then said, "Lazarus, come forth," and He put God on the spot. Jesus walked by faith. He called His disciples to walk by faith.

His disciples were almost always inclined to "work it out." Then came that day when the disciples were out in the boat and Jesus came to them, walking on the water. Peter saw Jesus walking out across the water and said, "Lord, if that be you, bid me come to you." This is the first evidence, the first experience, in the Bible where the disciples began to perceive by revelation what God was trying to teach them.

God's whole economy is centered around faith. It may seem ridiculous to learn how to walk by faith through some experience like stepping out on water, but Jesus will meet you wherever you are. Jesus said to Peter, "Come." And Peter walked on the water! He saw that the laws of nature can be superseded by the "law of faith." Peter stepped out, and as long as he kept his eyes on Jesus Christ, he walked. When he started sinking he cried, "Jesus," and walked back. Jesus did not pick him up and put him in His arms like a baby and carry him back. They walked. The disciples who remained on the boat did not have that experience because they did not act on their faith.

If you want to be a just person, a righteous person, a pure person, a soul-winning person, a person that is pleasing to God, and a person that is actually God's ambassador in this world, you are going to have to learn to walk by faith. Ninety per cent of us are doing everything that we can to "secure ourselves" so that we won't have to walk by faith. But the blessings of God are waiting for those who are willing to walk by faith.

WHAT THE BIBLE TELLS US ABOUT FAITH

Without faith it is IMPOSSIBLE to please God. This is an amazingly strong statement. I had seen that

statement for many years without realizing its full significance. Perhaps it will help you to see why it is impossible to please God without faith when you study some of the things that faith accomplished as recorded in the Scriptures. Study the following statements and passages, and let God speak through them to make real to your heart the importance of faith in the Christian life.

It was by faith that:

- Abel worshiped God
- Enoch walked with God
- Noah worked with God
- Abraham became the Father of many nations
- Isaac blessed Jacob
- Jacob blessed both the sons of Joseph
- Joseph looked unto his father and blessed the nations
- Moses turned his back on money and power and delivered Israel

It is "by faith" that:

- The just shall live (Hebrews 10:38)
- Your heart can be made pure (Acts 15:9)
- We are sanctified (Acts 26:18)
- We are comforted (Romans 1:12)
- We are justified (Galatians 2:16; 3:24)
- We stand (Romans 11:20; II Corinthians 1:24)
- We walk (Romans 5:7)
- We live by the faith of the Son of God (Galatians 2:20)
- Through the Spirit we wait for the hope of righteousness (Galatians 5:5)
- We have access with confidence to the Father (Ephesians 3:12)
- We are children of God (Galatians 3:26)
- We have the promise of eternal life (Galatians 3:22)
- Christ dwells in our hearts (Ephesians 3:17)

It was by faith that:

- Kingdoms were subdued
- Righteousness was wrought
- Promises were obtained
- Lions' mouths were stopped
- Violence was quenched

- The edge of the sword was escaped
- Weakness was made strong
- Armies of aliens were put to flight
- Dead were raised again to life
- Men of weakness waxed valiant

Through faith:

- We understand that the worlds were framed by the Word of God (Hebrews 11:3)
- The law loses its power to condemn (Galatians 3:8)
- God justifies the heathen (Galatians 3:8)
- We are saved by God's grace (Ephesians 2:8)
- Righteousness is attained in Christ (Philippians 3:9)
- We are risen with Him (Colossians 2:12; II Timothy 3:15)
- We inherit promises (Hebrews 6:12)

Without faith it is impossible to please God. But all of these experiences and blessings are available to the man who will take them by faith. And this man is a pleasure to God.

THE ENEMIES OF FAITH

Through faith man becomes a pleasure to God and appropriates all the blessings that the promises of God have to offer. But if a man is to come to the place of faith, there are obstacles which must be overcome. In the remaining part of this lesson, we will consider briefly the enemies of faith. Although this section is brief, this is a matter of utmost importance if we are to learn to walk by faith.

DOUBT is one of the greatest enemies of faith. Peter began to sink because he doubted. Doubt caused Christ to rebuke the disciples: "Oh ye of little faith." We are told that in Nazareth Jesus did not many mighty works because of their unbelief.

HOPE can be an obstacle to faith. Many times a believer will mistake hope for faith. Hope is contingent. It is uncertain. As long as a person hopes, rather than actively believes God, he will never receive all that comes by

faith. There is a difference. "Faith is the evidence" of things hoped for. Faith is certain. Faith is substance!

REASON is an enemy of faith. As far as man's senses are concerned, faith is not reasonable. Reason, by the same measure, is not according to faith. Reasoning and rationalizing hinder faith. The "faith life" is a supernatural life, incapable of being reasoned. The believer's job is not to question God's motives, but to obey Him.

FEELINGS are enemies of faith. A man's feelings are not legitimate evidences of the life of faith. If God chooses to deal with a man in the area of his senses, then feelings are not necessarily an enemy. But keep in mind that Satan can give you feelings. In fact, Satan can give you anything but Jesus. What you feel may not be what God is trying to tell you. The Bible does not teach that "by your feelings" you are known, but "by your fruits." The life of faith is a fruitful life regardless of man's emotions or feelings.

SACRIFICE can be an enemy of faith. Lack of knowledge concerning the difference between sacrifice and faith is a definite obstacle in the believer's life. Many Christians hold the view that the life of faith is simply a life of sacrifice. They think it is "doing without" and "toiling on" in Jesus' name. Jesus has promised us "the desires of our hearts. He said, "Give, and it shall be given unto you." Sacrifice for the sake of sacrifice is a hindrance to Bible faith.

IGNORANCE is listed as one of faith's enemies. A man cannot believe what he does except he be taught from the Scriptures. "Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God." Thanks be to God for such a wise teacher, the Holy Ghost, destroyer of ignorance.

WORKS are enemies of faith when they are not products of faith. Paul declared in Romans 14:23 that "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin." Worship, a walk, or work that is not of faith is sin. Active energy, not

empowered by the Holy Ghost, is sinful. Works of the-flesh stand in the way of faith. They are unacceptable to God. "This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him."

BARGAINING AND SYMPATHY are enemies to the life of faith. Many believers approach God as though they were bargaining with Him, or they play upon His sympathy. God will not move in response to either approach. When you approach God by faith, you will see the glory. God moves in accordance with your faith. Faith is the key that moves God out of heaven and into earth.

CONFESSION can be an enemy of faith. Our faith is measured by our confessions. Sooner or later we become what we confess. There is a confession of heart and a confession of our lips. Often what we confess with our lips is not what is in our hearts. What we say is not really what we believe. When we hear our lips confess what our hearts are not confessing, we know that our faith is not real. The right confession will set us free. The wrong confession imprisons us. Refuse to confess weaknesses, doubts, and fears. We are what He says we are—more than conquerors. "Hold fast to the confession of your faith." (Hebrews 4:14)

SUGGESTIONS FOR THOUGHT AND DISCUSSION

1. Does God seem to place you in situations, as Jesus did his disciples, in which you can respond either the "faith way" or the "work way?" How do you respond? Can you think of a specific way in your life right now in which you, like Peter, can step out onto the water and by faith trust God to work a miracle to keep His word?
2. The Bible says that at Nazareth Jesus did not many mighty works because of their unbelief. Can you think of an area of unbelief in your life right now which might be hindering Jesus from doing His mighty works?

3. As you study the list of things that God has done through faith, do you believe these same kinds of things are possible today—in your life? Ask God to direct you to pick out at least one of these things that He would have you believe Him to do in your own life.

4. Examine carefully the list of the enemies of faith. Ask God to show you ways in which these enemies have hindered your faith. Seek victory over these enemies as you confess to the Lord how they have hindered you and as you trust Him for the victory.

Next Week:

Many people become discouraged in the faith life when they see their faith in the light of the scriptural teaching about faith or when they compare themselves to other people. Next week we are going to consider the matter of progressiveness in faith. We will see that it is wrong to be satisfied with your faith and that it is equally wrong to expect to have a mature faith without a period of growth and development in the life of faith.

If you are discouraged because of the weakness of your faith, you should know that you cannot expect to have a mature faith without a period of

LESSON TWELVE

Growth in Faith

Scripture Background

Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of our

faith. (Romans 12:6)

And after eight days again his

disciples were within, and Thomas

being shut, and stood in the midst, and

said, Peace be unto you.

Then saith he to Thomas, Reach

hither thy finger, and behold my

hands; and reach hither thy hand,

and thrust it into my side: and be not

faithless, but believing.

And Thomas answered and said unto

him, my Lord and my God.

Jesus saith unto him, Thomas,

because thou hast seen me, thou hast

believed: blessed are they that have

not seen, and yet have believed. (John

20:26-29)

And shall not God avenge his own

revenge, which cry day and night unto

him, though he bear long with them?

(Luke 18:7)

Let us therefore fear, lest, a

promise being left us of entering into

this rest, any of you should seem to

come short of it. (Hebrews 4:1)

And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the

dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from

their master's table.

Then Jesus answered and said unto

her, O woman, great is thy faith: be

it unto thee even as thou wilt.

Lesson
Aim

(Matthew 15:27,28)

To encourage those whose faith is weak to go on in faith by showing that

it is wrong to expect to have a strong and mature faith without a period of growth and development in the life of faith.

In this lesson we want to deal with

one matter which may help to clear up

some confusion and discouragement

which many people experience in their

desire to live the faith life. The Bible

clearly indicates that there is such a

thing as progression in the life of

faith. There are different levels of

faith or degrees of faith through which

a person may pass as he grows and

matures in the life of faith. Many

people, who are earnestly seeking to

live a life of faith, have undergone

needless discouragement because they

have not been able to fit their own

experiences into what they understand

about faith. Some have never

understood that there is a progressive-

ness in the life of faith that allows us

to move up the ladder and move on

at different points of growth.

NO SHORT CUT TO MATURITY

I remember that one time after

hearing Duncan Campbell preach, I

said, "I'll never preach again until I

can have on my life the anointing of

God that that man has." I had been so

under conviction and was so conscious

of my own nothingness that I walked

out of that service determined never

to preach again. I found out that there

were about fifty or sixty other

preachers who felt the same way. I

was in a state of absolute distress in

my life because I was ignorant of the

fact that although a person can be

cleansed of sin in an instant, it takes

God a lifetime to mature him. I was

looking at a man that God had disciplined for a lifetime, and I wanted to be like that man in one single experience. There is no such thing as instant maturity. And until I realized that fact, I was at a point of despair in my ministry.

The Bible tells us that whatsoever is not of faith is sin. Any way of life other than the faith life is sin, and it is my desire that not one person who reads these words will be satisfied with anything less than the life of faith. But within the context of the faith life there are many levels of experience, and there is no need for you to be discouraged or confused because your experience does not measure up to the experience of someone else or because your experience does not measure up to all that the Scriptures have to say about the life of faith.

Some time ago the Lord spoke to my heart and began to let me see a progressiveness in the faith life. What I saw brought some liberty to my own heart, and I want to share it with you in this lesson. As a background to what we are going to see, we might keep in mind what Paul wrote to the Romans when he said, "Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of our faith." (Romans 12:6)

A WEAK FAITH

In John we find the account of Thomas' encounter with Jesus after Jesus had been raised from the dead. From this incident Thomas has become known to many as "doubting Thomas." Thomas refused to believe the report of his fellow-disciples who had seen Jesus, and said that he would not believe that Jesus was alive unless he could see and touch the print of the nails in his hand and put his hand into Jesus' side. Jesus allowed him to do exactly that, and when Thomas could see with his physical eyes and touch with his hands, he believed that it was

the Lord. But he would not believe until after he could see and feel.

There are many people who have not learned to believe the things of the Lord simply because the Lord said them in his Word. They have to feel something before they can believe. They have to see something with their physical eyes before they will believe. I have found that this kind of desire in the heart of a believer is legitimate when it involves a genuine longing to establish the reality of the living Christ and His ability to do all that He says He can do. Many people pray, "Lord, if you're really real, do something to give me some evidence that I can really stake my life on. Allow me to see something so that I can believe." I believe that God in his mercy and grace will honor this kind of prayer. He does not respond to a spirit of belligerent doubt, but he will show Himself to the one who is honestly seeking Him. Even though God does not want a man to stay on this level, I am convinced that God will meet a man on this level. He will show Himself in some sense-world way to the man who is honestly seeking Him in order that that man might believe that Jesus is all that He claims to be.

A FAITH THAT WILL NOT FAINT

Another level of faith is illustrated in the parable about the widow and the unjust judge, recorded in Luke 18:1-8. The parable is about a certain widow who came before a wicked and ungodly judge requesting justice against someone who had harmed her. At first the judge paid no attention to her, but finally, because she was so persistent in her pleading, he gave in and granted her request. "And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:7,8)

This woman was not a person of great faith. She does not represent the kind of mature and dynamic faith that gets a word from God and then confidently steps out upon that word knowing that God will do a miracle in order to keep His word. She was not able to confess by faith that the thing that she desired was already done. Her faith was a struggling kind of faith. But her faith was a faith that would not faint. She refused to be denied.

This woman came before a totally inhuman and ungodly man who had no concern whatsoever for her welfare. Jesus referred to this man's response in order to show us something of how God responds to a faith that will not faint. He said that if this inhuman and ungodly character would respond to a woman who had no political or social or economic power to use against him and would bow to this widow's wishes simply because she refused to give up, surely a holy God will speedily handle your problem for you. Even though this woman's faith was weak and struggling, God recognizes such a faith so long as it refuses to be denied. You may be in a situation right now in which you find that your faith is struggling. But if you refuse to be denied, God will see to it that your problem is handled. If this is the kind of faith that you have, do not be satisfied to stay there; but you can be encouraged to know that God will meet you where you are and respond to the faith that you have.

THE GRACE OF FAITH

There is another kind of faith that the Scripture speaks of a great deal. I'll refer to this kind of faith as the grace of faith. As we noticed in an earlier lesson, the grace of faith and the gift of faith are different. I believe that the grace of faith is given to all men. In fact, I am of the opinion that even lost people have the grace of faith—that is they have the ability to believe. On some occasions lost people

have tapped in on this faith principle and have accomplished great things for man and in some instances even for God. This principle of faith operates in almost every facet of life. In order to become operative, the grace of faith requires two things. First, there must be a need or a problem, or an opportunity. Secondly, there must be a promise from the Word of God.

Most of our problems are really opportunities. If you have a problem, that's God's invitation for you to believe. God is inviting you to come to Him and allow Him to meet your need. God is the supply looking for the need. You are the need looking for the supply, but long before you ever had the need, the supply was looking for the need. Needs can be either positive or negative. Sometimes we have overlooked the importance of positive needs—or opportunities. When the Jews first came to the land of Canaan, they had a tremendous opportunity. They could have gone on in with God, but they refused. Some people do not recognize that they have a need until there is something obviously wrong in their lives. Failure to take advantage of an opportunity can be just as bad in God's sight as allowing a wrong to remain in the life. We must trust the Lord to enable us to take advantage of our opportunities to move on in our Christian lives. This is of utmost importance, because the Lord doesn't have any permanent spiritual babies. The Lord either grows you up or gets you out of here. There is no indication that God will allow you to remain a spiritual baby. It does take time to mature, but you will not continue to be a baby. Part of growing up is having needs and allowing God to meet those needs—whether our needs involve something negative that must be changed or done away with, or a positive opportunity to move ahead for the Lord.

The second thing that is necessary in entering into the grace of faith is a word from God. Getting a word from God involves more than just reading

the Bible. It is more than just an intellectual understanding of the truths of the Scripture or the development of a system of doctrine. We get a word from God when the Holy Spirit of God witnesses with our spirit through the pages of the Scripture and makes that which is written come alive in our hearts. Sometimes the Holy Spirit speaks directly to the spirit of a man (but He never speaks anything contrary to that which is written in the pages of Scripture). However He speaks, when you have a word from God, you know it!

When you have a need and you have a word from God, you are obligated to act on that word. If you do not act, you have sinned against God. You have committed the sin of unbelief, the most heinous sin of all in the sight of God. And unbelief will keep you from entering in to all that God has for you.

The book of Hebrews warns us not to be like the people of Israel who failed to enter the land of Canaan: "So then we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief. Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it." (Hebrews 3:19; 4:1) This means that if you have a need or an opportunity and there is a promise for you that fits that situation, then you'd better fear if you fail to experience it.

This kind of faith is available to every one of us. The reason that you have all the problems that you're having is simply the fact that God is wanting to teach you how to believe Him. If you have a need, then I can assure you that there is a word from God. If you had a need and there wasn't a word from God that would mean that you and the devil had designed something that God didn't have a supply for—and if that were true, He wouldn't be God anymore! There is nothing that you or the devil or anyone else can do that is too big for the adequacy of God. There is a word for your need. And the bigger the need, the bigger the promise.

The kind of faith that we're talking about is illustrated beautifully in many places in the Scriptures. One example is found in Matthew 8:5-13. A centurion came to Jesus requesting healing for his servant. He asked Jesus to simply speak the word, confident that at the word of Jesus his servant could be healed. Jesus commended him for his faith and told him that he had everything that he had believed Jesus for. He believed the word that Jesus had given to him and returned home to find the servant well.

In an earlier lesson we referred to the account of the ten lepers who came to Jesus for healing. (Luke 17:11-19) Jesus gave them a word: He told them to go to the priest. When they still had leprosy He asked them to go to the priests to be examined, pronounced clean, and returned to society. He asked them to act like they were healed when they were not healed in order to be healed. To many that sounds like foolishness. But when you have a word from God Himself about your need—when God by His Spirit breathes upon His Word and causes it to become alive and real and personal to you—it is foolish not to step out on His Word. You can act on a word from God as though a thing is so when it is not so, and I'll guarantee you that it will be so. This is not the power of positive thinking. It is the power of positive acting—in obedience to the living God who gave you His word. God will do everything He tells you He'll do—if you'll believe. What happened to the ten lepers. They got healed **AS THEY WENT**, as they believed and acted upon the word from Jesus.

When Peter walked on the water, he had a need. He had a need to learn how to trust the Lord. Jesus stood out there on that water in glory. And Peter wanted to learn what it meant to stand in the glory of God. And Peter had a word from Jesus—"Come." He had a need. He had a word. And he stepped out. And it worked! He let the world know that through taking Jesus

at His word the natural laws of the universe could be broken, that the glory of God could supersede all the laws of the universe and lift a man out and stand him on glory.

THE GIFT OF FAITH

Most of us have never really reached this level of faith. But there's another one. I call this kind of faith the gift of faith. I don't pretend to know all about this area. In fact, I won't even attempt to deal with all that could be said in this area because God will not let me preach or teach that which I have not experienced. Paul said that he lived the Christian life "by the faith of the Son of God." Some of the marginal renderings of Mark 11:22 translate the latter part of that verse: "Have the faith of God." I believe that there can come a time in our lives when we become so broken and open before the Lord that He will by His Holy Spirit reveal to us Jesus Christ not only as Saviour and Master and Lord, but also as our faith. Jesus does more than just give you faith. He becomes your faith. Jesus not only wants to be our Saviour and our Sanctifier; He wants to be our faith. When Jesus Himself becomes our faith, we are brought into a degree of maturity in our walk with God in which we intuitively know the mind of God about given situations. When we face a given situation, we just know the mind of God. And when you know, you act in the faith of God. You act just like God would act.

I think that the Canaanite woman who came to Jesus reflects something of this kind of faith. (Matthew 15:21-28) She cried out to Jesus to deal with her daughter who was "grievously vexed with a devil." Jesus ignored her. The disciples wanted to send her away. Jesus discouraged her. But this woman seemed to have an insight into the heart of God Himself, and nothing—not even the reaction of Jesus—was going to keep her from experiencing what she knew to be the

mind of God. She acted on the integrity of God and knew that God was going to be God and work His will in her behalf regardless of what anyone said.

In an indirect way Jesus even called her a dog. But she replied, "Truth, Lord, yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table." When He heard that, Jesus said, "Great is thy faith." I don't know anything great but God. So I've just concluded she had God's faith.

Jesus wants to bring you to the place where He is your faith. He wants to bring you to the place where you will know the will of God and act in the faith of God and thereby see the glory of God. Let me share just one example from my own experience. One day a man called and asked that we pray for someone who was dying. I got together with two other men and we began to pray first of all for ourselves. After about fifteen minutes of praying for ourselves, the Holy Spirit said, "You can quit. He's all right. It's all settled." I then went to the hospital to see this man that I had known for many years. He said, "Manley, I'm glad to see you here. This man hasn't slept in 36 hours, and he's going to die just any moment now. He needs to talk to you." I said to the doctor, "He's not going to die." He was offended and told me that I'd better stick to preaching; He'd take care of the doctoring. He did everything he could to convince me that the man would die, but my faith was absolutely unshakable. There was not the slightest doubt that the man would live. And he did. He's running a Sherwin-Williams paint store today.

At that time I knew very little about faith. I didn't ask for that kind of faith. I didn't look through the Bible and find a promise to act on in that situation. I knew nothing about this matter of the gift of faith, but when I got in tune with the Lord and let the Lord have His way in my own personal life, I had the faith that it

was settled and I knew that he would live. There was no shadow of doubt in my mind that he was healed and that he would be perfectly all right. Even the doctor could not shake me.

Jesus Himself wants to be your faith today. That's where He's headed with your life. The thing for you to do is just to give up and let Him be your faith. The trip from you to Jesus is a short one, but sometimes it takes us a long time to decide to take it. Don't be discouraged if your faith is weak and struggling. God will meet you where you are and will honor the measure of faith that you have and will move you on and "grow" you in the life of faith. But never stop short and never be satisfied with anything less than discovering what it means to have Jesus Himself as your faith.

SUGGESTIONS FOR THOUGHT AND DISCUSSION

1. In the light of this lesson, how would you describe your faith? What do you feel to be the next step that

God would have you to take in the life of faith?

2. Can you think of a specific area in your life right now through which God is trying to teach you to believe Him? What specific action can you take in order to step out in faith—at some level—and believe God?

3. Perhaps you can easily think of needs in your life which are a call to faith. Can you also think of positive opportunities for which you need to believe God?

4. God does not want you to be discouraged because you have expected to find some short cut to a mature faith. Nor does He want you to be satisfied to remain immature in your faith. What specifically does this lesson say to you in your own set of circumstances about how you can avoid both of these errors?

Next Week:

Next week, in our final lesson, we'll "test" ourselves on our knowledge of the content of this quarterly as we answer a series of questions drawn from Lessons 1 - 12.

Review

It is the purpose of this final lesson to provide us the opportunity to review the material that we have covered as we "test" ourselves by answering the questions listed below.

One very important word of caution is necessary before we turn to the questions. It would be possible for you to score very well on questions covering the contents of this quarterly and never step out in a life of faith. All that we have talked about is of no avail to you personally until God by His Holy Spirit makes these truths operative in your life. May this be our prayer for one another as we come to the end of our study.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What is the source and object of our faith? Explain your answer.
2. In your own words explain the statement "Faith is substance."
3. What are the three elements of faith? Give examples that will show how each of these elements functions.
4. In what two worlds does the Christian live? In view of the fact that a Christian lives in these two worlds at the same time, how is he to determine what is truth?
5. What does it mean to "get a report?" Give some examples from the Bible of men who got a report.
6. Discuss the two statements: "Find out what God is doing in heaven, and join Him." "The world is not impressed with what you're doing for God; the world is impressed with what God is doing for you."
7. How would you describe the relationship between faith and action? Give some examples of faith in action.
8. What is the relationship between victory and faith? Between fruit bearing and faith? Between faith and giving (and receiving)?
9. What does it mean when we say that from God's point of view the supply precedes the need? How does this work out in the everyday experience of the Christian?
10. What are the "steps of faith" as we discussed them? What do we mean by "the fight of faith?"
11. Describe some of the characteristics of "the faith that pleases God" as illustrated from Daniel 3.
12. What did the twelve spies see? What did Caleb and Joshua see that the other ten did not see? (See Numbers 13 and 14).
13. How does the story of Jacob and his son Joseph illustrate the danger of believing the devil's lies? Show some similarities between Jacob's believing a lie and tendency that many Christians have to believe the devil's lies.
14. Discuss the statement: "Faith is the key to the Christian life." How does the life of Jesus confirm this statement?
15. Name the "enemies of faith" that we discussed. How does each of these hinder faith?
16. What are the different "levels" of faith through which we may pass as we grow toward maturity in the life of faith? Illustrate these levels. How should an awareness of the need for growth in faith keep me from being either discouraged or satisfied?

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Manley Beasley has had a tryst with death and has emerged the victor! In 1972, after a prolonged period of total disability, his first engagement was to preach in a revival at the Castle Hills Baptist Church. During the period of illness every truth he had preached about faith was put to the test and proved!

Much of the material in this presentation was preached in this meeting which was planned for one week and went into the third week. It was a life-changing experience for hundreds.

The information in this work will bring the believer to considerations of the most adventurous life this side of heaven...faith living. These concepts have been hammered out on the anvil of experience, having been heated in the fires of testing.

This information will bear reading and studying again and again. Learn it for yourself and teach it to your children.

I commend the truths contained here to you with prayers that the victory of faith which overcomes the world will be yours.

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