

Bible Basics on Walking

by Faith

Pathway to the Promised

Land

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Bible Basics on Walking by Faith: Pathway to the Promised Land

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*Studies on Walking by Faith: Pathway to the
Promised Land*

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Faith at Salvation Puts Us in Jesus

We Are Saved by Grace through Faith. The gospel message has been made clear, both in Scripture and from Bible-believing Christians and their ministers. We cannot save ourselves. Nothing we do on our own pleases God. So we must count on supernatural change in ourselves, from God Himself, to make us acceptable to Him. God has designed our delivery from certain condemnation in a way that removes human effort from the equation, allowing us to choose to be saved without bringing merit to ourselves. The basis for our salvation is the phenomenal grace of God. The condition is faith. Grace, expressed in the person and work of Jesus Christ, has done the work for us, and salvation is now offered to us simply by our believing in Jesus Christ. We are saved by grace, through faith.

John 1:12-13 states it clearly, as follows:

Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision, or a husband’s will, but born of God.

As a result of this new birth which God generates in us, we are credited with the righteousness of Christ to qualify us to associate with God, and even to become a member of His family. Rom. 3:21-25a says this:

But now a righteousness from God, apart from the law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented Him as a sacrifice of atonement, which is accessed through faith in his blood.

The blood of Jesus Christ provides the penalty payment...He paid our fine with His blood. This made us legally “right” before God, even though we are sinners from start to finish. And we are justified forever. We avail this righteous standing before God when we believe in Christ...accepting the gift of salvation that He offers. God has made it easy and simple. All we have to do is believe. Nothing else needs to be done. Rom. 4:1-3 confirms this:

What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather, discovered in this matter? If, in fact, Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about—but not before God. What does the Scripture say? ‘Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.’

John 6:63a further establishes that we play no part in our salvation, except for an act of faith, which is not really “action” at all, and is completely non-meritorious. This passage says, “The Spirit is the one who gives life; human nature is of no help!” (Endnote 1) Nothing in our natural selves contributes to the process of our salvation. The only work to be done is

work that God has already done, and continues to do. When Jesus Himself was asked what “deeds” God expected, he answered, “The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent.” Our only work is to believe, which is not “work” at all.

Gal. 2:16 confirms the way of salvation, as follows: “Know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ.” And Eph. 2:8-9 seals it, declaring, “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.”

Saved by grace, through faith. Simple. Then, after we believe and are “born” into the family of God, we have certain assurances. We believe that God will save us, and that we will never again be “lost” or without hope. This is the opposite of thinking that we must do something ourselves to be saved, and that we must do something *after* we are saved to prevent our being lost again. This is an insult to God, who sent His Son to die for us, saw in eternity past that we would believe, chose us at that time, and planned the event of our salvation, at which time He “called” us. He would not do all this if we were ultimately to be lost. We have assurance that, when He saved us, the work was finished.

We Are “In” Jesus. When we receive Christ, we are placed “into” Him, so that we identify with Him in every way, as He did with us in the flesh when He became a man, while still retaining His deity as God. Christ died, was buried, and was raised from the dead. Our new identity enables us to share in these events...actually makes us part of them...so that the same things that happened to Christ also happen to us vicariously. The central event is the resurrection of Christ. 1 Cor. 15:16-17 says, “For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins.” Faith is worthless without the resurrection, and we can have no hope that we will be raised with Him, if He is not risen.

But Eph. 2:6 says He *is* risen, indicating that “God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus...” It’s a done deal. We are already raised *with Him* as an eternal reality. Rom. 6:3-5 ascertains this:

Or don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection.

We are united with Christ, merged with Him in His death and then in His life. This is the basis for the lives we live now. We received salvation because the saving life of Christ was put *into us*, and the life we acquired when we believed keeps us saved now because we are *in Him* forever. Col. 2:12 reiterates this, referring to us as, “Having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through [our] faith in the power of God, who raised him from

the dead.” When we cross the faith line, we are *in Him*: in His burial, resurrection, and eternal life.

Rom. 8:32 and following give us some insights regarding our place in Christ. This passage reads, as follows:

He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? Jesus, who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us... We are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

So our place in Christ gets us the following:

- Graciously gives us, along with His Son, *all things*.
- Overcomes all charges against us.
- Give us an intercessor in the person of Christ.
- Makes us more than conquerors, even over death, because we are in Christ.

How can we beat this? We get 1) all things, 2) no charges, 3) a divine Advocate, and 4) total victory. It seems He has thought of everything. But wait, there’s more.

The death of Christ also delivers us from the Law. We are no longer ruled by the “Law”, since the life of Christ releases us from it. We are freed from the Law because of our identity with Him. Rom. 7:4 says, “So, my brothers, you also died to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead...” Verse 6 adds, “But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the Law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code.” And there’s still more.

Our place in Christ also provides the basis for escape from the sinful nature that tramples the Law. Paul admitted in Rom. 7:14-23 that his sinful nature made it impossible for him to do the right thing and avoid sin. In verse 24, he exclaims, “Wretched man that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?” He is desperate, knowing that he cannot beat the power of his own sinful nature that keeps him in sin. Then the answer comes, the answer to sin...it is the work of Christ, not just at salvation, but each day as we live our lives. Verse 25 shows us how we are rescued, “Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!” The victory of rescue is sweet; the desperation of defeat is bitter. Jesus Christ is the key to our victory over sin. We will see more about this process shortly as we further explore the benefits of our place in Christ.

If there has been any question about our place in Christ, we want to lay it to rest right now. The following assurances are provided to show us our place in Him, and Him in us:

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- 1 Cor. 1:30-31—It is because of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God, that is, our righteousness, holiness, and redemption.
- Gal. 2:20—I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.
- Phil. 3:9—And be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.

We are in Christ from the time we are saved. We are safe, and we can confidently believe we are protected *in Him* forever.

What Being in Jesus Means after Salvation

Our Being “In Christ”, as It Relates to Sin. Rom. 6:10-12 says the following:

The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires.

The view we have of sin now is that we are dead to it, but alive to God *in Christ Jesus*. As we get further into our study on faith and the importance of God-consciousness in our ongoing attitude of trust toward Him, we will see how sin’s place is actually crowded out by the presence of God, as we become increasingly occupied with Him. When our eyes are on God, sin will not come into view. When we are praying or praising God, our tongues will not dishonor God. When we are near to God, at the throne of Grace, our hearts will not be full of hate and envy and dissatisfaction. When our minds are focused on Scripture, our thoughts will be noble, intent on bringing glory to God. Our place in Christ makes all this possible.

Still in Rom. 6, we see in verse 12 above that sin does not have to reign in our mortal bodies. We do not have to be slaves to sin. In verse 13, we see the command to do the following:

...not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness.

Verse 14 caps it, “For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace.” Grace does not give a license to sin; it gives the solution, which is found in Jesus Christ. Christ has defeated sin and guarantees we will conquer sin completely in eternity, but when we understand our place in Him and how to appropriate our relationship with Him on a day to day basis, we will share fully in His victory RIGHT NOW...in time. That is what we’re looking for.

Rom. 6:1-2 says the following: “What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?” We died to sin because we were “buried with him through baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead...we too may live a new life” (Rom. 6:4). Since we died to sin, how can we continue to allow it to rule in our lives? Somehow, we must stop it. Continuing in Rom. 6, we see in verse 5 that, since we “have been united with him in his death we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection”. This resurrection offers great power, as we shall soon see. Verse 6 tells us “our old self was crucified with him, so the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin.”

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1 Jn. 5:4 states, "...for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith." We are unable, by our own power, to withstand the potent weapons that the world brings against us. But when our faith gets strong, we will be able to share in the victory that Christ has won over the world. His victory is an eternal fact, but it becomes a reality in our lives in time when we believe in His Word and His power. When we have strong faith, we will have great consciousness of God, and feel enormous reverence toward Him. This awareness and acknowledgement will empower us to say no to sin and yes to God's direction and blessing. Prov. 3:7b says, "...fear the Lord and shun evil." Focus on acknowledgement and reverence first, and power against sin will follow.

The same faith that saves us also gives us the ability to be presented "holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation, if you continue in your faith, established and firm" (Col. 1:22b-23a). This means we have the ability to achieve righteousness *in time*, as well as in our eternal position in Christ. Righteousness in time comes through confession of our sins (1 Jn. 1:9) and through the maturing of our faith through study and training. When sins are confessed and we are mature, we will achieve righteousness by God's power, which will show in our behavior and our attitude. This is the power of the resurrection which Paul said he wanted in Phil. 3:10. This resurrection power is the dynamic presence of the Holy Spirit, which is available to us because of our faith in Jesus Christ.

When we mature, we get closer to God. Anything close to God becomes holy by simple proximity. Remember how Moses' face glowed for a long time after he had been in the presence of God. And even objects can become holy, if God so chooses, when they are in God's presence. God "covers" them with His holiness. The same is true of us. We experience holiness from *God*, not from ourselves. When we are told to be "holy", we must know immediately that this holiness will not be generated by us. When we are saved, we are covered with God's righteousness and holiness, which are ours permanently. The same thing can occur in our walk as believers, even though the presence of our sinful natures tends to cause us to appear anything *but* holy. Holiness, or freedom from sin in our observable lives and our private thoughts, will be seen only when we confess, study, and believe, which lead to adoration of God, acknowledgement of His deity, and surrender to His will. Holiness begins with our identification with Christ from the perspective of our place in Him, and ends with mature faith, seen ultimately as love for others.

2 Pet. 1:4 tells us that we can "escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires", by participating in the divine nature that is acquired by learning and believing God's promises. Then (v. 3), His divine power will give us *everything* we need to live and be godly. This is confirmed in Eph. 1:18b-19, which reads, as follows:

...that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength.

When we fully *know* the hope, the riches, and the power of Jesus Christ, we will see His strength go to work in us.

Other Benefits of Being “In Christ”. There are limitless benefits that result from our being in Christ, not the least of which is our future life in eternal bliss as we worship God forever. Here are some other benefits that we have not mentioned (all emphases in the following are mine):

- Eph. 1:3—Praise be to the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing *in Christ*.
- Phil. 4:19—And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches *in Christ Jesus*.
- Col. 3:3—For you died, and your life is now hidden *with Christ* in God.
- 1 Jn. 2:1—My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father *in our defense—Jesus Christ* the righteous one.
- Rom. 7:24-25—What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God—*Through Jesus Christ our Lord!*
- Eph. 3:12—*In him and through faith in him* we may approach God with freedom and confidence.
- Phil. 4:13—I can do everything *through him* [Jesus Christ] who gives me strength.
- Eph. 2:18—For *through him* we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.
- 1 Cor. 1:2—To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified *in Christ Jesus* and called to be holy....
- Phil. 4:7—The peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds *in Christ Jesus*.

We have God’s blessing and power and protection because we are *in Christ Jesus*. This is the relationship that gives us access to the Father and allows our fellowship with Him.

We are Unique Because We Are in Christ. Because we are in Christ, we have a distinction that those who are on the “outside” do not have. They do not understand our perspective as believers, because they are “unbelievers”. Gal. 5:6 says, “For in Christ neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value.” So the circumcision distinction means nothing. 1 Cor. 12:13 says, “For we are all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.” So our place in Christ makes national origin or financial status meaningless. These are not the things that distinguish us most. Col. 3:11 further cements this, saying, “Here there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all and is in all.” Our place in Christ makes personal differences of no importance. Gal. 3:28 even adds

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gender to the list of distinctions that do not matter for those in Christ, saying, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

Does the “one” mean the entire human race? No. Only those who are in Christ are part of the “one”. All others are NOT a part. So we distinguish a dichotomy in humanity. There are two types of people: those who are in Christ, and those who are not. ALL OTHER DISTINCTIONS AMONG PEOPLE ARE OF NO CONSEQUENCE. We can talk all we want about diverse groups of people, but the two actual groups are 1) believers, and 2) unbelievers. That is how the human race is divided. Distinctions of race or national origin or skin color or height or weight or attractiveness or skillfulness or intelligence or athleticism or background or personality or wealth or position mean NOTHING for those of us who are in Christ Jesus. In Him we are ONE! That is how we distinguish ourselves. Christians are a single, monolithic race. We are together IN CHRIST JESUS. All other distinctions are not meaningful.

Walking in Christ

We Are Instructed to Walk in Christ. We are in Christ, and that is the place from which we can have eternal life, and it is our opportunity to draw near to God as we follow the steps He prescribes for our being in fellowship with Him and being His disciples. The lives we live, however, are generated from within us, because Christ's Spirit lives *in us*. He indwells us and empowers us to become like Him. Eph. 3:16-19 gives us this important passage relating to Christ being within us:

I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

Here is the main point of verses 16-17: We can be...

1. strengthened with power
2. through the Spirit of Christ
3. in our inner being
4. so Christ can “dwell” in our hearts
5. through faith.

Faith then leads to strengthening and spiritual receptivity to enable us to experience the love of Christ and to be filled with His completeness. The Spirit strengthens us within, so Christ can “dwell” in our hearts. Alright, we know He “lives” there. We've seen this before. But there is an implication with the word “dwell” that we do not want to miss. The Greek word translated “dwell” is *katoikasi*. Even though it is true that this word means “to live or occupy”, it does convey, according to Thayer's Lexicon, another layer of meaning, and that is this: “to pervade, to prompt, to govern”. It is as though the person “dwelling” in our hearts does so with a sense of ownership and supervisory authority. Christ lives in our hearts forever, but “dwelling” seems to be conditional on the Spirit strengthening us and on our sustaining a faith in the Christ within us. This message is addressed to believers, so Paul is not talking about his readers being saved; he is talking about acquiring the governance of the indwelling Christ, or having Him *come to power* within us to control us and produce within us the shining light of His life.

Prerequisites for Walking in Jesus. There are two things needed for Christ to control us. First of all, the Holy Spirit must be strengthening us, which means that we must have all sins confessed so that we are in fellowship with God, thus controlled by the Spirit. Secondly, we must have a mature faith in Christ and His work and in His power within us. When these

two conditions are met, Christ will not only live in us, He will be the manager of this place within us that He calls home, and He will be directing our lives and producing His character in us. On the other hand, if we are out of fellowship, or if our faith is weak, righteousness and love will not be seen in our lives. Our sinful natures will dominate and the control of Christ will be truncated.

Effects of Walking in Christ. Gal. 5:5 gives another look at the work of the indwelling Christ, saying, "...by faith we eagerly await through the Spirit the righteousness for which we hope." The righteousness that Paul says we are waiting for is that which is produced in us "through the Spirit". This is made possible through our being in fellowship and by our ongoing trust in Him. We are waiting and hoping *by faith*. We cannot separate the production of the indwelling Christ through the power of His Spirit from our own faith. Without faith, the power of the Spirit will not be sustained. Without faith, there will be no righteousness. We see this again in Gal. 2:20, which says the following:

I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!

Christ is living *in us*. And the life we live with Him inside us is lived *by faith in Him*. Then His righteousness, as opposed to our feeble efforts to be "good", will be seen. This takes us into Phil. 4:13, where we see that, "I can do everything through Him that gives me strength." We are engaged, but it is when Christ is doing His work through us that results are seen.

2 Cor. 3:5 reminds us where we get any competence we exhibit, saying, "Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God." The previous verse (v. 4) says that even our confidence "is ours through Christ before God". Righteousness is possible "not of the letter, but of the Spirit; for the letter [the Law] kills, but the Spirit gives life" (v. 6). The life the Spirit gives makes us competent to serve God, and produces His holiness in us.

This relationship with Christ, if we are in fellowship and trusting God and His Word, allows us to walk through our days and lives in a way that brings glory to God. In Col. 2:6 we are told to do the following: "So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live [walk] in him, rooted and built up in Him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness." When we receive Christ at salvation, we begin our walk through the Christian way of life. We are then told to continue walking in Him, with our faith built up by being taught in God's Word, and by acknowledging and fearing Him at all times (being conscious of Him and giving thanks).

Looking again at Col. 2, we see in verses 9 and 10 the effects of such a walk: "For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and you have been given fullness in

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Christ, who is the head over every power and authority.” When we walk by faith in Him, we are given his “fullness”, and—filled with Him—we live our lives by His divine power.

Living By the Spirit

We Are God's Temple. There is such an overlay among the members of the Trinity that make up God's Being that it is difficult, sometimes, to distinguish the function of One from the Other. It does not seem to do disservice to One to give credit to Another, but we try to keep track, because these are distinguished in Scripture. We turn presently from a focus on the person of Christ to the person of His Holy Spirit. Christ indwells us. He is the One Who died for us, and rose from the dead, and sits at the right hand of the Father. And when He departed earth after the resurrection, He sent His Spirit to indwell us. It is this Spirit that we now want to examine more closely.

1 Cor. 3:16 informs us that we are the temple of God, saying, "Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you?" We are God's temple because we are indwelt by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is there to do the following:

- To help us. John 14:16-17—"And I will petition the Father, and He will give you another Comforter, that He may remain with you forever, the Spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot receive because it does not see Him nor know Him. But you know Him, for He abides with you, and shall be in you." (Endnote 2)
- To teach us. John 14:26—"But the Counselor, the Holy spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you."
- To teach the world about sin (especially, unbelief), righteousness (divine righteousness), and judgment (condemnation). John 16:8—"It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. When he comes, he will convict the world in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment."
- To give us understanding of the things God has given us. 1 Cor. 2:6-16 (quote is from v. 12)—"We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us."
- To teach us to abide in Him. 1 Jn. 2:27—"As for you, the anointing you received from him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about all things and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit—just as it has taught you, remain [abide] in him".

We have seen other functions and roles of the Holy Spirit before, and we will see still others as we proceed. The Spirit lives in us to accomplish God's work, which He does when we have a thorough understanding of the doctrines of Scripture, exercise strong faith coming from maturity, and display hearts that are kept clean through confession of our sins. Then the Spirit can go to work.

We Are Told to Live by the Spirit. In Gal. 5:16 Paul admonished, “So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.” Living by the Spirit is the same as “walking by the Spirit”. When we walk, or live, by the Spirit, meaning that the power of the Holy Spirit is operating in us, we will have power over the sinful nature. Our goal is to be controlled by the Spirit a maximum amount of time to overpower our sinful natures and maximize our service to God.

Eph. 5:18 gives an analogy for the control of the Spirit, saying, “Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit.” In understanding the word “filled”, we look to Thayer’s lexicon, which tells us that the thing that fills you also controls you. (Endnote 3) When we are drunk due to consumption of alcohol, we are out of our own control, and under the control of intoxication. This leads to irresponsible behavior and sins of all sorts. On the other hand, when we are filled with the Holy Spirit, we will be under His control, and we will produce divine good by His power. Whatever “fills” you, controls you.

Learning How to Live by the Spirit. When you give in to the impulses of the sinful nature, you will not be controlled by the Spirit. But when you learn the doctrines of Scripture, confess your sins regularly, and exhibit faith in God and His Word, the Spirit will influence you to do good, the same way alcohol influences you to do bad. Your thinking will *change* when you are filled with the Holy Spirit.

In Eph. 5:1-16, preceding the verse we just saw, a call is made for us to be “imitators of God” by avoiding sexual immorality, impurity, greed, obscenity, foolish talk, coarse joking, and other sinful patterns of behavior and thought. To accomplish this, we are told in this passage to live in the light, which we know from 1 Jn. 1 means to confess our sins to God. We are also told to live “as wise”, which means to learn and apply God’s Word to our lives.

The positive changes that come from the filling of the Holy Spirit are revealed in the verses following Eph. 5:18 (remember that v. 18 told us to “live by the Spirit”). The changes cited in this passage (Eph. 5:19-6:9) include worship, thanksgiving, submission to one another, domestic tranquility, holiness, raising children properly, honoring parents, better performance on the job, greater service to the Lord, and increased strength from God’s power. When we are filled with the Spirit, good things happen.

1 Jn. 3:21-24 gives us the following additional guidance for fellowship with God, telling us the way to abide in Christ:

Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God, and receive from him anything we ask, because we obey his commands and do what pleases him. And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us. Those who obey his commands live in him, and he in them. And this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us.

When we confess our sins, they are forgiven (1 Jn. 1:9). Since we are forgiven, our hearts do not condemn us, and we have confidence before God, enjoying the benefits of being filled with the Holy Spirit. Our prayers are meaningful when we are filled with the Spirit, and we do things that please God, since we are motivated by the Holy Spirit. We obey the commands to trust in Christ, which applies to our “walk” in Him through ongoing faith in His work and His Word. By trusting Him and by being filled with His Spirit, we exhibit the fruit of the Spirit, the capstone of which is love. Once again, the path to filling and control of the Spirit is clear: confession, knowing the commands, and obeying the commands by exercising faith in Jesus Christ on a continual basis. Then the Spirit reassures us that Christ will be living comfortably within us, and will be guiding our lives.

The thing we have to avoid is loss of fellowship, which occurs when we sin. Eph. 4:25-31 cautions us to avoid sinful behaviors that disrupt our fellowship. Verse 30 says, “And do not grieve the Holy Spirit, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.” Sin grieves the Spirit. 1 Thess. 5:19 says something similar, calling for us to avoid curtailing the control of the Spirit. This verse says, “Do not put out the Spirit’s fire...” Putting out the Spirit’s fire, or reducing the effects of divine energy within us, will separate us from the power of God.

When we sin as believers, our consciences announce to us that we are not following God’s leadership or living by His Word. (For a thorough discussion on “conscience”, see “Drawing Near to God”, in *Getting Closer to God*). One role of the Holy Spirit is to “nudge” our consciences to create discomfort within us as we observe wrong behavior in or from ourselves. John 16:8 talks about this, saying, “When he comes he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin...” This applies to believers, as well as to those who have not received Christ as savior. The object is for us to *notice* our sinful pattern and to confess our sins so they can be forgiven and we can be restored to fellowship.

Flesh vs. the Spirit. When we do not confess, we become what Paul called “carnal”. In 1 Cor. 3:3 Paul charges the Corinthians of being this way, saying, “...for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men [like unbelievers]?” (Endnote 4) Carnal means “fleshly”, or controlled by the flesh (flesh is a term used for the sinful nature). Carnality is a condition in which the sinful nature controls our thoughts and behavior, and directs us into behavior that is displeasing to God. When we are carnal, here is what happens:

- The Holy Spirit is grieved and quenched
- The sinful nature takes over
- The control and the fruit of the Spirit are lost for the duration of our carnality
- Our prayers are not heard (Ps. 66:18)
- We cannot learn Scripture (1 Cor. 2:14)

- Rom. 8:5-8 gives us two outlooks that we can have, depending on whether we are controlled by the Spirit or by the flesh. This passage says the following:

Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God.

The respective mind-sets of the Spirit and the flesh are mutually exclusive...they cannot both be dominant at any given time. One or the other will be in charge, and the nature of the resulting thought content, leading to attitudes and actions, will be determined by its source of origin: the Holy Spirit...or the sinful nature.

Honoring God and Producing Righteousness. When we are out of fellowship, we dishonor God. 1 Cor. 6:19-20 calls for us to honor God with our bodies, saying the following:

Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.

We will not honor God when we are out of fellowship...the whole point of our Christian life is lost and we accomplish nothing good. We might even fool other believers or the world, but when we are not walking in the Spirit, God knows, and He is the One Who directs all the affairs of our lives.

We want to stay in fellowship and under the control of the Holy Spirit, because that is the condition that enables us to produce God's righteousness. Gal. 5:5 says, "By faith we eagerly await through the Spirit the righteousness for which we hope." We wait for and expect righteousness...by means of the Spirit only! Righteousness never comes by law-keeping, as we see in verse 4, "You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ..." Trying to manufacture our own righteousness is a form of self-dependence and self-righteousness, which cannot please God. Our self-determined efforts only "alienate" us from God, and place us out of fellowship. The Holy Spirit is our source of goodness, not ourselves.

Waiting for God's righteousness to be produced in us is an expression of *faith*. Verse 6b in this passage (Gal. 5) says, "The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself in love." This is a plain call for us to maintain faith in Christ and in God's Word, so control of the Spirit can be perpetuated within us, and so we can exhibit love, which is His fruit. Our expectation is that God will produce His character in us.

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Let's remind ourselves of how we got here. We did not begin the Christian life by taking a to-do list and charging out to do the things that we assumed God would approve. We began by faith in Jesus Christ. The order is important. We do not act first, and then learn *how* to act. We begin with preparation, not action. We begin with study, confession, and the development of our faith, and gradually begin meaningful service as God moves within us. We begin by placing God before our eyes and focusing our minds on Him, concentrating on His Word, with continual prayer and thanksgiving and God-consciousness. Then, when we move out, we do so in faith and fellowship, so that the holiness and righteousness of God can be generated in us. With God there with us, we can solve problems, conduct activities, perform tasks, complete jobs, build-up achievements, and exhibit competence...by God's power and direction. This is what happens when we walk in the Spirit.

Faith in Ourselves Will Not Work

We Can't Do It. I have been amazed to discover how much our lives depend on God, how much of it He does, and how unproductive we are in comparison with Him. So, before we launch additional considerations on the topic of faith and its importance in the process of *turning our program over to God*, I want to try once more to establish God's *centrality* in the running of His own programs, to see the peripheral nature of our involvement in them.

Phil. 2:12b-13 says, "...continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose." *God Who works in you...* He does it. When we are available through sanctification (cleansing) and faith (studying and believing), He puts into us the *will* to do something, and then enables us to *act* to accomplish it. The end result is that *we do what He wants*. 2 Cor. 3:5 reminds us that any good thing we do, any "righteous" thing, comes from Him. This verse tells us, "Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God."

The late J. Hampton Keathley, III, in his comprehensive and edifying primer for new or struggling Christians, *ABC's for Christian Growth: Laying the Foundation*, said the following regarding our efforts, as compared with God's:

Because of all we face in the enemies of God who are arrayed against Christians, the world around us, the flesh within us, and the devil against us, the Christian life and ministry is an absolute impossibility apart from God's supernatural ability which must be appropriated moment by moment through faith. The nature of these forces and our weakness necessitates the need for nothing short of the divine power of God. To think that we can live the Christian life is the height of ignorance or pride. (Endnote 5)

The Holy Spirit is within us. Christ dwells there. We have every divine resource in God's arsenal at our disposal. But we have to believe in Him, and we have to let God's way supplant our own for His resources to become our assets. When we use what He offers, He will do it all, and He will get the glory.

Faith in Ourselves Is Not Appropriate. In speaking to the Corinthians about his persecutions, Paul reported in 2 Cor. 1:8-9 that he had been close to death at the hands of his persecutors. He felt that the death sentence had been pronounced, and the moment of his death was now at hand. He was comforted by his belief that God could raise him from the dead, but resurrection was not the topic on his mind. Paul wanted these believers to understand that every single thing in their lives, and now in ours, are within the scope of God's will, power, and purpose. He simply wants us to trust in Him and not in ourselves.

Our sole task is to trust Him. It is ludicrous for us to think that we can trust ourselves more than we can trust God.

Here is the phrase (from verse 9) that stresses this point: "...this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God..." Paul is suggesting that, with our existence resting in the hands of God, how can we believe that the *details* of our daily lives do not also rely on His capable care. But it is not only *ludicrous* for us to trust in ourselves instead of God...it is a *sin*. Rom. 14:23b says, "...everything that is not of faith is sin." Anything you do or think or say that operates outside of faith in and fellowship with God is a sin. When faith is absent, you are in a "state of sin". To this, Heb. 11:6a adds the following: "...without faith it is impossible to please him." When faith is not active, we are in a perpetual pattern of displeasing God.

Self-Responsibility. We are taught throughout our lives that we are responsible for ourselves. This is not bad, because we live in a world that basically does not allow us to have others take care of us. If we have the physical and mental capability, we are expected to care for ourselves. If we don't attend to ourselves, we will starve. But there is a larger framework within which we can view ourselves. Self-awareness and self-care are principles of life that assume we will take responsibility for the common-sense maintenance of our well-being. But principles of self-care for the believer are subsumed within a larger, overriding reality, which includes the operations of the God Who created us.

While we should avoid ill-conceived notions that we do *nothing* in life, or that we should not *learn* how to preserve ourselves in the world, we acknowledge that we do nothing *consequential or meaningful* connected with God's will and work apart from God and His power. It is within the context of God's power and plan and will that we make reasonable decisions about self-care. But we must not MAKE OUR HOME in the subdivision of common sense...we must expand our minds by getting closer to God so that we can live in the greater sphere of *God's existence*, and operate in the limitless and timeless universe of God's grace. Common sense will not disappear; it will just have new parameters for its function.

Focusing on God. When our attention shifts from ourselves to God, a new priority arises that recognizes the superiority of God's provision over the unreliable sustenance of self-sufficiency. When our focus is glued to ourselves, we stumble and falter as we move through life. When our consciousness is affixed to God, we move out on a divine path toward meaning and purpose. Faith in God gets results. Jer. 10:23 says, "I know, O Lord, that a man's life is not his own; it is not for man to direct his steps." For us to rely on ourselves in *God's universe* is to take on more than we can handle. An attitude of self-dependence is an abandonment of faith, and will only bring God's discipline. Continuing in Jer. 10, we see in verses 24-25, the following:

Correct me, Lord, but only with justice—not in your anger, lest you reduce me to nothing. Pour out your wrath on the nations that do not acknowledge you, on the

peoples who do not call on your name. For they have devoured Jacob; they have devoured him completely and destroyed his homeland.

When we do not acknowledge God and try to depend on self-determination, we become involved in either self-indulgence, which leads to sin...or self-purification, by which we seek to be good enough to placate God. In either case, we are focused on ourselves and not God, and this will result in God's punitive discipline.

Self-Trust is Disappointing. In Rom. 10:1-3, we see what happened to the Jews when they tried to manufacture their own righteousness:

Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved. For I can testify about them that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge. Since they did not know the righteousness that comes from God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness.

When we assume that *we do it*, meaning we live the Christian life and please God in our own strength and by our own initiative, we are trusting ourselves, rather than God. We are showing our *pride*. We cannot operate in pride and please God. We cannot exercise self-belief and show faith at the same time. The issue is pride vs. humility. We are told to walk in the light...in fellowship and maturity and wisdom...but the only way we will walk in the light is on our knees, understanding that our will is no substitute for the will of God, and that He will lift us up only when we acknowledge Him.

We are ridiculously, hopelessly, incessantly sinful. It is only in the humility of knowing and seeing our humanity in contrast to God's deity that we can begin to understand the way God wants to relate to us, and work through us. We are not God. We must guard against any hint that we can be sinless or create our own righteousness...even for a second. Such an image is the beginning of pride. Our prideful, egotistical, self-assured involvement prevents the Spirit of God from working through us. This blocks confession of sins because we don't think we're really all that bad; this weakens faith in God because it shows faith in ourselves; this acknowledges *us*, not God; this prevents wisdom, because we think we can rely on our own abilities to solve our problems; this cuts off God's power, because we are operating on our own strength; this is the quenching of the Holy Spirit. We cannot dilute our faith in God with faith in ourselves. This will prevent us from living the lives He envisions for us.

This is a difficult thing to understand and a change that is hard to make. The most prominent tendency of the flesh is for us to depend on ourselves...to operate independently of God. We believe we can handle life apart from God's plan and resources. That is why we can go days without praying. That is why we ignore the need to confess our sins. That is why we open God's Word only one day a week, if at all. That is why we spend our thinking-time dreaming about what we want, or fretting at what we do not have. Our thoughts are occupied with ourselves and not with God. A hard lesson to learn is that we cannot have faith in God and in our own abilities at the same time, not ever, not in any situation of life.

Faith-Work vs. Self-Works. It is not just our own self-awareness and the deceit of the world that distract us and convince us to direct our faith away from God...there are whole institutions set up to convince us that we can be “good” apart from God. Many of these are called “churches”. Gal. 5:4 says, “You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ...” Paul is asking these believers NOT to “be burdened again by a yoke of slavery” (v. 1), and to avoid trying to maintain spirituality by keeping the rules of the Law. When you depend on the flesh for spirituality, fellowship is lost, as indicated in the phrase “alienated from Christ”. Legalism causes a loss of fellowship!

Rom. 7:6 continues this vein of thought, saying, “But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code.” We now have the Holy Spirit within us, so that our new objective is not so much learning what the rules of good behavior are, as it is becoming familiar with ways to have the Spirit perform God’s work through us. We should know the do’s and don’ts of Scripture, of course, but these are things that will be done (or not done) by the power of the Spirit, and not through self-effort.

Eph. 4:2 confirms that “works” line up against faith, indicating this: “If, in fact, Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about—but not before God.” We cited Eph. 2:8-9 earlier that make it clear that salvation is “not by works”, but by grace. This applies to our lives after salvation just as much as it does at the time we are saved. Grace is still the provider, faith is still the condition, and Jesus Christ is still the object. This is why we are focused in this study on faith and its functions. Faith vs. works, humility vs. pride, flesh vs. the Spirit, self-effort vs. God’s power...the distinctions go on and on. We must choose God’s way, because we are not strong enough to live properly when we depend on our own devices.

Consider the following verses that disclose the weakness and ineffectuality of our flesh:

- Rom. 6:19a—I put this in human terms because you are weak in your natural selves...
- Matt. 26:41—Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak.
- Jer. 17:5—This is what the Lord says: “Cursed is the one who trusts in man, who depends on flesh for his strength and whose heart turns away from the Lord.”
- Rom. 3:27-28—Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded. On what principle? On that of observing the law? No, but on that of faith.
- Gal. 3:2—I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by observing the law, or by believing what you heard?
- Gal. 2:16—Know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ.

- Gal. 3:3—Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort?

Choosing the Faith Alternative. If you are in fellowship, studying, and maturing as a believer, you will be motivated properly and energized supernaturally by God's power. Self-discipline is NO substitute for faith. Our efforts truncate God's power. You started with Him; stay with Him. Rom. 8:3-4 confirms this in the following:

For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man, in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit.

Christ offered Himself for our sin. It is *His* effort that qualifies us to be led by the Spirit in order to meet the righteous requirements of the law.

Prov. 3:5 puts the lid on this pot, by saying, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight." We cannot have faith in ourselves. We must have faith in God.

We must take seriously the need for us to practice believing. This is not a condition of our Christian walk that we can give a nod to and then walk away. We either believe in God for our minute-to-minute walk, or we do not. If we believe right now, as we write or read these words, we must also believe five minutes from now, and in the middle of the night tonight, and at our first blink in the morning. We must keep on believing.

Nothing short of ongoing, unflinching confidence in our God will suffice. We are called on to walk in it, compelled to live in it, invited to rest in it. It is not self-hypnosis; it is not herd-bound mentality; it is not lock-step marching. This is you and I believing at a core level that the God we profess is the God we trust. This is our commitment to enlist ourselves with abandon into His service, because He is real to us, and because we know He alone is God.

We must distinguish our growing and precious faith in Him from the confusion and disappointment of faith in ourselves. We, indeed, cannot stand in His place, except with our heads bowed. We are not sufficient. Why would we hesitate to move our trust from *us...* to *Him*?

Living by Faith

Living by Faith. Rom. 1:17 says, “For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: ‘The righteous will live by faith’.” We were saved by faith in the beginning, and now we are instructed to live by that same faith. We are told to live by faith, the same way we are told to “live in the Spirit”, and to “walk in Christ”. We are reminded of Gal. 5:16, which says, “So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.” Walking in the Spirit overpowers sin and allows God to produce His life through us. Faith has an important role to play in this process, and that is what we want to see.

2 Cor. 5:7 tells us we “live by faith, not by sight”. “Live” should actually be translated “walk”. (Endnote 6) This means every step we take should be by faith...every thought, every incident, every decision, every encounter, every moment of our lives should be executed by faith in Jesus Christ. We walk trusting in God and His Word...every second of every day.

To walk in the Spirit, we know we have to have all our sins confessed. This restores us to fellowship and puts the Spirit back in control. We have also said many times in previous studies that maturity strengthens us against sin and keeps us in fellowship longer, so that we are walking through our lives in the power of the Holy Spirit. The specific quality that grows to make us more mature is our faith. Paul told Timothy the following in 1 Tim. 1:18:

Timothy, my son, I give you this instruction in keeping with the prophecies once made about you, so that by following them you may fight the good fight, holding on to faith and a good conscience.

The two main pillars of walking in the Spirit are faith and a clean conscience. Confession gives us a clean conscience, and holding on to faith sustains us...keeping us walking in the Spirit. In *Maturity* a statement was made that codifies the condition of faith operating in our walk, saying the following: “Faith is the condition that sustains the control of the Holy Spirit. Believing God and His Word will keep us focused on Him.” (Endnote 7)

We begin fellowship by confessing; then we continue spirituality by staying focused on God and maintaining a trust in Him. This focus is an ongoing and pervasive attitude of faith toward God. This is fear of the Lord, occupation with Christ, acknowledging God, surrender, submission to God’s will, and God-consciousness, all brought to a point in a thing called faith. This is turning ourselves over to God, with all our problems, our aspirations, our dreams, our hopes, and our intentions. We relinquish control to Him, and keep on trusting Him to sustain us by His Spirit.

Offering our Bodies. Rom. 6:12-13 gives us a Scriptural frame for this concept:

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Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness.

This is what we are to do: *offer*. We offer our bodies as instruments of righteousness. We become God's tools to do His work. We surrender our will to His. We relinquish control to the Holy Spirit. We trust in His power to get the job done. We give our lives up to allow His life to be produced in us. We let Him be God...in us. Then sin will not be our master, because we will be operating in the realm of grace, where God's provision sustains us. (Rom. 6:14).

Surrendering to God. In the same passage in which we are told to draw near to God (James 4), we are told this: "Submit yourselves, then, to God" (v. 7). This is surrender, or submission, or yielding, or trusting. When we surrender to God's will and show that we trust Him, we will get closer to Him, and He will enable us to do things that will surprise us and bear great fruit for Him.

So we begin to see that surrender is the key to walking in the Spirit. Walking in faith becomes the condition for continuing our walk in the Spirit. From one minute to the next, we will see through eyes that acknowledge God, pray to Him, and fear Him. When surrender grows with the realization that "I can't do it, but He can", we will be trusting Him in ways that will open up His power to us, so that we can bring glory to Him, and complete our purpose for remaining here on earth. The importance of faith in this process cannot be overestimated.

We have much to consider yet concerning faith. We want to know more about what it is, what happens when it is lacking, how it is strengthened, some of its results, how it relates to hope, and how our faith can be encouraged.

What Faith Is. Faith is believing. Faith is trust. When we speak of faith in Jesus Christ, which coincides with faith in God the Father and the Holy Spirit, we express our faith in God's Word, His character, and His power. We believe that we have been given a relationship with God through Jesus Christ, and that we have His complete message for us in the form of Scripture. We receive and accept His person and His truth, and we see our belief as being so strong that it can actually be called "knowledge". We relate to God because we believe Him, and we *know* Him because we believe His Word.

The notion of faith has been blurred and distorted through the advance of false teachings. Faith is NOT emotion, ritual, reason, or incantation. These things may accompany faith at times, or even support it, but they are not the same thing as faith. Faith embraces data and facts not perceptible through the senses. The senses may be used in receiving information about things that are not perceived, but the operation of faith does not depend on the function of the senses. Heb. 11:1 states this clearly, "Now faith is being sure of what we

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hope for and certain of what we do not see.” Faith is sure and faith is certain. Having it means that we have been totally convinced, without experiencing the object of our faith through our senses.

Faith is not a constant. It functions as a variable condition in each believer, governed by the level of wisdom acquired by the believer, and the opportunity he has had for training in God’s preparation program. Faith can get stronger, or it can get weaker. We will see ways to strengthen faith; right now we just want to establish that faith for a believer does not stay at the same level of intensity.

The Connections of Faith. In the Christian life, faith is mixed with other components of Christian growth and maturity. These include confession, study of Scripture, prayer, acknowledging God, fear of the Lord, God-consciousness, surrender to God’s will, submission of the body, waiting on the Lord, and being still. (All these concepts are discussed in *Studies on Getting Closer to God*). For a believer, faith is summed up as focus on God with a spirit of trust. Faith in God trumps experience as a source of truth and reality, and is the most important condition in our Christian walk. Gal. 5:6 says that “the only thing that counts is faith, expressing itself in love”. This will be seen as *living in faith*...or operating in the power of the Spirit, as evidenced by His fruit.

Faith is also connected with gifts. In 1 Cor. 12:9, faith itself is a gift. Some see the gift of special faith as a temporary gift, provided to kick-start the early church. But obviously God can give this gift if He chooses to do so, at any time that He chooses. Faith is at least a gift that has, at some point, been given to specific believers. Certainly, some believers have stronger faith than others, based on their maturity, whether their faith is considered a “gift” or not.

Faith is a condition for certain gifts, as we see in Rom. 12:3, which says the following:

For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you.

This verse indicates that we are to think of our giftedness with careful discernment and from the perspective of humility and the faith we have received. We receive this faith as we learn God’s Word and feed on His divine nature, and as we go through the training God has designed for us. Faith is, itself, a source for humility, because when we see the reality of God through faith, we can only bow in an humble spirit. *Humility*, then, becomes an expression of the *faith* that prompts our *humility*, another case of the interdependence of spiritual operations. They feed off each other.

In a previous study (*Maturity*), the following was stated regarding the connection between prayer and faith:

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Anytime we utter a word in prayer, we are expressing faith in God. When we invoke His promises in our prayers, we are expressing faith in His Word. And when we trust Him and His Word, things happen.

Prayer expresses faith, and faith prompts prayer. More inter-relatedness.

There is also a sense in which “faith” can refer to *truth*. The term “faith” is used repeatedly as “the faith”, meaning “the body of beliefs embraced by Christians”. That would be the Word of God, which embodies what we believe. This sharpens our understanding of an application of faith that might be overlooked. Here are a number of examples of “faith” used as the truth of God’s Word:

- Acts 6:7. Luke describes the conversion of many people in Jerusalem, including priests, who “became obedient to the faith”. We can only be obedient to a *requirement*, or a prescription in Scripture.
- 1 Tim. 3:9. “They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience.” The truths of the faith are those contained in the Bible.
- Jude 1:3b. “I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints.” The faith given to the saints was the truth of God’s Word.
- 1 Pet. 5:9. “Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing...” Resist within the scope of your knowledge of the truth.
- Phil. 1:27b. “I will know that you stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel.” Faith of the gospel is the truth of the gospel.
- Eph. 4:13b. “Until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God...” We want to reach agreement in our beliefs and knowledge.
- Gal. 1:23. Paul was “preaching the faith he once tried to destroy”. Paul was preaching the gospel and the truth of the Word.
- Col. 2:7. “Rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught.” Paul wanted them to be built up in Jesus by becoming stronger in the knowledge of God.
- Tit. 1:13. “Rebuke them sharply, so that they will be sound in the faith.” This means sound in the doctrines of the Word.
- 1 Tim. 2:7. “...a teacher of the true faith to the Gentiles”. Paul was a teacher of the Word to the Gentiles.
- Other passages where the word “faith” is talking about the truth of God’s Word: 1 Cor. 16:13, Gal. 3:23, 2 Tim. 3:8, 1 Tim. 6:21, Col. 1:23, Rev. 14:12, Acts 16:5, 1 Tim. 4:1, Heb. 4:14-15, 1 Tim. 4:6, 1 Tim. 6:10.

It is interesting that a main object of faith (belief) is faith (the truth). We are told to believe God’s Word and His promises, thus having, essentially, “faith” in “the faith”.

Faith ultimately has many nuances. It can be a puny, ineffective, tentative, “half-way” believing, or it can be a robust, potent, and unwavering faith. We can develop stronger faith, if we *study* and *believe* God’s Word to keep us on His pathway to greater faith.

When Faith is Lacking. When faith is weak, or absent, God will not be able to teach us, bless us, motivate us, strengthen us, or guide us. We will have effectively cut off the divine supply for all our needs, especially those of a spiritual nature. When God looks at us He expects to see faith in full operation. In Matt. 6:30 Jesus tells His disciples, “If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?” He wants them not to worry about God’s provision, but to have faith that God will take care of them.

In Heb. 3:12, we are warned against a lack or loss of faith, with this admonition: “See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God.” We will see more about this condition when we examine “faith rest”, but for now we must understand that the Word of God speaks strongly and directly against unbelief. When faith is weak, the inevitable outcome is that sin will occur, and the sinful nature will take over, at which time nothing that is done will please God. So how can we avoid this and strengthen our faith? How can a 90-pound weakling take the spotlight at muscle-beach?

Faith Is Strengthened by Testing and Training

Faith is Strengthened by Testing and Training. The terms testing and training lead to a consideration of “suffering” in the Christian life. Suffering does not come to us for its own sake. Every experience God brings to us has a purpose. The main ways we have viewed suffering in previous studies is that God is providing guiding experiences to us, not just so we can “learn from the experience”, but so that—through the experience that He brings to us—we will be prompted to confess our sins and to return to the study of His Word. But there is a third reason why God brings suffering to us, and that is to provide “tests” or “trials” to refine us and to build our patience and faith.

So suffering is brought to us to 1) press us to confess, 2) prompt us to study, or 3) stimulate our growth by testing. This would mean, then—mathematically speaking—that two-thirds of our suffering is due to conditions we control. We confess by our own will, and we study when we want to. So we can ostensibly reduce our suffering by two-thirds if we consistently confess our sins and faithfully study the Bible. Any suffering that comes while we are consistently taking care of these two requirements will likely be designed only to test us, to spur our growth as maturing believers. This kind of suffering leads directly forward, whereas the other kinds (those regarding confession and study) just get us back on track so we can start moving again.

James 1:2-4 pointed out the relatively *joyful* underpinning for suffering of the “testing” variety, saying this:

Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

These verses tell us that trials build patience (the perspective of faith), so that we can grow until we lack absolutely nothing. The prospect for that kind of advancement can only please us, and make us welcome the trials. It is a relief, when all our known sins are confessed and we have been consistent in our receiving instruction in the Word, to know that the suffering and trials that come our way are for the refinement of our faith. On the other hand, when we have not been confessing or studying, we pretty well know that the suffering falls into the disciplinary category, which can't make us too happy.

1 Pet. 1:6-7 adds to our understanding of this process, saying the following:

In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

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Once again, when suffering is for growth, we rejoice, because we know this training will take us to a place of greater faith and additional divine production. When faith is proven, tested by fire as happens with gold, it is refined. When faith is refined, it gets purer.

We see this once more in Rom. 5:3-4, which gives us this:

Not only so, but let us rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.

Perseverance is patience, a signal that indicates the presence of faith. Hope is faith for the future. So the purpose of suffering, and the cause for our jubilation over it, is that our faith will grow because of it. With this growth comes power, not ours, but the power of God. When we suffer we are forced to trust God instead of ourselves, and the more we trust Him, the more we are exposed to His holiness and righteousness and love, and the more we take on His nature.

Even when suffering comes due to discipline, we still need to recognize that we will benefit if we respond to it as an opportunity to change and grow. Ps. 119:70b-71 says, "...I delight in your law. It was good for me to be afflicted so that I might learn your decrees." If we do not respond properly, however, disciplinary measures may increase, as we see in Lev. 26:18-21, which says the following:

If after all this you will not listen to me, I will punish you for your sins seven times over. I will break down your stubborn pride and make the sky above you like iron and the ground beneath you like bronze. Your strength will be spent in vain, because your soil will not yield its crop, nor will the trees of the land yield their fruit. If you remain hostile toward me and refuse to listen to me, I will multiply your afflictions seven times over, as your sins deserve.

We Will Suffer. Regardless of the reason, when we experience physical, psychological, or spiritual discomfort, we know that it is given to us so we can be developed and promoted. 1 Pet. 4:12 states, "Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you." This suffering has a purpose. One thing we can count on is that *we will suffer* (perhaps not a very good selling point for evangelists, who often want to paint the Christian life as an endless array of prosperity and well-being).

In Acts 9:16, Paul was told that he would suffer. Jesus said to Ananias, who was to report to Paul, "I will show him how much he must suffer for my name." And he did. 2 Cor. 11:24-32 gives us a report on Paul's suffering. He went through the following:

- In prison frequently
- Exposed to death again and again
- Forty-lashes-minus-one received five different times

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- Beaten with rods three times
- Stoned and left for dead
- Three times shipwrecked
- Spent a day and night in the open sea
- Always in danger
- Labored and toiled without sleep
- Went hungry and thirsty
- Cold
- Naked
- All the while pressured under the responsibility of all the churches

But did Paul mature? Yes. Was He productive? Yes. Did he bring honor to God? Yes. Is his commitment still benefiting Christians? Yes. Can we do this, as well? Yes. Will we get through all this without suffering? No. God's training is effective, but it may not be easy.

We are destined for suffering. 1 Thess. 3:3 says, "...so that no one would be unsettled by these trials. You know quite well that we were destined for them." There seems to be no way around it, but when it comes, we must maintain our trust in God. 1 Pet. 4:19 explains that we must surrender to God's will when suffering appears. This verse says, "So, then, those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good." We must remain conscious of Him and trust that he is working on our behalf...for our good (Rom. 8:28). We will get what we *need*, not necessarily what we want.

Faith is Strengthened by Intake of God's Word

Faith is Strengthened by Intake of God's Word. We learn from Scripture that faith can be weak, or it can be strong, or it may be somewhere in between. The point we need to re-establish is that faith is not a constant in our Christian lives. Faith is a variable, with fluctuations based on the operation of spiritual principles specified in God's Word. We must follow God's prescriptions for growth if we expect our faith to get stronger. Our beginning premise for this section, then, is that faith CAN grow.

There are many examples of the dynamic advancement of faith given in Scripture. One of these appears in Rom. 4, which I ask you to take time to read. In Rom. 4, Paul describes Abraham's belief in God's promise that he would father children at the advanced age of one hundred. You can see how credulity might be strained upon hearing this pronouncement, but Abraham believed God. The entire chapter of Rom. 4 is a lesson on faith, and the way in which Abraham trusted God. But the thing we want to see in this passage is that Abraham's faith *grew*. This is seen in verse 20, which says, "Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God." Whatever the level of Abraham's faith going into this test, that level changed to one that was "stronger", because he was maintaining his belief that what God promises, God delivers. Our application: By believing in God as we endure the tests, our faith is strengthened.

So, faith is strengthened by trials and tests, and growth is facilitated by suffering, whether it comes as discipline or to give us a spiritual work-out for growth purposes. But we want to look now at another aspect of increasing faith, or that which occurs by feeding on the Word. Consistency in learning Scripture by studying it and believing it will cause us to get progressively stronger until we reach maturity. If we become lax in our studying, however, we will become weaker and weaker, until we are completely ineffective as believers. A lack of study leads to a loss of faith, because we fail to be occupied with Christ, and that is when expressions of faith diminish, such as prayer, fear of the Lord, acknowledgement of God, and God-consciousness. When faith weakens, our focus shifts to things that are not productive, and we fall into 1) sin, or 2) legalism, both of which are destructive.

An example of the results of weak or diminishing faith in our lives is seen in Hos. 4:1-3, which says the following:

Hear the word of the Lord, you Israelites, because the Lord has a charge to bring against you who live in the land: "There is no faithfulness, no love, no acknowledgment of God in the land. There is only cursing, lying and murder, stealing and adultery; they break all bounds, and bloodshed follows bloodshed. Because of this the land mourns, and all who live in it waste away; their beasts of the field and the birds of the air and the fish of the sea are dying."

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Verse 6a follows with a statement that gets to the heart of the matter: “My people are destroyed from lack of knowledge.” Lack of knowledge is related to the loss of these: faith, love, and acknowledgement of God (Hos. 4:1). The outcome is not a good one; we will fall into sin, and divine discipline will be administered. But when we grow by learning the Word, we can avoid all that. 2 Thess. 1:3 says, “We ought always to thank God for you, brothers, and rightly so, because your faith is growing more and more, and the love every one of you has for each other is increasing.” And what prompted this growth? Well, “persecutions and trials for starters” (2 Thess. 1:4), but also their “holding to the teachings we [Paul] passed on to you, whether by word of mouth or letter” (2 Thess. 2:15).

To keep the Thessalonians on top, Paul sent Timothy to “strengthen and encourage” the Thessalonians in their faith (1 Thess. 3:2). Paul knew that the teaching of Scripture would strengthen these believers. In Col. 1:28 he further demonstrated this belief, saying, “We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ.” Paul was indicating that when believers mature, they are perfected, or made complete. By learning the Bible (our source for wisdom), we become complete.

In another instance, Paul told the Colossians that a leader named Epaphras was “always wrestling in prayer” for them, praying that they would “stand firm in the will of God, mature and fully assured” (Col. 4:12). Paul wanted them to know God’s will, which is acquired through studying and believing Scripture, so they would become mature and their faith would be stronger (fully assured). Until we know God’s will, we need to keep studying. There is no more-direct way to learn about God and what He wants to produce in our lives. In Acts 20:27 Paul said this: “For I have not hesitated to proclaim to you the whole will of God.” He equated his teaching of the Word with the proclamation of God’s will. Learn God’s Word and you will know His will.

The Bible is given so that we can grow. God has given us all we need to know. But—alas—too few believers seek the teaching of God’s Word, and too few churches provide it. What is needed is a topical study of the Word, wherein all verses pertaining to a subject in the Word are pulled together to see what the Bible declares about it. This gives us an understanding of the categories of knowledge found in Scripture. Another form of study that should be included in an examination of the Bible, is one including “exegetical” analysis. This is a verse-by-verse study of the books in the Bible, so that the concepts understood from topical studies can be explored in more detail in the words of individual chapters and verses. Comprehensive Bible teaching should be available to believers in a congregation several times a week so they can have maximum opportunity to feed on the Word and grow.

The idea of acquiring understanding through Scripture was reinforced by Paul in his farewell address to the Ephesians, cited in Acts 20:32, which says the following: “And now I entrust you to God and to the message of his grace. This message is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.” (Endnote 7) Believers are built up

by the Word of God, which, in Paul's day, led the Ephesians to maturity, even after Paul was gone.

Commands to Grow. It is so important that we grow in faith, that it is commanded repeatedly in the Bible. We are also reminded frequently of the procedure for growth, as we see in Rom. 10:17: "Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ." Faith grows from hearing the Word. We are told to hear...and grow...in many other scriptures, as we see in the following:

- 1 Pet. 2:2—Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.
- 2 Pet. 3:18—But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
- Eph. 4:12-14—...to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming.
- Jude 1:20—But you, dear friends, build yourselves up in your most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit.
- Jer. 9:23-24—This is what the Lord says: Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom or the strong man boast of his strength or the rich man boast of his riches, but let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight declares the Lord.

Many other commands to grow in faith and to study God's Word are given in Scripture, and we will see these as we proceed. But two things are already clear: 1) we must grow in our faith, and 2) the most important catalyst for growth is studying the Word of God.

Being Prepared to Learn. One thing we should know at the outset is that we can *ask* for understanding of the Scripture. This is what we see in James 1:5-6, which tells us this: "If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. But when he asks he must believe and not doubt..." This is comforting. You can ask God for increased understanding and He will *give it to you*. Does this say, "Those of you with high IQ's or strong educational backgrounds will qualify for wisdom"? No. This says "ask", and *if you believe*, you will receive wisdom from God. Spiritual truths are spiritually perceived, and the Holy Spirit will teach you God's truth and God's way, regardless of your ability, as long as you ask for it, believing.

The Bible is also clear that we must deal with sin in our lives before study will be meaningful and edifying. James 1:21 says, "Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so

prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you.” This tells us the gospel message leads to salvation, of course, but another application can be derived from this verse, which is that the Word planted in us will deliver us from lives of hopelessness, surrender to sin, and confusion, and give us ways to get closer to God to witness the working of His power in our lives. Before we can get the Word planted in us, however, we must deal with sin.

Peter repeats James in 1 Pet. 2:1-2, telling us, “Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind. Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation....” When sin is dealt with, then we can learn and grow.

We have seen repeatedly in previous studies that the first line of defense against sin is confession. As James said above in chapter 1, verse 21, sin is “prevalent”. This is because we are all sinners, believers included, and those who smugly assume that they aren’t simply do not have a clue about God’s standards. We all sin repeatedly, and confession of our sins is essential for every believer. When we have confessed, we will be receptive to Bible teaching, and we will be equipped to believe and apply the truths we acquire. Then, as we mature, we will be able to resist sin further and keep ourselves in shape to benefit fully from the teaching of God’s Word.

Faith and Learning...Learning and Faith. The key difference between a mature believer and one who is still an infant is the level of faith exhibited by each. Stronger faith increases receptivity to Scripture, and greater learning increases faith. Baby Christians need to get into this growth cycle. It is called “building up”, like bricks and mortar...the truths are the bricks that are stacked into place, and faith is the mortar that holds them there. Truths are “built up” on faith, which means that faith provides something for truths to stick to. By studying and believing God’s Word, the truths we learn become part of us and transform us into effective Christians. This, in turn, makes us all the more teachable as disciples of Christ. Faith is the bedrock for all learning.

So, what kind of faith are we talking about? Faith that endures all conditions. Paul demonstrated faith in an incident described in Acts 27:23-25. Paul recounts the following:

Last night an angel of the God whose I am and whom I serve stood beside me and said, “Do not be afraid, Paul. You must stand trial before Caesar; and God has graciously given you the lives of all who sail with you: So keep up your courage, men, for I have faith in God that it will happen just as he told me.

Paul believed that God would rescue him and his fellow passengers from harm in a shipwreck that he anticipated. He believed things would happen just as God told Him. That is exactly what we are being asked to do...to believe that things work exactly as God has described them for us in His Word. The point is that we can believe God’s Word!

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Paul cites the truth and efficacy of God's Word again in 1 Thess. 2:13, which says the following:

And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe.

These believers received the Word of God, believed it, and this made the Word go to work in them. God's Word performs work in us by the power of the Holy Spirit, when we spend time learning it...and when we believe it...because that which is believed can be applied, and application releases the power of God into our lives.

The Word is Central. What we're driving at is that the Word of God must be central in our walk as believers. No other criterion for a faithful walk exists. Paul told Timothy the following:

What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus. Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you—guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us.

What they *heard* was to be *kept* by faith, *guarded* with the help of the Holy Spirit. Paul reiterated this point in 2 Tim. 3:16-17, which says this:

All scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

This verse is loaded. It speaks of the holy nature of the Word, stating that it comes from God Himself. It is "useful" or PRACTICAL for the believer, giving him complete training instructions for his conduct and attitude. And it provides every piece of equipment he will ever need to access the grace of God and perform all the tasks designated in God's plan for his life. The Bible is our equipment room, giving us the tools we need to *allow God* to tend our growth. When we absorb the Word and believe it, we grow, and God oversees the process to make sure our maturity leads to fruitfulness.

One final example of Paul's making a case for growing by learning is seen in 1 Tim. 1:18b-19, which tells us this:

Timothy, my son, I give you this instruction in keeping with the prophecies once made about you, so that by following them you may fight the good fight, holding on to faith and a good conscience. Some have rejected these and so have shipwrecked their faith.

By following the instructions in Scripture, we will be fortified to fight because we hold on to faith (believing God, believing in the work of Christ on the cross, and believing God's Word). And we will continue to have a good conscience because all known sins will be

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confessed and we will be walking in fellowship with God. Notice this: Work (fighting) will get done when we know and trust God's Word, and when all sins are confessed.

If we fail to study and believe Scripture, and do not walk in faith, we will not be able to get close to God or experience the abundant grace He wants to give us. As a first priority, we must believe the truths from Scripture that we read or hear. Heb. 4:2b says, "...but the message they heard was of no value to them, because those who heard did not combine it with faith." This verse is citing the message of the Word as the specific message to be believed. This message can be for unbelievers, but an application is being made here for believers. In the remainder of Chapter 4 in Hebrews, the value of "believing" is presented to believers, where we are asked as Christians to believe the Word for daily living. When we hear the Word, we must *believe it* for it to be of *value* to us. Otherwise, it will be of no more value to us than the reading of the phone book. Faith comes by "hearing" the teachings of the Bible, and that which is heard infuses faith...IF what is heard is accepted as truth.

Being Transformed by the Renewing of Our Minds

Changing our Minds. You have heard it said that smart people change their minds. When conditions change or when we get new information, new perspectives result in new positions or decisions. This is reasonable...it's the way we work. It would be simple-minded to say that it is a mistake, or somehow a mark of instability, to change our minds, if circumstances or facts warrant such a change. And, of course, in the process of decision-making, we want as many facts as possible, so we can logically calculate the outcomes for all possible choices. Complete and accurate information yields the best decisions, and changes minds when necessary.

Bringing this construct into our Christian experience, we see that it is very important that the information we receive about God and the way we relate to Him is true and viable. The problem is that there are many unpalatable ingredients being dumped into the stew of our minds, along with truths that are being accumulated there. Human traditions and principles cloud the truths from God's Word. These ideas lead to distortions of the truth. For every scriptural verity, there exist ten false notions, waiting to obscure true doctrine.

At the outset of any assessment or evaluation of the credibility of information from any source, a basic premise must be established. The foundation must be laid. And for believers, the foundation is this: Our truth must be focused on the person, the finished work, and the ongoing acts of Jesus Christ. The following passage makes this very clear:

See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ. (Col. 2:8)

Christ is the center of truth, our Source for wisdom. Philosophy will deceive; secular society's ideas and practices will mislead. They sound good, they seem reasonable, and they look promising, but the world seen without the prism of God's Word will not bring reliable information or lasting results, and will ultimately lead to disappointment, or even destruction. Once we believe in Christ, any alternative we choose as our criterion for living that is *not* the Word of God will only leave us disillusioned and confused. On the other hand, when we immerse ourselves in the truths of God's Word, we will have correct information with which to compare and sift all theories and hypotheses that contradict truth, and a solid basis for building understanding and wisdom. The Bible gives us a source for content that will make us stronger and cause us to be more effective as servants of Christ. There's just no way around it. We need the truth...in copious amounts.

1 Pet. 1:13a instructs us on the need to have our minds filled with truth, saying, "Prepare your minds for action." The contents of our minds will indicate the level of our preparation. If our minds are full of ideas from the world, we will be placing ourselves at the world's

mercy, and if we follow the world, not only will we operate in the uncertain environment of the world's systems, we will also face the ongoing evaluation of God, Who will discipline us until we choose His Word as our source of truth. We don't need to just *add* truth to the world's notions; we need a complete mental transfusion, with truth completely replacing the world's viewpoints.

The Instrument of Change and Renewal. Rom. 12:2 brings this point home, saying this:

Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing, and perfect will.

When we are transformed by the renewing of our minds, we will abandon the pattern of the world, and will be equipped to do what is called for in verse 1 (still in Rom. 12), which is to “offer our bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God...” This complete offering or surrender is the result of great maturity, which comes from maximum understanding of God's Word. Surrender without transformation is nothing more than an emotional aberration, which will quickly fade. Conversely, surrender based on a change of mind through the intake of Scripture is a precious and powerful process in which we will be elevated spiritually and God will be glorified. The end of this verse (v. 1) frames the purpose for our transformation, saying, “...this is your spiritual act of worship.”

The Word of God has the power to change our minds. The thoughts we have that take place outside the truths of Scripture can be corrected by studying and believing the Word. This is the washing of the Word. Our minds are cleansed of false notions and incorrect concepts, which are replaced with an understanding of how great God is, how He can work in our lives, and what our lives can mean when we get closer to Him. Apart from this, we cannot please or honor God.

Col. 2:1-4 gives us the core of our transformation, reminding us that Christ is at the center of all our advancement and growth as we acquire His truth. Here is what this passage says:

I want you to know how much I am struggling for you and for those at Laodicea, and for all who have not met me personally. My purpose is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. I tell you this so that no one may deceive you by fine-sounding arguments.

In all our studies, we must return to Jesus Christ as the person at the apex of all the truths we learn. He is our passion, our companion, our savior. When we are focused on Him, we will be moving toward the renewal and revision of our minds. Then our thoughts will correspond with Scripture, and not with the world or our sinful natures.

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Phil. 4:8 describes in the following what our thoughts should be as a result of transformation:

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

These form the substance of a transformed mind: truth, nobility, righteousness, purity, love, and a consistent application of Scripture. The truth is not only learned...it is internalized, becoming a part of our ongoing thought lives and daily routines.

Growth and Renewal. Knowledge and understanding of the Bible gives faith an object. Our primary faith object is first, foremost, and always, Jesus Christ. But tied in with our faith in Him is our faith in what He says. We believe *in Him*, or believe that He exists and that the salvation and life that He offers is *real*, not just an inviting story or legend. Then we *believe what He says*, which is His Word, or the Scripture. Believing in Him is believing His Word. So the object of our faith is Jesus Christ, and that object is disclosed in His Word. By believing His Word, we express faith in Him. We live believing that what He says is true, and that He will do what He says.

The Word is a part of God's nature, so believing the Word is not disconnected from believing in the person and nature of God. As we pointed out in previous studies, our intake of Scripture is, in essence, a process of feeding on the character and nature of God Himself. 2 Pet. 1:3-4 declares the following:

His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

As we saw in *Maturity*, the phrase “participate in” is better translated “partake of”, which means to “eat or drink” something. In the passage just quoted, we are seen as eating and drinking the “divine nature” of God. 1 Cor. 12:13 suggests this also, saying, “For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.” The idea is that of actually taking in parts of the Spirit of God, seen as the Mind of Christ, which is done by assimilating Scripture.

The Bible transforms our minds, provides a concrete object for our faith, and enables us to take in God's thinking. And it also corrects our thoughts. Our minds drift and float, and sometimes follow the paths of least resistance. Our streams of consciousness often flow away from God. We saw already that Scripture gives us content for revision of our thinking. This prevents us from being swamped by the world and our flesh, where Satan is always

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enticing us. The Word is our defense against distractions and temptations. The Word reminds us to re-focus on God, and to re-attach our minds to Him. The Word gives us receptors for increased awareness of God, from which come God-consciousness, the adoption of the mind of Christ, and a walk in the light of fellowship, so we can see where we are going. Scripture keeps our thoughts on good things. The more we know God through His Word, the more our minds will be occupied with Him.

The Results of Faith and “Faith Rest”

Faith in the Word gets Results. Heb. 11:6 opens our discussion regarding the results of faith, saying, “And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.” Faith makes it possible to *please God*, and we get rewards for *earnestly* searching for him, which means studying the Bible and *believing* what we learn. We learn about God from the Bible, and—incidentally—*not* so much from experience. This is not to say that experience is not related to our learning, since we do grow through tests and trials, but we look for the “mind of Christ” only in the Word. Spiritually-significant information will come from the Bible, and not through observation of our internal or external environments.

Experience can fool us...we need truth. The content of God’s truth appears in His Word. Experience is what is *seen*; while faith deals with the *unseen*, which is more real and meaningful than the visible universe. If our faith is in the Word, we will live in it and learn by it, trusting it more than we do ourselves or what we see. A positive result of believing the Word, then, will be the ability for us to live our lives on the basis of solid truth.

When our lives are based on truth, faith will strengthen, and many good results can be expected. One of these is that faith will give increased access to the power of God, so we can glorify Jesus Christ. 2 Thess. 1:11-12 lays it out for us in the following:

And in this regard we pray for you always, that our God will make you worthy of his calling and fulfill by his power your every desire for goodness and every work of faith, that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God, the Lord Jesus Christ. (Endnote 8)

By God’s power, our desires to achieve good things for Him can be fulfilled; *real* “good works” are made possible through faith, which provides access to that power.

The results of faith are numerous, and more than we can do justice to in these brief studies. To provide a survey view of the results of faith we present several of them here, as follows:

- Love. 1 Tim. 1:5—“The goal of this command is love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.”
- Strength to overcome weakness and sin. Eph. 2:1 with 1:19—“As for you, you were dead in transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of the world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient”, BUT NOW WE HAVE “...his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength.”
- Protection. 1 Thess. 5:8b—“...putting on faith and love as a breastplate....”

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- Strength for resisting Satan. Eph. 6:13, 16—“Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground,” AND, “. . .take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.”
- Obedience. Rom. 1:5—“Through him and for his name’s sake, we received grace and apostleship to call people from among all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith.”
- Fulfilled promises. Heb. 6:12—“We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised.”
- Production. 1 Thess. 1:3—“We continually remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.”
- Blessing. Gal. 3:9—“Those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.”

Faith Rest. “Faith rest” is an English term used by Keathley (Endnote 9), Thieme (Endnote 10), and others, which conveys the idea of resting in a place of safety. This implies a sense of comfort and confidence that everything is taken care of, that no insurmountable danger lurks, and that continued protection and provision are expected.

1 Cor. 2:4-5 extols the power of God, saying, “My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power, so that your faith might not rest on men’s wisdom, but on God’s power.” The *resting place* for the faith that gives us rest is *God’s power*. When we trust God, we rest, because we believe in His power. If we do not trust Him, and depend on ourselves and the world for solutions and sustenance, we will not rest, but live in constant anxiety about what might happen to us. Ps. 62:5-8 expresses this very well in the following:

Find rest, O my soul, in God alone; my hope comes from him. He alone is my rock and my salvation; he is my fortress, I will not be shaken. God most High is my salvation and my honor; he is my mighty rock, my refuge. Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your hearts to him, for God is our refuge.

No statement could be clearer. Our souls can find rest in *God alone!* And when we rest we will not be shaken, because He is our rock and refuge. This means that we can trust Him completely and open our minds and lives to Him, because He will protect us and take care of us.

Faith rest beautifully illustrates the operation of God’s power and provision that come to us as a result of our walking by faith in Him. God delivers...we wait; God works...we rest.

Faith rest is the topic of Hebrews 3 and 4. In these chapters we see the need for and the call to faith rest. Heb. 3:1 sets up the discussion of faith rest by saying, “Therefore, holy

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brothers, who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus....” The writer was asking Jewish believers to keep their focus on Christ. When we aspire to faith in our daily walk, we must start by being occupied with the person and work of Jesus Christ...not just the work on the cross, but the powerful work He does every day through those who practice continuous faith in their lives. Faith focused on Jesus is the beginning point for access into God’s rest.

Heb. 3:7-8 says, “Today if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion, during the time of testing in the desert...” Even if the Word of God is coming to us, we must believe it for it to become part of our spiritual metabolism and strengthen us. If we refuse to listen or if we walk in darkness (out of fellowship), or if we simply close our spiritual eyes to the truth of the Word, we will not receive His rest.

In verse 10, we see two conditions that prevented the Israelites in the desert from entering into God’s rest: 1) Their hearts went astray, and 2) they have not known my ways. These two states of faith (or the lack of it), spin around each other in a way that make them both operate simultaneously and interdependently. Here’s what I mean. Hearts going astray indicate a loss of faith. A loss of faith prevents the acquisition of truth from the Word, even when it is heard. Then, by not acquiring truth, faith is further diminished, resulting in a downward spiral in which faith gets continually weaker, and the support of faith from Scripture is shut off.

A bad thing, the loss of faith, but there’s hope...always...as long as we are alive. We started our Christian lives with the gospel message. We heard it and believed it, which changed our eternal position and placed us into Christ. Now, as we receive teaching from His Word, it provides content for our belief, so our belief can get stronger. As we learn more, we can learn *yet more*, making our faith even stronger, and giving us greater receptivity to still greater truths (known as the “meat” of the Word). The message has been delivered, and it must be accessed and believed in order for the growth cycle to operate. We want to grow, because growth leads to the faith rest life

But the Jewish believers in the desert had a serious problem. It was so bad that God said, “They shall not enter my rest” (v.11). They practiced unbelief in the desert and were told they would not enter the Promised Land, which is equivalent to the faith rest life that we are told now to access. Verse 12 warns us not to make the same mistake they did. “See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God.” The Jewish believers being addressed in Hebrews are told to make sure they are believing God’s Word, and also that they are dealing with sin in their lives. Verse 19 summarizes the outcome of not believing, concluding, “So we see that they were not able to enter, because of their unbelief.” Faith gets us in; unbelief keeps us out.

The Rest of Faith is Available to You Today. Heb. 4:1 continues our discussion, telling us, “Therefore, since the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it.” God had made a promise to the Israelites

that they would occupy a land of their own, a place of plenty and pleasantness. This promise was disregarded by the Israelites, thus nullifying it for those to whom it was given. The promise remained, and the Jews finally entered the “Promised Land”, but this did not include the generation that had shown unbelief. The point is clear: When we do not believe God’s Word, which tells us what He provides, we will not enter His rest, and we will live restless and struggle-driven lives. We’ll see more specifically what this “rest” is shortly.

Verse 2 tells us that the truths of the Word, specifically God’s promises (which is virtually the entire Bible), must be combined with faith. The message of God was of no value to the Israelites, because they did not believe it. But we who have believed can enter that rest (v. 3). When we keep on believing the Word we will enter the rest.

According to verse 8, Joshua brought the Israelites into the Promised Land after forty years, and that gave substance to the promise God had made, but the “rest” they received was not the one God spoke of later, when He cited a future day at which time the promise of “rest” would be satisfied. This is the rest we are offered today. Verses 9-10 says, “There remains a Sabbath-rest of the people of God; for anyone who enters God’s rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his.” Verse 11 follows with this: “Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following their [Israelite’s] example of disobedience [unbelief].” We must not make the same mistake they did. We must enter God’s rest and cease our own human efforts, and we must continue to build up our faith, so that we will not fail as believers.

Entering God’s Rest. Verse 12-13 (Heb. 4) starts to open the door to the real meaning of Hebrews 3 and 4. These two verses tell us that the Word of God exposes our sin and convicts us of misdeeds, so that we can confess and return to fellowship with God. That leads us to v. 14, the second part of the verse, where we are told to keep on studying. This verse says, “...let us hold firmly to the faith we profess.” The faith we profess is the collection of truths in God’s Word. If we will stick with the Word, learning while maintaining fellowship, we will be prepared to enter God’s rest.

In a chapter called “God Within Us”, in *Maturity*, we looked closely at the concept of the Most Holy Place, and saw that the throne of grace, which appears in verse 16 of Hebrews 4, is the place where we approach God for mercy (forgiveness through confession) and where we seek grace (spiritual power and daily provisions). When we have confessed at the throne of grace, we receive forgiveness and are able to enter the Most Holy Place, which is the place to access strength, purpose, power, clarity, truth, love, courage, and all the other assets that God provides to equip us for His service. What does this have to do with “rest”?

Pay close attention: When we enter the Most Holy Place, *we are at the place of rest*. And what do we find there? What is this rest? It is the glorious and amazing *grace of God*. This is where we get everything required to accommodate us “in our time of need”. Verse 16, in its entirety, says this: “Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. We are seeking grace to

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help us in our time of need. And when is that? Think about it...it is ALL THE TIME! We always need God's help. There is never a time when we are without need. God is there to meet our needs, but we must approach the throne of grace, access the Most Holy Place, and enter God's rest, to receive His power and get His provision. This is why we MUST enter God's rest. Otherwise, we have no resources on which to build our faith and conduct our mission, and our lives will not count for God. We will be saved, but we will not live the lives of grace He has designed for us.

Matt. 11:28-30 gives a summary of faith rest, rendered by our Lord Himself, as we see here:

Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

The yoke of Christ is easy, because He has already finished the work; and the burden He asks us to carry is light, because it is He Who carries it. That leaves only the command to "learn from me". That is our job. That is our calling. When we learn from Him, we will carry enormous loads, but they will seem light because our work *for* Him is to rest *in* Him...or to *trust* Him.

Believing the Promises of God

Believing the Promises. The place of rest is the place of faith. We access God's rest by 1) confessing our sins, 2) studying God's Word daily, and 3) trusting God's promises, which is believing the Word as it is being taught to us. Failure of the Israelites to believe God's promise caused God to be angry with them in the desert, and was the condition that prevented them from entering God's rest (the Promised Land). Failure to accept and trust God's promises for our lives now will prevent us from entering His rest. By the way, we cannot separate believing God's Word from believing God, or trusting in the work of Christ, or submitting to the power and work of the Holy Spirit; they are all part of the same faith package. Our focus at this point is on believing the promises of God. Faith is an individual responsibility and choice. In the following, we want to provide a core sample of God's promises, specific truths that we are to believe.

Here are some of the promises we are called upon to believe:

- Matt. 10:30-31^a—And even the hairs on your head are all numbered, so don't be afraid.
- 1 Pet. 3:4—Through these he has given us great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.
- Eph. 4:13-14—until we reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming.
- 2 Thess. 3:3—But the Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen and protect you from the evil one.
- Rom. 8:28—And we know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose. (NET BIBLE)
- 1 Pet. 3:12^a—For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer.
- James 5:16^b—The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.
- 1 Jn. 1:9—If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.
- 1 Jn. 5:14-15—This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him.

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- Matt. 7:7—Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.
- Luke 17:6—He replied, “If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, ‘Be uprooted and planted in the sea,’ and it will obey you.”
- Luke 1:37—For nothing is impossible with God.
- Heb. 4:16—Let us approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.
- Rom. 8:26—In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express.
- James 4:8—Come near to God, and he will come near to you.
- James 4:10—Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.
- John 15:7—If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you.
- 1 Pet. 5:7—Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.
- Matt. 6:25a, 33—Therefore, I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.
- Phil. 4:12b-13—I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength.
- Phil. 4:6-7—Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.
- James 1:5—If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.
- 2 Cor. 4:7—But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.
- 2 Cor. 12:9a—But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.”
- 2 Tim. 1:7—For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.
- Heb. 13:6—So we say with confidence, “The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?”
- Phil. 4:19—And my God shall supply all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.

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- Is. 41:10—So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.
- 1 Sam. 17:47—All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the Lord saves; for the battle is the Lord's....
- Prov. 21:31—The horse is made ready for battle, but victory rests with the Lord.

These are the provisions of grace. When we believe these promises, and all the other promises given throughout God's Word, we will have the kind of faith that enables us to do what Eph. 3:12 describes, "In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence." Through faith we can enter God's rest and open the supply line for our mission.

Faith and Hope and a Final Encouragement

Faith for the Future. It is faith, but we call it “hope”. Hope is still “believing”, but it is faith *looking forward* to future events. Our hope, first of all, is in our salvation. We believe what God has assured us about our eternal life in Him, so we have hope. 1 Pet. 1:3-4 says the following:

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil, or fade—kept in heaven for you.

We have God’s word that we have an inheritance that is eternal, and we believe it. That is our hope...our faith.

The same hope that we have for our eternal lives, we can have for the empowerment of God for our temporal lives. Rom. 8:23-26a states this clearly in the following:

Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is not hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently. In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness.

Our hope for salvation began when we were saved, and continues as patience as we wait for our final salvation when Jesus comes for us. Until then, we have “help” from the Holy Spirit. This is the “grace to help in time of need” that we saw in Heb. 4.

Here are some additional truths about hope that will need to be assimilated:

- Our faith and hope (expectations) are in God, Who raised Christ from the dead. 1 Pet. 1:21—“Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God.”
- Endurance and the encouragement of Scripture give us hope (expectancy). Rom. 15:4—“For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.”
- Suffering produces perseverance, character, and hope. Rom. 5:3-4—“Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope.”
- Hope does not disappoint. Rom. 5:5—“And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy spirit, whom he has given us.”

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- Hope looks forward to future grace. 1 Pet. 1:13—“Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed.”
- When Christ appears, we know that we will see Him as He is, and we will become like Him. Because this is our outlook, we keep ourselves pure. 1 Jn. 3:2-3—“Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure.”
- We are called to *one hope*. Eph. 4:4-6—“There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to one hope when you were called—one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.”

We have faith to endure and grow, but it is hope that gives us joy, as we look forward not only to God’s provision in this life, but to our life with God. This is where we get relief from the trials of life...looking forward. As we get closer to God, joy increases because hope gets stronger; we anticipate the change from these bodies of death into perfect bodies that cannot decay or suffer. That’s a happy thought.

Encouragement in Our Faith. Our faith is under attack. Doubt is an opening for Satan, and a condition that invites the world in for a party. This might titillate the sinful nature, but it does not please God. So we keep our faith strong. As we saw earlier in this study, Rom. 4:19-20 says this of Abraham:

Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead—since he was about a hundred years old—and that Sarah’s womb was also dead. Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God.

We are constantly bombarded by information that seems believable, based on experience, but may be wrong spiritually. It is easy to believe our eyes and our “reason” more than we do the Word. But it does not matter what we see, or how bad (or even good) things seem, there is no circumstance in our lives that is not allowed or orchestrated by God, and we can be sure that He is in control. Whatever happens, our relief and help are found in God, and we access these by trusting Him.

Is. 41:10, listed above with the “promises”, says, “So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.” Will frightening things happen? Yes. Is this a problem for God? No. But it is a test for us, so we better have this promise loaded up and ready to be launched when threats appear in front of us. Corresponding with this promise is another one, seen above as well, in Prov. 21:31, which says, “The horse is made ready for battle, but victory rests with the Lord.” God gives the solutions for our problems; God gives the victory for our battles; God gives the energy for our service; God provides the will and plan for all of

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our lives. Fear does not fit in if we understand and believe that we belong to God, and that He will take care of us.

Jer. 29:11-14a confirms this, giving us the following:

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you.”

God’s plans for us are good ones. And He has woven all of the universe together in such a masterful way that, even though there is sin in the world, an attacker always out to get us, and a nature within us that wants to rebel against God, and even though bad things happen and go on all the time, God works everything together *for our good*...all the time.

Deut. 1:29-31 gives encouragement, as follows:

Then I said to you, “Do not be terrified; do not be afraid of them. The Lord your God, who is going before you, will fight for you, as he did for you in Egypt, before your very eyes, and in the desert. There you saw how the Lord carried you, as a father carries his son, all the way you went until you reached this place.”

Ps. 34:7 continues the promise, declaring, “The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him, and he delivers them.” We can doubt God’s Word and ignore His promises, or we can embrace them. Faith is a choice...our choice. If we do not believe God, we will not grow, and we will not understand why our “Christian” lives have stagnated or stalled. If we choose to believe God’s Word, as we did at our re-birth, and if we continue to grow, the power and grace of God will be opened up to us, and our hope will cause our strength to be renewed. Our faith will enable us to “soar on wings like eagles...run and not grow weary...walk and not be faint.” (Is. 40:31). Faith is evidence of things “not seen”, but with faith, we will *see* God work.

Endnotes

- 1) *NET Bible: Reader's Edition*, John 6:63a. Biblical Studies Press, LLC, www.bible.org, 1996
- 2) *The Interlinear Bible*, ed. and trans. by Jay P. Green, Sr., p. 834. Sovereign Grace Publishers, Lafayette, Indiana, 1985
- 3) *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, by Joseph Henry Thayer, Eph. 5:18. This reference was found online at www.tgm.org/bible.htm, under the web site listing, *Free Bible Tools—Strong's Concordance*.
- 4) *The Holy Bible, New King James Version*, 1 Cor. 3:3. Thomas Nelson, Inc. 1983.
- 5) *ABC's for Christian Growth: Laying the Foundation*, by J. Hampton Keathley, III, p. 140. Biblical Studies Press, 1996-2002. This book is available at www.bible.org.
- 6) *Interlinear Bible*, p. 897.
- 7) *NET Bible: Reader's Edition*, Acts 20:32.
- 8) *NET Bible: Reader's Edition*, 1 Thess. 1:11-12.
- 9) *ABC's for Christian Growth*, p. 129.
- 10) *Faith Rest*, by Robert B. Thieme, Jr. Published by R.B. Thieme, Jr., Bible Ministries, Houston, TX.

About the Author

William D. Gibbs, III, spent 25 years in public service as an educator and curriculum designer. He served as teacher, principal, superintendent, and curriculum developer in the public school systems of Texas. He has now taken his skills in the area of learning-program development and is channeling them into the service of the Lord Jesus Christ. Much of his career in education was spent developing programs for at-risk students. This book is designed for at-risk Christians (or new ones). The same way that he built systems for filling in gaps and establishing solid foundations for student learning, he has built on the foundation of the Word to provide understandable lessons that facilitate Christian living and accelerate the growth and effectiveness of believers.

Gibbs began an intensive study of the Word in 2010, and initiated a practice at that time of recording his findings in writing. He has written ten books since then...and has now condensed them into a survey course: *Bible Basics for Living: Essential Foundations*. This course and the books which form the foundation for it, are the culmination of his experiences in life, his professional career, and—more recently—his studies in the Word...incorporating what he has learned into a turn-key, easy-to-read, step-wise study book. He has been surprised to discover what the Bible REALLY says about living, and is sure that you will be surprised, as well, when you work through his studies.

It must be said that the central player and point in this “work” is not the author, but God. If—and only if—God is in this writing, it will be helpful and beneficial to believers who read it, and God will be glorified by its dissemination.
