

Faith — It Works!



by
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*An Examination of the Doctrine of Faith,
Illustrated by Personal Experiences
of a 20th Century Bible Believing Missionary*

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the King James 1611
Authorized Version of the Bible

Second English edition
printed June 2005

By

Valiant for Truth
P.O. Box 135
Adamsville, AL 35005

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FAITH— IT WORKS!

PREFACE

FAITH— how precious it is to those who embrace it!

Certainly the lives of men like Hudson Taylor, George Mueller and Lester Roloff are shining testimonies to God's provision, by faith, for everything needed in the work of God and the sustenance of man. Seeing what God has done for the three men of God mentioned above should stir us to live by faith also. However, while living by faith may be a subject of interest for doctrinal discussion, it seems to have little practical application in the lives of most folks today. After all, who needs faith when you have all the riches of the world? Why, in wealthy America men can build church buildings, support missions programs, establish Bible colleges and televise their ministries worldwide WITHOUT God. But what would things be like if we got off OUR program and got on GOD'S program? Only in eternity will we know what could have been accomplished for the glory of God.

Brethren, many Christians have sinned greatly against God in the matter of faith. Like Israel, who chose to have a king rule over them rather than God, we prefer to have security from things we can see rather than security from the unseen bounty of Heaven, which must be by faith.

Ours is as the sin of Sodom.

*“Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, **pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness** was in her and in her daughters, **neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy.**”*

And they were **haughty**, ” — Ezekiel 16:49,50

Furthermore, ours is the sin of Laodicea.

“He that hath an ear, let him **hear what the Spirit saith** to the churches.

And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God;

I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot; I would thou wert cold or hot.

So then because **thou art lukewarm**, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.

Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that **thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:**

I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and **anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.**”

— Revelation 3:13-18

I submit to the reader that we fundamental, independent, Bible believing Baptists, are becoming as the Laodicean church in need of the aforementioned counsel from our Lord. While I think we are still much blessed of God and have the right doctrine, we must take inventory of the present state of our spiritual lives. Of which sort would we fancy ourselves to be— the Hebrews eleven Christian or the Revelation three Christian? Let us take care, lest we become as the Pharisees and lawyers in Luke 7:30 who “*rejected the counsel of God against themselves...*” If we are guilty, should we not choose the better part if we go to God and confess

our sins. Let us not be ashamed to humble ourselves before God. Thereby, we too might obtain a good report (Hebrews 11:39) and “*run with patience the race that is set before us.*”

I charge you, as does Paul the apostle:

“For **consider him** that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, **lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.**”
— Hebrews 12:3

Do not faint, but look unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith (Hebrews 12:2). He will give us the strength and faith we need to finish the race to the praise of His glory.

“*That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith*”

— *Ephesians 3:17*

“Beyond measure it is desirable that we, as believers, should have the person of Jesus constantly before us, to inflame our love towards Him, and to increase our knowledge of Him. I would to God that my readers were all entered as diligent scholars in Jesus’ college, students of Corpus Christi, or the body of Christ, resolved to attain unto a good degree in the learning of the cross. But to have Jesus ever near, the heart must be full of Him, welling up with His love, even to overrunning; hence the apostle prays ‘*that Christ may **dwell in your hearts.***’ See how near he would have Jesus to be! You cannot get a subject closer to you than to have it in the heart itself. ‘**That He may dwell;**’ not that He may call upon you sometimes, as a casual visitor enters into a house and tarries for a night, but that He may **dwell;** that Jesus may become the Lord and Tenant of your inmost being, never more to go out.

Observe the words— ‘*that He may dwell **in your heart,***’ that best room of the house of manhood; not in your thoughts alone, but in your affections; not merely in the mind’s meditations, but in the heart’s emotions. We should pant after love to Christ of a most abiding character, not a love that flames up and then dies out into the darkness of a few embers, but a constant flame, fed by sacred fuel, like the fire upon the altar which never went out. This cannot be accomplished except by faith. Faith must be strong, or love will not be fervent; the root of the flower must be healthy, or we cannot expect the bloom to be sweet. Faith is the lily’s root, and love is the lily’s bloom. Now, reader, Jesus cannot be in your heart’s love except you have a firm hold of Him by your heart’s faith; and, therefore, pray that you may always trust Christ in order that you may always love Him. If love be cold, be sure that faith is drooping.”¹

¹ *Morning and Evening* by Charles H. Spurgeon; August 23 evening reading.

INTRODUCTION

Immediately after I got saved I began to learn to live by faith. At first, however, I had no real understanding of the workings of faith. Like many other Christians, I knew God *could* do anything He wanted, but I did not really think He *would* do many of the things I asked Him. I *wanted* Him to do them, but felt no real assurance that He *would*. After all, why would God bother with someone as unimportant as me and with my prayer requests.

My first beginnings of a real walk by faith came by necessity. During a crisis in my life, I found that I was in a situation where I had to have help that only God Himself could give me. I cast myself upon His marvelous grace and found Him to still be the same *never-failing God* who had led Abraham to seek for a city whose builder and maker was God. The same God who led Moses and the children of Israel out of Egypt and to the Promised Land was still alive and well. Furthermore, I discovered that He had been there all the time—just waiting for me to trust Him with everything in my life. What a wonderful realization it was! Still, I had *bouts with doubts*. I really had a struggle with the old *flesh* wanting to SEE something first, before I could trust the Lord completely. The old flesh is so undependable and such a liar. Now, I know the truth. The Lord Jesus Christ, our God and Savior is the only one *we can trust completely*.

Well, I suppose my experiences with faith were like most Christians until He gave me the GIFT of faith. This came

about as a result of a Christian testimony and from my study of the Scriptures. I met Evangelist Lester Roloff and his faith in God made a lasting impression on my life. In studying my Bible I read that we should desire the best gifts, and I could think of no gift that would be more to be desired than the gift of faith that would enable one to believe God. I prayed for this gift one night and left the matter with the Lord. Little did I know the effect this would have on my life.

At the time, I did not see the providence of God working in my life. But looking back, I wonder at my inability to see Him in EVERYTHING. Needless to say, my experience of growth in grace and faith led me through many trials and attending victories. Finally, I came to a point in my life where I realized that I really needed a spiritually minded wife as a help meet. My thought was, *“How will I ever find a GOOD woman.”* Furthermore, if I did find one, why would she want anything to do with me? Well, God began to work to change me first, then he gave me this first big test of my faith. I felt certain that this was the will of God, and I prayed earnestly about it. As I prayed, God spoke to me. He agreed that I needed all the help I could get and that a good wife would be forthcoming. He instructed me to just ask for what I wanted. So, I sat down with a piece of paper and began to make a list of attributes that would typify a godly Christian wife. I felt as if I were placing an order with a divine match making service. (The Holy Spirit is the only one I could trust with such a task.) What would a GOOD woman be like. Immediately I ruled out outward beauty as a priority, because it is deceitful. I wanted a woman with the inner beauty that gave a radiant countenance and a loving smile. I went on to list fifteen things I thought would be the woman I desired. I won't list them all, but I did ask for a woman who could type. *“Why not ask for the practical as well as the*

spiritual?” I thought. I knew the Lord would have me be a writer one day, so I asked for that. What a coincidence that my wife can type 120 words per minute. (No coincidence at all.) Well, 60 wpm would have done, but then I might have thought that it *was* a coincidence. What God does, He does exceedingly well.

I also wanted a wife who was in touch with reality—someone who had been through some hardships in life, so she would better understand the hardships of others. But, unfortunately, many who have experienced real hardships and have been through some things in life are often scarred and may never completely get over their experiences. So, I asked that she have victory over her past as well. How was that fulfilled? My wife grew up in the back of a bar owned and run by her parents. As a teenager she got involved with drugs and other youthful sins. But, those who know her can hardly imagine she had such a background.

I asked for a country girl and one who could cook. Nothing personal against city girls, but give me a country girl. My wife is one of the best *scratch*² cooks in the country. She can take anything and make it taste like the best thing you ever ate. That has proven to be one of my best requests, for when we got to the mission field there were no microwave ovens or grocery stores. Somehow, she could just look at vegetables she had never seen before and know one could substitute for another. Everywhere we go, people ask her to cook. Some of the Chinese husbands have even asked her to show their wives how to cook Chinese food, because they told her that hers was better.

I went on to ask for a woman who would be a soul winner. I asked for one who would be faithful to God and a

² Cooking a dish from the beginning with the basic ingredients.

good mother. I asked for one who could put up with me and one who needed me as much as I needed her. Well, I could go on and on because I DO have a wonderful wife. One final request was that she be interested in me first. Interested, because I was a Christian trying to serve the Lord. When I met my bride to be, she was working as a night supervisor at an alcoholic rescue mission for women. She had taken this job because she wanted to do something for the Lord. I kept the mission supplied with Christian books, preaching and music tapes and gospel tracts. I would always call to let them know I was coming so it would not conflict with any of their activities. When I called this particular night, a young woman I did not know answered the phone. When I heard that voice on the phone, it made my heart skip a beat. I decided right then, that she should be the one to deliver the tracts to. The moment I met her I knew this girl was different. For some reason, my visits to the rescue mission became more frequent and lasted longer. I really do not know what they were doing with all those tracts I was bringing, but I was sure they would need them. One day as I was leaving, the director of the mission spoke to me about Lisa. *“Why don’t you and her go out to eat together or something to get to know each other better?”* I hesitated to tell her that I did not want to get too involved in a relationship with anyone until I knew she was interested in me first. Then she added, *“She really likes you and says you have been so helpful in answering her Bible questions and teaching her from the Bible.”* That fulfilled the first qualification, so I pursued the matter. I must mention, too, the plaque that hung on the wall of the mission office. It read:

***“God always gives the best
to them that leave the choice to Him”***

I later discovered that Hudson Taylor spoke those words that made a lasting impression on me. I thought they were sound words and scriptural, so I just let Him make the choice.

In the end we were married and the first day of marriage was just as if we had been married for years. There was really no adjustments and no problems— just a continuance together of living our lives for the Lord. The Lord answered my prayers for the most important choice in my life after salvation. On the mission field, as well as off, I have seen that a good woman can make a man or ruin him. She can help him be the best he can be, or she can put him out of the ministry. Thank God for a precious Christian wife (and a southern belle at that).

Of course there were many other steps that brought this “*doubting Thomas*” to be a man of faith. Since this is not an autobiography we won’t cover them all. However, I hope these and the other stories found in this book will be an inspiration to all.

STATISTICS

Interestingly, the word **“faith”** is found only twice in the Old Testament. And yet, we read in Hebrews chapter eleven, about the faith of all those Old Testament *heroes of the faith*.

James, in his epistle, says:

“[S]hew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works.” — James 2:18b

Surely this was the case of those Old Testament saints listed in Hebrews chapter eleven. The word “faith,” itself, might have been little used in the Old Testament, but the works of those who had such great faith still speak volumes of lessons on the faith they LIVED.

In contrast, the word “faith” is found 231 times in the New Testament. It is found in every one of the New Testament books except the Gospel of John and the two epistles of John (II John, and III John). I find this a great curiosity, but have no explanation for it. Certainly it is an interesting observation for further study. As would be expected, the highest usage of the word is found in the Pauline epistles; especially, Romans (34 times) and Hebrews (31 times).

THE ALL-ENCOMPASSING SIN

There are two things about faith that ought to be very sobering for every Christian to consider.

Firstly, we read in the book of Romans:

“[F]or whatsoever is not of faith is sin.”

— Romans 14:23

Preaching from this verse on faith, Evangelist Lester Roloff once asked his audience, *“I wonder how many Christians that verse throws into sin tonight?”* I do not know about you, but if I were to take a few minutes to think about it, I could probably come up with at least one thing I did this week that had nothing to do with faith at all. But, whatever it might have been, it was sin! It is just so natural for us to *figure things out* for ourselves without inquiring of the Lord to see what He might think about it. It is even worse when we DO ask to know His will, but then do something completely different than what He wants us to do. This sin is so common that we never even think about it. But, we must think about it, because Romans 14:23 is a verse we should not take lightly. One trip to the altar will not solve the problem. We must be ready to completely turn our lives over to the Lord for a major overhaul.

Secondly, we read in Hebrews:

“[W]ithout faith it is impossible to please God.”

— Hebrews 11:6

Whatever else we might have to say about faith, we must recognize these two things:

➤ **Without it we can not please God!**

➤ **Anything in our lives that is not of faith, is sin.**

Isn't that plain and clear? Anything we do that is not by faith, is sin.

The Lord has given me a sermon about faith from Hebrews 11:6 that I call, The All-Encompassing Sin. I feel it is one of the most important messages I have ever preached, because of what we have just seen from the scripture. That message stirred me to write this book and give more detail about the life of faith. However, it is something many Christians know little about. What do we need to know about faith?

Faith is so important to believers, that we must KNOW:

➤ What it is

➤ How to get it and increase it

➤ How it works

Brethren, I ask you— do you know these three things about faith? How can you hope to develop a closer walk of faith if you cannot answer these simple questions?

WHAT IS FAITH?

➔ To begin with, faith is **NOT** the same as “*believing God.*”

➔ **Faith and belief are two different things.**

It is like the relationship of Christ (the living Word of God) to the Bible (the written word of God). Certainly the two are not the same, yet they cannot be separated. The Bible is not the Savior, but we are *born again* by the living word of God (I Peter 1:23). Furthermore, while Jesus said in John 14:6 that He, Himself, is life, He also said that His words are spirit and *they are life* (John 6:63). They are not the same, but they are inseparable.

All right then, what do we really KNOW about faith? I mean, tell me, if someone asked you, “*What is faith?*”—what would you say? Immediately, most folks think of the well known verse in the book of Hebrews.

“*Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.*”
— Hebrews 11:1

Have you ever given or received that as an answer to the question, “*What is faith?*” I have. Still, I was not any closer to the answer, because that verse did not really answer my question. It only made me wonder more about the meaning of Hebrews 11:1. So, while Hebrews 11:1 is absolutely true, it is not a *definition* of *faith*. It does tell us some essential things about faith, but it does not really define what it is.

For example, we read in I John 4:16, that “*God is love.*” While this is true, we cannot turn that around and say that

love is God. God IS love, but love IS NOT God. The two words are not synonymous. You see, while we know that *love* is one attribute of God, it does not define who He is.

In the same way, Jesus is the *door*, but *door* doesn't define who Jesus is. It only tells us something about Him.

To say that one thing IS something else does not mean that it is the complete definition of the word.

What, then, DOES Hebrews 11:1 tell us?

1. It says, "*faith is the substance of things **hoped for**.*" "*[H]oped for*"— that means it has to do with the future!
2. "*[T]he evidence of things **not seen**.*" "*Not seen*"— that is something that exists but cannot be observed.

In the book of Revelation we read:

"[T]he testimony of Jesus Christ is the spirit of prophecy."
— Revelation 19:10b

Prophecy! Again, a reference to future things!

It means that God is

"[C]alling those things that be not, as though they were."
— Romans 4:17

- The basis of our faith, then, is the testimony of Jesus Christ.
- It is God telling us NOW, about things in the future.

Because time separates us from the future, we consider those things as not existing. But, from eternity, God sees the future just like He sees the past and the present. He can tell us what lies in the future and that those things DO exist.

Thereby, we may count them as real and may lay claim to them NOW, in the present. And what is this “*testimony of Jesus Christ?*”

☞ **It is the word of God!**

Look in the book of Exodus and see for yourself.

“*And he gave unto Moses, when he had made an end of communing with him upon mount Sinai, two **tables of testimony**, tables of stone written with the finger of God.*”

— Exodus 31:18

Look again in the Psalms.

“*Quicken me after thy lovingkindness; so shall I keep the **testimony** of thy mouth.*”

— Psalm 119:88

(cf. John 3:33; I Corinthians 1:6; 2:1; Revelation 1:2)

If we will agree with what God says, and believe Him, then we shall see “*those things*” of Romans 4:17, come to pass in time, although they are still “*unseen*” to us now. God’s testimony is His witness to truth.

Of this witness the apostle John says:

“*If we receive the witness of men, **the witness of God** is greater: for this is the witness of God which **he hath testified** of his Son.*”

— John 5:9

The Psalmist adds:

“*It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man.*”

— Psalm 118:8

John continues:

“*He that believeth on the Son hath **the witness in himself**: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar;*

*because he believeth not **the record** that God gave of his Son.”*
— I John 5:10

Do you understand that? The **witness** (the Holy Spirit) is IN them that believe in the Son of God. And what is the **record**? It is the word of God, the Holy Bible.

The Psalmist says

“For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven.”

— Psalm 119:89

➤ **That is the record!**

That is why the Bible says that “*whatsoever is not of faith is sin.*” Because it is sin to reject the testimony of the word of God. In the same manner, when the Spirit of God testifies that something is true in the future, we have a choice. We can agree that His testimony is truth (I John 5:6), or we can reject his testimony in unbelief and make Him to be a liar. Living by faith is serious business!

So faith has to do with the Lord’s *testimony* about the future and the *revelation* of truth. He tells us what to believe him for now, based upon His foreknowledge of future events. Then we must decide if we will receive it in belief, or reject it in unbelief.

It works the same way when we pray and talk to the Lord. When we take time to meditate on Him, the Holy Spirit bears witness in our hearts. I have had some real good times like this with Him, haven’t you?

Now some people don’t have any idea what I’m talking about, because when they get down and pray, they don’t take time to listen as the Lord speaks to them. It is something that we all must learn. If someone asks, “*Do you mean God speaks to you?*” My reply is; “*Certainly! Doesn’t he speak to you?*”

James Stewart, in his moving autobiography, I Must Tell,³ tells of a time in His life when an important decision had to be made regarding his future ministry. He finally committed it all to the Lord in a lengthy prayer meeting with God. At the end of that season of prayer, he knew the Lord had spoken and clearly established his way. When he related his experience to a friend, he was told that he was beginning to get a little crazy. “*After all,*” his friend said, “*God doesn’t speak to people today.*”

The reading of that book was very timely for me because I had just had a similar experience with the Lord. Upon confiding to a friend how the Lord had spoken to my heart about a certain matter, my friend told me quite plainly that God didn’t speak to man anymore except through the Bible. However, the Lord confirmed His witness in my heart by Brother Stewart’s testimony. Then He confirmed it again by bringing the things to pass even as He assured me he would.

Here Is My Testimony Of Faith

Our first years on the mission field were a great blessing. We were much instructed of the Lord about faith because quite frankly, we were “up against it” as they say. The Lord taught us, through experiences as I am about to relate, that we could wholly depend upon Him to care for us in all things.

One day my daughter (then six years old) came in the front door crying. When I asked her what the trouble was, she said it was nothing. As I pressed her about it, she related that she had been playing with the other children. It was obvious that every one of them had a bicycle but her. We had even been able to buy, from another missionary, a used bicycle for her older brother. I suggested that she ask one of

³ I Must Tell, James Stewart • Revival Literature • P.O. Box 6068 • Asheville, NC 28806

the other girls if they would let her ride their bike for a little while. She said she had done that, but the other girls were being unkind to her and told her to get a bicycle of her own. Well, I could understand that, too. However, by now I was feeling terrible, because I could not supply my daughter's simple need.

"Daddy," she asked, "would you buy me a bicycle of my own?"

"Well, I don't know if we can buy one right now, honey." I answered painfully.

"Could we pray and ask Jesus?" she asked.

I tried to comfort her, and told her we really didn't have any money for a bicycle. The truth was we just didn't have money for anything above the absolute basic living expenses at that time. "But, yes," I replied, "of course we can pray about it."

Now, what was I going to do? I mean, we teach our children to pray and to trust God, but what if He does not give us our desire? Will our children still believe God? That is when I decided I had better have a talk with God and see what His mind was on the matter, before I committed Him for a bicycle.

Often, after praying for some need, without waiting for God to work, we begin figuring every way possible to make it happen. If our prayer isn't answered right away we might just use our credit card to get what we want and hope God will pay the bill. If we find our credit overextended, we wonder why God let us down and why He let us get in a financial bind. But God is not at fault. We just did not wait on the Lord to know His will or to receive His provision for that need. We rush to fulfill our lustful desires and then send God the bill, expecting him to pay, whether it pleases Him or not.

I did not know what to do, so I told my daughter to wait a few minutes and let me pray about it. Then I casually walked upstairs to a little room I used as an office. I closed the door, and fell upon the floor and began to cry out unto the Lord in tears, *“Oh, God have mercy on my soul. What a rotten father I am. I drag my family to the other side of the world and can’t even buy my little girl a bicycle.”*

As I poured out my heart I confessed that I didn’t mind the sacrifice and our children had not complained, but now it was beginning to wear on us all. It just seemed like I ought to be able to fulfill such a small desire for my own daughter. *“Lord, what am I going to do?”* I prayed.

Well we had a sweet time of communion together and at the end I asked, *“Lord, would you be pleased to give a little girl, who loves you, a bicycle?”*

Having so little faith, I was sure He would remind me how we all must suffer and do without, etc. But, He surprised me. *“Yes, I would like to do that for Deanna,”* he answered in my heart, *“Tell her she can have a bicycle.”*

But, wait a minute. The Lord knew I had no money. His answer was not exactly what I was expecting. Nonetheless, I believed what God had spoken and I was going to do what I felt he wanted me to do. I went downstairs to find Deanna still sitting in the living room with a sad look on her face.

“All right, Honey, let’s pray and ask Jesus if He might give you a bicycle.” I said. *“You pray first.”* (She prays better than I do anyway.) So she began, *“Jesus I love you so much, and you have been so good to me, and you have given me a good mommy and daddy, and I have so much to be thankful for, and I know I should not want everything, and if you don’t want me to have a bicycle right now, that’s all right.”*

“Well, don’t forget to tell Him that you DO want one though,” I encouraged her.

She did ask Him and then I prayed.

Now, before I even told her to pray, I had already talked to God in my office. Now that I knew His mind on the matter, I could lead her in her first experience in faith.

“Is He going to give me a bicycle?” she asked.

“Yes,” I said confidently, *“I believe He will.”*

I didn’t know how He was going to pull it off, but I KNEW He was going to do it. I had perfect peace about it and was actually surprised at myself, because I had no doubt whatsoever that God was going to give her a bicycle.

“When?” she asked (as only a child would).

But I had covered myself there, because I had already asked the Lord the same question. Sometime we act like children too, don’t we?

“Oh, very soon, I believe— probably in the next couple of weeks,” was my reply, *“but let’s not tell anyone what we prayed. Let’s just wait and see what God does.”*

Not even a week had passed before one morning, there came a knock at the front door. It was a woman who lived a couple of blocks away. She was an unsaved Buddhist and I only knew her by sight, having never met her.

“Is this your little girl?” she asked.

“Yes, this is Deanna,” I replied.

“She is a cute little girl,” she continued.

“Why, thank you,” I agreed.

“I love children and I often sit and watch them playing,” she told me. *“I noticed that yours is the only little girl in our neighborhood without a bicycle,”* she said.

“Uh, yes,” I said, a little embarrassed, and I explained that we hoped to get her a bicycle soon.

“I came over to ask if it would be all right with you if I bought Deanna a bicycle,” she said plainly. “Hmm, well— I hmm, don’t see any reason why not, if that’s what you want to do.” I stuttered.

You say, *“I wouldn’t let some unsaved stranger buy a bicycle for my kid.”*

Yes, but I prayed, and God told me He was sending a bicycle. Am I to reject His gift because I don’t like the delivery person?

We were still a little doubtful whether she would really do this, but our doubts were turned to shouts when she came by the next day with a new bicycle for Deanna. In fact, it cost the equivalent of one hundred and fifty U.S. dollars (in 1986) and was the nicest bike in the compound at that time. **Let me emphasize** that we told no one what we had prayed about and I had not previously known the woman. So, tell me, who do you think sent that bicycle? All I know is that I prayed, God told me what He would do, and to verify it, He answered prayer in such a way that it was unmistakably the hand of God.

God Speaks Today

Why should it seem strange to anyone that the Lord would still speak to His children in this way today?

What does the scripture say in John 10:4?

*“And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: **for they know his voice.**”*

— John 10:4

☞ Did you get that? “...*they know his voice.*”

If your earthly father telephoned you today, would you recognize his voice? If, perhaps, I telephoned and claimed to be your father, could you tell the difference? Of course, because you know your father’s voice. Then why don’t we know our heavenly Father’s voice? The verse says, “...*they know his voice.*” But we DO NOT seem to know His voice. Why not? Because we have not spent much time listening to Him. We have not become so familiar with Him that we know him by his voice. Beloved, don’t you want to know His voice? Then spend more time at His feet, listening to Him. Soon, it becomes unmistakably clear to you.

In his book, *The Law Of Faith*, Norman Grubb says,⁴

“God does still speak... to His servants now... as He spoke of old, though by somewhat different methods.”

“Now, He indwells the believer and speaks within. Tens of thousands of God’s servants could attest to His direct leading in their lives.

“There need be no confusion between our thinking and desiring, and His inspoken word. Only the spiritual... can tell the difference, **but they can tell it.** Paul said that, when he told the Corinthians that the ‘natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But **he that is spiritual** discerneth all things.’”

While I do not agree with Brother Grubb on some things, he is right on the mark here.

When the Lord speaks, He always imparts faith to the hearer so they can believe what He says. It was true when

⁴ The Law Of Faith, by Norman Grubb, Christian Literature Crusade

He spoke in the Old Testament, true when He spoke in the New Testament, and still true when He speaks today. Although it is not inspired scripture, it is still Him speaking in my heart, and with His words comes faith.

That brings us back to our original question: **What is faith?**

Here is the definition of Bible faith.

- It is the gift of God (Ephesians 2:8).
- Imparted by the word of God (Romans 10:17).
- Revealing in the present, that which is real in the future, but not yet manifest (Romans 4:17).
- Enabling the recipient to believe God and
- Hold the same faith toward God (confidence and trust. — Matthew 9:28)
- Enabling God to accomplish His will in the life of the believer, “*according to their faith*” (Matthew 9:29; 13:58).

The Bible says that faith is the gift of God.

“*For by grace are ye saved through **faith**; and that not of yourselves: **it is the gift of God:**” — Ephesians 2:8*

- What is faith? — it is the gift of God.
- What is belief? — it is an exercise of the will.
- Belief is NOT “*the gift of God.*”

Isn't that simple? — faith is NOT belief. Then why do men think they are the same? It is because they are so closely associated in the scriptures and in our experience that we have come to consider them as being the same. It is an honest mistake and easily made, but we must see the difference in order to see the proper operation of each in the believer's life. Then we may learn of God's wonderful workings in our lives, by faith, to bring honor to Him and humility to ourselves.

THE SOURCE OF FAITH

It is often assumed that faith just sort of lies dormant inside a person. Then, at any given moment it can be worked up to rise to the occasion and believe God for something needed. So, when we have a certain need or desire, we just fan the smoldering ember, and before you know it, faith blazes up and we can believe. Without God, this is the way the lost world thinks of faith as well. But, this is just not quite true. Yes, it is the Holy Spirit inside the believer that illuminates our minds with the revelation of God's will. But true faith must begin with HIS leading and not with our own presumptuous mind.

As Paul says in the book of Romans:

*"Faith **cometh** by hearing and hearing by the word of God."*
— Romans 10:17

We did not have it awhile ago, but now we do. Where did it come from? What is the source of faith? Faith comes from the living Word of God that we read about in John's gospel.

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

*But as many as received him, **to them gave he power** to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:"*
— John 1:1, 12

The apostle Peter tells us that believers are also

*"[K]ept by the power of God **through faith** unto salvation."*
— 1 Peter 1:5

Faith isn't the power itself, but we have access to the power "*through faith.*" We can liken it to electricity. The little plug in the wall is not the source of the power that runs our electrical appliances. *The source* of that power is a giant dynamo in a huge hydroelectric dam on some river far away. But that little plug does give us instant access to that huge dynamo's power.

We know too that the Lord Jesus Christ is,

"[T]he author and finisher of our faith." — Hebrews 12:2

Faith has a source— it starts with HIM, it ends with HIM and it comes to every man by the Spirit of God, who, bearing witness to the "*record*" (the written word of God), illuminates our darkened, carnal minds and *enables us* to believe.

When an unsaved man speaks of having faith IN something, he means that he is trusting that person or thing to accomplish what it is supposed to accomplish. No one has BIBLE FAITH apart from the word of God, because true faith must have God as its source. The unsaved have no power by revelation of God to know whether the things he is trusting in will actually come to pass. Except as given to the unsaved that they might believe the gospel of salvation, faith is a family affair. Faith is given by the Father to His children that they might be able to believe Him as He reveals His will for our lives. Once we are saved we have direct access to *the source of our faith.*

We read about this in Paul's epistle to Timothy.

*"And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through **faith, which is in Christ Jesus.**"*

— II Timothy 3:15

*“And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and **love which is in Christ.**”*

— I Timothy 1:14

So, we see that real faith and love are found only IN HIM.

Furthermore the Apostle John says,

*“For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and **this is the victory** that overcometh the world, even **our faith.**”*

Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?

*And **it is the Spirit that beareth witness**, because the Spirit is truth.”*

— I John 5:4,5,6b

Who overcomes the world? “[H]e that believeth.” But belief, alone, doesn’t do anything; it must be by faith, because “*faith IS the victory!*” And we know it is true because of His witness “*because the Spirit is truth.*”

Do you have Christ? If so, then you already have the victory, because He is the source and object of our faith and He will accomplish whatever He has given us faith to believe.

Here are some things the Lord testifies to in I John 5

Verse 1: The Lord Jesus is “*the Christ,*” the Son of God.

Verse 2: Every soul that believes this is “*born of God*” and has already overcome the world “*by faith.*”

Verse 7, 8: The Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost are one and are in agreement.

Verse 7, 8: They bear record to the truth in heaven and bear witness to it in earth.

Verse 13: We can KNOW that we have eternal life.

Verse 20: We are given eternal life “*in Christ*” — He IS eternal life.

These things are already accomplished in God’s eyes and we can believe it by faith, because we have God’s word on it!

You may have heard the little saying, “*God said it, I believe it, that settles it!*” (referring to God’s word). Some have modified that to say, “*Whether you believe it or not— God said it, and that settles it!*” Well, that is true in that context. But regarding faith, God said it, and what you believe has everything to do with how it is settled.

As the apostle Paul asks in his epistle to the Romans,

“*For what if some did not believe? Shall their unbelief make **the faith of God** without effect?*” — Romans 3:3

Faith IS the victory, but we must believe in order to receive. I love that old hymn, *Faith Is the Victory* — “... O glorious victory that overcomes the world.” “*God said it, I believe it, that settles it!*”

To say we have hope *IN something* also means that the *something* is the source of our hope. While *the unsaved* have faith *IN Him*, this *IN* indicates source and not position. If we say, “*My only hope is IN the Bible,*” we mean that it is the Bible itself that gives us hope. How can we hope unless we have something to give us hope? If our faith is *IN Christ*, it is because He is the source of our faith. Our faith comes from Him. There are many verses having to do with this, but one of the best is found in Galatians.

“But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise **by faith of Jesus Christ** might be given **to them that believe.**”
— Galatians 3:22

- Who will receive the promise? — “*them that believe.*”
- But how did the promise come? — it was given “**by faith** of Jesus Christ”

It was FAITH that enabled them to believe.

The promise was “*by faith,*” because the Lord was telling them what he would do in the future, IF they believed. It was Jesus’ faith that enabled them to believe! What does the word “*of*” mean here? It means “*from.*” The promise by faith that is “*from*” Jesus Christ. To whom is it given? Them that believe.

Let’s look again at “*the faith of God*” (Romans 3:3). The word “*of*” can be possessive— meaning it is God’s faith— His revelation of the future, etc. Or, “*of*” can mean that the faith is *from* God, and is given to us; it is His enabling power.

Do you see now how inextricably faith is linked to belief? Yet, they are not the same. The verse says that some didn’t believe. But their “*unbelief*” didn’t change a thing, because “*the faith of God*” is not dependent upon anyone’s belief. Just how it all works out in the life of the one who does not believe is something else again.

Speaking of Israel, Paul says:

“Well; because of **unbelief** they were broken off, and thou standest by **faith**. Be not highminded, but fear:”

— Romans 11:20

They were not “*broken off*” because of a lack of faith. They were “*broken off*” because of UNBELIEF. At the same time, we must realize that our belief will not save us (or, in this case, cause us to be grafted in). No, it is only by faith that we get in. However, it is by BELIEVING that we lay hold of faith’s promises.

What does it say in Romans?

“Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee.” — Romans 11:18

How could we ever boast in our salvation? Why, we could not even believe except the Lord had given us faith to do so. Look again in the book of Romans and see how some have begun to teach “*easy-believism*” because of the misunderstanding of the doctrine of faith.

“Even the righteousness of God which is by **faith of Jesus Christ** unto all and **upon all them that believe**: for there is no difference:” — Romans 3:22

How does one receive the righteousness of God?

- ☞ It is by faith OF (from) Jesus Christ.
- ☞ But if we do not BELIEVE, then we do not receive.
- ☞ And only those who have faith *can* believe.

We must receive faith from the Lord Jesus Christ before we are able to believe that He is the redeemer.

Elsewhere, in John, the scripture says,

“No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me **draw him**.” — John 6:44

“And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will **draw all men** to me.”
— John 12:32

The Holy Spirit draws ALL men to Christ at some time, giving each enough faith to believe the witness presented, be it through the creation or preaching. When the Holy Spirit brings conviction of sin by the preaching of the gospel, a man can see what he is. If he agrees with God, by faith, godly sorrow naturally follows, working repentance unto salvation. Some are taught that all there is to soul winning is convincing a man that he is lost and getting him to believe the doctrine of salvation and pray. But have we forgotten something?

- Unless the Holy Spirit has been dealing with that man’s heart, convicting of sin and drawing him to Christ
- Unless the Lord has imparted faith to the sinner [Which he does to all at some time or another (cf. John 12:52; John 1:9)]
- Unless the unsaved sinner chooses to believe
- Unless there was godly sorrow and repentance
- Then a man’s profession of salvation is absolutely worthless.

One must BELIEVE to be saved. But true belief is only possible “*by the faith of Jesus Christ,*” while under the convicting power of the Holy Ghost. We see this again in our justification.

In Galatians Paul writes:

*“Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but **by the faith of Jesus Christ**, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified **by the faith of Christ**, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.”*

— Galatians 2:16

- Is a man justified by works? NO!
- HOW is one justified, then? By the faith of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- And WHO is justified? Them that believe.

Those Galatians knew that all who are justified, are justified by faith. They believed so that they would be *“justified by the faith of Christ.”*

Let’s look at this again in the book of Romans.

*“Much more then, being now **justified by his blood**, we shall be saved from wrath through him.”*

— Romans 5:9

All that are justified are justified *“by his blood.”* It is the blood that justifies, but it only justifies them that believe. Don’t you see, it is the same with faith? Philippians says very much the same thing.

*“And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God **by faith**.”*

— Philippians 3:9

➤ HOW does the righteousness of God come to a man?
Only by the faith of Jesus Christ.

➤ How is it received? By believing!

The scripture says very clearly.

*“For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness **by faith.**”*
— Galatians 5:5

So, we see that faith is the key to our salvation and our relationship with God.

The writer of Hebrews plainly says.

*“For **without faith** it is impossible to please God: for he that cometh to God must **believe** that he is.”*

— Hebrews 11:6

It is impossible to please God without faith, because a man cannot even believe that God exists without faith. And the source of that faith is in the Lord Jesus Christ. Now let's look at a few other relevant scriptures.

*“So then faith **cometh** by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”*
— Romans 10:17

When faith comes, then one can believe.

“And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.” — II Timothy 3:15

➤ THE SCRIPTURES “are able to make thee wise unto salvation,”

➤ And HOW? — “through faith.”

- Where does one get this faith? The only source is “CHRIST JESUS.”

The unsaved sinner certainly isn't IN Jesus, but that is where the faith comes from that enables Him to believe. The world tells us to look inside ourselves for the good, “*just have a positive mental attitude because things are going to get better, we can pull ourselves up by our own bootstraps and anything we can believe we can achieve.*” No! You cannot. And you certainly will not get to heaven with that sort of nonsense. You must receive power from God to believe and to be saved. That power is through the faith that is found only in the one who has power to forgive sin, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Righteousness doesn't come to an unbeliever, neither does justification. Only *faith* comes to an unbeliever, and then only that he might have power to believe the gospel of salvation. Once he believes in the Lord for salvation, something wonderful happens. He is baptized with the Holy Spirit into the very body of Christ and henceforth has a new position, IN CHRIST!

- He was outside of Christ, now he is IN CHRIST.
- IN CHRIST, he has righteousness,
- IN CHRIST he is justified and
- IN CHRIST he has the source of faith.
- Being IN HIM certainly makes a difference.

As we said at the first, Jesus is

“... *the author and finisher of our faith;*” — Hebrews 12:2

Faith originates IN HIM, and it is his good pleasure to accomplish in our lives those things he has revealed to us to be His will, IF we will only believe Him.

*“Having **made known** to us the mystery of **His will**, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself:*

That in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him;

In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will:

That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.

In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,”

— Ephesians 1:9-13

Notice the order:

- ➡ The will of God made known by the word
- ➡ Belief in what God said
- ➡ Trust in Him to accomplish his purpose in our lives

For faith to work in our lives, we must believe that He is.

“Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

For it is God which worketh in you to will and to do his good pleasure.”
— *Philippians 2:12, 13*

Brethren, God isn't trying to hide His will or make it difficult to know what His desire is for your life. He isn't playing guessing games or waiting for you to even be spiritual. He only requires that you believe Him. Then we are to work out our salvation and seek after holiness. But we can only please Him by faith. If you don't know the will of God, it is because the old self-will is holding on. You don't have a clear leading from God, because you don't have a clear separation from the desires of the flesh. The cares of the world choke the word. Won't you lay aside everything for Him today and walk with Him? And of course, how can two walk together except they be agreed?

We are so blessed by the good will of God, that we think we can do quite well without praying about every little thing and know EXACTLY what the will of God is in those things. So, we go our merry way until we meet some difficulty or trial in our lives. Then, we cry out to God to have His will in our lives. But why is it we don't already know His will and walk in His Spirit day by day.

Remember, in First Samuel chapter thirty, the story of King David, when he returned to Ziklag ?

“And it came to pass, when David and his men were come to Ziklag on the third day, that the Amalekites had invaded the south, and Ziklag, and smitten Ziklag, and burned it with fire;

And had taken the women captives, that were therein: they slew not any, either great or small, but carried them away, and went on their way.

And David enquired at the LORD, saying, Shall I pursue after this troop? shall I overtake them? And he answered

him, Pursue: for thou shalt surely overtake them, and without fail recover all.

And David recovered all that the Amalekites had carried away: and David rescued his two wives.

And there was nothing lacking to them, neither small nor great, neither sons nor daughters, neither spoil, nor any thing that they had taken to them: David recovered all.”

— *I Samuel 30:1,2,8,18,19*

King David returned to Ziklag and his family had been kidnapped. It would seem that, as soldier and king, his immediate response would have been to pursue them immediately and rescue them. Doesn't that sound like what we would do? And then, on the way, we would ask God to bless what we were doing. But, not David. First, he took time to pray and ask God if that was the right course of action. Just as we would suppose, God told him to "Go get 'em." Now, does that seem like something you would have to pray about? It is, if you want to go *by faith*. So, David did go, but now he went by faith and had the assurance that God was with him and that he would prevail over the enemy. He had God's word on the matter BEFORE he pursued them. He knew he would prevail.

KNOWING THE WILL OF GOD

The Apostle John gives us some plain instruction on prayer and the will of God in I John chapter 5.

*“And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask anything **according to his will**, he heareth us:*

And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petition we desired of him.”

— I John 5:14,15

John tells us that when we pray:

- We can have confidence IN HIM that
- IF we ask “*according to His will.*”
- THEN “*we can KNOW that we have the petition we desired of Him.*”

Faith comes with the revealed will of God.

While attending Moody Bible Institute, John Stam wrote a letter to his father John. In it he listed six lessons he had learned while there. The fifth lesson of those six was:

“Fifth, that **faith must be intelligently based upon the revealed will of God.** Not because I have a supreme conviction that I need something or other, but because I find it is His will, I can pray with confidence.”

Until we know God's desire regarding a matter, we cannot make it our own desire and we cannot really know how to proceed to obey His will. The knowledge of the will of God comes from the written word, as we read it or as we hear it preached. It also comes from the Living Word, as we spend time with Him in prayer. Now do not get nervous because I said you can find the will of God by asking the Lord. You will get used to hearing His voice by and by, if you will begin to spend a little time with Him. We must remember that not only do we have His word in Scripture, but we have His Spirit within us and we have access to the LIVING Word of God through prayer as well.

I am not talking about extra-revelation. I am talking about a child of God talking with his Father. Do our children do all the talking when we have a conversation with them? If so, our relationship is unusual, to say the least. No, you usually listen to them talk about the things of the day, and the things that are important to them. Then, we respond—instructing them, advising them, answering their questions, etc. Why should we think our relationship with our heavenly Father would be any different?

When the Lord speaks in our hearts and reveals His will, something happens— faith is imparted to us. That faith gives us the ability to believe what He has told us. Then, we exercise our will and either agree with Him, and receive faith, or disagree with Him and reject the will of God in unbelief.

Once we *have* believed Him, we do not have to believe Him over and over again for the same thing. We simply trust Him for what we believed Him for and go about doing what He has instructed us to do.

➤ **FAITH and BELIEF**— Inseparable, but different.

In his book, *The Perfect Will Of God*, G. Christian Weiss gives the following illustration.⁵

“Dr. George Mueller of Bristol, England, Founder and Director of a large Children’s Orphanage, which he carried on by simple faith, to the amazement of the whole world, was one of the spiritual giants of the preceding century. During the course of his lifetime \$7,500,000 were entrusted to his hands and spent for the care and maintenance of thousands of orphaned children, in response to prayer, without any form of solicitation. (On today’s scale, this would be more than \$100,000,000). The story of his life and faith and the marvelous answers to prayer he experienced, is indeed a spiritual romance. He became the Christian world’s great example of the life of faith and his orphanage work became the outstanding monument to the work of faith. All the money that came into his hands and all the marvelous and detailed guidance he received from God came in earnest response to earnest prayer and a simple, childlike faith.”

☞ “Here is Mueller’s simple formula for determining the divine will, given as he himself gave it:”

“How I Ascertain the Will of God”

1. I seek at the beginning to get my heart into such a state that it has no will of its own in regard to a given matter. Nine-tenths of the trouble with people is just here. Nine-tenths of the difficulties are overcome when our hearts are ready to do the Lord’s will, whatever it may be. When one is truly in this state, it is usually but a little way to the knowledge of what His will is.

⁵ The Perfect Will Of God, by G. Christian Weiss, Back To The Bible Broadcast, P.O. Box 82808 Lincoln, Nebraska 68501

2. Having done this, I do not leave the result to feeling or single impression. If I do so, I make myself liable to great delusions.
3. I seek the will of the Spirit of God through, or in connection with, the word of God. The Spirit and the word must be combined. If I look to the Spirit alone without the word, I lay myself open to great delusions also. If the Holy Ghost guides us at all, He will do it according to the scriptures and never contrary to them.
4. Next I take into account providential circumstances. These often plainly indicate God's will in connection with His word and Spirit.
5. I ask God in prayer to reveal His will to me aright.
6. Thus, through prayer, the study of the word, and reflection, I come to a deliberate judgment according to the best of my ability and knowledge, and if my mind is thus at peace, and continues so after two or three petitions, I proceed accordingly. In trivial matters and in transactions involving most important issues, I have found this method always effective."

Simply put, *Mueller's Formula*, if we may rightly call it that, can be boiled down to the following:

1. Surrender your own will.
2. Seek God's will.
3. Note providential circumstances.
4. Pray for guidance.
5. Wait on God.

Beloved, that will work! But, while we may wave our Baptist banner and claim to be living by this kind of faith principle, the sad truth is that we often approach the matter of faith just like the confused Pentecostal; we just don't aim as high. For example, I heard one Pentecostal preacher telling about how he got his airplane. He explained how every believer could have whatever they desire, if they would just "*name it and claim it.*" Just tell God that you are believing him for that new Lear Jet airplane, and you sir— just "*put God on the spot*" and tell Him you are going to believe Him for it. Just believe that God will give you the Goodyear blimp and God will have to deliver it to you because of your faith. Well, what else can God do? Why, He will have to deliver the goods or He will look awfully bad.

The Lord did say, in Matthew

"And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." — Matthew 21:22

But look in verse 21 and see what Jesus said before that.

"IF ye have faith." — Matthew 21:21

We have what we ask for IF we believe according to the faith given us! And do not forget I John 5:14. This verse qualifies Matthew 21:22.

*"And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, **if we ask any thing according to his will**, he heareth us:"* — I John 5:14

It says that in order to have confidence that we receive what we ask for, we must ask, "*according to his will.*" And when does faith begin? It begins with the revelation of His will. Do you see the difference? If we look at Matthew 21:22 alone, it might seem as if faith could originate in our little

finite pea sized brain, and because it seems good, we just know it must be the will of God. The truth is, however, that real faith always begins with the mind and will of God. When this is revealed to us, then, and only then, can we believe and, “ask... according to his will.”

We must *receive* faith *from* God by agreeing with Him and believing Him. What He shows us through faith is still future to us. But to God, it isn't something that is GOING TO HAPPEN; rather, in God's sight it is already accomplished. So, when we find the will of God and pray according to His will, we *will* receive the things we ask for— there is no doubt about it.

Again, I quote from, *Knowing The Will Of God*.⁶

“A careful study of Romans 12:1,2 shows that the Apostle Paul marks out therein **three preparatory steps** that must be taken in order ‘...that ye may prove what is... that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.’

The **first** of these steps is clearly carved out in the words, ‘Present your bodies a living sacrifice.’ This means utter, unreserved unqualified **surrender**. According to Paul, such utter surrender to God as a living offering on His altar of sacrifice is the first prerequisite toward knowing the will of God.

The matter of knowing God's will is far more a matter of the heart than it is a matter of the intellect, a heart problem more than a head problem. If our hearts were right, rightly surrendered and rightly related to God, our minds would discern far more readily the guidance of God.

⁶ Ibid.

As a boy, often when I wanted my brother to do something for me which I feared he would not be pleased or desirous to do, I would try to extract from him the promise to do it before telling him what it was, and then hold him to his promise. I would very simply ask, 'Will you promise to do me a favor?' But only too often his quick comeback was, 'What is it?' In other words, he was not sufficiently surrendered to me, or devoted to me, or had sufficient confidence in me, to agree to do my will and pleasure until he knew what it was. Actually he was not surrendering his will to mine at all! He was only manifesting a kind of interest and readiness to do my pleasure if it did not too severely cross or interfere with his own. That is not real surrender at all. So it is with many Christians. God is, in effect, saying to all His children, 'Will you do my will?' and so many of them are coming back with, 'What is it, Lord? Tell me what it is so I can decide.' And in that response they are really intimating that if the thing God is requesting is something not too much in discord with their own will, something not too contrary to their own liking, they will yield to the doing of it.

The Spirit not only directs the course and work of one's entire life, but He also guides the Christian from day to day in particular instances and special services which God's will has for him along life's path. The experience of a missionary in the jungles of inner South America illustrates this very well. It is a gripping and striking account. On a particular morning this missionary received a distinct impression that he should make a trip in a certain direction into the surrounding jungles that very day. When he made a trip

into the jungles, he usually prepared for it several days in advance, so at first he merely ignored this impression, considering it only his personal '*feeling.*' As the morning wore on, he could not be rid of the impression that he must go to that particular area without delay. He quickly got together some things for the journey, called a few of his Indian carriers, and set out. After long, weary trekking through the dense jungles, they arrived at nightfall at an Indian hut. Inside the bamboo hut was an old Indian man, literally on his deathbed. Strange to say, he seemed all prepared for the missionary's coming and almost immediately asked about '*The Book.*' Upon the missionary's inquiry, the aged, dying pagan related how the preceding night, after he had cried out to God for hope and light in his darkness, he had a dream wherein a messenger came to him from heaven bringing a book. He was told to believe the words and message of the Book, and he would thus be saved. But the dream was soon over, and there he lay again in his hut in heathen darkness. Now the white man had come with the Book. He would believe and be saved! To make a long story short, the old Indian put his trust in Christ and shortly passed away to be with his Lord.

In such an experience one sees the Spirit's special leading in a particular event. He spoke to the heart of the missionary and guided him to the hut of the benighted man. He also spoke, in another manner, to an earnest heathen who was seeking light and prepared him for the message of the gospel that was going to be brought to him. Any saint who has obeyed the voice of the Holy Spirit calling him into the will of God for his life may expect such

experiences as this along his pathway. The life that has followed overall guidance can expect particular guidance.

*'Holy Spirit, faithful Guide,
Ever near the Christian's side;
Gently lead us by the hand,
Pilgrims in a desert land;
Weary souls fore'er rejoice,
While they hear that sweetest voice,
Whisp'ring softly, 'Wand'rer, come,
Follow Me, I'll guide thee home.*

*Ever present, truest Friend,
Ever near Thine aid to lend,
Leave us not to doubt and fear,
Groping on in darkness drear;
When the storms are raging sore,
Hearts grow faint, and hopes give o'er,
Whisper softly, 'Wand'rer, come!
Follow Me, I'll guide thee home.*

*When our days of toil shall cease,
Waiting still for sweet release,
Nothing left but Heav'n and prayer,
Wond'ring if our names were there;
Wading deep the dismal flood,
Pleading naught but Jesus' blood,
Whisper softly, 'Wand'rer come!
Follow Me, I'll guide thee home.'*

Has the Spirit borne witness that you are to do a certain work for God? As you heed that impression and pray over it, does it become deeper and more

indelible on your heart? As you yield toward the carrying out of that impression does there come a deep and settled peace to your soul? If so, it is doubtless the leading of the Holy Spirit. This, however, brings the question we raised at first: Have you yielded your life completely to the Holy Spirit? As you know your own heart, have you utterly yielded yourself to God? Has there been a time in your life when you came to the place where it became your fixed intention to surrender everything to the will and working of the Spirit? One missionary has put it, ‘*Such a surrender is not easy, nor as complete as we often suppose. Yet, is it right to expect God to lead you to the field of **His choice** if you have already determined in your own heart where you want to go? If you really want His guidance, you have to be ready to put yourself in His hands and gladly follow His directions, wherever they may lead. Does selfish ambition enter into your plans, the desire for recognition and praise from other Christians? It is better, and infinitely more satisfying, to please God than men.*”

As Paul wrote to the Galatians, we must reckon ourselves crucified.

“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

Look again to the book of Romans.

“Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but **yield** yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.

*I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now **yield** your members servants to righteousness unto holiness.”*

— Romans 6:13, 19

- ☞ YIELD is the key word in this text, and it must be the key word in the life of those who would live by faith.

Once I was preaching a missions conference in San Pedro, California. While I was there, I was determined to visit with my cousin. He was my only first cousin and I hadn't seen him in thirty years. When I got there I called him. We had lunch together and I asked him to come out to the meeting that night. He said he would and he'd bring a friend with him. That night I preached and two missionaries presented their work. At the end of the last missionary's presentation, I was so burdened for the work on his field that I was saying, *“Lord, somebody pass the offering plate and let's help this fellow;”* and shortly they did so. There I was praying, *“Lord, how much should I give this guy?”*

Before I could even finish my sentence, the figure popped into my mind, *“one-hundred and fifty dollars.”*

Startled, I shook my head and began to pray again, *“Now Lord whatever you tell me to give I'm going to...”*

“One-hundred and fifty dollars” immediately came to mind again.

“My, my,” I thought, *“I am getting over zealous.”* Very carefully, I began once more, *“Now Father, I just want to know the will of God on this thing...”* And once more, before I could finish, *“One-hundred and fifty dollars”* came to my mind.

“Lord, are you sure about this?” I questioned, “I really don’t think I’ve even got one-hundred and fifty dollars.”

There I stood, with checkbook in hand, as I mulled over the figure— *“One-hundred and fifty dollars; one-hundred and fifty dollars.”*

“Oh my; well, let’s see what I’ve got,” I said, looking into my checkbook.

I had almost enough to cover it; and with a good offering maybe... But how was I going to pay for my travel expenses and get home? Besides, I hadn’t even gotten my offering yet.

You see what a great man of faith I was; cheerful giver and all, you know.

“Oh, well,” I finally sighed in surrender, *“I may not get home, but I’m going to help this man get to the mission field.”*

“Hmm, maybe just fifty dollars,” I thought; *“you know fifty dollars would be a pretty good gift.”* I could afford that; and I wrote a check for that amount. But something was wrong; man, did I feel uncomfortable, no peace at all. I tore the check up and started again.

“Now let me see; how about one-hundred dollars. If I got a good offering from a church, plus an extra gift of one-hundred dollars from an individual, I would think that was pretty good.”

As I began to write I felt like the Lord was looking right over my shoulder. *“Is that what I told you?”* I felt Him ask.

“Oh, that’s right— you said one-hundred and fifty dollars.”

So, I wrote the check for that amount. And as I filled in the amount (one-hundred and fifty dollars), I sighed, *“Well Lord, I’m preaching about living by faith, so here we go.”*

My only first cousin, whom I had not seen in 30 years, lived in that city and came to the meeting to hear me preach. As we left the building that night, my cousin invited me to have supper with him and his friend. Of course, I was delighted to get to spend some time with him. Then he pulled out his check book, saying, "*I believe in what you are doing and I want to give you something for the work in China.*" He proceeded to write me a check for two-hundred dollars. Now I had my money back with fifty dollars added. "*Why didn't he put his check in the offering plate like everybody else?*" I wondered. Because the Lord was testing me.

The Lord knew all the time that my cousin was going to give me two-hundred dollars. Can you imagine how ashamed I would have been if I had withheld my gift, and then have received that check from my cousin the same night? But I wonder, would I ever have seen that two-hundred dollar check from my cousin if I had given only fifty or even one-hundred dollars, rather than the one-hundred and fifty the Lord told me to give? I don't think so.

By the way, the next night I was handed a check from the church for preaching the conference. Can you guess what the amount was? I thought you could; it was for one-hundred and fifty dollars! Well, what do you know about that? I got all that money back, plus a two-hundred dollar gift. God just gave it out of the bounty of heaven. You see it *had been* the Lord telling me to give one-hundred and fifty dollars. You see, I was having a disagreement with the Lord about the matter. Afterward I could imagine the debate.

He was telling me to give the money, but I kept thinking, "*No, I don't have one-hundred and fifty dollars.*"

"*Yes, you do!*" he replied.

"*Now Lord, really, I don't think so,*" I advised.

“Trust me,” he said, “I’m telling you, you have the money.”

“Well, where do I have it?” I asked.

“Out the back door in about thirty minutes,” He revealed.

“I am sorry for doubting you Lord, but how could I know that?” I asked, ashamedly.

Of course, I did not know that— but He did. He was “counting those things that be not as though they were,” while I was only counting on what I could see that was present before me. It was still future to me, and unknown by all my carnal faculties. Still, He gave me the faith to believe that it was so, even though I could not understand how it could be true. But, if I had not put my faith in Him, it would not have been there. After all, what should we believe; our eyes, our minds or what others say? Even if the whole world should disagree, even though it may seem impossible, we must believe God.

How many times has the Lord touched our hearts and led us to give a certain amount and *we reasoned* that if we did, we would not be able to pay the water bill. I mean, WHAT IF— some emergency arises. WHAT IF— we need the money for groceries or for weight watchers, etc. (WHAT IF— will kill your faith quicker than anything). So, we don’t give what God led us to give, and sure enough next week we do need the money.

“If I had put that money in the offering plate, I’d be in a fix now,” we’d say.

Yes, and we would already be in a fix with God because of our unbelief. Furthermore, if we had obeyed the Lord, He would have taken care of everything. You can trust what He says.

“Well, I don’t SEE how it could possibly have worked out.”

That is the trouble isn’t it, walking by sight? We just can’t believe God for those, *“things not seen,”* even though faith says they are there for us all the time. If only we would have asked God about it and believed what He showed us.

It is like the story of the elderly lady who was greatly disturbed by her many troubles, both real and imaginary. Finally she was told, in a kindly way, by her family, *“Grandma, we’ve done all we can do for you; you’ll just have to trust God for the rest.”* A look of utter despair spread over her face as she replied, *“Oh, dear, has it come to that?”* Sooner or later, brethren, by the grace of God, it always comes to that, so it might just as well begin with that.

There’s an old saying, *“Go as far as you can see, and when you get there you will always be able to see a little farther.”* As the redeemed of the Lord we can go even further and say, *“Go as far as you can see, and when you get there, God has already seen a little further.”*

From time to time God will put you in such a place, so that if He fails, you are sunk. Good! That’s right where he wants you. Be careful, however, that it is He who brings you to that place. If you get into trouble because of your own foolishness and presumption, he may just let you try to work out the situations yourself for awhile. Then, you will be more careful in the future to seek His will day by day.

It is like the tight rope walker. The performer may put on quite an impressive show; but when they take the net away, there is no room for mistakes. Then there can be no mistakes or all is lost. The only difference about faith is that God does not make mistakes.

Years ago, when I was on deputation to raise support to go to the mission field, I felt I could hardly wait to get there. I kept telling the Lord I was ready. *“Just give me a few more supporting churches,”* I said, *“and I will go to the mission field.”*

The Lord would patiently shake his head and say, *“No, you’re not ready yet.”* This went on and on until I began to hear from some of my missionary friends about the trials of their faith and finances. Soon I began to think that maybe I was not ready to go yet; that I had better wait until God told me it was time to go. *“I am willing to go now, but if my supporting churches don’t come through, I’m sunk.”* I thought to myself.

But I felt like the Lord was saying to me, *“Are you trusting your churches or are you trusting me? After all, those churches are just my instruments— I am the source of all your supply.”*

“Well, Lord,” I replied, *“I am sure I had better trust in you, so when you say I’m ready, I can make it, no matter how few churches support me.”*

It was then that the Lord assured me, *“Now you are ready.”*

Everyone said, *“Brother Smith, you can’t go to the mission field, you do not have enough support.”* I told them I felt the same way, but God had told me that I was to go anyway.

Evangelist Earl Hughes tells this story about faith. *“I saw how God gave some folks the faith to believe Him for thousands and thousands of dollars to do his work. I often wondered why He didn’t do that for me. Finally, I just asked Him, and he told me He just couldn’t trust me with too much money. So He would just give me the faith to believe that He could do it without the money.”*

Thank you Brother Earl! That's seems to be the way God has worked in my life also. But I had never heard anyone put it just that way before. I am sure there are a lot of other folks who have been in this same situation. Many have made themselves miserable wondering why God has not let them win the Reader's Digest lottery or raise a couple of hundred thousand dollars for the work they are involved with. Maybe you ought to learn to be content with what the Lord has given you, or if you think you can take it, do like Brother Earl Hughes, and ask God what He thinks about you.

We did go on to Taiwan at that time; and, brother, we were broke. But the Lord supplied our every need. One denominational missionary there asked me how much money I had in my church planting fund, how much in my literature fund, how much in my furlough fund, how much in this and that. I said "*Brother, I do not even have enough support to live on. I have to teach English on the side to have enough for food and rent.*" (By the way, all of my English students, except one, received Christ as their Saviour, praise God.) About this time I was feeling pretty downcast, so I went to the Lord and told him what a pitiable missionary I was. I had no money for gospel tracts, no money for Bibles, no money for anything. In tears, I poured out my heart to my heavenly Father. I told him if he would give me the tracts, I would deliver them, but I did need tracts. If he would give me Bibles, I would deliver them, but I did need Bibles. I felt comfort as the Lord assured me that I would have all I had asked for.

To make a long story short, the Lord laid it upon one man's heart to send us Bibles; and I never lacked for Bibles the whole time I was in Taiwan. At the same time, God put over 80,000 Chick gospel tracts through my hands with my name and address stamped on the back. For a while I had so

many gospel tracts I was wondering if I was going to get them all distributed. God has no problem supplying our needs, but sometimes we are confused about what our real needs are and about what God is doing in our lives and ministries.

We were beginning a new work and I prayed, “*Lord, give us souls.*” He did, but as is common in China, we had almost all women. Then I prayed, Lord thank God for these dear ladies, but we need men. Pretty soon we had more men than women. Then I said, Lord what I mean is that we need families. Just before we left Taiwan, the Lord gave us our first family.

The church needed a piano but, again, we had no money. I prayed; and the Lord had a missionary family leave their piano with us when they went on furlough. That was God’s answer for our need then, but before they returned, I prayed, and felt the Lord would be pleased to give us a piano of our own. We began to take up special offerings from time to time and put the money back. Then, just before the furloughing missionaries returned to get their piano, the Lord gave us a nice piano. For a time it was in our home until the other piano was picked up. Anna, one of our members, asked if she could come over to our home after services one Sunday and see our new piano. As she ran her hands over it, she confessed, “*Pastor, when you said the Lord was going to provide us with a piano, I thought, ‘We can’t buy a piano, we’re too few people.’ But now here it is. God did answer our prayers just like you said.*” I was safe in what I told them, because I only told them what God told me.

THE POWER OF FAITH

In Matthew 17:14-20 we find the disciples inquiring of the Lord about their inability to cast a devil out of a young boy. In verse 20, as you will see many times in the scriptures, the words *faith* and *belief* are used in the same verse. This is to differentiate between the two while showing that they cannot be separated. The Lord does not tell them that it was because of a lack of faith that they could not cast out the devil. Rather, it was because of UNBELIEF. The Spirit of God gave them all the faith they needed. But, while they were going through the motions, they did not really believe God's testimony that they could do it. I am sure you and I would never be guilty of such a thing. Can you imagine almighty God leading us to do something and us not believing Him? The truth is, we have all been guilty of the same thing. We have all disobeyed God at times and argued with Him about His guidance. In fact, we have all been guilty of downright unbelief at one time or another.

In Matthew chapter 17 we read about "*having faith as a grain of mustard seed.*" I always wondered about this verse. If it is saying that with a little bitty, tiny amount of faith one could move a mountain, then I must have no faith at all. What, *move a mountain*? I cannot even say to a mountain of leaves in my yard, "*be removed,*" and see it removed hence. But, maybe that isn't what it means at all. Let's take a look at this **mustard seed faith**.

The verse says,

“If ye have faith AS a grain of mustard seed.”

— *Matthew 17:20*

That doesn't mean that even if we have only an itty bitsy bit of faith we can move mountains. It says “AS,” meaning that if we have the kind of faith *like* a mustard seed has we could do those things. Well, pray tell me, how much faith does a mustard seed have? Just enough to do what God told it to do. And the result is amazing.

In Genesis 1:11-12 when God said, “*Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit,*” bless God, the grass started springing up everywhere. And the herb yielding seed began to yield herbs, and the fruit tree started yielding fruit. His word has such power that, in the act of creation, all He had to do was to *speak* for all things to come into existence. All of God's creation instantly obeys Him at His word— except man. It is man who has trouble believing God. When God speaks to the little mustard seed and says, “*grow,*” His word has power and the seed starts growing. It is the Living Word of God that speaks and we know that, “... *faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God..*,” doesn't it? Yes! And when the Lord speaks, He imparts faith to that little mustard seed to do His will. How much faith does it take? Just exactly enough to do what the Lord says. Even so, God gives every man enough faith to believe Him for just exactly what He has called him to do.

William Jennings Bryan, famous American lawyer and creationist, wrote:

“Recently someone planted just one little seed in the ground. Under the influence of sunshine and

shower, it took off its coat and went to work gathering about 200,000 times its own weight. It forced all that material through a tiny stem and built a watermelon. On the outside it had a covering of green; within that, a rind of white; and within that a core of red. Scattered on the inside were more seeds— each capable of doing the same work all over again. What architect drew the plan? Where did it find its flavoring extract and its coloring matter?

The mustard seed didn't have faith to become a watermelon, nor was it designed to do so. But the watermelon was designed by God and given enough faith to accomplish just what it was designed to do."

That reminds me of another true story told by Evangelist Sam Jones. Brother Jones was walking down the road with an acquaintance who claimed to be an atheist. The atheist was ridiculing God about creation. For example, there was a field full of watermelons. Why would God make the watermelon so large and support it and feed it through such a small, flimsy vine? And another thing he noted was how the tiny little acorn hangs from the mighty oak tree. Would it not make more sense, he pointed out, if the tiny vine supported the small acorn and the giant oak tree held the large watermelon? About that time an acorn fell and hit the guy right on top of the head. His companion commented glibly, "*I think the Lord knows what he's doing. Just now, for example, aren't you glad that acorns grow on trees instead of watermelons?*"

Yes, God does know what He is doing in His creation. The watermelon knows the will of God for watermelons, and acorns know His will for acorns. But man does have a

problem with it, doesn't he? Because man is the only one who has a will and has to make a choice.

Do you know the will of God for your life? Don't sit around for the rest of your life telling God what you want Him to do; find God's will.

If God tells us to build a frame building for a church and then we set out to build a *crystal cathedral*, we are not doing it by faith, but by presumption. So, when we get in trouble down the road, we want to ask, "*Lord, what happened?*" What happened is that we sinned. By the same token, if God tells us to build a church that will seat 5,000 people and, in unbelief, we build one that seats 500, we have sinned. Remember what the Bible says, "*Whatsoever is NOT of faith is SIN*" and "*Without faith it is impossible to please God.*" Is it any wonder why American Christianity is in the shape it is in. We have not been living by faith. The best thing for us to do is get down on our faces, confess our sin to God and cry out, "*Lord help mine unbelief.*" Yes sir, *godly sorrow* would be a good starting place. Let's ask God to forgive our sins of unbelief and to give us "*the faith of a grain of mustard seed.*" That is all the faith we need to do the job God has given us to do.

- Faith, itself, does nothing— it enables us to do something.
- IT ENABLES US— to believe and accomplish whatever the Lord has set before us.

The Will Of Man And The Faith Of Christ

Now we come to a pivotal point of theology that is crucial to understanding faith and salvation. If you can get this, it will keep you from the error of John Calvin and others. Calvin taught that man had NO CHOICE about being saved.

If he was one of the ELECT, God would just come upon that man and save him. At that moment he was born of the Spirit. THEN he could believe Christ. Now, even if that makes sense to you, let us look at what Calvin saw and what he missed.

First of all, Calvin did get *something* right in his TULIP patch. He saw that man, in his fallen state, was alienated from God. He saw that in his fallen state, man not only had no ability to receive Christ, but he had not even the desire to be saved. Furthermore, there was no way he could change that situation of himself.

Since the fall, no man has had a truly FREE WILL. Now, in the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve had a free will. They could have chosen to obey God or they could have chosen to disobey. And under these very simple terms of their relationship with God, they showed that man left to himself, even without a sin nature and in a sinless environment, would sin against God. Having once sinned, all of mankind would have remained lost forever unless God did something to save man. So, we see that before the fall was the only time anyone has ever had a truly “free will.” As a result of his sin, Adam died spiritually.

See what Paul says.

*“Wherefore, as by one man **sin entered into the world, and death by sin;** and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:”*

*Nevertheless **death reigned** from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam’s transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come.*

For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.

— Romans 5:12,14,19

After sin and death entered into the world, death reigned over all men. Sin and death passed on to all Adam's offspring. All were born in a sinful state, cut off from God, spiritually depraved, children of the devil, in bondage to sin and the servants of sin. They did not seek after God and were not in any way, good. They were spiritually blind, lost and in darkness.

The following verses testify to this.

*"As it is written, There is **none righteous**, no, not one:"*

— Romans 3:10

*"Let them alone: they be **blind** leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch."*

— Matthew 15:14

"Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it."

— John 8:44

*"Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is **the servant of sin.**"*

— John 8:34

*"But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be **in bondage?**"*

— Galatians 4:9

*“But if our gospel be hid, **it is HID to them that are lost.**”*
— II Corinthians 4:3

*“But **the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God:** for they are foolishness to him: **neither can he know them,** for they are spiritually discerned.”*
— I Corinthians 2:14

- ☞ So, how can an unsaved man come to God or how can he believe God? The answer is, he CAN NOT and WILL NOT come to God, nor can he believe God— at least not of himself. You see the dilemma?
- ☞ Since an unsaved man is not looking for God, nor capable of believing God, something MUST take place to change that situation. Calvin’s answer to this dilemma was his belief that God changed man’s nature, by the new birth. Since man had nothing in him to desire God or receive the truth, Calvin believed that man was born again by a sovereign act of God upon the *elect*. Having thus been born again, that man would then receive spiritual truth, believe God and be saved. However, this is NOT what the Bible teaches.

Seeing man’s desperate condition, Calvin wondered how a man could get from a position of total alienation from God, to being a child of God. When he could not figure it out, he twisted the truth of divine election to try to make it the answer. Well, the problem is very real, but his solution is heresy. What did John Calvin miss? How *did* God solve our problem? The answer is FAITH! Faith is what bridges the gap from darkness to light. Faith gives divine power to man to believe God. Faith opens man’s eyes to see the light before

he has received it. Then, after God imparts faith to the unbeliever, that man has the power to exercise his will and *receive* the truth.

Look at what the scriptures say.

*“For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, **not being mixed with faith** in them that heard it.”*

— Hebrews 4:2

Why wasn't the word of God, preached to those Israelites, “*mixed with faith*”? It was because of their *unbelief* (see Hebrews 4:6). Faith DID COME by the hearing of the word. That faith was the gift of God to enable them to believe. Then, by faith, they *could* have exercised their will and chosen to believe God. But, because **they would not believe** the message, they remained in their sin.

Notice the references in verses 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7 to what God SAID. Faith is based upon God's revelation of himself. Here it is by the word of God. In the same manner, those Israelites in Egypt who rejected what God SAID, could not receive the promise that they might enter into His rest.

- ☞ Before faith was given to them it was impossible for them to believe.
- ☞ But, even after faith came, it was still necessary that they exercise their will and believe.
- ☞ So, faith comes first and then belief.

Look at verse twelve and see how faith is connected with the word of God. Note in verse 14, that the *profession* of

faith of those who did believe and did receive the faith that came by the hearing of the word of God.

*“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: **it is the gift of God:**”* — Ephesians 2:8

Now if faith is “the gift of God”, no unsaved man has BIBLE faith unless it is given to him to reveal the existence of God through creation or to reveal Christ as Savior. The difference in BIBLE faith (the faith of Jesus Christ) and WORLDLY faith, is simply the source. The world’s faith is based on the limited understanding of human flesh—their hope is but wishful thinking. But BIBLE faith is the gift of God given in the witness of creation or by the hearing of the word of God (Romans 10:17). When faith COMES from God, then the unsaved man to whom it is imparted can do something that was impossible for him to do before. He can believe God! Faith is the gift of God; now that faith has given me the power to believe, it remains for me to exercise my will and decide whether or not I WILL believe God. I have no ability to believe God until I am given the faith to believe.

Then the problem changes from whether or not we CAN believe, but whether or not we WILL believe. You see, there is no excuse for not living and walking by faith. No man will even be able to say justly, *“Well, I would have done better, but I just didn’t have enough faith.”* We cannot blame it on God, because He will give us enough faith to believe Him for whatever He has revealed to us. The problem isn’t whether we have enough faith; it is whether or not we are willing to believe God according to the faith He has given us.

That solves the problem that Calvin could not solve. How can a man, who can not get to God, get to God? He can’t!

☞ **God must make the first move, and draw the sinner to Himself.**

We see this in John's Gospel.

*“No man can come to me, **except the Father which hath sent me draw him:** and I will raise him up at the last day.”* — John 6:44

*“**And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.**”* — John 12:32

So, Christ will draw all men to Himself either by the testimony of creation or by the word of God. And when man is drawn he is given faith to believe what God has revealed. Then he is free to choose, because he is given power, by faith, that enables him to do that which he could not do of himself.

Peter Receives Faith From The Word

In the book of Luke we have a wonderful story of faith in the account of Peter and the draught of fishes. Even the Savior's command to “*Launch out into the deep*” stirs our souls today to live by faith. This story is a very practical illustration of everything we have been studying about faith.

“Now when he had left off speaking, he said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught.

*And Simon answering, said unto him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: **nevertheless at thy word** I will let down the net.*

And when they had this done, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net brake.

And they beckoned unto their partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And

they came, and filled both ships, so that they began to sink.”

— Luke 5:4-7

Luke 5:2 says that these fishermen were “*washing their nets.*” They had fished all night. Having caught nothing, they came to the shore and there, in the early morning, began to clean their gear. Do you know anything about commercial fishing? I have a preacher friend who used to be a commercial fisherman before he was saved. He told about drawing the nets in against the current and how heavy some of the big nets became when they were wet. Then they had to be washed and hung up to dry. This is back breaking work for the hardiest of men.

So, here we have Peter and these commercial fishermen. Having fished all night they had nothing to show for their labors but tired bodies and empty nets.

“*Man, it’s time to clean up and head for the house,*” Peter might have said.

Then the Lord speaks. “*Caught anything, Pete?*”

“*Not a thing, Lord.*” Peter replies.

“*Well, toss the net on that side, over there,*” the Lord instructs.

“*Lord, are you kidding?*” Peter asked wearily. “*We are really beat. Why we’ve fished all night and not caught a thing. I mean, they just weren’t running last night. Fellows, are we professional fisherman; were there any fish out there?*”

“*No, Pete, we did not get even one,*” they agreed.

Then the Lord told them to get back into their ships and let down their nets one more time. It is against Peter’s experience as a fisherman, and beyond all reason, but not beyond

faith. So Peter says, “...*nevertheless at thy word...*” and faith came at the hearing of the word. Well, the fish were not only there, but in such abundance that the disciples feared the net would break and the boat would sink. Peter was astonished at all this. But, Peter had to yield his old will to the Lord, agree with Christ and obey Him. (THAT IS BELIEVING!) Then, trusting Christ, he went about doing what the Lord had instructed him to do. It was a case of “*Not my will, but thine be done.*” Had Peter not believed the Lord and not obeyed, he would never have realized the great proportions of the Lord’s provision— by faith.

Here is what the Lord Jesus Christ wants us to be doing:

1. **Listening** for his instruction.
2. **Believing**; even against all reason and experience, because He said it.
3. **Trusting** him for what we have believed and resting in the Lord.
4. **Working**, to do His good will. Sowing good seed to reap rewards later in this life and in eternity to come.

All of this can be done only by faith.

God’s Provision For Small Things/All Things

Years ago I had an experience I will never forget. The lesson I learned was simple, but profound. It was a memorable event, not because some great thing came to pass, but because of the way the Lord worked it out and because he showed me that even the simplest decisions must be by faith.

While in Bible school, my old watch expired on me. About that time I received an ad through the mail featuring a real bargain. I could not only purchase a watch for six dollars a month, but get the latest technology in a digital wristwatch. It was about twice as thick as today's models and gave only the date and time. About four years later all kinds of new models began to come out. My friend knew I liked gadgets, so he couldn't wait to show me the one he had just purchased. Man it could do everything. You know any watch can keep the time, but this one could keep time in ten different countries, give the altitude and temperature, check your pulse rate, play pac-man, do your income tax, and all that stuff. After seeing his watch I suddenly became discontented with my old outdated one. I began to think how I might save enough money to buy myself a new watch, but I was still paying school bills and doctor and hospital bills for delivering babies, etc. I just couldn't seem to come up with the money.

Then, one day as I was walking through K-Mart, I saw a sign that caught my eye. It said,

**“SPECIAL SALE ON SEIKO WATCHES,
UP TO 50% OFF WHILE THEY LAST.”**

I went over to look, and immediately saw the watch I wanted. Of course it was one of the most expensive, but at a fifty per cent discount it was quite reasonable. What was I going to do? I couldn't pass up an opportunity like this. My old flesh began to covet.

“That's the last one of that model,” the salesgirl commented.

You see how it must have been the providence of God. After all, it was the last one, and at that price, how could I resist? Of course all these were wrong motives, but it

sounded good at the time. Fumbling through my pockets I came up with twenty dollars; not nearly enough.

“Could I put that on layaway?” I asked.

“Of course,” she courteously replied.

The transaction was made and I headed toward the door rejoicing. At last I would have the watch I had wanted for so long. Just then, I felt as though the Lord was trying to get my attention.

“Did you pray about that?” he asked.

“Well, no, Lord,” I replied sheepishly, *“after all, it’s just a wrist watch.”*

“You are a Bible believer, aren’t you?” He continued.

“Oh, sure, Lord,” I said, *“you know I believe every word in the King James Bible.”*

“Well,” he began, *“doesn’t the Bible say, ‘...everything by prayer and supplication?’”*

“Yes,” I agreed, *“it does say that.”*

“Well,” he inquired, *“shouldn’t you pray about buying that watch?”*

“Oh, of course,” I said, as I stepped over behind a column next to one of the display counters.

“Now Lord, I’m just taking time to pray about this watch I’m buying, and thank you for saving the last one for me,” I began.

Before I could go any further, the Lord asked me, *“Why are you buying a watch?”*

“To tell time by,” I answered, frankly.

“Doesn’t the watch you have keep good time?” he continued.

“Well, yes, Lord, it does, but not like that new one,” I argued.

“You really don’t NEED a watch then, do you?” He countered, “Maybe you’d better just get your money back.”

What else was I to do? I went back and the store refunded my deposit. I was about to leave the store and man, was I about to get a case of double mullygrubs, or what?

“You’d think a man could at least have an old watch. I just can’t have anything, and besides I always have to sacrifice, and another thing...” I grumbled. It was really getting bad.

“Hold on there, son.” the Lord said again. “I just want to say that you did the right thing a moment ago and I’m pleased about it.”

“Well, it was the right thing to do, Lord, and besides it really wasn’t such a big deal anyway,” I said.

“No, it wasn’t,” he agreed.

“You know, son, a good father could give his own son a gift if he wanted to— without any reason— just because he loved him,” He offered. “You’ve done the same thing for your son once in a while, haven’t you?”

“Sure,” I thought, and I brightened up as I figured out what He was about to say.

“That’s right,” I said smiling. “All right Father, as long as this old watch keeps running, I’m not going to buy a new one, but if you’d like to give me one, I’d be glad to accept it.”

“That’s what I’m going to do,” he confided, “just wait and I’ll give you THAT watch you were looking at.”

I was anxious to see how He was going to do it, but days turned into weeks and weeks turned into months as I waited on the Lord.

While on deputation my travels took me to Phoenix, Arizona. There I had a meeting in a small church with a pastor I'd never met before, except on the telephone. After the meeting he invited us to stay in their home until we had to leave for our next meeting. Saturday, we went to the church together where he was going to give me the offering.

“Oh yes,” he exclaimed, *“let me give you this!”*

It was a wristwatch, still in its plastic box with the cardboard cover around it and everything. After examining it I told him how much I appreciated it, but was curious. I asked him how he knew I had been wanting a watch, and explained that I was a little embarrassed to receive such a nice gift. He replied that it wasn't a gift from him, but it was put in the offering plate the previous Wednesday night that I preached. I told him I wanted to thank the one who gave so generously, and asked their name. He told me that he really didn't know. As he saw my confusion, he explained.

“Didn't you see that old bum who came in during the middle of the service Wednesday evening?” he asked. *“When the offering was taken, he dropped that watch in the plate.”*

Now think for a moment. How many different brands of watches are on the market today? And how many different models does each company make? Well, what do you think the chance would be that a man would look at a watch six months earlier. Then, two thousand miles away, have a man nobody ever saw before or since, walk into a meeting and put a new watch into the offering plate. If you think that's something, let's go a little further and make it the same brand and even the very model that, after prayer, God said He

would give to the man. Now who do you think gave me that watch? I was astounded! I guess I just couldn't believe God would do what He said He would do. And yet all the while I had waited for Him to do it. I was really humbled before the Lord. If He had given me a couple of hundred thousand dollars to build a church or to print tracts to win souls I could have understood. Why, though, would he go to all that trouble to give me a wristwatch that I really didn't even need? He did it because He loves me. And I will tell you something else; He wants to do the same thing and more for every one of His children.

The lesson from the Lord was, *"I care about your smallest needs in America. I can take care every need you have here and I can take care of your every need on the foreign mission field?"*

How could I do anything but trust Him from then on?

Peter Walks On Water

Let's look at another story in the scripture. It is Peter again in Matthew 14:29. Here we see Peter wholly yielded to the Lord. As the story begins, we find the disciples in the midst of the sea *"tossed with waves,"* Matthew 14:24.

Naturally enough, we read in verse 26 that when they saw what they thought was *"a spirit,"* *"they cried out for fear."* But in verse 27, *"... Jesus spake unto them, saying, be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid."* Peter, fixing his eyes on the Lord, suddenly feels that he would be a whole lot safer with Jesus on the water than in a sinking ship, *"And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water."*

Of course, you and I would have wanted time to better evaluate the situation, to get prayed up, and to see if it was

really necessary. After all, there's no sense in going overboard about this thing. Well, Peter *literally* went overboard for the Lord. (Now there's a sermon for you, preacher) Notice that at His word, Peter never hesitates. Jesus says only one word, "Come." At His word, Peter climbs out of the boat, "... and he walked on the water, to go to Jesus."

Peter isn't showing off; he is in a storm-raged sea and he wants to be right at the Lord's side. He doesn't take time to pray or make a decision or yield or anything else. When Jesus speaks, Peter obeys without hesitation and steps out of the realm of reason into the realm of the impossible with His Lord. Peter had his eyes and heart set on Jesus then. But in verse 30 we see that when he took his eyes off Christ and began to look at the waves of circumstances, he began to sink in despair. Faith is beyond all our reason and experience. When we begin to listen to our old carnal mind and look about us at the waves of circumstance, it brings us to doubt and fear. After all, everybody knows these things just can't be. I mean, be reasonable, you're just going to make a fool of yourself. Does this sound familiar to you? Let us learn the secret of living by faith, and we need not fear even in the most perilous times.

Finally, look in verse 31 and see a most marvelous and comforting truth. Let's begin by thinking how men will say, "*if you go way out there (by faith) and it doesn't work out, then what will you do?*" You do what Peter did; cry out to the Lord in your unbelief and He will rescue you. You see, **the grace of God will keep you where the will of God leads you.**

There was no faith in that ship full of preachers. Yes, they had started out by faith upon the Lord's command. But here, only a short time later, we find them crying out for fear. They

were in a similar circumstance in Matthew 8:25 when Jesus was asleep in the ship and they cried unto the Lord, "... *carest thou not that we perish?*" But see the difference when, in Matthew 14:29, one of them lays hold of faith and believes God. Suddenly the scene changes from one of fear to one of a great attempt to follow Christ by faith.

Notice the order:

1. **Fear** (when there is no faith).
2. The **revealed will of God** (by the word of God).
3. **Faith** imparted by the word ("*Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God*").

We see that the Living Word of God *spoke* to Peter. At that moment, faith was imparted to him and he was able to do something he could not have done a moment before; BELIEVE! At this time Peter must have been in a close relationship with the Lord. When one is yielded to the Lord, he needs only to know the will of the Lord. It is not time to decide if I will believe, but only to discern the will of God and obey.

FAITH IS BASED ON AUTHORITY

We read the interesting story of the great faith of the Roman Centurion.

*“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.”* — Matthew 8:10

The Lord told them he had not found such faith among the children of Israel, because Israel’s unbelief kept them from receiving the faith that had been given to them.

Notice in this passage how faith is connected with AUTHORITY (Matthew 7:29). The centurion also saw the connection and made allusion to it in Matthew 8:9. His servants obeyed him because he spoke with the authority of Rome. Now how much faith do you think a preacher has who questions the authority of the Holy Bible. If he doubts the authority of the Bible he holds in his hand, how can he truthfully proclaim, *“thus saith the Lord.”*

We obey because we believe the testimony of our Lord and the authority of the scriptures.

In Matthew, Jesus tells the centurion

“Go thy way; and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee.” — Matthew 8:13

- Was it believing, or was it faith that brought it to pass? Neither one, ALONE!
- FAITH testified, that it was even as the Lord had said.
- Man BELIEVED, agreeing that God’s word was true.
- And God brought it to pass.

Now what if the centurion had said, “*Well, I believe some of what you say; but I really don’t believe every word?*” Then he would have received according to the faith that he DID have and according to how much he DID believe— no more. Maybe he could have believed that his servant would get better, but not be completely healed. That is where the charismatics err. They say folks are sick because they didn’t have enough faith. But they did not ask God if he wanted them to be well. They just began with their own will instead of God’s will.

The Lord Jesus Christ marvelled at the centurion’s faith because he accepted every word as truth, without question, based on the AUTHORITY of the one who spoke. When a man begins to undermine the authority of God’s word, he has also begun to undermine the very basis of his faith.

Notice again in Matthew 21:21,22 when Jesus taught about faith and believing. In the next verse we see the “*chief priests*” asking the Lord,

“By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority?”
— Matthew 21:23

THE ISSUE IS AUTHORITY

Notice too, the use of the term “*the faith*.”

“[A]nd so were the churches established in ***the faith***,”

— Acts 16:5

“Beloved... earnestly contend for ***the faith*** which was once delivered unto the saints.”

— Jude 13

“*The faith*” is simply the body of revealed truth. In the historical context it was whatever truth was revealed to the church at that time. Today it is the body of truth as revealed to us in the completed word of God.

THE CIRCUIT OF FAITH

We have explained that we are dealing with the faith of Jesus Christ, given to us.

*“Looking unto Jesus the **author and finisher** of our faith;”*
— Hebrews 12:2a

➤ He is the **author** (the source) and

➤ He is the **finisher** of our faith.

Faith originates in Him and is given to us that we might believe. He finishes it up by accomplishing His will in our lives, IF we believe.

But what about those verses that speak of “*OUR faith*,” and others where we read of “*YOUR faith*,” etc? When anyone speaks that way in the scripture it is the recognition of the *manifestation* of the faith of Jesus Christ in some person’s life. The absence or lack of faith is always due to a lack of yieldedness and to unbelief.

*“And he said unto them, Where is **your faith**?”*

— Luke 8:25a

*“Let us hold fast the profession of **our faith** without wavering; for he is faithful who promised.”*

— Hebrews 10:23

Look at another passage of scripture in Matthew.

*“But Jesus turned him about, and when he saw 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

Notice that it wasn't BELIEVING that made her whole, but her FAITH. God's faith enables us to believe Him, while *our faith* enables God to perform that which we have believed Him for. God's faith becomes our faith when we agree with him and believe and embrace that faith as our own. When Jesus said this, he knew that faith had already been given to the woman and that she had already believed him and had faith TOWARD him. It is like He looked into a mirror and saw His own faith, given to her that she might believe, reflected again by her toward Him.

Look once more in Matthew's gospel:

*“Then touched he their eyes, saying, According to **your faith** be it unto you.”*
— Matthew 9:29

Again, it wasn't believing (vs. 28) that brought healing. He told the man it was “*according to your faith.*” God's faith enables us, but when we receive it and embrace it, then HIS faith becomes OUR faith. Then OUR faith enables God to do that which we have believed him for, by faith. So the explanation for these terms, OUR faith, YOUR faith, THEIR faith etc. is that, in order to work, faith must complete a circuit. We could liken it to an electrical circuit. For an electrical device to operate, there must be a connection to the positive side of the power source. But, that alone is not enough. There must be a second connection to the opposite pole of the power source in order for the power to flow. So, you see,

faith comes from God. But, we must *throw the switch* of BELIEF in order for faith to work in us.

- Faith is given BY GOD, TO MAN.
- Faith ILLUMINATES man as to the will of God and ENABLES him (gives him the ability) to believe.
- Man must make a decision
 - **believe** (*throw the switch* and accept God's will)
 - or **reject** (choose his own will).
- HIS faith and OUR faith then become one— we are in agreement regarding the matter at hand.
- Man may then REST in the Lord (yielded to God).
- Finally, faith is manifested TOWARD GOD in trust and obedience.

James says:

*“My brethren, have not **the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ**, the Lord of Glory, with respect to persons.”*

— James 2:1

In other words, the Spirit may move you to witness to a rich man one time and to a poor man at another time. However, we are not to witness to the one and then refuse to witness to the other simply because of their station in life.

Again, let us look at it another way. We are not to believe God can use a rich man, an educated man, a man of a certain race or culture, but refuse to use a poor man, uneducated man, or man of a different race or culture.

James continues:

“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.***” — James 2:18

“Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance **toward** God, and faith **toward** our Lord Jesus Christ.” — Acts 20:21

Paul says it this way in his epistle to the Romans:

“For **of him**, and **through him**, and **to him**, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.”

— Romans 11:36

Our faith comes OF (FROM) Him— He is the source. It is only given THROUGH Him— He is the dispenser. And finally, it is returned (manifested) TO (TOWARD) Him— we rest in His work and obey by our work. Indeed, He is *the author* and He is *the finisher* of our faith.

Look again in the book of Hebrews:

“Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of **repentance from** dead works, and of **faith toward** God.” — Hebrews 6:1

I used to wonder what this verse meant. After all, what could be more precious than “*the principles of the doctrine of Christ?*” Why would Paul possibly want to leave that behind?

Let me explain it this way. We Bible believing Baptists really know our Bible well. We can refute all the heresies, draw the dispensational lines just right, and a hundred other things. That is all well and good, but it is worthless until we

apply what we know. That's what he means in Hebrews 6:1. He is exhorting believers to leave behind the **principles** of the doctrines, and to "***perform the doing of it.***" (II Corinthians 8:11).

THE CHALLENGE OF FAITH

One of the keys to pleasing God is found in the book of Hebrews.

“Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, (in unbelief) my soul shall have no pleasure in him.”

— Hebrews 10:38

- ☛ We have no other choice in the matter. If we are to please God we must live by faith.

All of us have had times when we believed God for something and it came to pass. But all of us have also had the disappointment of believing God for something that did not come to pass. What went wrong? Surely God did not fail! Maybe we just did not have enough faith. So, we have had the past experience that sometimes our faith seemed to work and sometimes it did not. But because we did not understand how faith worked, we did not know when to expect our prayers to be answered and when not to expect them to be answered. It was kind of like the lottery, where one takes a number and waits with anticipation to see if He is a winner. But now we know how to LAY HOLD of faith by the will of God. And when we do, we are promised it WILL come to pass. The fault was not God's, but ours. If we first know His will, then we will find our prayers are much more productive, because we pray after God's own heart. When we believe Him for what He desires, we need not want.

It is just like the Psalmist says.

“The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.”

— *Psalm 23:1*

When we follow the leading of the shepherd and commit ourselves wholly to His tender loving care, we will not want (lack) for anything. One might say, “*Well I did that and I am still wanting for this or that.*” Then I would say someone has been wanting for something outside the will of God and they need to get their *wanter* fixed.

Can you imagine what a man could do if he would get hold of this and perform the doing of it? General William Booth said, “*The world has never seen what God could do with one man wholly yielded to God.*”

How many souls remain unsaved because we daily seek our will rather than His? How many needs in our lives and those of others are yet unmet, because of our lack of yieldedness to His will? How awful it will be to get to Heaven and find how wonderfully different our lives could have been if we had only followed after Him like tender sheep. Many tears will be shed then, as we realize what a poor substitute the fulfillment of the lust of the flesh was when we could have had the bountiful provision of the Holy Spirit.

How often we keep God from blessing us because we do not want His will or we do not believe His word. We miss great opportunities to serve Him because of unbelief. Why is it that so many mission fields seem to be closed today? God is still not willing that any should perish. Could it be our fault? Have we been on our faces before God asking Him to send forth laborers into the harvest? Are we willing for that prayer to be answered in us? Right now, are we in the place where God put us, in the church where He wants us to serve, doing nothing more or less than He wants us to do? If not,

why not? Perhaps we are in the church of OUR choice, with the preacher of OUR choice doing whatever WE choose. Do we really know where we are or what we are doing— by faith? If we would get hold of God’s heart through prayer and just ask Him, He would show us where we are and what we are really doing for Him. At a crucial time in my life I cried out to God, “*Lord, what am I doing?*” His answer was, “*That’s what I would like to know— what are you doing?*” I had to confess that I really did not know what I was doing. But I told Him that if He would show me what HE wanted me to do, I would do the best I could to get about doing it. Today I am serving God in the ministry, with the wife He chose for me, in the work He has built, looking for the home beyond that He has prepared for me. I believe I’m pretty much on course. Let me say quickly that I have no delusions about having arrived at perfection. However, I am confident that, by faith, I am keeping out of the ditches and heading down the right road.

The Bible speaks of

“**faith** which **worketh** by love.” — Galatians 5:6

We know that FAITH WORKS, but how does it work? The apostle Paul tells us that it works by LOVE, and love brings forth HOPE (expectation). You see, when you really love someone, you cannot help but trust them. Where there is no trust, there is no love. We cannot say we really love one in whom we have no faith. Beloved, “*the love of God shed abroad in our hearts,*” will keep our motives pure and keep us hungering and thirsting after the word of God. Because He loves us, we can love Him. Because we love Him, we have faith in Him.

Look at Romans chapter 5:

“Therefore **being justified by faith, we have peace** with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:

By whom also **we have access by faith into this grace** wherein we stand, **and rejoice in hope** of the glory of God.

And not only so, but **we glory in tribulations also**: knowing that tribulation worketh patience;

And patience, experience; and experience, hope:

And **hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts** by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.”

— Romans 5:1-5

We are “justified by faith,” therefore “we have peace.” No faith, no peace. We have access to grace by faith, therefore “we rejoice in hope.” “And not only so, but we glory in tribulations.” Now there is a scripture verse I’ve never seen displayed in a Christian home. But faith can cause us to rejoice even in time of tribulation. When we believe God for something He has revealed to be His will, then we are going to be tested. But, we see that tribulation worketh patience; and patience through tribulation gives us experience with God. Once we have gone through some trials with the Lord, and we have experienced His grace for all our needs, then we have hope (expectation) that He will always be our Shepherd and that we shall never want.

Like James says,

“the trying of your faith worketh patience.” — James 1:3

Our trials work patience, teaching us how to wait on God. Thereby we gain experience in seeing God answer the prayer of faith. When we have seen God work by

experience, our hope (expectation) in Him is increased. That expectation stimulates love (absence makes the heart grow fonder), and brings us back again to faith. By simply believing and obeying the will of God, our faith is increased because our experience testifies, and the Spirit and the word bear witness, that God is faithful. Notice how these three, **faith, hope, and charity** (love) are so often found together, as in the following:

*“And now abideth **faith, hope, and charity**, these three: but **the greatest of these is charity.**”*

— I Corinthians 13:13

*“If ye continue in the **faith** grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the **hope** of the gospel,”*

— Colossians 1:23

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

— I Thessalonians 1:3

*“But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of **faith** and **love**; and for an helmet, the **hope** of salvation.”*

— I Thessalonians 5:8

*“Who by Him do believe in God, that raised Him up from the dead, and gave Him glory; that your **faith** and **hope** might be in God.”*

— I Peter 1:21

All of these, especially Romans chapter 5, have to do with our growth in faith. The challenge of faith is set before us as a blank page. Let's believe God as He reveals His will to us and set our hearts on things above. Who knows what marvelous works our Father might be pleased to write on those blank pages in the hearts of those who would truly live by faith.

“Tell me I pray thee wherein thy great strength lieth.”— Judges 16:6

Where lies the secret strength of faith? It lies in the food it feeds on; for faith studies what the promise is— an emanation of divine grace, an overflowing of the great heart of God; and faith says, “My God could not have given this promise, except from love and grace; therefore it is quite certain His Word will be fulfilled.” Then faith thinketh, “Who gave this promise?” It considereth not so much its greatness, as, “Who is the author of it?” She remembers that it is God who cannot lie— God omnipotent, God immutable; and therefore concludeth that the promise must be fulfilled; and forward she advances in this firm conviction. She remembereth, why the promise was given, — namely, for God’s glory, and she feels perfectly sure that God’s glory is safe, that He will never stain His own escutcheon, nor mar the lustre of His own crown; and therefore the promise must and will stand. Then faith also considereth the amazing work of Christ as being a clear proof of the Father’s intention to fulfill His word. “He that spared not His own Son, but freely delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?” Moreover faith looks back upon the past, for her battles have strengthened her, and her victories have given her courage. She remembers that God never has failed her; nay, that He never did once fail any of His children. She recollecteth times of great peril, when deliverance came; hours of awful need, when as her day her strength was found, and she cries, “No, I never will be led to think that He can change and leave His servant now. Hitherto the Lord hath helped me, and He will help me still.” Thus faith views each promise in its connection with the promise-giver, and, because she does so, can with assurance say, “Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life!”⁷

⁷ *Morning and Evening* by Charles H. Spurgeon; July 08, morning reading.

Recommended Reading To Help Increase Your Faith

- To China With Love, by Hudson Taylor
(pioneer missionary to China)
- Answers To Prayer, by George Mueller
- How They Prayed— Volumes 1,2,3, by E.F. Harvey
- Streams In The Desert, by Mrs. Charles E. Cowman
- Evidence Not Seen by Darlene Deibler Rose
(missionary to Indonesia (New Guinea) for 43 years)
- By Searching by Isobel Kuhn
(missionary to China)
- A Green Leaf In Time of Drought by Isobel Kuhn

Other Books By Bro. Smith, You Will Want To Read

- Not By Might Nor By Power— The Bible-Believer's Study Guide to the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit
- Gloryland's New Christian Series— Doctrinal Studies for New Believers with co-author Vernon Hanson
(ten lessons with over 500 pages)
- Remission and Redemption: Understanding Acts 2:38 and Refuting the Heresy of Baptismal Regeneration

You may order any of the books on this page from:

Seed for the Sower Bookstore
P.O. Box 587
Adamsville, AL 35214-0587
205-791-0312
<seedforthesower@valiantfortuth.net>

ADDENDUM

Here are several more simple stories of faith the Lord has given me. I hope they are a blessing to you.

Finding Our Place In China

We always knew that God had called us to work in Communist China, even though it was not possible at the time of our calling. So, after deputation, we set our course for the Republic of China (Taiwan). It was a good introduction to the language and culture, but our hearts were always in the mainland. While there I would pray over a large map of China and ask God to show me where and when he would send us. Finally, I closed my eyes, flipped a quarter in the air and told God that within a two inch radius of where He saw fit to have it land, I would consider our ultimate destination. After three years in Taiwan we took a one year furlough. Then, we felt strongly that the Lord would have us move to Hong Kong. From there we labored to carry Bibles and literature into China. In January of 1991 we oversaw the translation and printing of the *New Life In Christ* Bible course in simplified Chinese with permission from Source of Light Ministries of Madison, Georgia.

God had shown me very clearly that we would be in China by January 1992. We had no idea how this would be accomplished, because we planned get into the country as English teachers, but knew that they were not called until the spring of each year. Nevertheless, we took God at His Word and began to pray to that end. In September of 1991, I

received a phone call from a man I had never met before. He was teaching English in Zhengzhou, Henan Province and told us that his wife could no longer live in China because of her health. She and the children had already returned to the States, but he had remained behind because he was under contract to teach English for another semester in a university there. He had called everyone he knew, but no one was free to take his place. Then one of those friends referred him to us. By the providence of God, this city was almost at the center of the circle I drew around where the quarter had landed on the map in Taiwan. Therefore, I felt liberty to pursue this lead further. I replied to this brother's request and traveled thirty-one hours northward by train to the city of Zhengzhou. In October, I signed the contract there with the Light Industry Institute. And, in January, 1992 (just like God had told me) my family and I moved there and began to teach English and to preach the gospel. We packed up all our belongings, household goods, kitchen items (everything we owned) into thirty-six pieces of luggage for the trip. (In those days Zhengzhou was very poor and backward, and nothing could be found from the West in stores there.) It was a long arduous journey as we carried all this luggage hand by hand across the border and through customs. (In those days my children were small, so I had to move it all alone.) After clearing customs, we had to take everything to a hotel, where we collapsed from near exhaustion. The next morning we made our way by a caravan of six taxis to the train station where we waited in line for hours to purchase a train ticket and waited several more hours for our train. We were told that we could not ship any of this luggage in the extra freight car, that it ALL had to go with us. (In those days travel in China was hard and no one knew how to deal with foreigners.) My wife spoke to a Communist soldier and told him we

were English teachers. When he heard that, he got several men to help us carry our luggage to our train car. We did not quite understand what they had in mind at first, but it soon became evident as they began loading our luggage through the doors and windows of the car. We put all we could into our cabin, but it was so little. Since the Chinese carried so little in those days, I was able to put a few pieces in the adjoining cabins on either side of ours. Finally, they loaded all the rest between our car and the next one. And that is how we began our first adventure behind the Bamboo Curtain, into China.

Living in China is very austere and takes its toll on foreigners, especially women. (You will note that many missionaries to China had two or three wives, who died. For example Hudson Taylor and Adoniram Judson.) “The dragon” is notorious for sending missionary wives into deep bouts with depression, etc. (My wife’s hair has fallen out several times because of stress.) Besides riding a bicycle for hours every day to the market and different little stores to buy food and supplies for the family, my wife was home schooling two children, discipling the new women believers, handling some of the new inquirers, and trying to prepare decent meals without the help of modern conveniences, spices and identifiable vegetables. And, there was also wheat to wash and grind in preparation to bake bread. In addition, the university told us she had to teach English classes too. Under all this stress, Lisa’s heart problem began to act up and leave her so short of breath so that she could hardly walk. We found out later that this was caused by some medication she was taking that didn’t agree with her. Nevertheless, at that time there was no adequate medical help available in China, and we felt the Lord would have us return to the states in the summer of 1993 to see her doctor.

I was busy too, with English classes, preaching, dealing with new inquirers and discipling new believers day and night. So, it was obvious that she needed some help. I cried out to God and asked Him what could be done to take some of the load off my wife. God clearly told me that I needed to find someone to take over the home schooling of our children. “Oh, great idea,” I thought, “but who in the world is going to come over here and help us in China.” Well, one girl came to my mind. “But she is only a kid” I thought. Then I realized this “kid” would have graduated from high school by now. (Actually, she had finished Bible college too.) I wondered “How could I contact her, and why would she come to China, and how would we ever get into the country?” Still, God showed me that she was the one. So I began to pray about her every day. This continued until the end of the school year, in May.

My wife’s heart condition got worse and I felt the Lord clearly leading us to return to the States that summer to get her to a competent doctor. There, she was given some new medicine and she got better. While we were home, I spent some time traveling and preaching. One of my trips took me to Pensacola, Florida and to Bible Baptist Church where the young lady attended. After services her mom and dad (old and dear friends) invited me out for supper. Shelley, their daughter, asked if she could go with us. This certainly looked like my chance to speak to her about what was on my heart. After the meal we were all talking and I turned the conversation to China. Then I asked her outright, “Shelley, what is going on in your life? Why don’t you go back to China with me?” Her eyes got big and her mouth literally fell open. (She told me later that she almost fell out of her chair.) “I can’t believe you asked me that,” she replied, “I came with you all tonight because I felt that the Lord wanted me to ask you if I could go back to China with you.”

Later Shelley told me that she had been at youth camp about six months before (just about the time I had begun praying in China). It seemed her life was going nowhere and she despaired for her life. She looked around at her friends and saw other young women whose lives she did not want to emulate. Finally, she went forward at an altar call and yielded her life wholly to the service of the Lord. She was not sure what that would mean, but she felt sure the Lord wanted her in full time service for Him. Shortly after that, during a Wednesday evening service at Bible Baptist Church, her pastor read our prayer letter to the congregation. “I just wish I could be in China with the Smith’s,” she said to herself and the Lord. But, how could that ever work out. Now, to her surprise, here I sat before her asking her to do just that. She prayed about it, but already knew the answer. “Yes, she would return to China with us.” How marvelously God works out His will when we cannot even imagine it possible.

As the Bible says,

“Trust in the LORD, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed.

Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.

Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass. ” — Psalm 37:3-5

The last month before we returned to China, Shelley came to Birmingham to live with us. There was much to do in preparation for our trip. “How would we get her into China” someone asked. “And, had we applied for her visa?” As we prayed about these things, the Lord impressed upon me to just take her with us to Hong Kong, apply for a tourist visa, and take her on into the mainland. I did not understand

it all, but I knew it was the will of God. After all, although China is the biggest country in the world, God had greater authority. “Why do you need to ask them if Shelley can go there, if I have already told you to come to America to get her and have already told her to go to China with you?” God questioned me. It made sense to me, so we went on to Hong Kong where we got a tourist visa for Shelley.

When we arrived at our university in China, the school officials came to pick us up. “Who is this,” they asked, “another of your daughters?” “No,” I replied, “this is the young woman I brought to homeschool my children.” They looked at each other curiously and then said, “But, you cannot bring her here like this. It is not possible!” “Why not?” I asked. “Well,” they replied dumbfounded, “it just cannot be done.”

Now, understand that this was an impossible situation. We could only enter Communist China as English teachers because this was a COMMUNIST country. Missionaries were NOT allowed here. NO ONE was allowed there without a reason and they are serious about it.

So, a few days after we arrived in China we went to the police station where all foreigners are required to report. When they saw Shelley they asked, “Who is this young lady and what is she doing here?” I said, “I have her here to homeschool my children.” In unbelief they said, “You can’t do this.” Once again I asked, “Why not?” “Because it is impossible, this is not done in China.” I have already been told that,” I said, “but why can’t we do this?” They queried, “The school hires a foreigners and the foreigner hires a foreigner? This case is too important for us, we will have to send it to Beijing to see what they say.”

Well, at this point, I took my eyes off the Lord and put them on the circumstances. I thought, “Oh, great! In Beijing they don’t know us or care about our situation— they will just say NO!” Later, in prayer, God asked, “Hey, remember Me? Am I still God?” “Of course,” I replied.” “Well,” he reminded me, I can do whatever I want.” “Right,” I agreed, “I am with you.” Two weeks later the answer came back in a letter from Beijing. It said, “‘Application for resident visa refused.’ We don’t know how to do this. It has never happened in China before.” Then it went on, “While no resident visa will be issued, as long as the Smith family is teaching in China, Shelley Root can stay with them and her tourist visa will be renewed automatically every six months.” Later, Shelley was invited by the school to teach also and got a resident visa. Shelley picked up Chinese faster than anyone I’ve ever known and was a great asset to the work for the three years she was in China. She led many young ladies to the Lord and disciplined them. It was wonderful training for her and she is now married. She continues to serve the Lord in the Philippines with her husband, Eric Molitor.

Police Investigation

In February of 1994, we heard from friends at our school and others in the police force that Beijing had ordered another crackdown on unregistered churches. At first we didn’t pay too much attention to this because it happens periodically. Then, a few days later, a friend in the foreign affairs office of another university phoned my wife. She said that the director of foreign affairs at their school had told them that Zhengzhou was targeted this time. We were also told that our school had been singled out and that special agents had been sent from Beijing to investigate us. This unusual privilege caught us off guard and we waited to see

just how things would proceed. The next day as my wife returned from the market she saw three policemen had moved up on the third floor (we live on the fourth floor). A day later, we found that seven more had moved in, making a total of ten. Panic! Now, what would we do?

We began burning photographs and removing Bibles, Bible courses and other gospel materials from our apartment. We had many precious pictures from a recent wedding and a baptism that we hated to destroy, but we felt we had to burn them. It took a dozen trips or more, but we sent all the gospel material to the homes of our church people who lived on the other side of town. There was one suitcase full of Bibles and courses that was remaining and we had decided to sneak it out during their traditional afternoon nap time. We figured it would be less obvious if our son Stephen took the last bag out alone. Shelley helped him. One of the policemen was not asleep, however. He followed them down the stairs, but Stephen just pretended like he did not even notice him and casually situated the bag on the back of his bicycle with a rubber strap. They were really scared when the policeman came right up to them and looked them right in their faces. Shelley said it looked like he wanted to say something, but he never opened his mouth. While he was still looking intently at the suitcase, Stephen coolly hopped on his bicycle and took off. By the grace of God we got everything we felt might cause any problem with the police out of our house without any altercation with the police.

We felt that the police wanted most of all to catch us meeting together, because they knew that the church met in our house. (In those early days we had about thirty people meeting here— large for a house church). At that time few of our people had a telephone, so we sent word to as many as we could not to come to church that Sunday night. Lisa met

the rest of them at the gate of the school and walked with them back to their rooms while she explained what was going on.

We knew full well that these policemen could have broken the door down and arrested us and all our church people. They already had all the evidence they needed anyway from wire taps and bugs. During this time, several of our people were taken aside and questioned for three hours at a time. They were told that the police knew what was going on at the foreigner's home. They were commanded NEVER to come back to the foreigner's home because if they did, they would be punished. That might mean they would not be able to find a job, that they might get thrown into prison, etc. They left their inquisition, walked across campus and came directly to our apartment for discipleship classes (which we did continue during that time).

After two weeks, the policemen left as suddenly as they had come, without ever even coming up to our fourth floor apartment. We spent long hours in real prayer those few days. But, for all our fears, nothing ever came of it.

Over The Limit

We have many friends among the Filipino national pastors in the Philippines. They invited us to stop in the Philippines for a few days and preach in their churches. We felt this was the Lord's will, so that is what we did. After about a week we began to try to make reservations on a flight to China. We were told that it was the Catholic "Holy Week" in the Philippines. The Pope was making an appearance and we could not get a flight out. Finally, the holy papa left and things got moving again. However, every airline we called laughed at us when we told them we had twenty-two

pieces of luggage (including tracts, Bibles, Bible courses, etc.). We were told, “First of all, NO AIRLINE in Asia will allow you that much luggage even if you paid extra. Even IF they would, it would cost a minimum of one thousand US dollars for that many pieces.” The rule is that flights inside Asia are allowed ONE twenty kilo bag PER PERSON. We had four people with us, so we were allowed FOUR twenty kilo bags. (We had come to the Philippines with TWENTY-TWO thirty-five kilo bags!) Every airline said it is impossible. We were STUCK in the Philippines. Once again, we began to pray and God said He would take care of it. He had gotten us that far with no extra baggage charges (unheard of), so we knew He would get us to our destination somehow. The one airline we had not called was China Southern. We hesitate taking the Chinese airlines because of their poor safety record. In fact they have crashed more 737 aircraft than all airlines in all other countries combined. Besides, the chickens brought on board by passengers always bothered us sometimes and made it difficult to walk down the aisle (believe it or not). Not wanting to leave a stone unturned, we called China Southern Airlines as a last resort. We had been given the name of a certain lady there who would try to help us. When we told her about all our luggage, she told us that it was our “lucky” day. She said she could give us a really good price on the tickets that week because there were special rates for businessmen attending the Guangzhou Trade Fair in China. Most of them were only taking a briefcase and a carry-on bag. So, we could just put our luggage under their name. We were given a picture of a lady who was the China Southern representative and were told to look for her and she would take care of it. We got to the airport with our twenty-two pieces of luggage and found the lady. She put us at the end of the line and every so often, she would run back

and get one of our bags and write the name, “Wang” on it. The next time, she would run back, get one of our bags and write, “Liu” on it. This continued until she got every one of our bags on that airplane and we didn’t have to pay ONE PENNY of overweight charges!!!

Disclaimer: Warning, this was accomplished for missionaries in distress. At no time should it be attempted at home without consulting your heavenly Father for divine direction. Other rules may apply in your state.

God Gives Me A Computer

Let me say at the beginning of this story that I have a love/hate relationship with computers. If you own one you probably know what I mean. Still, I could never write books, commentaries, keep up with my mailing list and finances, or afford to keep in touch with friends and family without my computer. It also has my Bible program and a library full of reference books on it. Having justified having the damnable thing, here is how God answered my prayers and gave me my laptop computer.

Advancing technology had made my computer outdated. I really needed a more powerful model to continue to meet my needs. However, there was one little bitty problem keeping me from getting a new one— M-O-N-E-Y. Sure enough, Bill Gates was not giving money or computers away (especially to missionaries). No, computer companies still want cold hard cash (cold hard credit cards will do nicely as well). I had to, but I couldn’t— I was in a quandary. “Lord,” I prayed, “what am I going to do?”

The clear, plain answer rang out of Heaven, “Wait!”

That was not the answer I wanted to hear. But, as I yielded to His guidance, I waited on the Lord. However, as I

waited I read up on the different computers, their features, prices and capabilities. I knew pretty well what I needed, and exactly what I wanted. I also knew what I could afford and between the two was a great gap. Still, the Lord had told me that I could have whatever I wanted. But, as I looked through the computer magazines, I felt He really meant to limit that to the lower price range. The truth was, I had no money at all to purchase a computer. I knew I would probably have to put it on my credit card. I had no peace about that, though. The Lord had told me to wait until a certain time. It was now that time and I still had no way to buy the computer I knew the Lord had told me I could have. About that time the Lord moved.

I got a phone call one afternoon from a long time friend. This man walks with the Lord and we often have wonderful talks and correspondence about all sorts of things. Computers is not one of the most edifying topics, but it is something we talk about as a common interest. On that particular day this dear brother told me he had some good news for me. During his regular prayer time the Lord had impressed him for several weeks that he should buy me a computer. Well, that *was* good news and very welcome indeed at the present time. I had the faith to believe that. After all, who was I to hinder the work of God. He went on to say that he certainly did not have unlimited resources, but he felt the Lord would have him give me \$2,500. I had waited and the Lord had provided.

Oh happy day, now I can get my new computer and get on with my work. One problem remained, however. While that was quite a sum of money, it was still a good bit short of the computer I *really* wanted. That was quite all right, though, as I had picked lower performance models in several price ranges. As I thanked the Lord in prayer, He told me it

pleased Him to do it and He wanted me to have the computer I wanted. I did not mean to be unthankful, however the one I really *wanted* was too expensive. But, I was thankful for what He had provided. Again, I was having some difficulty understanding.

“Well,” He reminded me, “you can have the cheaper computer if you wish, but I told you to get whatever you want.”

Now I was not going to even begin to explain to the Lord about CPUs, RAM, hard drives and the like. Still, I felt he did not understand that what He had given me was not enough to get the computer I *really* wanted.

“It’s okay,” I mused, “I am satisfied with the smaller computer.”

“Fine,” the Lord assented, “if that is what you want. But remember, I said get what you want.”

I knew He said that, but I was sure He did not really mean that. That is He told me to get what I wanted, but He meant get what I could afford. No, wait just a minute now. The Lord means what He says. Wow, could it be that He really meant what He said? Now, I know this sounds silly, but haven’t you done the same thing before?

I was on the phone waiting for an operator to take my order. But I had no peace. I hung up the phone. “Hmm, it wouldn’t hurt to call the company who made the computer I really wanted and get a price,” I thought. “No, but it wouldn’t do any good either.”

Oh, well, better get back on the phone to order the cheaper computer. No peace!

“Now just hold on here,” I reconsidered. “It won’t hurt to just call. If you don’t you will always wonder if you could have gotten that computer you really wanted.”

“Yes, but why bother?” I answered myself.

You see, I knew all the prices for all the top models in three price brackets. I had followed them in the computer magazines and even checked the prices online in the last few days. Still, I felt compelled to just call and see what the latest prices were.

“Why not just call,” I thought.

So, I did. I got the salesman on the phone and I told him that I knew I couldn’t afford the computer I wanted, but I was about to purchase a laptop computer and wanted to check with her company before I made my purchase elsewhere. I told her the specifications I required and she gave me the price I already knew to be more than I had.

“Wait a minute,” she said as I was about to hang up the phone. “We do have an unadvertised special today. Do you require high resolution for graphics?”

“Not at all,” I replied, “I don’t fool with graphics much and besides I always use 800x600 resolution anyway.”

“Maybe I have just what you want after all,” she said.

The computer she described was exactly what I wanted. It even had extra features that I had not bothered to think about because of the price. The only difference was the resolution and that was no problem at all for me. But, still, what was the price?

“Let me see, it is \$2,499.00” she told me proudly.

You could have knocked me over with a feather.

“Uh, well, yes, that will be fine. I will take it,” I stammered excitedly.

What a coincidence! No, not at all. It was the work of my Father, and just what I have come to expect of Him. He is wonderful and loving beyond all imagination, but I don't have to imagine it, I am experiencing it. He had me wait until the right computer was manufactured. He gave my friend the money and moved him to give exactly the amount I needed. He had me call in spite of all the information I had and all the reasons I knew it could not happen. Then He did it. It seemed impossible, but God delights to do the impossible. Let me quote Hudson Taylor again. “God always gives the best to them that leave the choice to Him.”

By the way, I looked in the computer magazines for months afterward and even looked on the manufacturer's website, but never found this offer anywhere. But God knew it was there.

And that is how I got my high performance laptop computer. I guess God could just give me lots of support so I could buy whatever I wanted. But, then I wouldn't get to write about all these neat stories of faith. The Lord has others more capable of handling money; He just uses them to give me what I need. That way, the Lord gets all the glory and I get to praise Him for His provision in the wilderness.

Upgraded To 1611

In March of 2000, I got a phone call saying my Dad was dying and was calling for me to come and be with him before he departed. While not a total surprise, it was rather unexpected. I pondered what I should do. How could I return to the States at this time? There were still six more weeks of school and final exams ahead. I would not think of

leaving my wife in China alone. However, as I prayed it seemed clear to me that was what the Lord wanted me to do. Before I spoke to her, my wife came to me and expressed her surprise that she felt that the Lord did indeed want me to leave to be with my Dad. We prayed some more and were assured this was the will of God. If it was, we would know soon enough. It seemed impossible to get transportation on such short notice. I would have to go through Hong Kong, which is a very busy hub of Asian travel. It can be difficult to get tickets from there to the States even one month in advance, let alone one week. The travel agent there told me as much, but promised to try. I got an e-mail message a few days later saying they were able to get me on a flight. Still, getting out of China to Hong Kong is not easy either. If I was to get to Hong Kong to make the flight that was reserved for me, I would have to fly from Zhengzhou to Hong Kong. That is even harder to imagine on short notice. But, I reasoned, if God had a flight for me from Hong Kong to America, He would have one from Zhengzhou to Hong Kong. In two days our local agent called to say there was one seat available to Hong Kong. Wow! I was reconciled that I would indeed go to America and in spite of my misgivings, leave Lisa in China. But, she would not be alone. She would have the Lord. And she would have all our church family. In fact two of them were teachers who volunteered to help Lisa with the final exams, because it would have been impossible for her to do it all alone.

Oh, my, I knew this was going to be expensive. Not only were the tickets to be considered, but it would be necessary for me to stay in Hong Kong for two nights. The cheapest lodging I could find was US\$90 a night; not bad for Hong Kong. I remembered that when we had stayed at the same hotel coming into China we had been given vouchers for two

free nights the next time we stayed at the hotel. It was a promotion by American Express because I used it to pay for everything there. When they were given to me I almost did not accept them because the promotion ended in April. What use would they be to me, I wondered. If we were to return to the States we would not leave until after class exams in May. I thought I would hang on to them anyway. Now, I phoned to see if they would let me use them for these reservations, but they said only a few rooms were available for each day under this promotion and those were already full. Still, I felt impressed to hang onto them. When I got to Hong Kong and checked in I asked again if I could use the vouchers. Of course, they replied, and as a courtesy we want to upgrade your room during your stay. Things were getting better and better. They put me on the sixteenth floor, and handed me my key. When I saw room “1611” on the key, it was just like the Lord tapped me on the shoulder and smiled, saying, “This one is on me.” That may not mean much to some folks, but if you are a King James Bible-believing Baptist preacher, it means something. Two free nights at one of the finest hotels in room 1611.

