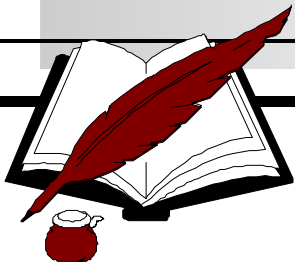


Think Red Ink



On Faith

Inside this issue:

Exposition on Faith	2-12
The Word of God	13-14
Excerpt from On The	15-16
Write to us	16

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

King James

"Now faith is the substantiating of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen."

Darby Translation

"And faith is of things hoped for a confidence, of matters not seen a conviction."

Young's Literal Translation

Hebrews 11:1

On Faith

"God answers prayer." *ALL prayer... but sometimes the answer is 'No' —* Excuses are made for the Creator of heaven and earth for not answering or granting the petitioner of His power their request. "You didn't have enough faith." "God may be late but He's always on time!" (As if that makes any sense.)

Does He indeed need us to make excuses for Him? Could we have simply misunderstood some illusive step in praying and receiving? What about the men and women of faith in the Scriptures who seemed to understand fully the secret that we are miss-

ing? Yet none of these exemplars in faith ever read any twentieth century books on receiving from God.

On a late night trip from Pennsylvania to my home in Ohio, I had great openings into the faith record in the 11th chapter of Hebrews. God opened to me great understandings of the elements of faith. It is so clear to me now; I am sure never to doubt again that God is indeed faithful to the words from His mouth. Through this revelation the sorrow of having prayers going "unanswered" has been permanently removed from my thoughts.

Pascal on Faith

Faith certainly tells us what the senses do not, but not the contrary of what they see; it is above, not against them.

Blaise Pascal (1623–62), French scientist, philosopher. *Pensées* (1670; no. 185 ed. by Krailshaimer, no. 265 ed. by Brunschvicg).

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

Hebrew 11:1

Huh? How's that again?

Has anything confused us more than this so-called definition of faith? It seems as though we knew more before we read this than after. Is there some mystery in this riddle that, once understood, will define this inexplicable thing called faith?

Can you define faith? Many will say, "Well faith is, . . . well . . . you know . . . faith." Which is really a better definition than most. As truth is a self-defining word, so is faith. One finds oneself *describing* rather than *defining* faith, saying what it is like rather than saying what it is.

Try to define the color "green" and more than likely you will find yourself describing it, usually by comparison. "It's like blue, only yellower" or "It's like yellow, only bluer." To define green perfectly you have to use a definition that brings the hearer unswervingly to the understanding of the color even if he has never seen it. So that, upon hearing and understanding the definition, he would say, "This is green, because, by the true definition, it cannot be anything else." Could it be possible to define this color so perfectly so as to obtain this declaration from a man even if that man were blind? An example of this would be, "Green is the resultant color rendered by the equal and thorough mixing of the primary colors yellow and blue." This definition is most adequate as it not only defines green, but also maps the action required to create it. Though the blind cannot "know" the color in all the ways sighted persons do, by assuming purity of ingredients, using this definition, he can surely create it as accurately. (This metaphor is most fitting because most of us

wishing to know faith's fullest definition and experience are as well equipped as the blind seeking to know the color green.)

Some attribute this *creative* quality to the verse above (Hebrews 11:1). I submit this verse is *not a formula to create faith* but a mere description of it. It is, in reality, less than that, but I will clarify what I mean by that later. The formula to *create* faith cannot be found within this verse. Actually the creation of faith, according to Scripture is not found. Faith is something that is given, not marshaled or created. According to Romans 10:17, Faith is not generated, it "comes." "*So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*" We will learn later what this hearing process is. Also, faith is misconstrued, or more perfectly, misunderstood to be something that can be grown. The Scripture records an answer given the disciples when they asked, "*Why could not we cast him (the devil) out?*"

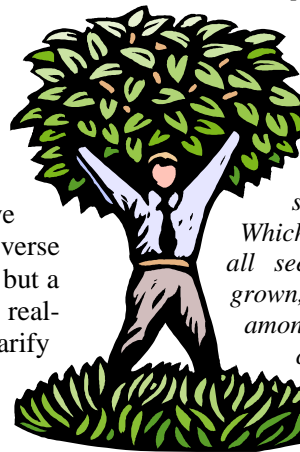
"And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you."

Matthew 17:20

When this idea of miracle working is pursued by mere action it produces no results. "We did our part," we think to ourselves, and not willing to lay blame on God, we subsequently place the cause of the failure at the *amount* of faith. We reason, "We don't have enough faith."

The modern faith teacher is more than happy to encourage this idea. If you buy his book you will learn how

to grow your faith. He will incorrectly couple this idea with what they call a "key" found in Matthew 13:31-32.



"Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: Which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof."

These teachers imply that the subject (because of the mustard seed reference) is faith, but this sentence is clear in its declaration of its subject – it is clearly the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God does start out small and with time becomes large and strong. As He went on in the Matthew account, Jesus also used the metaphor of "leaven" (previously used for sin) to describe the growth of the Kingdom. I think that the projection of one concept upon another has, unfortunately, created the idea that there is "big faith" and "small faith."

From there, teachers usually try to teach how to grow faith to this great size so we can do the really big miracles. They neglect that the Lord said we could move mountains with faith as a mustard seed, not a mustard tree. (Much can be learned from what is *not* said in Scripture. If one looks for the concept one thinks is there and does not find it in words, maybe the inference in an incorrect one.) If then size is not the factor, why then does Christ Himself refer to "great faith?" as in this Scripture:

Matthew 8:10, "*When Jesus heard it, he marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith,*

no, not in Israel.”

“Great faith” is better rendered from Greek “such faith.” It is a misconception of *faith’s character* to declare it small or large.

More perfectly, it should be considered fledgling or mature. Someone who is new to the life lived by faith could be considered fledglings in faith. Jesus called his disciples, then new to faith, a kind, yet diminutive term in the Greek “little-faiths.”

“Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye little faiths?”

Matthew 6:30 (modified)

Jesus made it clear that the size of faith was **not** a factor. He even tried to clarify the disciples’ faulty thinking in this area when they asked Him to increase their faith.

“And the apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith. And the Lord said, If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you.”

Luke 17:5-6

Listen to His answer, He said that the tiniest amount of faith could move a mountain, pluck up a tree, and make all things possible to us. It was as if He was steering them in another direction. We can hear in His answer, “You don’t need *more* faith, an amount of faith in the tiniest form you can imagine is enough to move mountains.” You may ask, “Why then, can’t we have the thing for which we earnestly pray in faith?” Is it because we don’t have *any* faith?

If it is true that faith is not large and small, cultivated or grown, we must deduce that we either have it or we don’t. Isn’t this true? If the Scriptures say we can have what we ask, if we have faith -- and we ask and don’t receive, can we, by that, deduce that we have no faith at all? I think we can confidently say that something is wrong with our understanding of faith, what faith is, its origin, its us-

age, and its place in the believer’s life. Let’s start over and with a fresh, unbiased perspective find what our own hearts tell us and what the Scriptures confirm about faith.

The Faith Chapter

Hebrews has always been informative and an interesting favorite of mine, but the last time I read it, a pattern developed as the words unfolded in my heart. Somehow I could see clearly, exactly what faith was. God was sharing secrets of this principle. I wanted to put into print what I understood that night. That is the purpose of this essay.

Reading this time through I was able to keep in the forefront of my mind, for the first time, the subject of the writing. This may sound simplistic, but it is a prevalent problem in Scripture interpretation. One of the worst practices to come from modern

Christianity is the *memorization* of Scriptures. Rote memorizing causes the inevitable lack of the contextual thought that each Scripture inherently possesses. As we read a text that we have previously memorized, our mind wanders to the inane and routine explanations and interpretations we learned previously. We skip over the fluid and intended thought that would arise otherwise. This problem, coupled with the lack of proper educative discipline, i.e. an inability to read compound sentences, makes the extraction of the subject, let alone any new information, nearly impossible. It is necessary to hold the thought that the writer held when we read what he wrote.

The book of Hebrews was written to Hebrews. These were the “brothers and kinsmen” Paul spoke of so fondly. He desired their conversion

and completion so much that he valued it above his own relationship to Christ. Look at this:

“I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh: Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God,

and the promises; Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.”

Romans 9:1-5

Reading [Hebrews] this time, I was able to keep in my mind, the subject of the writing.

The author of Hebrews was explaining the differences between law and faith. He makes it clear that we are to move away from the *le-*

gal, and toward *faith* for our justification now, and shows the shadows of this truth in the recitation of the Old Testament stories. He is introducing faith as an old concept, one that has been around from the beginning.

The one thing that stands out about these stories if you read them (and we will before continuing), is that these men and women heard from God. They were told that something was to happen, or they were made a promise, or they acted upon the immutable law of God. None of them could be accused of fanciful notions, foolhardy ideas, selfish motives, or personal ambitions.

Take the time now to read the 11th chapter of Hebrews afresh, as if for the first time, looking for these heros’ motivations.

Hebrews 11

1 Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. 2 For by it the elders obtained a good report. 3 Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.

4 By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh. 5 By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God. 6 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. 7 By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.

8 By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. 9 By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: 10 For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. 11 Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised. 12 Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable.

13 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. 14 For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. 15 And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. 16 But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.

17 By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, 18 Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: 19 Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure. 20 By faith Isaac

blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come. 21 By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff. 22 By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones.

23 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. 24 By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; 25 Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; 26 Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward. 27 By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible. 28 Through faith he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the firstborn should touch them.

29 By faith they passed through the Red sea as by dry land: which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned. 30 By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days. 31 By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace.

32 And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: 33 Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, 34 Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. 35 Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: 36 And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, more-over of bonds and imprisonment: 37 They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were emptied, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; 38 (Of whom the world was not worthy) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.

39 And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise:

40 God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.

THE WORD – THE FAITH – THE ACTION

Abraham is known as the “father of the faithful.” *“And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also:”*

Romans 4:11

“Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all,”

Romans 4:16

Abraham is a great model of faith. Let’s consider his actions and motivations. Three distinct parts will emerge from each account.

Look at the three ingredients in the promise of Isaac. This promise, the day it was spoken, was an *improbability* and with the passing of time was quickly becoming an *impossibility*. Abraham was honored because of the fact that, [THE WORD] *“He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; [THE FAITH] ...And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness.”* (Romans 4:20-22) And the verse before it says, *“And being not weak in faith, he . . . [THE ACTION] ...considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old...neither yet the deadness of Sara's womb:”*

THE WORD – THE FAITH – THE ACTION

On another occasion he was asked to offer Isaac on an altar of sacrifice.

[THE WORD] *...“And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.”* (Genesis 22:2) Somehow the apostle Paul was informed that Abraham received from God in “a figure” or vision or dream (presumably that night) that his son would be raised from the dead. *“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:*

Hebrews 11:17-19

[THE FAITH] *...Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure.”*

Nevertheless, this was a trial that Abraham passed that likely I would not. The thoughts of a man in this situation can only be speculated. However, the Scriptures say that he . . . [THE ACTION]... *“rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him”* (Genesis 22:3) and went out to do exactly what he was told to do. Again, the three elements of faith appear. THE WORD – THE FAITH – THE ACTION

Here we go again. *“Now the LORD had said unto Abram, [THE WORD] ...Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee:”* Genesis 12:1. Paul adds in Hebrews, *“By*

faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. [THE FAITH] ...By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: [THE ACTION] ...For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.” Again we see the trio. THE WORD – THE FAITH – THE ACTION

These examples and this pattern could be faithfully made throughout the list in the 11th chapter of Hebrews and throughout all the Scripture’s stories of men and women of faith. A word from the Lord gave Sarah the faith to do as He instructed. Though she wavered, she came to be listed in the heroes of faith. Isaac knew the promise of God and therefore believed and blessed his grandsons accordingly (as if what he believed was true). Moses had such an understanding of the Word of God (Jesus) he was said to have chosen to suffer the reproach of Christ! He actually *knew* the preexistent Christ and his faith led him to do exploits! Amazing!

You can apply this thought over all the acts of the men and women of faith — one pattern emerges every time:

The Word of God, The Faith in that Word and The Corresponding Action

THE ACTION

We will look at these parts individually and we'll start with "action." It seems to be the part we humans like best. Perhaps it is because we understand action because it gives us a sense of control. When a complicated project needs to be done, it is easy to find folks who are willing to tackle the task, yet have no apparent skill. They will say, "Just tell me what to do and I'll do it," especially if they have no idea where to start. In most of the areas where we need Spiritual guidance, we too, have no idea where to start. *Doing something* seems like a logical place to start. Doing something to save ourselves, heal ourselves, or remedy our situation is favored above waiting for an answer to our prayer. "God helps those who help themselves" is an old and accepted saying (and some even think it is Scripture). The nature of man is to act in the area he understands and to involve himself in any action over which he wishes to maintain control.

The concept of working to bring about a "miracle" is not new. As a matter of fact, it is such a palatable concept it is often used in cultic spiritualism and in modern, miracle-based Christianity to bring about what they term, "blessings from God." They are simply teaching visualization techniques that are nothing more than lasciviousness gone to seed, Desire it; believe it, and then go about to bring it to pass. (Which, by the way, according to Anton LeVey, the author of the Satanic Bible, is the same advice to bring about "miracles" by the power of Satan.) The "Christian" version of this, adds the advice, "Claim the promise" which is a reference to Scriptural promises claimed by the person as their own "word" from God. I want to say again what was said at the beginning, these men and women mentioned in Hebrews heard from God. They were told that something was to happen, or they were made a promise, or they acted upon the immutable law of God. None of them

could be accused of fanciful notions, foolhardy ideas, selfish motives, or personal ambitions.

Unfortunately for the simple, selfish masses, these visualization techniques and "name it and claim it" practices work very well. They do not work because they are blessed of God, but because of the power of positive thinking and the ability and power of the resolute spirit of man. These powers were put in us for good

The concept of working to bring about a "miracle" is not new.

and the accomplishment of God's will, but to use it correctly, our resolve needs to be to do His will, not ours. We need to make sure our action is in accord with the *genuine* word we *personally* received. Abraham, in a moment of doubting, (or at least in Sarah's time of doubting) clearly made the wrong choice. He went about to make "God's Word" true by impregnating Hagar his handmaid. This ACTION, was misapplied because it was not done in FAITH. Although It was done to bring about THE WORD (the promise) it caused the aggravations and battles that still go on today in Israel between the offspring of Isaac and Ishmael these two half brothers. Misapplied action, even if done in faith, can cause disaster, hinder, and in some cases, stop God's better plan.

The Other Side of Action

So should we do nothing but wait? No, - action is required, if one believes that they have the mind of God on a matter and that matter calls for service or action, (as if one says he has faith, yet he DOES nothing . . . his faith is worthless.) "For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also." James 2:26.

It naturally follows (and we all know within our selves, that we do what believe) that we should act according to our faith.

A story goes that a circus per-

former walks into the crowd after successfully walking across the high wire suspended above a gorge, and asked, "Do you believe I can go across pushing a wheel barrow? The crowd chanted Yes! Yes! Then stone silence fell as he prepared the wheelbarrow for the narrow journey and not a word in answer came when he asked, "now, who would like to ride?" Corresponding action is the ONLY indicator of unfeigned faith.

"What doth it profit, my brethren,

though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works. Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God. Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only." James 2:14-24

Action is a necessary, an integral, and indeed an inseparable part of faith. **Without action, faith is dead. Without faith, actions are useful, but only to our own ambitions for " . . . without faith it is impossible to please him . . ."** Hebrews 11:6

THE FAITH

Contrary to my opening remarks about its definition, faith should be rather simple to relate. Faith is simply trusting in something for which you have no substantive reason to trust. Remember, faith is only necessary when facts are not in evidence. As a matter of fact, when there are facts as evidence there is no need, nor does the possibility exist for faith. The absence of substance is an essential to faith. Example: To walk across a bridge that is in sight requires no faith, but a bridge that one cannot see requires faith to cross. Here's another more complicated example.

If you place a fluffy mattress behind you on the ground with the intention of falling backwards onto it, it requires no faith that it will be there to keep you from harm, but to depend on a friend to catch you from behind before you hit the ground is another matter entirely. To have trust in the friend encompasses this idea of faith. You must have faith in their *ability, desire, opportunity*, and their *willingness* to do as you wish. When these facts are not in evidence, faith is absolutely necessary.

When trusting God and walking by faith takes us into circumstances that are fearful, we may have to step by faith. Sometimes, some, but not all of the facts are there, and some are dubious and obscure. Faith like this is much like walking across a bridge one can see, but is rotten or rickety. There are boards missing and loose. One's faith tends to jump from board to board as one walks; footfalls are placed strategically and carefully. At this point we will find comfort in the commission, the words of God – spoken to us – personally.

The story of the shipwreck in Acts 27 is a nice analogy to this concept. This “complicated” faith emerges in Christian faith as we rely on our “boards and broken pieces of the ship” (things we can see) and not on the word of God, i.e. “God has

given thee all that sail with thee.” We tend to consider the buoyancy of the boards and not the promise given. Rather than trusting in ability (buoyancy of the boards) we should trust in the power of God. I believe Peter started to sink at the very instant he thought he was able to float. (I realize not everyone will understand that last statement, but someone will.)

...the
simple
definition
of faith is
“trust.”

Albeit incomplete, the simple definition of faith is trust. This technical definition is simple because it demands only that a word be used in the place of faith. The spiritual idea must be more, however. When one speaks of a spiritual faith it requires an object. When someone declares that they have faith, the word itself demands that they state as well where their faith is placed

The Apostle Paul (as well as all the Apostles) spoke of THE faith.

“I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept **the faith.**” 2 Timothy 4:7

It was well understood that this was not just faith, but **The Faith**, faith in Christ, the Christian faith. It was known throughout the New Testament, if one spoke of the faith, it was faith in Jesus Christ.

Today we may say to each other, “Keep the faith!” or, when in distress we may say, “In times like this, ya gotta have faith.” These are colloquialism or slang for “be positive” or “keep a good attitude.” They are ghastly uses of the word faith and nearly blasphemous to the term The Faith. When a friend has trouble and is in need and says he is keeping the faith, are you not curious to ask, “Faith in what?”

When we feel faith within our

own selves and obtain strength and encouragement from it, do we not owe it to truth to ask ourselves, in what do we place our faith? Keeping the faith is nearly always equated to smiling and a “Keeping a stiff upper lip”, but, a person with faith that the stock market will bounce back and maintain an upward trend and a person that has faith that God will meet their needs, may have the very same smile and cheery disposition. One has his faith in the economy and the resilience of

the monetary system and the other has his faith in a living God.

Remember also that faith in Christ will not necessarily facilitate a happy face. (How can one believe in judgment, or the surety of suffering for sin, the consequences of forsaking God's law and have lighthearted thoughts about it at the same time?)

I like the word *trust*, better than *faith*. Faith has been rendered by the modern Christian as ethereal, magical, wish-based, or surreal. The word *trust* demands an object. You may be asked, “So what do you think of this economy?” If you answer that you have faith they will likely nod knowingly (although they don't know at all) and wish you well. However, if you answer, “I have trust”, you will be asked, “Trust in what?” The word *trust* demands an object.

All in all, faith (trust) is when one overlooks what he does not know or understand, ignores any facts to the contrary and BELIEVES the word given to him. This may come with ease, but it may come with difficulty. Therein lie the concepts of great and little faith. It is not the *faith* that is small or large, it is your confidence and reliance upon it that determines the state of maturity of your faith. Let's look at examples.

Great Faith

Here is a combination of Luke 7:1-10, Matthew 8:5-13

Now when he had ended all his sayings in the audience of the people, he entered into Capernaum. And a certain centurion's servant, who was dear unto him, was sick, and ready to die. And when he heard of Jesus, he sent unto him the elders of the Jews, beseeching him that he would come and heal his servant. And when they came to Jesus, they besought him instantly, saying, Lord, the servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented and they said, that he was worthy for whom he should do this: For he loveth our nation, and he hath built us a synagogue. And Jesus saith unto him, I will come and heal him. Then Jesus went with them. And when he was now not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to him, saying unto him, Lord, trouble not thyself: for I am not worthy that thou shouldst enter under my roof: Wherefore neither thought I myself worthy to come unto thee: but say in a word, and my servant shall be healed. For I also am a man set under authority, having under me soldiers, and I say unto one, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it. When Jesus heard these things, he marvelled at him, and turned him about, and said unto the people that followed him, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. And Jesus said unto the centurion, Go thy way; and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee. And they that were sent, returning to the house, they found the servant that had been sick healed in the selfsame hour.

What was great about the Centurion's faith? He had an understanding of *authority*. He explained to Jesus that he knows that it only requires a word from one in authority to cause his will to be done. I can imagine the wonder of Jesus as he witnesses this example of faith, "Don't you want to touch my garment or something?" To which the answer would have been, "No thank you." This man sought a **WORD from Christ** to bring the healing to pass. His FAITH was established beforehand. His ACTION was in waiting, anticipating a word from Christ. He knew the ingredients. THE WORD – THE FAITH – THE ACTION

Let's look at another example from Matthew 15:21-28 and Mark 7:25-30.

"Then Jesus went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. And, behold, a certain woman of Canaan whose young daughter had an unclean spirit, heard of him, and came and fell at his feet, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil. The woman was a Greek, a Syrophenician by nation; and she besought him that he would cast forth the devil out of her daughter. But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away for she crieth after us. But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me. But he answered and said, Let the children first be filled: for it is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it unto the dogs. And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which

fall from their masters' table. Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith. For this saying go thy way; the devil is gone out of thy daughter be it unto thee even as thou wilt And when she was come to her house, she found the devil gone out, and her daughter laid upon the bed" And her daughter was made whole from that very hour."

Here some history may be necessary. The Canaanites were definitely not part of the Jew's mission or ministry, nor were they part of Christ's ministry. This may come as a shock to most, but Jesus didn't come to save the Gentiles. They were considered (and they knew it) to be dogs. It is the rejection that the Jews accorded Him when He appeared that opened the way for us. This is a great mystery well worth your study. Although few of us know this, it was common knowledge of those days. No one was surprised that Jesus was less than receptive to this outcast woman. It was her understanding of His reception by the Jews that got His attention. She said, effectively, "The Jews aren't sitting at your table, are there no crumbs for the dogs?" Remember the statement, "For that saying..." it was what she said that captured Him. Her ACTION was her *tenacity*. Her FAITH was ready to be put into His WORD when He said it. But, she knew she had to have the WORD, "*Thy daughter is whole*" Her faith was considered great because of the *confidence* she had in the word of Christ. Like the centurion, **the word** is what she came to receive. She knew the ingredients. THE WORD – THE FAITH – THE ACTION

It is obvious that faith is considered great when it has a seasoned quality of waiting and a surety of confidence. These examples were of those who had no word as yet. They sought the word from Christ to make complete their faith, and bring to pass their desires. Contrast these to the house of Israel that had Messiah sent to them ready, willing, and able to take them to Himself.

Matthew 23:37-38, "*O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.*"

Little Faith

Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is in the field, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? (Matthew 6:30 Luke 12:28 combined)

This is a general admonition to hold God in the forefront as provider; a doubt in which we often find ourselves indulging. Our level of faith maturity will be reflected in our assurance of His provision.

"Now it came to pass on a certain day, when the even was come, he saith unto them, Let us pass over unto the other side of the lake. And when he was entered into a ship, his disciples followed him and they launched forth. And there were also with him other little ships. But as they sailed he fell asleep: and there came down a storm of wind, a great tempest on the lake and the waves beat into the ship, insomuch that the ship was covered

with the waves so that it was now full and was in jeopardy: but he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow. And his disciples came to him, and awoke him, saying, Lord, save us and asking, Master, carest thou not that we perish? And he saith unto them, Why are ye so fearful, O ye of little faith? How is it that ye have no faith? Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the raging sea; and said unto the sea, Peace, be still and there was a great calm. And he said unto them, Where is your faith? But the men marvelled, saying, What manner of man is this! for he commandeth even the winds and water, and they obey him."

(Matthew 8:23-27, Mark 4:35-41, Luke 8:22-25 combined)

Notice Christ equates little faith with no faith. Have you ever wondered what the Lord wanted His disciples to do? Did He want them to speak to the storm? I think He did. THE WORD, one of our ingredients, was present in the command, "Let us go over to the other side of the lake." THE ACTION was to go into a ship and pursue the commission. When the snag comes, in this case a storm, the authority of the called should come to the fore. Remember Jesus' words to his disciples,

"And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven. Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you." Luke 10:18-19.

The problem was that these were fishers well acquainted with the destructive power of the sea. They had known of lives being claimed out there. They would have to change their minds and habits about very familiar things -- a task very difficult indeed. The ingredient missing here was THE FAITH.

This Faith Lesson Continues Another Day

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

(Matthew 14:22-33)

Like a father reaching for the tottering bicycle while

teaching his child to ride, Jesus asks, "Why did you doubt? You were doing fine!" Many times we say sarcastically if someone thinks too highly of another, "They think he walks on water," leaving the impression that no one can do that except the Lord Jesus. Actually two people walked on water in history. A point to make about judging the *size* of faith is this, Jesus called this one who walked on water a "little-faith." Peter did this with "little faith," but this is an enterprise I would not recommend to the greatest men of faith I know. Again, I think the best term is "fledgling faith."

A More Dangerous Example

From Matthew 16:6-12, Luke 12:1, Mark 8:14-21 combined -- *"Now the disciples had forgotten to take bread, neither had they in the ship with them more than one loaf. He began to say unto his disciples first of all, Take heed and beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees, and of the leaven of Herod, which is hypocrisy. And they reasoned among themselves, saying, It is because we have taken no bread. Which when Jesus perceived, he said unto them, O ye of little faith, why reason ye among yourselves, because ye have brought no bread? Do ye not yet understand, perceive ye not yet, and do ye not remember? Have ye your heart yet hardened? Having eyes, see ye not? and having ears, hear ye not? Remember when I brake the five loaves among five thousand and how many baskets ye took up? They say unto him, Twelve. And when the seven among four thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took ye up? And they said Seven. How is it that ye do not understand that I spake it not to you concerning bread, that ye should beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees? Then understood they how that he bade them not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees."*

Because of a lack of faith in God's supply and concern for our own ego, a dangerous gap in theology occurred. The Lord Himself was issuing a warning of danger and his disciples could neither hear nor understand. They had other concerns and as sycophant workers they were bowing to the CEO of the corporation. Their concern was to cover their mistakes and their thoughts were irrevocably committed to their own vindication. There was no faith in operation here at all. This gradually aggravated the Lord and provoked comments as faithless and perverse to come to light in the case of the demoniac brought to Christ.

"And when he came to his disciples, he saw a great multitude about them, and the scribes questioning with them. And straightway all the people, when they beheld him, were greatly amazed, and running to him saluted him. And he asked the scribes, What question ye with them? And when they were come to the multitude, there came to him a certain man, kneeling down to him, and saying, Lord, have mercy, I have brought unto thee my son, which hath a dumb spirit for he is lunatick, and sore vexed: for oftentimes he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water. And I brought him to thy disciples, and they could not cure him. And wheresoever he taketh him, he teareth him: and he foameth, and gnasheth with his teeth, and pineth away: and I spake to thy disciples that they should cast him out; and they could not. He answereth him, and saith O faithless and perverse

generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him hither to me. And they brought him unto him: and when he saw him, straightway the spirit tare him; and he fell on the ground, and wallowed foaming. And he asked his father, How long is it ago since this came unto him? And he said, Of a child. And oftentimes it hath cast him into the fire, and into the waters, to destroy him: but if thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us. Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth. And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief. When Jesus saw that the people came running together, he rebuked the devil; the foul spirit, saying unto him, Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him. And the spirit cried, and rent him sore, and came out of him: and he was as one dead; insomuch that many said, He is dead. But Jesus took him by the hand, and lifted him up; and he arose and the child was cured from that very hour. And when he was come into the house, his disciples asked him apart privately, Why could not we cast him out? And he said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you. Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.”

Mark 9:14-29, Matthew 17:14-21

The Lord wants and even commands us to have faith saying, “Have faith in God.” (Mark 11:22b) This is rendered in Greek, “Have the faith of God.” The faith of God is unswerving, confident, and assured faith that what He promises He is able to perform. This is why He could, without flinching, place the two adjectives, **faithless** and **perverse** in the same sentence. We should place as much importance on this as the Lord did. Our concern for ourselves, and doubting God can put us in the category of

perverse. Look who is included in the list of the damned: “But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.” (Revelation 21:8)

When Jesus tells His disciples why they could not cast out the devil, He used the phrase, “Because of your unbelief.” He did not say they didn’t have *enough* faith or that their faith was not *large enough*, faith was not there. The disciples inquiry was almost like, “Master, did we need a greater faith?” I can hear a message behind the words of Christ: “...if your faith were the size of the smallest seed it would have been enough. The problem was that faith wasn’t there at all. You doubted my word. I gave you power and authority over unclean spirits and you doubted it...” then He added, “Howbeit (although) this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.” This tenacious demon played the same role as the contrary wind and sea was to the prior mission. The disciples would have spoken to this demon and cast it out if the lesson from the Sea of Galilee was learned. They had no faith in this situation either. They did not speak to the wind in faith and they likely did not speak to this demon either. They had the command, the word, they knew what action to take, but they did not have the faith.

Can belief and unbelief be in the same spirit of man? It probably can, but it would be worth little. It is described well in James 1:8, “A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.” James goes on to say that this man will not receive anything from God. The King James poorly translates the account of the man with the demon possessed son when he said to Jesus, “I believe, help thou mine unbelief.” The Aramaic Peshitta translates this as, “I do believe, help my little faith.” He recognized his own fledgling faith and admitting that to Christ, asked for help. Fledgling faith is enough at the start of one’s spiritual journey, but not forever. Our Lord

Jesus expects us to mature and come to the fullness of the knowledge of God and unity of faith.

What about Faith in Christ? (Saving Faith)

I am convinced that we are recipients of the faith of Christ as a gift to save our souls. We don’t *generate* belief in Christ; it is given to us. When we are told to believe in Jesus as an act of our will, that demand has no Biblical basis. Belief in Christ as savior is not a matter of volition or will. Your decision to live for Him *is* your will, but deciding to believe is not your doing. It is a gift. For by grace ye are saved through **faith**, and THAT [faith is] NOT OF YOURSELVES, it is the gift of God. It’s odd how we read one thing and think another. As we read the passage above cited, we think, “for by faith are ye saved through grace.” The fact that the faith is not an act of our own will is good news, however. After we examine our feeble faith and see that, in some cases it is even nonexistent, it is nice to know that the faith required to save us is not in our control at all.

God *gives* this faith to those who follow Him. There comes a time when a man or woman, who follows God and desires His will and earnestly seeks Him, is visited by God and He enlightens their heart and speaks this assurance to them in words unknown to anyone else. Then one hears this confirmation and feels this adoption take place. It is then that the faith is placed in the heart. Only then can we have faith that God raised Jesus Christ from the dead and that He will apply that power to raise us on the last day.

Our duty is, as was the Syrophenician woman and the Roman centurion, **to seek that word** in which we can put our faith. But where will we find it? Where do we find “The Word” Where will we look now that Christ is risen? Shall we go up to heaven and search it? Shall we search all of hell? Reading Romans 10:6-10 will answer,

“But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into

heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:) Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead) But what saith it? **The word** is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”

THE WORD

Hearing the Word of God is essential for faith. We must hear the Word given to us, pertaining to the matter at hand. To have faith in the Word is not faith that the word is merely pertinent or applicable to us, it is to have faith that the word we *have received* is indeed true. Also, it must be our Word, given to us – by God Himself. Today, it is very popular to say, “I am claiming this Scripture as my word from God,” (not having received it by revelation but merely by reading it).

Those who presume upon the Scripture like this are not simply believing the Scriptures are true, they are believing that their *assumption* as to their application is true. The logical deduction will turn an honest person to admit that they are placing faith only in themselves, not the Author of the Scriptures.

Faith in the Immutable Word

One form of faith in God’s Word is faith in the immutable (unchangeable) Word. I mentioned before that the heroes of faith acted either on the Word of God or the Immutable Law of God. What is the Immutable Word of God? There are several examples of this, but the best example is the Law of God. If we place our faith in the immutable Law, we would not be unrewarded. We can place our trust in it because it is *un-*

changeable and we can have the assurance that adherence and obedience to that word is a thing most precious to the Lawgiver.

A good example would be the three Hebrew children of Daniel 3. They did not receive a special revelation to reject the King’s commandment to bow down and worship when the music was heard; They did not have to receive such a commandment because the unchangeable law of God had already been given.

Exodus 20:3-5, “*Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God. . .*”

For them there was no decision to make, no alternatives to contemplate. They were also settled on dying, if necessary, to obey God. There was nothing presumptuous about them, even as they spoke to the King.

“*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 3:16-18.

When we act in faith to the immutable Word, we can act in full assurance of faith in God. Not **presuming** He will do miracles on our behalf, but obeying for obedience sake, we can know that we are in the center of His will. When deliverance comes, if it comes, we can know that it is a confirmation of our actions toward His Word.

Faith in the Word of God

It is a rare person who has the fortitude required to speak the thought that we all think deep within ourselves; that the God we all expect to answer our prayers — simply doesn’t do so. I challenge you to be that honest one. How many of us have endured the long night, the watchings over the sick and dying, the waiting for the miracle that was never granted? Somehow, we think we are not to question why. We dare not complain or doubt out loud. We dare not say that God never cared, or that He couldn’t or wouldn’t help. So what happened? Did we not have faith? Does He not hear? Does He not care?

If you have struggled with these thoughts I have some avenues to share that maybe you have not considered. We may even be pleasantly surprised that God’s nature is not fickle and unreliable, nor is He moody and unpredictable. Nor is it that you have left out a step of some formula, or that there hides within you some unconfessed sin, or any such nonsense as that. God is faithful to His Word and you can receive help from a loving and mighty God. God does not work in formulas like magic or voodoo, He works with us as any father would His obedient children. It is distasteful to me to put this concept into a formula of steps one, two, three. Formulaic concepts applied to spiritual things are dangerous and damaging. Frankly, I expanded the concept into steps or elements because that is the way they can be seen as *ingredients* of this experience of faith. They are so interconnected and integral one of another they cannot be truly separated, i.e. you cannot believe what you do not hear nor can you have true faith without action and so on. In the case however, where it fails to work, it will help you to examine these elements so that you can realign your thinking.

Let’s review what we have learned so far. We have found simply that the men and women of faith, **heard** from God, **believed** what He said, and then **acted** as if what He

said was true.

Look at these Scriptures:

“I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him. But the prophet, which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die. And if thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the word which the LORD hath not spoken? When a prophet speaketh in the name of the LORD, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him.” (Deuteronomy 18:18-22)

What is this sin of presumption? It was simply this: When someone acts upon an impulse, or notion that he fancies was given to him by God. It may be a “good” thing or an evil thing. It makes no difference of intention or design or means or end. If it is done as if it was faith in Gods word, and He did not commission it, it is presumption. There was a time when Moses scolded the Israelites for not acting on God’s word when He told them to go and fight the battles of the Promised Land. Do you remember when Caleb and Joshua brought back the good report and all the people believed the cowards and shrank in fear? Do you know that after the rejected their messengers, and Moses scolded them for it, they repented and were ashamed and set about to rectify the situation? They decided to go into the land they were promised and **DOING EXACTLY AS THE LORD HAD SAID** the day before. The result? They experienced a **BITTER DEFEAT**.

“So I spake unto you; and ye would not hear, but rebelled against the commandment of the LORD, and went presumptuously

up into the hill. And the Amorites, which dwelt in that mountain, came out against you, and chased you, as bees do, and destroyed you in Seir, even unto Hormah. And ye returned and wept before the LORD; but the LORD would not hearken to your voice, nor give ear unto you.” (Deuteronomy 1:43-45)

How could this happen? How can anyone act upon the Word of God and be defeated? Simply by acting **PRESUMPTUOUSLY**. How does the Word of God “cause” presumption? It really doesn’t... it is our reaction to that Word that causes presumption. **It was initial disobedience and the passing of time changed the Word of God into the words of God.**

The Word of God must be acted upon immediately or it will degenerate. We cannot act in true faith if the “word” upon which we act is past history. Actions taken after the fact are as wrong as acting on your own will or ideas. They are both *damning presumptions*.

God views your **presumption** as “despising” His Word.

When we take the **WORDS** of God and make them out to be the **WORD OF GOD**, we are acting presumptuously. The manna in the wilderness was an example. Jesus said, “I am that bread that fell in the wilderness.” He is the Word of God. He said, “Man shall live, not by bread but by every Word that *proceedeth* out of the mouth of God.” Notice the present tense. That “**proceedeth**”, not, “that *proceeded*” (past tense). Sometimes the older English confuses us. Exchange the words “*proceedeth* and *proceeded*” for “comes and came.” We are not to live by the words that **came** from His mouth; we are to live by the freshest words as they **COME** from His mouth. We are

not to presumptuously try to reactivate, or by our action or so-called faith try to claim, what He said 2000 or 4000 years ago, but we are to seek His Word today – while we hear His voice. (Hebrews 4) The manna stored for only a day, rotted and was unusable and even stank; the Word of the Lord endures forever. To claim a promise not given you, or to hold to a promise of the past that you did not act upon is, according to the Scripture, to despise the living Word of God. God views your presumption as “despising” His word.

“But the soul that doeth ought [anything] presumptuously, whether he be born in the land, or a stranger, the same reproacheth the LORD; and that soul shall be cut off from among his people. Because he hath despised the word of the LORD, and hath broken his commandment, that soul shall utterly be cut off; his iniquity shall be upon him.”

(Numbers 15:30-31)

*We must seek
new and fresh
revelation
every day.*

We must be careful to seek new and fresh revela-

tion every day. We must seek God Not for miracles, but for a **WORD** to act upon to prove ourselves faithful. If that

Word does not come, we must accept patiently the providence of God, give thanks in all things, and say and believe “Thy will be done.” We cannot just grab vague references from the Bible, hold them up to God as if He said them to us, and claim that He owes provisions or blessings. If we do, we are being presumptuous and showing that we despise His fresh, daily bread; His Living Word, Jesus Christ.

“The Bible is the

Word of God. – The Word of God is the Bible.”

Do you have any concerns with these two statements? Do you disagree with one or both of these? How did we come to believe and hold dear these as statements of doctrine? The conventional Christian of today will usually place anyone that does not hold these as true and self evident into a category of heretic, fraud, blasphemer or false prophet. The use of the term (and indeed the title) “The Word of God” when reference is made to the Bible, is the most destructive idea to sound doctrine to come from the reformation. When teaching on this, I can say with little resistance, “The Word of God is not the Bible”. People will still listen attentively. But to make the statement, “The Bible is not the Word of God” will set the hot tar to boiling. Why does one statement bother us and the other does not? It is not logical. It is like being satisfied that three times seven is twenty-one but seven times three has to be something else. If one statement is true, why then does the logical reciprocal make us flare? This can be nothing less than brainwashing.

This pet doctrine has become a wall erected between God and His people. The true meaning is lost; the false meaning is accepted and ingrained deeply. So as not to be misunderstood, I’ll say again, the Bible being considered the Word of God, the Word, God’s Word, or any derivation of the thought is destructive to the sound doctrine *and* vocabulary of the Scriptures. Why such a statement? It is because our faith, the whole Christian faith, is based on The Word of God being alive and working in us. The revelation of Christ himself residing in soul and spirit of the believer hangs in jeopardy when one transmogrifies Christ into a book. He is not a book. He is not words on a page. He is alive and powerful. His words are sharper than any sword. He longs to speak to the quiet and contrite heart. We cannot arbitrarily change a definition of a word in Scripture and accurately interpret any that contain that word!

In our day, when some one uses the descriptive title “the Word of God,” in its proper definition, (in reference to Christ) it is strained and awkward. Its use, however, in reference to the Bible, although it has NO basis in the Scriptures, is to us a free-flowing and natural one. We must understand that we have been taught error. Whether it is an insidious plan of our arch-enemy, or whether we have been purposefully deceived, we have been taught error.

I promise a whole new world of Bible understanding awaits the person that embraces this concept. We have been drawn *from* the very sustenance and power of God and been

given a book that is only a shadow, a mere echo of the voice and power of the One it replaces. As we try to extract life from paper and ink, we are as orphans looking at torn and faded photographs and tearstained letters of the past in comparison to the vibrant life force of the resurrected Word of God in whom we should live and move and have our being. Of modern Christianity, who can say with the Apostle Paul, “...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.) I urge you to shake off the idea that God’s Word has been reduced to paper and ink and call on the living Word of God to manifest Himself to you. You will soon find that the promise of Jeremiah 31:31 is not God’s writing of words on your heart by memorization, or rote learning, but the very residence of the Word of God Himself. Christ has come to teach His People Himself!

We Must Hear From God.

When I first started to understand that I must hear from God directly, I felt an overwhelming discouragement. I can no longer have faith in promises that were never made to me personally but were made to others. If you feel this discouragement you may fight against this revelation. Hold on. There is no reason to despair.

The promise, for example, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee may not have been written to you, but I think that contemplation on this subject and the offering and opening of a pure and contrite heart before God will reap

rewards yet unknown to you. Your heart will soon be filled with these words of promise. When this revelation comes to you, it is yours to have and hold — in faith. Not as a stark faith, *hoping* that it is true, but a real and lasting opening of

your spirit and a hearing of God’s voice. These words of Christ were a simple example of application to one’s life, but all of the truths of the Bible and the openings of prophets are available for revelation by God to us as fresh manna, or “*Bread of Life*,” in which we can place our full assurance. To have the Word of God revealed to you bit by bit is much like the disciples were taught. As you place faith in what you are “told,” you will be given more and more till one day you speak the Word of God from your own mouth as Peter did. When he confessed Jesus was the Son of 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.’”

(Matthew 16:16-17)

We must understand that we have been taught error. Whether it is an insidious plan of our arch-enemy, or whether we have been purposefully deceived, we have been taught error.

This eliminates in short order the false guilt placed upon the saints for not fulfilling worldwide commissions that were never given to us. We don't have to answer for the lack of power over vipers or immunity to poison. (Luke 10 19) The power is not present in all of us because **it was not said to all of us, it is not our commission.** These to whom it was said, however displayed the power of God over all these hazards and more. We are responsible for what is said to us. We are to place our faith in our own commissions and believe the Word spoken to us, not wallow in the inevitable defeat of trying to resurrect a dispensation accorded our predecessors. We can no more conjure up God's power by using His recorded words to men of the past, mistakenly applied on our behalf, than we can part the Red Sea by claiming as our own, the words spoken to Moses. We are quick to condemn those who would claim a promise not given them in order to make a gain for themselves, but it is just as much presumption to claim another's commission (even though it may be done for unselfish purposes). This is what we do when we create personal burdens out of "go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." How much more power will be available to you who after hearing God's voice to speak to you personally

and, placing faith in your own commission, minister on God's behalf. To hear God say, "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel." would give you the same power that it gave to the early church. Let us seek the Living Word [let us seek Christ]; let us forsake the rehearsing of former commissions and words given to Moses and Elijah and hear the beloved son of God as the Father Himself commanded at the transfiguration. This is my Son...Hear Him

As we learn to avoid presumption and act only on the word revealed to us we will grow in faith and maturity and our lives will take on a new strength and quality that will appear to others as confidence. We will understand more deeply, and care more honestly, and love people, not with the love we read about, but with the love that has been *revealed to us*, the love shed abroad in OUR hearts. Our lives take on an eternal hue and dimension unavailable to the superficial, shallow and self-ish "claimer" of promises, and we become Friends of God as we listen and obey, putting faith in what we hear in our own hearts.



From time to time one may hear someone say, "That's a good question." This can mean a variety of things to the one who says it and to the one who hears it. Usually it means, "I'll have to think of an answer." As I read the questions of Christ in the Gospels, I was constantly saying to myself, "That's a good question..." and almost immediately I would add, "... and it deserves an honest answer."

Then I endeavored to gather and examine all the recorded questions Jesus asked throughout His life and ministry and honestly attempted to answer them, or to apply their rhetorical truth, one by one, for myself. The idea of this guide is for you, the reader, to do the same. You will find here, riches yet untapped, available by a simple honest approach to the questions of Christ. Answers to these questions provide a sound basis to answer questions of life. A foundation of solid understanding awaits an honest seeker.

Much of our time and consideration is given to the questions that we ask God. These questions often go unanswered and leave us in a state of confusion worse than before we asked. Is it that they have no answer? As C. S. Lewis asked, "Can a mortal ask questions which God finds unanswerable? Quite easily, I should think. All nonsense questions are unanswerable." But what about the question He asked us? Because they were formulated in the mind of the Son of God they must be answerable and of inestimable value as well.

The following is an excerpt from the book "On the Questions of Jesus" by Don Harris.

When I sent you with nothing, did you lack anything?

Luke 22:35, "And he said unto them, When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye any thing? And they said, 'Nothing.'" Reference Luke 10:1-4, Mark 6:8-9

Waiting on the Lord's provision is probably one of the most difficult areas for the "responsible" Christian. If we take seriously our duty to provide for our house to avoid being labeled by the Scriptures as "worse than an infidel," then we want to exercise some control over our daily needs. How does this effort of providing for one's family balance with the Lord's admonition to seek the Lord and all these things (what we eat, drink, and wear for clothing) will be added to us. If we heard of a man who would not *work* to supply his family with food but instead said to them, "Seek the Lord and all these things will be added to you," we would know within ourselves that this man has much to learn about Christian living. Yet the other extreme of being sole provider soon robs God of His rightful place of providence and guidance. The Bible gives us no clear dividing line as to what is our responsibility and what is our Father's. (It is in situations like these that I feel sorry for those who look to their Bibles for the guidance promised to us through the Holy Spirit.)

In times like these, the Spirit of God can lead us to perfectly balance our lives to please God in every way. As we start to take too much control, the voice of the Spirit speaks to our heart and tells us so; and if we obey, we find ourselves curbing our ambition, perhaps not seeking, or even turning down that promotion. Or, we may find that we are not adding to our possessions, but sometimes, going in the opposite direction all together, we give away our "nest egg" to someone in need. As we listen and obey, we may find that God has only blessed us hitherto to hold in store for someone else. What we hold, we hold in an open hand. What we earn, we earn with an ear open to our Father's call to come aside awhile and rest in His provision. It is life in this balance; it is life under the direction of God who will keep us in perfect harmony with His divine plan for us. We need not fear living in offense of His command to provide. Nor need we fear offending the equal and opposite command to avoid anxiously asking, "What shall we eat or wear?" His provision is forthcoming to those who give without reservation and live responsibly, and His peace abounds to those who look to Him for guidance. His will may take forms unrecognizable to us at first. His provision may well *be* the promotion, but it may be as well the financial reversal or the loss. As He leads, where He leads, we follow. (To hear some talk, one would think that God follows them.)

Still it is difficult for the responsible man to expect from God what he could easily provide for himself. We have a tendency to only expect God to intervene or act when we have done all we know to do. We even have a cliché to express such a sentiment. "God only helps those who help themselves" – when in fact the Bible says that God sends rain and sun on the just and unjust. The Scripture tells us that God helps those who trust Him and commit their way unto Him and do not say, "My hand hath gotten me this wealth." The "Christians" who "help themselves" have a tendency to trust in their own might and only thank God for the power to do so. This, I fear, is only a play on words to assuage their faithlessness as if their act of fear was somehow ordained of God.

(Continued on page 16)

At the end of each devotional meditation the question is presented to the reader for consideration in new light. Let an answer formulate within and ponder it *and* its implications. It is unfortunate, but the reader will find that today, many of the questions Jesus asked are never posed and certainly never honestly answered. What a waste of resource this is! Jesus was a master communicator. In this day, we chase to and fro to find someone to help us, to motivate us, to guide us. Communicators we may have among us, but one with such a message, one with such pure motivation, one with pure caring and love for His audience, is more difficult to find. To whom but Jesus could we ascribe our unrestrained trust with our very lives? Unfortunately, His Bible, though still a best seller, remains least read. Alas, Bibles bought, but not owned; stories read but not heard; questions asked but not answered.

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(Continued from page 15)

A balance must be found. However, without a daily communion with God, that balance is impossible. A comfort of living in, and doing God's will is necessary for this communion to take place and without God's hand upon what we do, we cannot expect His blessing and guidance on the finances attained from such actions. You see, there are many complicating factors. All of which are clearly made known to us through the Spirit of God. We may be close or we may be far from His provision, balance and a life free from anxiety, but we must go in that direction everyday. He will guide any who seek Him. Step by step we will discover that His protection is sufficient, His guidance becomes clearer, and His provision is abundant and timely.

Many of us have also seen the other side. The providence of God can take negative forms as well. All of us nod in agreement when we read Haggai 1:6 "Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes." If our lives were just free from accident and breakage, mishap and abnormal wear, many of us could be on top in a couple of months. As it is, we are chasing our troubles and convinced that a little more income will do the trick. When in fact, if we had a little less problems, a little less sickness, a little less unexpected calamity, we could make it. But, we have left God on the outside of our finances. Our thinking has become backward. We call people who do not carry insurance "irresponsible" and those who do not tithe "living under grace." We spend money for that which is not bread, but when money runs low, we complain that we cannot "feed our families." The world's answer (and regretfully some of the church's as well) is cash! That is why everyone lights up when they think about winning the lottery, gaining a large inheritance or winning a large lawsuit or insurance settlement. May God have mercy on us all!

The Bible has much to say about money. Money has much to say about the Christian. Your checkbook will tell you where your priorities are, where your loyalties lay, and where your heart is. Perhaps that is why the Bible has so much to say about money.

Most of our hesitation comes from fear. We are afraid to give over our control to an invisible, incommunicative, irrational God. None of us would have any reservation turning our finances over to an all-wise, honorable, just and holy God, one with whom we are in constant communication and with whom we were living in totally obedient surrender. It is *our idea* of God that is unreliable. We must admit that it is our end of the bargain that is lacking. It is our side of this equation that sags with unresponsive prayer and less than enthusiastic obedience. God has proven Himself faithful to everyone who ever trusted Him. We should trust Him as well.

Although this situation was different than ours, the Lord's comments are still powerful and useful. It will do you good to look back at the times that you walked in faith. It can only help to recall that when we were commissioned of God and walked in His way, our needs were provided. As your record of trusting Him grows over years, it should become easier to trust Him. When you doubt the goodness and provision of God, Jesus may give a little recent history quiz to make His point. "When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye any thing?"

For more information or to order the book *On The Questions of Jesus* write to:
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