

The Divine Quest



God's passionate pursuit of faith
in the heart of man.

When the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?"
Luke 18:8

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The Divine Quest

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Introduction

The Spirit has led me to put a number of things in writing to share with the saints for their edification and instruction, but I can think of no more important message than that which is contained in this book. The book “The Remnant Bride” presents a challenge to the saints to not be content with Outer Court Christianity, but to enter into the place of intimacy to which the Bride of Christ is called. The books “The Road from Babylon to Zion”, “Laying Down the Law” and “Sarah’s Children” contain insight and instruction to the saints to lead them out of the dead works of an apostate church and into the will of God. The books “Sabbath” and “God’s Plan of the Ages” contain foundational truths and hold great benefit for those who comprehend their message. Yet in this book is contained a message of foundational truth that goes even deeper than the books that have preceded it.

Some having read the cover to this book and discerned that it deals with the topic of faith might rightly object, that as profound and essential as faith is, there are deeper and more important issues. In Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians he declared that “there abides faith, hope and love, but the greatest of these is love.” What will be shown in the pages of this book is that faith is actually born out of love. Faith finds its foundation in the love of God, and it is those who struggle with trusting in the love of God who have the greatest difficulty in manifesting faith.

The extreme importance of faith is seen in the words, “Without faith it is impossible to please God.” Pleasing God should be the aim of every saint. If we understand that we have no possibility of pleasing God apart from faith, we can discern that it is among the most vital and essential needs of every saint. This book will explore questions such as:

- What is the foundation of faith?
- Why is faith so important to God?
- How might we be increased in our faith?
- Why does God allow, and even desire, for our faith to be tested?
- How is God glorified by our faith?

From Genesis to Revelation the Scriptures reveal that Yahweh has been looking for faith in the heart of man. The history of the 6,000 years of man’s existence has revealed that faith has been a rare and precious thing. Far more men have lacked faith than have possessed it. It has been a mere remnant of mankind that have found God’s approval as they have manifested faith in Him. With these few God has been well pleased. Their faith has brought glory to the God who created them.

The words of Christ reveal the divine quest that has been present within the Godhead since Adam was created.

“When the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?”

Luke 18:8

The Father, Son and Spirit are still on this divine quest today. Even in the Old Testament, this divine quest, this earnest searching by God for faith in the hearts of men, was expressed in the clearest of language:

II Chronicles 16:9

“For the eyes of Yahweh move to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His.”

In this hour the eyes of Yahweh continue to search the earth that He might find those who trust Him with their whole being. He is looking for those who will willingly cast everything over onto Him in confidence that He will not forsake them. Will He find what He is looking for in your own heart? When the Son of Man comes, will He find faith in you?

This book is offered as a challenge to those who name the name of Jesus Christ, Yahshua the Messiah. Its aim is to reveal why faith is so precious to God, and why it is absolutely essential if any are to please Him. May you be stirred up in your innermost being, and may Yahshua find faith in you at His soon return.

Faith and Love

Understanding the message of this chapter is essential to comprehending why faith is so very important to God, bringing great honor to Him, and why a failure of faith is so grievous, serving as a reproach to Yahweh. Most of my life I did not understand the things shared here, and I cannot ever remember a sermon or teaching on this matter. It is something that the Holy Spirit has brought understanding in as I have been led through multiple trials of faith.

The foundation of faith is having a genuine trust in God's love for us. The absence of faith is similarly based upon a distrust, or unbelief, in God's love for us.

Understanding the words above is critical in order to comprehend this matter of faith. Most sermons on faith that I have heard have centered upon God's power and ability to rescue and deliver. There are myriads of examples throughout Scripture to draw upon to exposit Yahweh's great power. Yet, I am convinced that most failures of faith are not due to unbelief in God's great power. Most failures of faith are the result of not trusting in God's love and kind intention toward man.

When one considers this, they can perceive that this makes a failure of faith an even greater reproach to God. When a man or woman believes God can deliver them from some trial, or preserve them through it, when they have little doubt about His power and ability to save, but they do doubt His willingness to save them, this brings a tremendous reproach upon God. Throughout this book we will look at many examples of this type of failure, and we will see how Yahweh was dishonored as men doubted His love for them.

Consider for instance the children of Israel who were delivered from the bondage of Egypt. They had witnessed the awesome power of God in the miraculous plagues and judgments that were brought against the gods of Egypt. They had seen the Nile turned to blood. They had seen frogs cover the land, as well as lice and locusts and other insects. They had witnessed the hail and lightning, and had seen Yahweh make a distinction between the Egyptians and the children of Israel, for the land of Goshen where the Israelites dwelt was right in the midst of Egypt, yet it was spared from the plagues.

They had seen the darkness that covered the land for three days, a darkness so thick that it could be felt, and no one in Egypt moved while under the darkness. They had witnessed the boils that tormented the Egyptians, breaking out everywhere upon

their flesh. The Egyptians were so in awe of Moses and his God that they began to esteem the Israelites whom they had despised, and when Moses instructed the Israelites to ask of the Egyptians articles of clothing and gold and silver, we are told that the Egyptians gave them all they asked for, and so the Israelites plundered the wealth of Egypt. Finally, the Israelites also were witness to the first Passover where the firstborn of all Egypt was slain, both of man and cattle, yet all those of Israel were protected who had placed the blood of a lamb upon their doorposts.

Surely this generation of Israel could not doubt the power of God. They had witnessed things that astonished both great and small. The power Yahweh exhibited was so great that the Egyptians begged the Israelites to leave them in great haste, fearing that they would all be dead if they tarried any longer. There is no possible way that the Israelites who followed Moses and Aaron could doubt the power of Yahweh. They had seen His power repeatedly with their own eyes.

The Israelites left Egypt and God brought them to the Red Sea by a circuitous course to make the Egyptians think that they were lost and wandering in the wilderness. The Egyptians then said, "What have we done in letting them go? We must bring them back." So Pharaoh and his armies pursued Israel and found them camped before the Red Sea, with mountains on either side. The Egyptians came in behind them leaving Israel no place to go. They were hemmed in.

See now what Israel did next. Did they remember the plagues and great power of God and expect Yahweh to perform another miracle on their behalf? Did they stand with confidence as they viewed the Egyptians, knowing that Yahweh was mightier than the gods of Egypt and well able to save and deliver them? Did they remember His words of kindness and His promises to bring them into their own land? No. Instead they brought reproach upon Yahweh by expressing great unbelief. Yet their unbelief was not in His power to save, but in His love for them.

Exodus 14:10-12

As Pharaoh drew near, the sons of Israel looked, and behold, the Egyptians were marching after them, and they became very frightened; so the sons of Israel cried out to Yahweh. Then they said to Moses, "Is it because there were no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? Why have you dealt with us in this way, bringing us out of Egypt? Is this not the word that we spoke to you in Egypt, saying, 'Leave us alone that we may serve the Egyptians'? For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness."

What an insult this was to Yahweh. When He had demonstrated His mighty power, and His willingness to bring them out of Egypt; when He had spoken through Moses and Aaron, telling the Israelites that He had seen their cruel captivity and He had

heard their cries and was going to bring them to their own land, a land flowing with milk and honey; after all this, they scorned His love and accused Him of having the falsest of motives. They accused Him of not truly loving them, but of bringing them out to the wilderness to kill them.

What is the greater insult to God, failing to believe in His power, or failing to believe in His love? It would have been better that they had doubted His power, for doubting His love was a reproach to His character. The God who had just brought them through the first Passover celebration, demonstrating His love for them by sparing their children while killing the firstborn of all of Egypt, would later give His own Son as an atoning sacrifice in their place. He would demonstrate a love that would confound both man and the angels by delivering up His Son in the place of sinful man. It was this love, a love purer and deeper than anything known throughout the creation, that was being called into question. Great was the insult to God, and deep was His displeasure over their unbelief.

If you are a child of God then you have surely been brought to trials of your own where faith was necessary in order to overcome and see God's deliverance. Perhaps you have known a financial crisis, or a health crisis, or a legal crisis, or some other test where you were placed in a perilous situation. Surely you heard the Spirit urging you to trust God, to place your hope and faith in Him to deliver you. When you heard this voice, did you truly doubt Yahweh's ability to deliver you? Did you think He did not have the power to provide the money you needed, or to bring healing, or to deliver you from the peril you faced?

I have been placed in many such situations, and I know that the struggle in my heart was not in doubting His power and ability to deliver me. Rather, my struggle was in trusting in His willingness to deliver me. In my youth I struggled with this time after time. I would say to God, "I know You can save me if You are willing, but how do I know You are willing?" My struggle for faith was not based upon my doubting His power, it was in doubting His love for me. What a diabolical thing is this struggle. What a reproach to a loving heavenly Father who did not spare His own Son, but freely gave Him up for us.

I did not understand when I was younger that my unbelief in His willingness to save me was actually a lack of confidence in His love toward me. It was years later when I was faced with some severe tests that the understanding came. His grace was great toward me, and He enabled me to cast myself upon Him, believing that He did love me and He would surely not fail me as I looked to Him. It was after these tests that I came to understand that my decision to trust Him brought great honor to Him, for it was a testimony of my belief that He is a loving Father.

Throughout this book we will look at numerous examples that bring forth the understanding that faith is born out of a confidence in the love of God toward us. We will also see that men and women struggle with faith when they lack this assurance of God's love.

It may seem incredible to us that the Israelites could have witnessed so many mighty acts of God and still failed in faith. We may be tempted to judge them as the most carnal of people after God had given them many assurances of His love and they still called it into question. Yet we need to judge with righteous judgment. We have been given a greater witness of God's love than they ever received. They only saw a lamb being sacrificed to spare them from the penalty of death. We have the witness of God giving the life of His beloved Son for us. When we look to the cross and see what an awesome and incomprehensible love was demonstrated there, we have not a shred of room to ever doubt Yahweh's love for us. But we struggle with unbelief, nonetheless.

We should weep and fall on our knees in repentance when we consider what a reproach we have often brought to God when we manifested unbelief in His willingness to see us through some situation. Yahweh has done all He could possibly do to demonstrate that His love for us is a faithful and true love, beyond our ability to comprehend. How His heart must ache when we come before Him with our doubts and anxieties and we ask Him, "Do you truly love me? Are you there? Have you forsaken me?" Look to the cross, child of God. His love is beyond questioning.

John 15:13

"Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends."

Romans 8:38-39

For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Messiah Yahshua our Lord.

Prayer:

Father, forgive us for doubting your love. Your love is our delight. Though we do not deserve it, we receive it with gladness of heart and rejoicing. It is Your love that gives us hope, and it is in the confidence of Your love that we are able to demonstrate faith as we walk through many trials. Father, may You have a people who demonstrate an unshakeable confidence in Your love, and may I be among those people. May You receive honor as I willingly cast my life into Your hands in full assurance of Your great love for me. My Abba, my Father, my heart trusts in You.

Faith's Great Foundation

I do not know of any saint that does not want to have a strong faith that will see them through all the trials of life. This chapter will show the way to possessing such a strong and overcoming faith. In order to build something that will stand through the storms of life, one must begin by laying a solid foundation. Yahshua spoke about a foolish man who built his house upon the sand, and when the storm came the house was destroyed. He contrasted this with a wise man who built his house upon a rock, and when the wind and the rain beat against it the house remained a sturdy and safe haven.

The Scriptures reveal what is the only sure and unshakeable foundation that the saints are to build their faith upon. It is an understanding of the love of God. The apostle Paul prayed that the church might be given insight in this matter:

Ephesians 3:14-19

For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through *faith*; and that you, ***being rooted and grounded in love***, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God.

Paul mentions the faith of the saints, and then he immediately prays that they might be “rooted and grounded in love.” The words ‘rooted’ and ‘grounded’ are both foundational words. A root is the lowest part of a plant. It is what anchors the plant to the ground and it is also a source of life as water is drawn up through the roots. To be grounded also is a foundational matter. When we say that someone is “well grounded” in some field of study, we are acknowledging that they have a firm grasp of the principles upon which this field of study is based. Paul also desired that the saints would have a firm grasp of God’s love toward them. He knew that when the saints had become “rooted and grounded” in the love of God, then they would have a faith that was both sound and immovable.

The love that Paul wanted the saints to be established in is not our love toward God, but His love toward us. Notice that he continues by praying for the saints to comprehend “what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge.” When we begin to comprehend the love of Christ, the very measure of it which is past knowing, then we will have a sure

foundation upon which our faith might rest. This is a foundation which cannot be shaken, for the love of Christ will never fail us, and nothing can ever come between us and this love.

Yahweh has given us many assurances of His love throughout the Bible. One promise that has been particularly precious to me is the following:

Romans 8:31-32

What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?

The apostle Peter echoes this in his own words:

II Peter 1:3

His divine power has granted to us everything necessary for life and godliness...

What a magnificent foundation to stand upon, and I have stood upon it in many circumstances, and I continue to stand upon it. Yahweh loved you and I so much that He did not even withhold His own Son, but delivered Him over to die in our place on Calvary. This was His dear and beloved Son about whom He testified that He was well pleased. This was the Son that lived only to do the will of His Father and to bring Him pleasure in all things. If Yahweh did not even withhold His perfect and beloved Son out of His great love for us, will He not certainly and freely give us ALL things necessary for both life and godliness? Assuredly, He will!

Oftentimes when I have been in some place of need I have remembered these words. When I look to the cross of Christ I am comforted with a great assurance that God loves me. I know that His love is unfailing and does not change. Since He gave His very best and dearest for me, I am brought to a confidence that He will give me what I need to sustain my life and that of my family. He will meet our needs.

The Father and the Son have both proven Their love in a way that I can clearly perceive and hold onto. My comprehension of God's love serves as a foundation to stand upon, and allows me to not be moved in the face of trials. Though the enemy comes against me with many attacks, seeking to cause me to doubt the watchfulness and concern of God for my life, I have only to look to the cross and be assured that there is no limit to His love. What strength is ours when we consider the love of the Father and the Son for us.

In the previous chapter I mentioned that most failures of faith are not based upon an unbelief in God's ability to deliver us, but they are the result of failing to trust in

His love. The saints freely confess that the worlds were created by the Word of God. By His Word the stars were hung in their place. His power is seen everywhere. If God could speak a word and create the Universe, can He not take care of your need, whether it is a financial need, a health need, a need for protection, a need for peace in your life, or any other need? Surely He is able. Meeting our greatest need does not tax His omnipotence in the least.

Isn't it true then, that our struggle for faith is in believing that He is **willing** to do that which we need? Many saints struggle with feelings of unworthiness, and they allow these thoughts to bring into question God's love for them. They have forgotten that Christ died for them while they were His enemies. His love for us is not based upon our worthiness, but upon His own character. God is love!

Satan also attacks the saints in their understanding of God's love. He seeks to present God as a merciless judge who is looking for the slightest misstep in the believer's life that He might punish them severely. Rather than seeing Yahweh as a loving Father, they are tempted to see Him as a cruel taskmaster. In this way Satan has also unsettled the faith of many.

In each of these things the love of God toward man is under attack and brought into question. Satan knows that the love of God is the foundation of faith, so he goes straight to the foundation. If the foundation can be eroded then faith will fall. As we will see in the next chapter, this is the very point upon which he attacked Eve in the Garden.

It is understandable then that Paul had a great yearning for the saints to be rooted and grounded in the love of God. He knew that this foundation was essential to living an overcoming life, and he also knew that Satan would attack this foundation at every opportunity. We are not unaware of Satan's devices, and to be forewarned is to be forearmed. Let us press in to know the immeasurable love of the Father and the Son.

Prayer:

Father, we praise you for demonstrating such an incomprehensible love toward us. We rest in the assurance that You loved us 2,000 years ago when You sent Your beloved Son to die in our place that we might be reconciled to You. We rest in the knowledge that You love us with this same love today, and that Your love will never end. Teach us the measure of Your love that we might stand in faith all the days of our lives, bringing You honor as we confidently trust in You. Protect us from the deceit of the evil one who would seek to malign Your love through his lies, and to call it into question. At such moments may we remember that You did not withhold Your

Son on our behalf, enabling us to quickly take such thoughts captive to the glory and honor of Your Son.

Faith's First Failure

The first occurrence of events, names and numbers in Scripture hold great significance, for they often establish a pattern or type for those things that follow. This is true when we look at the first sin which occurred in the Garden of Eden. The first sin was preceded by an attack of Satan upon Eve's confidence in the love of God. Satan could only entice Eve to disobey the command of Yahweh by first assaulting her confidence in His kind intention toward her and her husband. Let us read this account:

Genesis 3:1-6

Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which Yahweh God had made. And he said to the woman, "Indeed, has God said, "You shall not eat from any tree of the garden'?" The woman said to the serpent, "From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, "You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die." The serpent said to the woman, "You surely will not die! For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.

Satan tempted Eve to embrace the idea that Yahweh did not really have her best interests at heart. He suggested to her that the reason God forbade her to eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was that God wanted to withhold something that was good for her, and that God's motives were not pure in the matter. The serpent's words declared that God had lied to Adam and Eve in order to keep them from becoming like God. What was under attack was the woman's confidence in God's love for her, for if God loved her He would certainly always choose what was best for her.

The heart of God toward His children is expressed in the words recorded by Jeremiah:

Jeremiah 29:11

"For I know the plans I have for you", declares Yahweh, "plans for good and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope."

These words express the essence of Yahweh's love toward mankind. It is an unselfish love that seeks the welfare of another. The apostle Paul gave definition to this love

with the following words:

I Corinthians 13:4-5

Love is patient, love is kind... it does not seek its own...

In I John chapter 4 verses 8 and 16, we are told that “God is love”. We can then exchange the word ‘love’ with the word ‘God’ and understand the nature of God.

God is patient, God is kind... and does not seek His own...

God is unselfish in His love. If God were selfish, impatient and unkind, would He have ever sent His beloved Son to die in man’s place? Undoubtedly, He would not have done so. From the beginning of man’s creation, God has treated man with an unselfish love. He has looked after man’s best interests, and has even destined man to share in His glory and the glory of His firstborn Son. It was a great lie that Satan brought to Eve in the Garden as he told the woman that God was withholding some good thing from her. It is Satan’s nature to lie, and Yahshua bore witness to this.

John 8:44

“You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies.”

Satan’s transgression in the Garden is shown to be an exceedingly reprehensible thing when we consider that his first recorded words to mankind consisted of lies against God’s holy character. He called God a liar with the words, “You surely will not die!”, and he maligned the character of God’s love for mankind when he suggested that God was withholding that which was good from Eve because He did not want her to become as He was. We see that what was under attack in the Garden was mankind’s faith in the love of God. When Eve received the lie, she was then removed from a foundation of faith and her fall into sin was accomplished.

What Eve did was displeasing to God. It was the first act of mankind that displeased Yahweh, and the door was opened for a flood of similar acts to follow. The Scriptures tell us that “without faith it is impossible to please God.” The first sin was both a failure of faith in the love of God, and a failure to please Him. With her faith in God overturned, it became impossible for Eve to please God.

Is it any wonder then that God has been looking for faith in the hearts of men and women ever since the Garden of Eden? When we are removed from a foundation of faith, when we begin to doubt God’s holy character, His flawless love and His

righteousness, it becomes impossible to please Him. Any thought or action that arises from a heart devoid of faith in God will be regarded with displeasure.

I am sure that all saints have heard the phrase “Have faith in God” a multitude of times. It has become a cliché and often has little understanding attached to it. We need to examine what it means to have faith in God. Faith in God is trusting in who He has declared Himself to be. Faith in God is confidence in His character.

I think perhaps that most saints, when they have heard this phrase, have thought about God’s power. “Have faith in God” has been understood as “Have faith in God’s power to deliver you.” As we are seeing, a more accurate understanding would be, “Have faith in God’s character. Believe that He loves you and will work all things out for your good.” When we have this latter type of faith in God, when we trust in His character, we please Him immensely. We are declaring by our thoughts and actions that God is trustworthy.

Eve’s sin in the Garden was a declaration that she believed God to not be trustworthy. She believed that He had some selfish motive in withholding from her the fruit that was forbidden. She doubted that He had her best interests at heart. Such thoughts are an affront and a reproach to Yahweh. In spite of the great insult that Adam and Eve gave to God, He did not destroy them and start anew. Instead He gave them a promise of a Savior being born to mankind who would take away the curse of sin. His love is truly kind and unselfish.

This first sin, being a failure to trust in the character of God, set a pattern for many more sins to follow. The histories recorded in the Bible demonstrate this same example of unbelief and sin being played out time after time. We could fill hundreds of pages with examples.

Before Cain slew Abel, God spoke to Him, “Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted?” God was telling Cain to trust in the character of God. He is a rewarder of those who do right. Yet Cain failed to have faith in God and he gave himself over to evil, murdering his brother.

The history of the kings of Israel gives us many profound examples of men who failed to trust in God’s character. The first king was Saul. God made precious promises to Saul, telling him that if he did what was right that the kingdom would be established under him, and his sons would never cease to sit on the throne. As God does with ALL of His children, He tested Saul’s heart to see if Saul would have faith in Him and obey Him.

The story of King Saul’s failure to wait upon God is familiar to most saints. I have

heard it frequently taught on. I think most saints are much too hard on Saul. I know few who would not cave in to the same pressure. Saul's son Jonathan had just gone and raided a Philistine garrison and had achieved a stunning victory. This angered the Philistines. They called their whole army together. Their numbers were tremendous. "Now the Philistines assembled to fight with Israel, 30,000 chariots and 6,000 horsemen, and people like the sand which is on the seashore in abundance... (I Samuel 13:5).

How many people did Saul have. We are told that there were 2,000 men with Saul and 1,000 with Jonathan. King Saul was vastly outnumbered. The people with him saw this and it is said that those following him "trembled." They were scared to death. Things then began to deteriorate. Saul's army began to slip off and disappear.

I Samuel 13:6-7

When the men of Israel saw that their situation was critical and that their army was hard pressed, they hid in caves and thickets, among the rocks, and in pits and cisterns. Some Hebrews even crossed the Jordan to the land of Gad and Gilead. Saul remained at Gilgal, and all the troops with him were quaking with fear.

Now, it is bad enough to be outnumbered and to have the numbers get worse and worse (it got to the point that Saul only had 600 men left, 4 out of 5 of his soldiers deserted), but to have the ones who remained "quaking with fear" made it even worse. Who was there to encourage and embolden Saul? Who was there to tell him to stand fast and trust in the Lord? Few of God's saints today have ever been put in such dire straits.

Saul rightly knew that only God could deliver Israel in such a situation. It was customary to entreat Yahweh's favor before entering a battle. The king, however, was not to offer the burnt offering. It had been pre-arranged that the prophet Samuel would show up and make the offering and entreat Yahweh's favor. Saul waited seven days, the days agreed upon for Samuel to arrive. When Samuel didn't show up on time, Saul could endure the wait no longer.

It must be said that it was a tremendous test for Saul to wait even seven days. Each day he received reports of more Philistines gathering and more of his army fleeing. Saul was surrounded by terrified men. A seven day wait had to have been agonizing, but Saul waited these seven days. But, Saul had a point past which he could wait no longer. His endurance had limits to it.

I Samuel 13:11-12

Saul replied, "When I saw that the men were scattering, and that you did not come at the set time, and that the Philistines were assembling at Micmash, I thought, 'Now

the Philistines will come down against me at Gilgal, and I have not sought Yahweh's favor.' So I felt compelled to offer the burnt offering."

Saul seems to have done the prudent thing. Certainly, he felt justified in his own eyes. Things started out bad and they were falling apart. In very little time Saul anticipated having no men left at all. The Philistines could come against him at any moment. In offering up the burnt offering he was seeking Yahweh's favor. Yet God looks on the heart of man and He saw something different. Saul had been commanded to wait upon Samuel to make the sacrifice. Yahweh saw that Saul's confidence in His character was failing. He began to doubt that Yahweh would save Him, and deliver His people Israel. Unbelief took hold of Saul's heart, and from this position of unbelief Saul could not please God. Samuel told Saul,

I Samuel 13:13-14

"You acted foolishly," Samuel said. "You have not kept the command Yahweh your God gave you; if you had, he would have established your kingdom over Israel for all time. But now your kingdom will not endure; Yahweh has sought out a man after his own heart and appointed him leader of his people, because you have not kept Yahweh's command."

It is interesting to note that if Samuel had shown up at the appointed time that Saul would have appeared to be the most godly of men. He had faithfully waited seven days under the most trying conditions when all were deserting him. How many of us appear godly when God is on-time? How many of us look like heroes when God meets us according to our expectation? But what if God's answer is delayed; what will be revealed to be in our heart? Will we also feel "compelled" to do that which we know in our heart is wrong? Will unbelief take hold of our hearts? Will we begin to doubt the love of God toward us?

There are a few examples among the Kings of Israel and Judah of men who had confidence in the character of Yahweh, and these men pleased God tremendously. By looking at the character of the man that God chose to replace Saul, we can see the underlying foundations of this struggle for faith and what it takes to please God. David had a different heart than Saul, and God also tested his heart. David was anointed by Samuel to replace Saul as king, but first he spent many years being prepared and tested by God.

David was jealously pursued by King Saul, who sought to take his life because God's favor was evident upon David. For years David lived as a refugee, even having to flee from the land of Israel. Saul organized military expeditions to hunt down David and his men, and this made his life very perilous. He was only a step ahead of death on many occasions. This precarious existence stretched from months into years, with

no end in sight. The promise of God that he would be king seemed to be a distant fulfillment. The main obstacle between David and a fulfillment of the word of God was King Saul, for he was ruling as king and he was also seeking to put David to death.

On two occasions God delivered Saul into David's hands to see if David would fail in faith. If David did not have faith in God's character, if he doubted that Yahweh would fulfill the things promised to him, then he would reach out his hand to remove the obstacle from his path. He would kill King Saul and take the kingdom for himself. David knew in his heart that to do such a thing would be a great transgression against the will of God, but he was sorely pressed.

On one occasion David and his men went into a cave to hide from Saul and his army, and Saul came into the cave alone to relieve himself. David's men said, "Look, God has delivered your enemy into your hand. Strike him with the sword and your problems will be over." Great pressure was placed upon David to do this thing, for he and his men were living in peril of their lives. Yet David did not forsake his confidence in Yahweh's character. He knew Yahweh was faithful and would surely fulfill His word to David.

On another occasion when Saul was pursuing David, Yahweh brought a deep sleep upon Saul and his army so that David and Abishai were able to enter their camp and walk right up to Saul. Abishai counseled David to kill King Saul, but David answered in this way:

I Samuel 26:9-11

But David said to Abishai, "Do not destroy him, for who can stretch out his hand against Yahweh's anointed and be without guilt?" David also said, "As Yahweh lives, surely Yahweh will strike him, or his day will come that he dies, or he will go down into battle and perish. Yahweh forbid that I should stretch out my hand against Yahweh's anointed..."

With these words, David demonstrated that his faith in God had not failed. He entrusted himself into Yahweh's hands, believing Him to be faithful and true to His word. This faith pleased God tremendously, and God's own testimony was that He had found in David a man who would do all of His pleasure. Without faith it is impossible to please God, but with faith we are able to fulfill all Yahweh's pleasure and desire.

Is this not the difference between these two men, Saul and David; Saul failed to trust in the character of God, believing that God would abandon him, while David maintained his trust in the character of God? The Psalms of David are filled with

words of trust in God's character.

Psalms 4:3-5

But know that Yahweh has set apart the godly man for Himself; Yahweh hears when I call to Him... Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and trust in Yahweh.

Psalms 9:9-10

Yahweh also will be a stronghold for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble; And those who know Your name will put their trust in You, for You, O Yahweh, have not forsaken those who seek You.

Psalms 27:1-3

Yahweh is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?

Yahweh is the defense of my life; whom shall I dread?

When evildoers came upon me to devour my flesh, my adversaries and my enemies, they stumbled and fell.

Though a host encamp against me, my heart will not fear;

Though war arise against me, in spite of this I shall be confident.

One of the greatest themes of the Psalms of David is trust in God's holy character. To be established in faith means that we have confidence in God's character. The author of Hebrews summed it up with these words:

Hebrews 11:6

And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.

It is not enough to believe that God exists. It is not enough to be convinced of His mighty power. One must also believe that He rewards those who seek Him. This is confidence in His character. It is testifying that we believe that He is just, He is righteous, and He will do that which is right. Abraham, the father of faith, exclaimed his own confidence in the character of God with the words:

Genesis 18:25

Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?

Those who receive the testimony that they are pleasing to God are those who hold to their confidence in the holy character of God. Saul failed to maintain this confidence. Eve failed to maintain this confidence. The children of Israel at the Red Sea failed to maintain this confidence. All these received the testimony that they were not pleasing to God. Yet Yahweh has a remnant that will not waver in faith. These will look to God with confidence when the storms of life are raging and they are faced

with great peril. Their testimony will be:

II Timothy 1:12

For I know Him whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that He is able to guard that which I have committed unto Him against that day.

Prayer:

Father, we confess that Your holy character is such that all men should rest easy as they entrust themselves to You. You are a just God, and those who place their lives in Your hands need never fear. You are a loving God, and those who place their lives in Your hands need never fear. You are a merciful God, and those who place their lives in Your hands need never fear.

Forgive us Father for allowing fear to have a place in our lives. We know from Your word that perfect love casts out all fear, so we ask You to perfect us in the confidence of Your love. May our lives be examples of the peace that surpasses all understanding as our hearts and minds are focused and set upon You. As we survey Your awesome faithfulness, Your immeasurable love, and Your certain justice, may we be brought to peace, and may anxiety, unbelief and fear find no resting place within us.

Sight, the Enemy of Faith

The apostle Paul was, apart from Christ, possibly the greatest New Testament example of a man of faith that we have been given. His faith in the character of God allowed him to walk in many dangerous places, and to suffer many things for the name of Christ, and yet remain confident in God's love for him. Through shipwrecks, beatings, stoning, nakedness, peril, hunger, the treachery of false brethren, the jealousy and hatred of the Jews, and many other such things, Paul remained confident in the love of Christ and declared with assurance that nothing could separate him from it.

It has been the tendency of the church to picture a man of faith as someone who performs many miracles, and believes God for awesome things. Such things are not to be discounted, but the greater man of faith is the one who remains steadfast in his confidence in God's just, holy and loving character when he is subjected to one heartache and suffering after another.

In this regard, Paul was not unlike Job who suffered so much. In his suffering Job refused to curse God, maintaining his trust in Him. Even when Job suffered the loss of all things, his children, his great possessions, and even his health, and though he did not understand the reason that God had brought such devastation upon him, Job did not fulfill Satan's expectation by failing to trust in God. His words and example are an amazement when one considers the depth of his grief. Upon hearing the news of all the calamity that befell him in a moment of time, we read:

Job 1:20-22

Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head, and he fell to the ground and worshiped. He said,

**"Naked I came from my mother's womb,
And naked I shall return there.
Yahweh gave and Yahweh has taken away.
Blessed be the name of Yahweh."**

Through all this Job did not sin nor did he blame God.

Job's wife was overcome by her own grief, and she asked her husband why he yet maintained his integrity, his confidence and trust in God. She urged her husband to curse God and then die. Job's response is recorded:

Job 2:10

But he said to her, "You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God and not accept adversity?" In all this Job did not sin with his lips.

The man or woman of faith is one who maintains their confidence in the character of God, and His love for them, when all around them seems to be testifying very different things. Such men and women are not walking by sight, but by faith. Paul practiced this in the same way as Job, and he wrote these words for us:

II Corinthians 5:7

For we walk by faith, not by sight.

Our faith in the character of God stands apart from what our senses report to us. Faith comes to us by the Spirit of God, as Paul also wrote:

Romans 12:3

For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, **as God has allotted to each a measure of faith.**

I Corinthians 12:7-9

But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit; **to another faith by the same Spirit...**

Faith is a gift of God, as Paul further confirmed to the Ephesian believers.

Ephesians 2:8-9

For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that (referring to faith) not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.

The understanding that man's faith is a gift from God is manifested throughout Scripture. When Yahshua asked His disciples who they thought He was, Peter confessed that He was the Christ, the Son of God. Yahshua told Peter that this understanding of his did not come through his natural senses, but from God.

Matthew 16:17

And Yahshua said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, **because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.**"

How does the Father cause this faith to appear in His children? He does a divine

work in their hearts. When Luke penned the book of Acts he gave some insight into this.

Acts 16:14

A woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics, a worshiper of God, was listening; and the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul.

Even as God opened Peter's heart to discern who Yahshua was, in similar fashion we read that He opened Lydia's heart to respond to the gospel that Paul preached. This faith is a free gift, and it comes through an act of the Spirit. We don't really know how the Spirit imparts faith to men and women, but we can clearly see the effects of it, for where we formerly were in darkness and unbelief, our souls are suddenly filled with light and faith. Yahshua described the work of the Spirit to Nicodemus in the following manner:

John 3:8

"The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit."

We cannot see the wind, but we can see the effect of the wind as it blows through the trees and across the grass, and as it passes by us. We see the wind's effect, but we cannot tell where it originated or where it will end up. In the same way the Spirit comes and produces faith in our hearts, and it is hard to discern how He came, or how He accomplished His work in us, but we can see the effect upon us as we are given spiritual sight that we formerly lacked. This spiritual sight is often at odds with our physical sight. What God reveals to our spirit is often unseen to our natural senses. This is why Paul wrote:

Hebrews 11:1

**Now faith is the assurance (the confirmation, the title deed) of the things [we] hope for, being the proof of things [we] do not see and the conviction of their reality [faith perceiving as real fact what is not revealed to the senses].
(Amplified Bible)**

The man or woman who walks in faith must often turn away from the things that their natural senses report, or they will be led into unbelief. In the examples already given in this book, we see with great consistency that those who failed in faith were focused upon the witness of their natural senses. This focus on natural sight led to unbelief, and the unbelief gave birth to sinful actions. We see this in each case. Look at the key words in the following passages.

Genesis 3:6

When the woman **saw** that the tree was good for food, and that it was **a delight to the eyes**, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.

Eve believed the report of her senses, rather than trusting in the word of God, and this opened the door to sin. We see the same pattern in King Saul.

I Samuel 13:11-12

But Samuel said, "What have you done?" And Saul said, "**Because I saw** that the people were scattering from me, and that you did not come within the appointed days, and that the Philistines were assembling at Michmash, therefore I said, "Now the Philistines will come down against me at Gilgal, and I have not asked the favor of Yahweh.' So I forced myself and offered the burnt offering."

Saul "saw" several things with his eyes. He saw his people scattering. He saw the Philistines gathering. And he saw that Samuel was delayed. What Saul witnessed by natural sight failed to confirm God's instruction to him. The man or woman of faith cannot walk by natural sight. They must lean completely upon the word of God that they receive by the Spirit of God.

We are told in another place that "faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word (rhema) of God" (Romans 10:17). As saints, we only truly know something when we have received it from God's Spirit. Our natural senses and carnal mind are incapable of leading us to truth. We dare not rely upon natural faculties, but must learn to discern the voice of the Spirit.

The Scriptures state that we are being conformed to the image of Christ, and knowing this we can gain understanding by studying an Old Testament prophecy of Christ.

Isaiah 11:2-4

The Spirit of Yahweh will rest on Him,
 The spirit of wisdom and understanding,
 The spirit of counsel and strength,
 The spirit of knowledge and the fear of Yahweh.
 And He will delight in the fear of Yahweh,
 And **He will not judge by what His eyes see,**
Nor make a decision by what His ears hear;
 But with righteousness He will judge the poor,
 And decide with fairness for the afflicted of the earth...

In our lives as Christians we are continually brought to make judgments. Should we marry this person? Should we take employment with a particular company? What fellowship of believers should we participate with? Should we buy a certain item? Where should we live? How should we respond to a crisis in our life? Such decisions, and a host of others, are a part of our everyday lives. How are we to decide?

The way that the world makes decisions is to examine the things that their eyes see and their ears hear and choose a course based upon the physical evidence before them. The decision making process remains totally in the realm of natural observation and rational thought. As Christians, however, we are called to walk differently.

Consider this prophecy of Christ. He never made a judgment or decision based upon what His eyes saw or His ears heard. How then did He decide? We are told plainly in the gospels. He received instruction from His Father in heaven and did only what His Father directed Him to do. Yahshua walked in spiritual life. He was always beholding the Father, and He lived to do the will of the Father. He was so perfect in this that He did not even speak a word of His own initiative, but only spoke the things that the Father gave Him to speak.

John 8:28

So Yahshua said, "When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught Me."

John 12:49-50

"For I did not speak on My own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me a commandment as to what to say and what to speak. I know that His commandment is eternal life; therefore the things I speak, I speak just as the Father has told Me."

Yahshua did not get up in the morning and think to Himself, "What do I want to teach the people today? What do these people need to hear?" He began His ministry only after the Spirit descended upon Him at the Jordan, and He was led of the Spirit in all things. The Spirit taught Him what to speak and led Him in every encounter. Yahshua practiced every day that which He gave as an instruction to the saints:

Mark 13:11

"When they arrest you and hand you over, do not worry beforehand about what you are to say, but say whatever is given you in that hour; for it is not you who speak, but it is the Holy Spirit."

If the Spirit is capable of giving us the very words we need to speak in the moment that such words are necessary, then how will He not also give us guidance in every decision and in every judgment? Yahshua is instructing the saints to not try to decide for themselves what they will say. They are not to apply their human reasoning to such matters and judge what would be appropriate. He is instead telling them to yield themselves to the Spirit in that moment. We are to practice such yielded lives moment by moment.

Our senses and our rational mind will not lead us to the will of God for us. They stand as an obstacle to a true walk of faith in most instances. Some years back I attended a church where a pastor had been called to shepherd the body and lead them into the things of God. The Lord allowed me to have a close relationship with this man, and, after he had been at this church for about a year, he asked me to accompany him on an overnight stay to some type of teaching event. We shared a room together and were able to share things that were on our hearts.

This man had a wife and three children and they were all living in small rented quarters. He shared with me that he had a desire to purchase a house in a town closer to the church, but that he had been holding off because he was unsure of his future and the future of the church. His decision to remain in his small rented quarters was arrived at by examining things with his senses and making a rational decision.

The Spirit strongly convicted me that the decision of this pastor was a carnal decision, and that if he did not have faith for God to do a work through this body of believers, that as a shepherd of the people he would be unable to lead them into the plans God had for them. The Spirit showed me that the issue of the house that this man desired was something God had brought him to in order to reveal the unbelief in his heart. If he could not trust God to work through this people, and this lack of trust was keeping him from purchasing the home he desired, then his unbelief would have a disastrous effect upon the body. The Spirit led me to share with this man concerning these things, and he felt the conviction of the Spirit.

Not long afterwards this pastor came to me and shared that the Spirit had convicted him in this matter, and that he had decided, as an act of faith in God's desire and willingness to work through this people, to buy a house in the community. He was excited about this decision because it was a desire of his heart to have a home, and he knew the witness of the Spirit in it.

The Spirit led him to a beautiful house in a nice neighborhood. The house was a dream home to him, far beyond what he had expected to find, and I was myself amazed at the house and the yard, for it was all very beautiful. As he spoke to the

realtor, the owners, and the bank, he found that he had just enough money to close on the house and take possession of it. However, God had a test for him before he was able to do so.

On the day before he was to meet with the bank and close on the house the realtor called him and told him that a mistake had been made on the paperwork, and he would have to come up with several thousand more dollars than he had been told. He did not have the money, having already pledged all that he had available. He was brought to a crisis of faith. Would he be daunted by the obstacle that his senses were reporting to him, or would he believe the witness of the Spirit, that God had called him to purchase a house and had provided this one for him?

This man was not accustomed to walking by faith, and his confidence in God's love and character were weak. He shared with me that he drove out to the church parking lot, which was out in the countryside, and he parked there and got out of his car and began to rail against God. He accused God of deceiving him, of bringing him to a place of having his hopes built up only to dash them at the end. He shouted out many words of unbelief and shook his fist at the heavens. He shared that he was tempted to get in his car and drive away and leave behind the church, his calling as a pastor, and his confession of God.

The next day this man went to the closing at the appointed time, expecting to be given the news that he could not take possession of the house. However, God worked it out where the owners and realtor absorbed part of the extra cost, and this pastor was able to sign the papers on the house and move in. God had already determined how He would work things out and fulfill His words to this pastor, yet this man failed to trust God.

When I heard the account of what had happened I was reminded of the Israelites at the Red Sea, and how they had brought a reproach to God's love and compassion toward them by asking, "Did you bring us out here to kill us because there were not enough graves in Egypt." Great was God's displeasure over this pastor's lack of faith in His character. The Spirit spoke to me and told me that He had rejected this man as the one to lead His people into the plans He had for them, and it was not long afterwards that God removed him.

Without faith it is impossible to please God. Those who come to God must believe that He exists, and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him. What an important matter is faith.

Prayer:

Father, we confess that our natural senses and reasoning are an unstable foundation upon which to make decisions. Teach us to subject these things to Your Spirit that we might walk according to Your judgment. May we be guided by spiritual sight, and led by the voice of Your Spirit. When we hear a voice behind us saying, "This is the way. Walk in it." may we respond with trusting hearts and quick obedience that You might be honored.

Faith Comes by Hearing

Perhaps the single greatest source of comfort that I have had as God's Spirit has directed our family to an ever expanding walk of faith, has been found in dwelling upon the things God has spoken to us. The Spirit has directed us down paths that bring fear to the natural man, and this fear has to be dealt with and overcome. By meditating upon the words Yahweh has spoken to me I have time after time been brought to a place of peace, and I have felt the nagging fear and anxiety that was coming against me dissipate. Sometimes it has dissipated just enough to allow me the courage to continue on the path of obedience, with fear and trembling. At other times as I have meditated upon the things God has spoken to me, all fear and anxiety has fled away, giving way to a peace that surpasses understanding.

I am confident that complete peace is the portion and inheritance of the overcomer in Christ. Yet it is a place to be attained by warfare and perseverance. It is something that we must grow in, and as we arise to meet the challenges before us, entrusting ourselves into the hands of a loving God who cares for us, we will find ourselves gaining a greater confidence and a more sure peace.

Spiritual hearing is a key factor in the process of our growth in faith. On the one hand, we must hear the voice of the Spirit speak to us to lead us into the walk of faith that He has chosen for us. We are not to be presumptuous and choose a path of faith for ourselves, foolishly putting God to the test. God is not obligated to come through for us in our need if He has not led us to the test of faith before us. We must know that God's Spirit has directed us to the particular course of obedience we are pursuing. If we have no assurance of having heard God's voice in some matter of obedience, then we have nothing to stand upon.

The Spirit first revealed this to me many years ago as I contemplated the life of Abraham. Abraham is called "the father of faith", and his life is recorded for our instruction. Abraham was only able to walk in faith as he heard from God. Consider a few events of his life.

God called Abraham to leave his father's household and to journey to a land he did not know. He was called out of Ur of the Chaldees, and out of Haran, to go forth into the land Yahweh promised to him and his descendants. Abraham heard the voice of God calling him to journey forth, and this voice of instruction provided the impetus necessary to respond with faith and obedience. The Scriptures are clear that Yahweh called Abraham, and gave him instruction in this matter.

Genesis 12:1-4

Now Yahweh said to Abram, "Go forth from your country, and from your relatives and from your father's house, to the land which I will show you; and I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great; and so you shall be a blessing; and I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed." So Abram went forth as Yahweh had spoken to him.

Hearing from God is a necessary part of a life of faith. Without hearing there can be no true faith. Many are teaching a type of faith today that lacks this vital necessity of hearing God give us direction. Many are teaching a false faith that originates in man's own mind and imagination. They encourage the saints to envision the things they want and then stand in confidence, claiming that they have these things. Elwin Roach wrote regarding this type of teaching:

Some have called this type of faith the "Prosperity Message", although in less favorable circles it has been called "Name it and Claim it", "Bless it and Confess it", "Blab it and Grab it", or "What the Heck, Write the Check"...

It is one thing to have the Faith of God as a result of an impregnation of His anointed word, which will move mountains, but it is entirely another matter when a man carves an image in his positive-thinking mind and calls it *faith*, and then holds God ransom with the written word which his carnal mind has little or no understanding of. This, dear reader, is not faith, not even in the farthest stretch of the imagination. It is presumption, and God is not obligated to pay up!

Many of the saints today have built upon the shifting sands of a false faith doctrine. Its teachings rest upon a belief in a principle of faith. It is taught that if one can work up enough confidence to believe something when they ask for it in prayer, then they will be assured of having their request. The key to this type of faith is the ability of man to believe something. The saints are told that if they can conceive something, and believe in its fulfillment, then they can have it.

This is not the type of faith that Abraham demonstrated. Abraham did not think to himself one day, "I sure am tired of this city of Ur. I would like to live somewhere far away from here, so I think I will take my wife and hit the road, and I will trust God to protect me and bless me in my journey." No! Abraham did not initiate this journey. We read where Yahweh spoke to him and gave him a command. So Abraham's faith began with hearing. The literal translation of Romans 10:17 is, "So faith is **out of** hearing." That is, faith has its origin in hearing a word from God, and it is from this word that faith appears. All acts of faith must have their origin in a

word from God. Some who have tried to walk in faith without such a word have stumbled badly, and many have made a shipwreck of their lives.

Abraham heard God speak to him to leave his father's household, and he responded with obedience, trusting the One who commanded him to go forth. This trusting obedience pleased God. The crowning act of Abraham's faith was when he took his son Isaac and laid him on an altar to sacrifice him to Yahweh. This was much later in Abraham's life, and it too was precipitated by a word from God.

Genesis 22:1-2

Now it came about after these things, that God tested Abraham, and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." He said, "Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I will tell you."

Abraham KNEW that he had heard the voice of God. He did not have to wonder, "Does God want me to do this thing? Am I sure this is His will?" If Abraham had not heard from God clearly, then he would have nothing for his faith to arise out of. Because Abraham knew he had heard from God, he was able to respond with trusting obedience. We can only exercise this same faith that Abraham walked in if we have heard the voice of God leading us to some act of faith. If there is no hearing, there is no faith.

In between Abraham's call to leave his father's house, and his testing in the matter of his son, the Spirit has recorded for us some other events in Abraham's life that equally serve as instruction for the saints. Two events are particularly related to us. Both involved Abraham leaving the land God had promised to him and dwelling for a time in a foreign land, due to a severe drought being in the land. In both instances Abraham walked in unbelief and suffered disgrace and shame. He was buffeted by fear in both places, and gave into fear by asking his wife to lie about her relationship to him.

Genesis 12:10-13

Now there was a famine in the land; so Abram went down to Egypt to sojourn there, for the famine was severe in the land. It came about when he came near to Egypt, that he said to Sarai his wife, "See now, I know that you are a beautiful woman; and when the Egyptians see you, they will say, 'This is his wife'; and they will kill me, but they will let you live. Please say that you are my sister so that it may go well with me because of you, and that I may live on account of you."

Abraham, the father of faith, did not manifest faith in this deed. Instead, he manifested fear and unbelief. The result was that his wife was taken from him and

actually given to Pharaoh to be Pharaoh's wife. What a terrible thing this was. Abraham allowed his wife to be given to another man to have relations with her. He allowed this in order to save his own skin. In His mercy, Yahweh kept Pharaoh from touching Sarah, though when Abraham's deceit was made known to Pharaoh, shame and reproach were brought upon Abraham and his wife.

Genesis 12:18-20

Then Pharaoh called Abram and said, "What is this you have done to me? Why did you not tell me that she was your wife? Why did you say, 'She is my sister,' so that I took her for my wife? Now then, here is your wife, take her and go." Pharaoh commanded his men concerning him; and they escorted him away, with his wife and all that belonged to him.

Abraham was escorted out of Egypt in shame. His purpose for going to Egypt was to escape the famine in his own land, but he found that he was not able to escape it. What is glaringly absent in this account is any mention of Abraham hearing from God. We are not told that Abraham was instructed by God to go to Egypt. If Abraham had heard Yahweh tell him to go to Egypt, and if Yahweh had told him that He would protect him and keep him while in that land, then Abraham would have had something for faith to arise out of. Yet no such word was given. Abraham went to Egypt of his own initiative, and because he had no command from God, he lacked confidence in the situation.

Later Abraham repeated this same error when he went to Gerar with all of his possessions. Again, we have no word that God had sent him there. He once more lied about Sarah being his wife, and once more he suffered reproach. Without a word from God there is nothing for faith to arise from, and we will suffer terribly as the flesh and Satan fills our hearts and minds with visions of fear and calamity. To stave off this assault of fear, we must have a word from God to stand on. Before choosing a course to follow, we should press in to hear from God. We must refuse to move without receiving instruction from God, knowing that His word is our strength and security. What He has said, He will surely accomplish. He has not promised to accomplish the things we have imagined, or the plans we have chosen for ourselves.

The Father has done some tremendous things in our family. He has performed miraculous things for which only He can get the credit. Our son was born with a hereditary bone disease called Osteogenesis Imperfecta, and by the time he was seven years old he had already broken thirteen bones and had two surgeries to correct fractures. We had some years earlier applied for government SSI benefits on him and we had been accepted. This provided us with free medical benefits on him and a monthly stipend of between \$300-\$400 a month. However, these things gave me no satisfaction, for I desired for my son to be healed.

I began to pray in earnest, asking God to heal my son. I was distressed over his condition, and he was spending so much time in casts that his muscles and bones were not able to grow stronger and this exacerbated the situation, making him more prone to have more fractures. As I was praying one day about this, the Lord spoke to me and told me that He would heal my son, but that He required that I cancel the SSI benefits on him. The Lord demanded that I exercise faith before I would see His provision.

To natural sight and reason, this was a foolish thing to do. My son was freshly out of a cast and had already broken two bones that year. Medical treatment was very expensive and many people fought long and hard battles, even hiring lawyers, to attain the benefits we were receiving. I considered, however, that it would be much better for my son to be healed and to have no more fractures, than to have the government pick up the tab each time he broke a bone. I wanted my son to be able to run and play and do all the things that other boys did.

I shared with my wife what the Lord had spoken to me, and we decided to follow the Lord in obedience, to cancel the benefits we were receiving on our son, and to trust the Lord to heal him. When we called the government agency to ask them to cancel our benefits, they did not understand why we would make such a request. They tried to get us to reconsider, but we told them that we no longer wanted the benefits they offered.

The Lord told me to not baby my son, but to allow him to ride bikes, skateboard, play on trampolines, roughhouse with other kids, and do all the things other boys were doing, and that He would protect him. That was over six years ago, as my son is now thirteen years of age, and God has preserved him and he has not suffered another fracture.

My faith arose out of hearing the voice of God. I did not just decide for myself that I would cancel all medical benefits on my son and believe that God would heal him. I pressed into God in prayer, and when I heard from Him faith resulted. This is ever the pattern for faith. “Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”

A year after God led me to trust Him for the health of my son, He spoke to me again and told me that He now wanted me to trust Him for the health of our entire family. I was working as a computer professional at a local hospital and they had excellent medical benefits at a reasonable cost. I was serving as a minister at a local church at the same time, and the Father was calling me to steps of faith as an example to the body. I knew I had heard from God again, and I shared what I had heard with my wife. This caused her much fear, and she opposed this decision initially, but later she came to agreement with me in the matter.

When I went to the office at work to cancel my health insurance, I was informed that changes to benefits could only be made during a two week period that occurred in December. This was some months away, so I determined then that when the date arrived I would cancel health insurance on my entire family and trust God to keep us in health.

Several weeks before the date that I could drop my insurance I began to manifest symptoms of diabetes. I began experiencing dry cottony mouth and constant thirst. I had extremely frequent urination, even having to get up 5 or 6 times a night to use the bathroom and get another drink of water. I experienced blurred vision and occasional dizziness. One day while at work I became dizzy and, being right there in the emergency room, I asked them to run some tests on me and they checked my blood sugar and it was about 370 when it should be no higher than 120. The attending doctor told me I was diabetic and that I needed to go see my family physician and get started on a diabetic regimen for treatment.

I knew what God had spoken to me about trusting Him for our health and His instructions to cancel my health insurance. The timing of this physical attack, just weeks before I could cancel this insurance seemed more than coincidental. I knew it was a test. The pressure was poured on even more. Some nurses I knew at the hospital had heard about my case and they dealt with diabetic education and treatment. They began telling me regularly that I needed to see a doctor quickly. They gave me brochures about diabetes and they told me horror stories of amputated limbs, blindness, organ failure, and other effects of leaving diabetes untreated. They told me that they had patients in the hospital at that moment whose blood sugar was no worse than mine and these patients were on intravenous insulin drips.

I struggled greatly during the next weeks and my symptoms persisted. I became nervous and distracted by all that was coming against me and I even was so distracted that I pulled right out in front of an oncoming van while driving and only avoided a collision because my wife screamed and I slammed on the brakes. I had great pressure from family to not cancel insurance, but again my choices seemed pretty plain.

As I considered it, I could go to a doctor and begin treatment for diabetes, a treatment I would be on for the rest of my life, or I could cast myself wholly over onto the Lord and trust Him to bring complete healing. The prospects of being healed when compared to lifelong diabetic management, knowing that there was no medical cure for diabetes and the condition usually worsened with age, caused me to prefer entrusting myself to God with anticipation of complete healing.

Another contributing factor that weighed in my choice to trust God was that I

considered what life would be like if God could not be trusted. I considered what the years ahead would be like if I devoted my life to serving a God who would not, or could not, meet my needs. The prospect was horrendous. I decided that I would rather go ahead and die of diabetes than to spend the rest of my life with the thought that God would not be there for me in my hour of greatest need. Life to me was not worth living if God could not be trusted. The only fulfillment and satisfaction I could envision in life was in entrusting myself to a heavenly Father who genuinely cared for me and who would not abandon me when I placed my life in His hands. How unbearable it seemed to me to serve a God I could not trust.

With some trepidation, I went to the office at work during the allotted time and I asked them to cancel health insurance for myself and my family. I never took the advice of the emergency room doctor or the nurses, to go and see a family physician to begin treatment, and I cast myself wholly over onto Yahweh for healing. Over the next weeks I began to lose weight, when all of my previous efforts to do so had failed. I lost about forty pounds and all of the symptoms of diabetes disappeared. Within 1-2 months I experienced complete healing, and to this date, now more than five years later, I have had no reoccurrence of any of the symptoms.

Once more the pattern was shown in my life, that the word of God precedes faith. I had heard the Lord tell me that He wanted me to cancel health insurance on our family, and it would have been an easy enough thing to do if we had all been in great health. Yet He allowed me to be tested by asking me to do this thing when I was suffering from a serious condition and was being advised to seek medical attention quickly. Praise Yahweh! He is faithful! As Paul wrote:

II Timothy 1:12

For I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day.

Because hearing is such an important part of faith, being that which faith arises out of, the Spirit of God is willing to give us many confirmations of His will when we ask for it. We see this revealed most clearly in the life of Gideon. Gideon lived in a time when the children of God had been suffering defeat by their enemies on a continual basis for many years. Midianite bands had been coming in and raiding their land at the time of harvest and taking all their produce from the Israelites. Gideon was threshing grain in a hiding place when the angel of God appeared to him.

God knew that asking Gideon to take three hundred men into battle against more than one hundred thousand of the enemy would require much faith in God. On top of this, for Gideon's entire life he had only seen the Israelites meet defeat at the hands of the enemy. How could he now expect that God would bring them a great

deliverance with so few men? Gideon wanted to be certain that God was speaking to him and that He would accomplish what He had said. He asked for confirmation and Yahweh was pleased to give it to him.

Judges 6:36-40

Then Gideon said to God, "If You will deliver Israel through me, as You have spoken, behold, I will put a fleece of wool on the threshing floor. If there is dew on the fleece only, and it is dry on all the ground, then I will know that You will deliver Israel through me, as You have spoken." And it was so. When he arose early the next morning and squeezed the fleece, he drained the dew from the fleece, a bowl full of water. Then Gideon said to God, "Do not let Your anger burn against me that I may speak once more; please let me make a test once more with the fleece, let it now be dry only on the fleece, and let there be dew on all the ground." God did so that night; for it was dry only on the fleece, and dew was on all the ground.

This is the mercy, kindness and gentleness of Yahweh. He did not reprove Gideon in this matter, but did according to what Gideon asked. Yahweh even went beyond what Gideon had asked. The sign of the fleece was given before God had whittled Gideon's army of 32,000 down to just 300 men. In His mercy He gave him one more tremendous confirmation that Gideon had not even asked for.

Judges 7:9-15

Now the same night it came about that Yahweh said to him, "Arise, go down against the camp, for I have given it into your hands. But if you are afraid to go down, go with Purah your servant down to the camp, and you will hear what they say; and afterward your hands will be strengthened that you may go down against the camp." So he went with Purah his servant down to the outposts of the army that was in the camp. Now the Midianites and the Amalekites and all the sons of the east were lying in the valley as numerous as locusts; and their camels were without number, as numerous as the sand on the seashore. When Gideon came, behold, a man was relating a dream to his friend. And he said, "Behold, I had a dream; a loaf of barley bread was tumbling into the camp of Midian, and it came to the tent and struck it so that it fell, and turned it upside down so that the tent lay flat." His friend replied, "This is nothing less than the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel; God has given Midian and all the camp into his hand." When Gideon heard the account of the dream and its interpretation, he bowed in worship. He returned to the camp of Israel and said, "Arise, for Yahweh has given the camp of Midian into your hands."

I too would have bowed to the ground and worshiped upon receiving such a confirmation from the Lord. With great love and tenderness He does lead us into a walk of faith.

In the day we live in we also have few examples of men and women who are walking in faith. We live in that hour that Paul spoke of to Timothy where men “would have a form of godliness, but deny the power thereof.” The churches today are weak and anemic and are overrun by the enemy. Pastors are sending those who come to them in need to the world to find their answers. Recently a couple we have known for many years were on the verge of divorce after having been married more than twenty years. They went to the pastor of the largest Baptist church in town for counseling and as a last attempt to find reconciliation. The pastor advised the husband to take drugs to deal with an anger problem and to go to a psychiatrist.

This is just one of a myriad of examples that demonstrate the powerlessness of the church. Worldliness is entering into the church, and in many instances is being freely invited in. Faith is largely absent and defeat is everywhere. In this environment the Spirit is calling forth a remnant to embark upon a walk of faith, and recognizing the environment of powerlessness and unbelief that people are being called out from, He is willing to give many assurances of His will. I have at times asked for further confirmation of Yahweh’s will for me, and He has been pleased to provide it. He has even given me assurances when I did not ask.

One of the greatest challenges the Spirit has given to me has been to trust Him for our financial needs. He has called us, as a demonstration to the body of His ability to provide for all of our needs, and as an encouragement to the saints to pray and to rest in the confidence of His love, to trust Him for all of our finances. This calling first began in October of 1999 when the Spirit spoke to me to leave my employer whom I had been with for fourteen years, and to trust Him to meet all of our needs.

This was a daunting word for me to receive, for I did not have money saved up in the bank to see me through, nor did I have any other source of income. Therefore, I asked for numerous confirmations and the Spirit provided them. The command of the Spirit calling me to leave my employer was upon my mind continuously, and one day as I walked through our kitchen my eye was attracted to a daily devotional calendar. The verse stood out to me, Exodus 14:14. The numbers caught my attention first, for I had been with my employer fourteen years, and later the name of the book was also given as confirmation. The word Exodus means to journey out from a place, to leave one’s previous habitat. I knew the Spirit was calling me to journey forth and to leave my job and to embark on a life of faith in the area of finances.

A few days later I was asking the Father for further confirmation, and I heard the Spirit tell me to go to my computer and look up the first occurrence of the number fourteen in Scripture. I typed the word ‘fourteen’ into my Bible program and ran a search. A snippet of each verse that this word occurred in appeared on my screen, and the very first one startled me. It said, “I have worked for you for fourteen years.”

This quote was from Genesis 31:41, and it was from Jacob's conversation with his father-in-law Laban as Jacob was leaving his household.

This was a tremendous thing that God was calling me unto. I did not personally know any other saint, not even any minister, who was trusting God for their financial provision in this way. I had been raised among churches whose members lived by sight, and where faith was a rare commodity. I lacked the confidence that would have been mine had I seen numerous examples of others who were living in this way.

I did leave my job, and for eighteen months our family lived in complete dependence upon the Father. I could fill many pages recounting the miraculous provision we saw, and one day I hope to do so. Yet, despite all of this, I continued to struggle in my faith. The main reason was that I was receiving much discouragement from other saints and ministers, telling me that the way I was living was unscriptural. I received many accusations and condemnations of this walk of faith. I was carrying around many wounds that I had received from the hands of the brethren. I had even been put out of the church I was ministering in for preaching a message of faith, and for living it out by my example. This was the most difficult thing, as the ministers who rejected me were close brothers whom I had shared many experiences with, and who had at one time declared their intention to follow God in faith wherever He led.

So after eighteen months of struggle I asked the Father to give me a tent-making occupation as Paul had in order to take away my reproach and give me time to heal. He miraculously opened up a job teaching computer concepts to college students, and this had the effect of removing the reproach I was receiving from all quarters. It also gave me the time I needed to heal from many hurts, so that I might go and rejoin the battle again. The job was to last for two years, though the Father began slowly drying up the stream to teach me to not trust in the job for my provision, but to trust Him instead. When I first began the job I was given thirty hours a week to teach, and this was adequate to pay for all of our needs. After about nine months my hours were reduced to twenty hours a week, and after another nine months my hours were reduced to ten hours a week.

Working ten hours a week was insufficient to meet the needs of a family of four, as it barely paid our rent at the time. Yet the Father made up what we were lacking in a variety of ways. We never knew lack in food, clothing, shelter, or any good and necessary thing. We were well provided for. It was not so difficult then when, at the end of two years, He spoke to me and told me it was time to quit my teaching job and trust Him once more to provide for all of our needs. If He could meet our needs while I was working only ten hours a week, then He could certainly do it with me working no hours a week. Within a month of my quitting this job He showed us we were to move to be a part of a new work He was raising up, and the location would have

rendered it impractical to keep teaching anyway, for the distance would have been too great.

Since we have once more embarked upon this adventure of faith in knowing God as our total provider, He has shown us His tenderness by giving us many confirmations of His will, and confirming us with numerous testimonies of men who have followed a similar course at the leading of the Spirit of God. A book arrived in the mail one day soon after I had quit my job, and it was titled “Rees Howells - Intercessor”. I did not order the book, but a Christian brother felt that I needed to read it, so he ordered it to be delivered to our home. It was just what I needed. When I opened the book to the index, the first chapter to catch my attention was titled “Called Out From Wage Earning”. It was the first thing I read. The entire book was a great confirmation of the path set before us, as Rees Howells was one who was called to a life of faith and the Spirit gave me much encouragement as I read of His dealings with this servant of His.

A few weeks later another brother felt led to send me the biography of the life of Bill Britton, called “A Prophet on Wheels”. His life is even more contemporary than that of Rees Howells, and it is filled with similar testimonies of God’s provision in the life of one who was called out from wage earning to a life of faith. We have recently also acquired a couple books on the life of George Muller, and the accounts of the daily faithfulness of God in the provision for hundreds, and even thousands, of orphans in England are incredible.

In all of this the Spirit has given us many confirmations of His will for us to step out in faith and walk in a way that is rarely seen in our present generation. He has been most kind to confirm our path over and over.

Back on July 24, 2002, during the period of time that I was teaching college classes, my hours had just been cut due to a lack of students, and I had also just had the longest break of the year between classes, this being about three weeks, where I received no income at all. We had bills due and no money on hand, and I called the family together for prayer. I wanted to hear from God as to whether I should seek another job, or whether we should look to Him to supply our need. I gave each member of our family a piece of paper and a pen and I asked them to go to their rooms and write down whatever the Spirit should give them. During this time I asked the Father to speak a clear word to me through my family.

A short time later we gathered back together and my daughter Kristin, who was fourteen years of age at the time, handed me the paper she had written on. The anointing on the words she wrote has been so powerful that I have carried them with me constantly. There have been days when I have pulled them out numerous times

to be encouraged by the words that the Spirit spoke to me through my daughter. Here is what the Spirit had Kristin record.

I have great things in store for your family.
Marvelous things that only I can get the credit for.

My sheep will hear My voice and they will know
that it is I, the Lord thy God.

My provision is on its way. My timing is perfect.
You need not fear any trouble, instead, trust Me.

The time has not yet come to reveal all things,
but behold, it is drawing nigh.

You need have no less than great expectations, for
I, the Lord thy God, am in control.

Watch and wait.

You must put behind you all foolish thoughts of
doubt and disbelief, for great is My reward for
those who trust.

Forget not those things which I have done for
you, and expect greater things in the future.

I am a just God, those who put their life in
My hands need never fear.

Await with anticipation the things that are to
come. They are drawing near.

Those things which I have spoken to you will
be fulfilled, for I do not lie.

I have listened to your heart's cry. I have
not turned a deaf ear.

I am a father who loves to give good gifts to
His children. Trust My timing.

You must learn to listen to My voice, and My
voice alone. Take the path which I have set for
you. Do not turn to the right or to the left.

Hearing from God is crucial to a life of faith. We can be sure that the enemy will buffet us with many false and lying words as he seeks to instill fear in our hearts and turn us from the path set before us. It is critical that we learn to listen only to the voice of God. As this prophetic word states, this is something that we must learn. It does not come in a moment of time, but as the fruit of continual pressing in.

Recently we had a day here in our new location where the wind blew hard all day long. The wind picked up speed as the day wore on and the trees were bent over under the onslaught. In the spirit I was also undergoing fierce gales of oppression as the enemy relentlessly attacked throughout the day. Anxiety kept buffeting me, and I had to fight to keep standing firm upon the ground of faith. I wondered how long the assault would last and when I would finally break through to realms of peace. Late in the day the peace finally came, even as the wind was abating outside.

It is the Father's will to allow us to be subjected to such onslaughts. In this way we learn to mature in our faith and to come to a place of steadfastness. At such times we must stand upon the word that has been sown in our spirit and upon our confidence in the love of God that will never allow us to encounter more than we can bear. His words to us must be more real to us than the physical world around us. We must give much attention to hearing from Him, for:

Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

Prayer:

Father, teach us to hear Your voice, and to distinguish it clearly from the voice of the enemy. Though the adversary comes in disguise, masquerading as a messenger of truth, he is a liar and the truth is not in him. May his disguise be revealed and his true nature uncovered, for he seeks only to kill, steal and destroy. You, however, have established plans for us, to give us a future and a hope. Teach us to wait patiently upon a word from You, and to stand when the word is given, not turning aside to the left or to the right.

Your word, Father, is precious to us. Your word sustains the weary one, and gives courage to the fainthearted. We are but dust, but when You breathe upon us we are given life. Breathe upon us Father. Fill us with Your Spirit. May Your anointing carry us through all the trials of life and bring us safely to Your side.

Our Strength and Shield

In the preceding chapters I shared some events in which the Spirit of God has called my family to step out in faith and to lean totally upon Him. Some who have read of the victories and miraculous provision we have seen in our lives as we looked to Him have thought that we must be a different type of person than they are. Satan would like to convince those who read these things that it is only some type of elite saint who can experience such victories and perform exploits in the name of Christ, and that only a few are given faith to experience such a walk. This is merely one more lie of the enemy to keep the saints from having the confidence to believe that they too can experience the overcoming power of God in their lives. Let me tell you the truth of this matter.

I think that God has chosen me to walk in places of faith, and to write about them, in order that the church might know that Yahweh is capable of taking the weakest, most fearful, and anxiety prone man, and through His power and love He is able to make such a one stand. Some saints after having read of some of our experiences have written to comment that I must possess a powerful faith, and this makes it sound like the power to walk this path of faith is something that is in me. Such ones have formed the exact wrong conclusion, for I am exceedingly weak in myself, and it is only the strength and grace of God that keeps me standing. Paul expressed this beautifully.

II Corinthians 12:9

And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me.

Paul has also described the type of people God has primarily chosen to do His works.

I Corinthians 1:26-29

For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are, so that no man may boast before God.

Do you feel that you are described in the passage above? If so, then congratulations to you! You are a perfect candidate for God to display His mighty power through. By choosing the foolish and weak and base and despised things of this world, and then

displaying His awesome power through such vessels, He receives all the glory. God chose me for this particular walk based upon my insufficiency, and my inadequacy, and my weakness. If I had been a strong and self-confident person, full of faith in my own abilities, then I would have been led to boast about the great man of faith that I am.

A few years back I wrote an article detailing some of the magnificent victories God has wrought on behalf of my family, and in it I described myself in this way:

From my youth I have been beset with feelings of inadequacy and insecurity. I felt that I was somehow inferior to other people and that I was lacking in certain vital areas that I really couldn't define, but which I felt nonetheless. I rarely looked people in the eyes when I spoke to them because of my insecurity. I was placed in a public speaking class once when I was in High School and the first day we had to state our name and say one short fact about ourselves. I was mortified. I turned red and stammered and sweated and I went immediately afterward and dropped the class.

I became so frightened about being in the public eye and put on the spot that I would avoid every situation that held fear for me. I was consumed with a fear of other people and their opinions of me, thinking that people would see my lack and failings and I would somehow be rejected. One of the most trying episodes for me was getting a haircut. While getting a haircut I was a captive and could not flee until it was over. I was afraid that I would get nervous while getting a haircut and that it would be noticed. I would begin to sweat profusely and this was impossible for the barber to not notice since my hair would be glistening with sweat while he was trying to cut it. Haircuts for me became miserable times as I tried to do everything to not think about getting nervous, only to fail time after time and to have my head dripping with sweat while the barber cut my hair. I even had a barber hand me a towel to dry my hair and wipe my brow as he noticed my discomfort.

I share these things with you to show you that I have not been a bold or self-confident person. You can then understand that when I tell you how I have seen the power of God manifested in my life that God has done these things through a weak and insignificant vessel that He has chosen to display His power through. We are told that He has chosen the weak and the foolish things of this world to confound the wise.

God has taken someone who could not even say his name in public and He has called me to publicly proclaim the word of God. This I have done now from my early twenties and God has used my own insecurity to cause me to cast myself upon

Him for His strength, His enabling, and His ability to have His word proclaimed. I have often stood upon God's own words to Moses, "Did I not create man's lips? I will be with your mouth and give you the words to speak." In our weakness we look to the promises of God and we press into them and rely heavily upon them. It is then that we see His power manifested.

Like Paul, I would rather boast about my weakness in order to magnify the grace of God that is available to all of the saints. In the previous chapter on hearing God I shared how vital it is to hear the voice of God to both direct our steps and to give us confirmations along the way. Gideon had no confidence in himself, nor in the Israelites' ability to defeat their foes. Because of this he asked for a number of confirmations to God's will, and he received them. When God first called me to step out from wage earning and to trust Him for our provision, I asked Him for so many confirmations that I became ashamed to ask for more. Yet He was patient with me and gave me all the confirmation I needed.

I would not have anyone to receive the impression that God chose me for some inherent strength in me. He did not choose me because He knew He could speak a word of direction to me one time and I would go forth fearlessly with no anxiety or shadow of doubt. I have needed many assurances, and He has walked with me as a father would walk with a small child, holding my hand and speaking words of comfort to me all along the way.

This has also been how He has walked with those men and women in the Bible who we view as the champions of faith. Moses is revered today, as he has been for thousands of years, for the mighty power of God that was demonstrated through him. Yet by his own confession he could not even speak. He tried to convince Yahweh that He had called the wrong man. I find great comfort in this, for at times I have felt the same way. In the writing "The Lion, the Bear and Goliath" I wrote some about the men God has chosen to display His power through.

We sometimes have a view of certain Biblical personalities as being cut from a different mold than us. We think they were not beset with our petty weaknesses of the flesh, with doubts, fears, and uncertainty. In thinking this we actually make things more difficult for ourselves because when we find these weaknesses resident in our frame we become convinced that we are not cut from the same cloth as the saints of God whom we read about as overcomers. But let me assure you, they all experienced these same fleshly battles.

Abraham, the father of faith, was afraid that he would be killed by foreigners when he sojourned in their land because of the beauty of his wife. He therefore had her passed off as his sister and she was even taken to be another man's wife on two

occasions, but God protected her from any sexual involvement.

Jacob ran for his life from the anger of his brother who vowed to kill him. He later deceived his father-in-law and snuck away from his household to avoid a confrontation with him. Later, as he approached his homeland, he was gripped with fear at the prospect of meeting his brother again and he was afraid that he and his wives and children would be killed. He took steps to at least spare some of them, even when God had told him to return to his homeland and God vowed to be with him.

David, who is often thought to be as fearless of an individual as there ever was, wrote so many Psalms that expressed how his soul was being overwhelmed by his trials and adversaries that it is impossible to think that he didn't struggle with these same human feelings of weakness. He cried out over and over for God to come to him quickly lest he should perish and his soul should be swallowed up in despair.

But how about the New Testament? Wasn't Paul a man who endured so many things and who did so courageously without any fear at all? Listen to his own words.

I Corinthians 2:1-4

*And when I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God. For I determined to know nothing among you except Yahshua the Messiah, and Him crucified. **And I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling.** And my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power...*

It seems somehow incongruent that Paul could preach "in demonstration of the Spirit and of power", yet he was physically "in weakness and in fear and in much trembling." Yet Paul understood that God's power is not shown through our natural strength, but through our weakness. It is in our weakness that we deem ourselves incapable of performing anything of eternal value so that we throw ourselves unreservedly over onto the Father and say "God, if anything of worth or value is to come forth it must come from You, for I am unable to accomplish it." This acknowledgment of our weakness opens the door for the power of God to be manifest.

A trait of all overcomers in Christ is humility. Such ones do not have an elevated opinion of themselves, or of their own strength and abilities. Their confidence is in God Who has called them, and Who will surely keep them through all trials. This, once more, is a reason that Satan so opposes faith in the hearts of men and women.

True faith exalts God. The false faith that is rampant in this hour exalts men, and men love to be exalted. The world can watch men prancing around on stage blowing on people and pushing on their foreheads, so that all can see the power in them as men and women fall to the ground. They present themselves as great giants of faith. True faith that pleases God does not act unbecomingly, but is marked by humility.

As I have been writing this book, the Spirit has been reminding me of my own weakness and dependence upon Him. There have been a number of days recently when the Lord has pulled back His hand of protection from me just a little bit, and He has allowed the enemy to buffet me. I have felt that a fierce gale was raging in my soul, and words of anxiety and fear and doubt and unbelief were being carried to me on the wind. These words would slam into me and I would feel my flesh responding with a desire to flee. Satan has sought to move me from the ground the Spirit has told me to stand upon, and I have felt myself teetering at times.

Yesterday was one such day. I dealt with battles raging in my soul all day long, and I prayed, and confessed, and praised God, but the intensity of the battle would not weaken. After a time I began to grow weary, and I even got down on my knees and wept as I prayed to God for strength and deliverance. I felt isolated and very vulnerable. In the evening I sent out an e-mail to the saints asking them to stand in intercession with me. I shortly received a number of e-mails back as brothers and sisters in Christ said they were standing with me in prayer. Before I even read their letters, however, I felt the impact of their prayers as the storm in my soul finally subsided and the light and peace of Christ came flooding in.

The Spirit spoke to me through this and disclosed to me my great dependence upon Him. I have no reason to boast, weak and fearful as I am. If I have been able to stand in past trials, it has only been because He has strengthened me and given me the grace to do so. This strength and grace is available to all of the saints. After this experience, the Spirit began leading me to Scriptures that brought forth this point very clearly. He is the One who makes the saints to stand. The ability is not in ourselves.

Jude 24-25

Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy, to the only God our Savior, through Yahshua Messiah our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.

A part of our faith in the character of God is trusting that He will keep us in the time of trial. We must believe that He will never suffer the righteous to be overcome by evil, and that His hand of protection will shelter us in the storm. When the storms

were blowing in my own life, His hand was ever present. He told the Devil that He could go only so far and no more. He never totally removed His protection from me. He is like a master metalworker who is watching the temperature of the fire with great intensity so that it will heat the metal enough for the impurities to rise to the surface where they can be removed, but not too high that the metal should become brittle or damaged.

In the book of Job we see this watchfulness of the Lord. Satan had to get permission to attack Job, and God set precise limits on what Satan could and could not do.

Job 1:9-12

Then Satan answered Yahweh, "Does Job fear God for nothing? Have You not made a hedge about him and his house and all that he has, on every side?... Then Yahweh said to Satan, "Behold, all that he has is in your power, only do not put forth your hand on him."

In the lives of the saints today, Satan still has to get permission from the Lord to touch us. We see this revealed in Yahshua's words to Peter.

Luke 22:31-32

"Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat; but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers."

In these few words it is revealed that Satan has to get permission to touch the saint. The Lord will never allow Satan to have a greater access to us than we are able to bear, and Yahshua also intercedes for us during the trial. This should be a comfort to all the saints. Consider also the purpose for the testing that Christ allows here. It states that Satan desired to sift Peter as wheat. When wheat is sifted, the impurities in the wheat are revealed and are discarded. This produces a beneficial effect in the life of the saint.

The impurity that was present in Peter's life was self confidence, a trust in his own abilities. The next verses reveal this stronghold in Peter's flesh that had to be broken, bringing forth a humility in him.

Luke 22:33-34

But [Peter] said to Him, "Lord, with You I am ready to go both to prison and to death!" And He said, "I say to you, Peter, the rooster will not crow today until you have denied three times that you know Me."

Peter had such a confidence in his own strength that he stated that even if all of the

other disciples abandoned Christ, that he would not do so (Matthew 26:33-35). The confidence that Peter manifested with these words is not the type of faith that pleases God. Peter's faith was based upon confidence in his own ability to stay the course and not deny the Lord. Peter learned before the day was out that determination and self effort are incapable of providing the strength to stand in the face of the enemy.

This was also the lesson the Spirit brought to me yesterday. I was near to abandoning the course and giving in to fear and anxiety. The Lord was allowing Satan to sift me to reveal the weakness of my own flesh that I would place no confidence in the flesh. Our only confidence should be in God's ability and willingness to cause us to stand. The flesh is of no profit in a spiritual struggle.

Paul knew much about battling the enemy, and he was wise enough to not trust in his own strength. He knew that the Lord would never allow him, or any saint, to encounter more than they could handle as they manifested faith in the character of God.

I Corinthians 10:13

No test has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tried beyond what you are able to bear, but with the testing will provide the way out, an egress, so that you will be able to endure it.
(Author's translation)

Paul knew that it was not by his own strength that he stood, for he boasted in his weakness that he might more readily receive the power of God. Paul received strength continuously from God in his many trials.

I Timothy 1:12

I thank Messiah Yahshua our Lord, ***who has strengthened me...***

II Timothy 4:16-17

At my first defense no one supported me, but all deserted me; may it not be counted against them. But ***the Lord stood with me and strengthened me...***

I believe God will use many saints in these latter days to perform great exploits of faith. The dead will be raised, miracles will be performed, multitudes will be healed, the Spirit will be imparted, and greater works than Christ performed will be seen. In all of this no man or woman will have reason to boast in themselves. If left to our own strength for a moment, we would be overwhelmed. We have One to lean on Who has all strength, all power, and all might. His name is Yahweh, and in Him I will make my boast.

Jeremiah 9:23-24

Thus says Yahweh, "Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches; but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am Yahweh who exercises lovingkindness, justice and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things," declares Yahweh.

Prayer:

Father, my confidence rests upon the many testimonies of Your love and care for me. I may merely be dust, but I am dust that You have filled with Your life. You are the One who has called me. You will also cause me to stand. Teach my fearful heart to rest in You. Shelter me under Your wings. Call me into the place of sanctuary. Hide me until the storms of life are over. You are my rock and my strong tower. In You alone will I seek refuge, my Lord and my God.

The Place of Peace

Having read the previous chapter, you may have concluded that it looks like mankind, weak as we are, must always endure fear and anxiety, for this is our lot as long as we are clothed in this sinful, fallen flesh. It is true that there is great fear that is bound up in these fallen bodies which we inhabit, but there is a place of peace that the saint can attain to. I have received tremendous comfort in recent days as the Spirit has been testifying through many Scriptures that it is not the will of Christ that His disciples should carry fear and anxiety in their hearts.'

The fact of the matter is that we have been commanded to not be anxious and fearful. Whenever Yahshua's disciples manifested fear He chided them and gave them a reprimand. He would look at them and say, "You men of little faith! Why did you doubt?" We know that when Yahshua said, "Do not commit adultery", that any who were to violate His command would be displeasing to Him. It is equally a transgression of the will of Christ to be filled with anxiety and fear, for He commanded them "Do not fear." Nor did He tell His disciples these things one time, but many.

As you read through the following Scripture passages, consider the attitude of Christ toward anxiety and fear in the heart of man. Did He ever express pleasure over someone who was walking in fear? Did He ever commend their anxiety as being sensible? Did He give the idea that it was right, and even responsible, to worry about the things without which man could not live? Did He ever say, "Well done. You have proven yourself a good steward by having much care and anxiety in the performance of your duties"? Did He express an attitude that it was sinful to worry about the small things, but it was okay to be fearful about more perilous matters?

I think you will see that Yahshua treated ALL fear and anxiety the same. He never condoned it. He never sympathized with it. He never expressed satisfaction in it. Instead, He consistently said, "Do not harbor it! Get rid of it! Replace it with faith!"

Matthew 6:25-34

"For this reason I say to you, **do not be anxious about your life**, as to what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, as to what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they? And **who of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his life?** And **why are you anxious about clothing?** Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin, yet I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like

one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not much more clothe you? ***You of little faith! Do not be anxious then***, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear for clothing?' For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. So ***do not be anxious about tomorrow***; for tomorrow will care for itself."

Luke 12:22-32

And He said to His disciples, "For this reason I say to you, ***do not be anxious about your life***, as to what you will eat; nor for your body, as to what you will put on. For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing. Consider the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap; they have no storeroom nor barn, and yet God feeds them; how much more valuable you are than the birds! And ***which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his life's span? If then you cannot do even a very little thing, why are you anxious about other matters?*** Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; but I tell you, not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass in the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, how much more will He clothe you? ***You men of little faith!*** And do not seek what you will eat and what you will drink, and ***do not be filled with anxiety***. For all these things the nations of the world eagerly seek; but your Father knows that you need these things. But seek His kingdom, and these things will be added to you. ***Do not be afraid, little flock***, for your Father has chosen gladly to give you the kingdom."

Matthew 14:31

Immediately Yahshua stretched out His hand and took hold of him, and said to him, ***"You of little faith, why did you doubt?"***

Matthew 8:24-26

And behold, there arose a great storm on the sea, so that the boat was being covered with the waves; but Yahshua Himself was asleep. And they came to Him and woke Him, saying, "Save us, Lord; we are perishing!" He said to them, ***"Why are you afraid, you men of little faith?"*** Then He got up and rebuked the winds and the sea, and it became perfectly calm.

The apostles expressed the same attitude toward anxiety.

Philippians 4:6-7

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which

surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Messiah Yahshua.

I Peter 5:6-7

Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, **casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you.**

We must come to a mindset where we treat fear and anxiety as an enemy that has taken up residence in our frame. Whenever we find it arising we must do battle with it and cast it off. It seems that many of us have developed an attitude toward fear where we do not view it as an evil thing. We think it is just a part of our make-up, for it is resident in us and it serves a purpose of helping to keep us safe. This is not true, however.

Suppose we treated lust the same way, for lust is present in us, and there are some humanistic psychologists who have said that lust is a good thing for it leads to procreation and this has the positive effect of insuring the survival of the human species. We know immediately that this is nonsense, and it is both immoral and unrighteous. We can read the words of Christ where He said:

Matthew 5:28

But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

There is little argument in the church today that lust is an evil thing and it should be resisted at all costs. What was Yahshua's advice to those who were struggling with lust?

Matthew 5:29-30

"If your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. If your right hand makes you stumble, cut it off and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to go into hell."

Some have taken these words literally, but what Yahshua is saying is that we must identify the source of lust in our members and get rid of it. We must not make peace with it. We must not tolerate its presence. We must seek its removal even though it comes at great personal cost. We must be ready to adopt radical means to see that it does not overpower us and lead us into sin.

This is the same attitude we should have toward fear. As rampant as lust and sexual immorality is in the present day, and even in the church, I suspect that far more wrong has been done because fear been left to run unchecked in the members of the body of Christ. People have abandoned their faith. They have denied Christ. They have caved into the pressure of peers who were urging them to sin. Untold millions of times the saints have failed to obey God's will for them when fear assailed them. They have seen pain and ridicule or some form of persecution before them and they have turned back from the course of faith. To do so is to miss the will of God and those who allow fear to reign unchecked in their members will suffer great loss.

Hebrews 10:38-39

But My righteous one shall live by faith; and ***if he shrinks back, My soul has no pleasure in him.*** But we are not of those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have faith to the preserving of the soul.

Revelation 21:7-8

"He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son. ***But for the cowardly*** and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, ***their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.***"

Does it not speak volumes that the Scriptures place the cowardly even before murderers, immoral persons, sorcerers, idolaters and liars, as those who will have a part in the Lake of Fire? The cowardly are the first on the list. God's soul finds no pleasure in those who allow their fears to turn them back from a path of obedience. This is why we must treat fear as an enemy.

As I have been writing this book the Father has allowed me to experience a great onslaught by the enemy. Many fears have buffeted me and have tried to take up residence in my soul. He has led me to a very vulnerable place where if He does not come through for me, both I and my family could very well suffer. The enemy has been allowed to come attack with his lies and deceit to cause me to abandon the course of obedience laid before me. We have been given instruction as to what our response should be in such circumstances.

Ephesians 6:12-13

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. ***Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm.***

James 4:7

Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

II Corinthians 10:3-5

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. ***We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ...***

We are told to resist the devil and he will flee from us. We are to resist him and stand firm. After we have warred for a while he will give way. We must stand our ground and not be moved. The battle will not last forever. When thoughts arise that are not from God, we are to take them captive as we would a prisoner. We are not to allow fear to roam freely in our minds. We must cut it off and replace it with thoughts of faith. This is when we must return to those things we know God has spoken to us by His Spirit. We must entertain these thoughts. We must spread a banqueting table in our minds and lay out upon the table all of the things that God has spoken to us, and we must feed upon them.

I have done this time and again when the enemy would come against me and try to stir up fear in my members. I would command the fear to be gone and I would wrest my mind free of the enemy's control and turn it to the things that are in keeping with a victorious and overcoming life. Sometimes this struggle is most severe, for the enemy seems relentless, but as we stand firm and resist him he will ALWAYS give way and we will know the victory.

We have looked at the passage in Philippians where it states,

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Messiah Yahshua.

Just a couple verses later Paul tells the Philippian believers:

Philippians 4:8

Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things.

We have been given the capability by the Spirit to direct the course of our thoughts.

We can turn our mind to focus upon the things that are wholesome and which lead to life. Consider that when you go to work you are able to put off the cares of home and concentrate on the task at hand. When you go to school you are able to focus on the subject you are studying. One hour we might be looking at mathematics, and we turn our minds to the study of this field. In the next hour we may be studying English composition, and we turn our minds to this direction. In the same way, we can turn our minds away from the worries, doubts and fears that the enemy presents to us, or which our flesh would lead us to dwell upon, and we can dwell upon the faithfulness of God, His unfailing love, his many kindnesses to us, and His magnificent promises.

We must have an attitude concerning our thoughts where we declare to Satan, “This is my mind, not yours. I will determine what thoughts are served up, and you are not invited to the dinner.” We must then invite the Holy Spirit to come and join us and to make known to us the thoughts of God.

What I have been describing may sound a lot like warfare, and it is. Paul used the language of warfare when speaking about this struggle in Ephesians chapter 6. Our souls are the battleground and we must go in and take possession of them. Many enemies have slipped in and taken up residence in the land of our souls, and just like the Israelites who went into possess the promised land, we too must go in and drive out the enemy. The land will not be handed to us on a silver platter. We must have courage and the assurance that everywhere that we set our feet has been given to us.

How much of your own soul do you want to possess. You will have to first dispossess the enemy. The Spirit has given me an insight into this matter that could bring understanding to many. All of the things written about in the Old Testament were written for the benefit of the saints today. What transpired in a physical setting concerning the patriarchs and the nation of Israel bears spiritual application for us today.

God promised to the children of Abraham a land of their own. By faith Abraham went and sojourned in the land, but he did not take possession of it. It would be more than 400 more years before Joshua (a type of Yahshua - same name) would lead the descendants of Abraham to take possession of the land. Before Joshua led the people into battle he sent spies in to look over the land. They noted the boundaries of the land, describing the mountains and valleys and streams and the abundant fruitfulness of it. It was indeed a land flowing with milk and honey.

Joshua then had the spies give the report of the land to the people, and they divided the land up into portions. They then cast lots to see which tribe of Israel would get each portion of land. God commanded them to go in and drive out ALL the inhabitants of the land and to fully possess it. This is a picture of man taking

possession of his soul. We are to allow no enemies to remain in our land. We must drive out pride, lust, fear, and a host of other enemies. We are to let none remain.

There was only one tribe that was not given an inheritance in the land, and this was Levi. Levi's inheritance was God Himself. They were called to be priests unto Him, and they were given the ministry of the altar and the tabernacle. They had cities to live in that were located all throughout Israel, in the land given to every tribe. It was for them to dwell in every part of the land, though God alone would be their portion. All of this is highly symbolic, and David saw the truth of what it represented. In Psalms 16:5, 6 we read:

Psalms 16:5-6

**Yahweh is the portion of my inheritance and my cup; You support my lot.
The lines have fallen to me in pleasant places; indeed, my heritage is beautiful to me.**

In beautiful poetic form, David refers back to the time when Joshua sent spies into the land, and then had the tribes cast lots to see who received each portion. David states that when the time came for the lot to be thrown to determine his portion that Yahweh supported his lot. The lines that marked the boundaries of his inheritance were in the most pleasant of places. David received a beautiful heritage, for what David received was Yahweh Himself. David received the priestly inheritance. Yahweh was for him, his inheritance and his cup of blessing.

As I was meditating upon this Scripture one day, the Spirit led me to a revelation that our inheritance, which is Yahweh, has also been spied out, and there are various aspects of Yahweh of which we can go in and take possession. The Spirit showed me that the names of Yahweh given in Scripture represent this inheritance. When Abraham took Isaac up to the mount to sacrifice him, Yahweh provided a ram in Isaac's place. Abraham called that place Yahweh Yireh, which means 'Yahweh Provides'. As saints we can know Yahweh as our provider, but just like the Israelites when they went in to possess their inheritance, we must do battle first. We must by faith possess our possessions.

It really wasn't Israel who fought the enemy. Yahweh fought for them. He promised them that no enemy would be able to stand before them. It was a very one sided battle as long as Israel walked by faith. Only when they failed in faith did they fail to drive out all the inhabitants and fully take possession of the land.

We too take possession of our inheritance by faith. Yahweh is our portion and He says we can have as much of Him as we want. Do we want to know Him as provider? Then we must enter in by faith. We must drive out the enemy. What enemy is inhabiting the land of provision. For me, it has been fear. There have been giants of

fear who have taken up residence in this land that was promised to me. I must drive them out. I must battle fear and overcome. Only then will I dwell peacefully in the land of Yahweh Yireh.

In Exodus 15:26 we find Yahweh described as Yahweh Rapha, 'Yahweh who heals you.' If we want to go in and possess this portion of our inheritance, we must also battle by faith to enter in and drive out the inhabitants. I have described how Yahweh spoke to me and said He would heal my son of a hereditary bone disease. To receive the promise I had to exercise faith. The battle was the Lord's, but I had to follow where He led and do what He said. This is also what the Israelites had to do.

We should note that Yahweh did not lead the Israelites to do the same thing at every battle. To take Jericho they had to march around the city for seven days, and on the seventh day they had to march around it seven times. They did all this while remaining silent. After marching around the seventh time they were to blow trumpets and shout, and the massive walls of Jericho came tumbling down. What an awesome scene that must have been. Like a thousand bombs going off at once, the wall was destroyed and the people were given into the hands of the Israelites.

At the battle for the next city, Ai, God gave different instructions. It was fought more along the lines of a conventional battle. God told the Israelites which tribe was to lead in battle, and where they were to position themselves. In the same way God leads us by His Spirit to go in and possess the land before us today. He told me exactly what I must do to receive the promise of healing for my son. When I did it the promise was mine. I followed in faith and obedience and He wrought a great deliverance. When He said He would be health for my entire family He also instructed me in what to do. When I did it the inheritance was mine. We planted our feet in the land of Yahweh Rapha, stood against the enemy, and the enemy had to flee.

After this the Spirit told us that He wanted us to take possession of Yahweh Yireh, Yahweh our provider. A tremendous battle of faith ensued, and it is still continuing to this day. We are in the land. We are experiencing the provision of Yahweh on our behalf, yet not all of the inhabitants have gone peacefully. They keep making raids into the land to try to drive us back out, but as we stand in faith God will not allow us to be moved.

A couple months ago the Spirit spoke to me to go in and possess a third part of our inheritance. This part is called Yahweh Shalom, 'Yahweh our Peace'. We find this name of God recorded in the book of Judges in the story of Gideon.

Judges 6:24

Then Gideon built an altar there to Yahweh and named it Yahweh is Peace. To this day it is still in Ophrah of the Abiezrites.

Yahweh Shalom is the Hebrew rendering for the name that Gideon called this place. The Spirit has been speaking to me and telling me that whereas I have gone in and taken possession of Yahweh Rapha and Yahweh Yireh for my family, I have done so with much trouble in my soul. I have not known the peace that is the inheritance of all of the saints. He desires that I might have this peace.

In the New Testament we find many of these names repeated, and we see that God is our portion and we can enter into Him and know the bounty that He has for us.

II Thessalonians 3:16

Now may the Lord of peace Himself continually grant you peace in every circumstance.

I have not known peace in every circumstance, but this is what the apostle spoke as his desire for the church. It is also Yahweh's desire for us. How will I take possession of this portion of my inheritance? I must follow where He leads and let Him fight for me. My part is to exercise faith in Him, and His part is to give me the victory. What a wonderful partnership. If God be for me, who can be against me?

As I have followed the Spirit's leading in the past months He has led me into some fierce battles, fiercer than I have known before. But the prize set before me is also great. What a marvelous thing to dwell in peace. The enemy does not want to give up this ground. He has built many strong towers here. I can tear down some of the towers and have a measure of peace, but if I want to fully enter into my inheritance as the Father desires me to, then I must not fall short of tearing down all of the strongholds the enemy has built and which he occupies. If I leave any he will remain in the land and shoot arrows at me which will cause me trouble.

I have given two different analogies that may seem to conflict at this point. I have said that our soul represents the land that is filled with evil inhabitants that must be driven out, and I have said that this corresponds to the land of Israel. Yet I have also said that Yahweh is our portion and He also corresponds to the promised land that is set before us. These seem contradictory, but they are actually not.

As we look at another Old Testament type we will be able to draw these two things together. The type is that of the Temple that was defiled during the reign of wicked kings. Under Kings such as Manasseh the Temple was defiled. He built altars to false gods, and set up an Asherah pole in the Temple. He filled it with all manner of idolatry and wickedness.

Our bodies are like that Temple, and this is clearly declared by the apostles. We are called to cleanse our temples of all defilement so that the Holy Spirit can reside in holiness. The glory of the Lord will come forth more and more in these temples of clay as we remove all defilement and as we subdue and drive out all that stands in opposition to God. That which was a wasteland and a desolation becomes a land flowing with milk and honey. That which was a habitation of demons becomes a house of prayer where we commune with the Father.

As we go in to possess the land, we do not have to choose our battles. The Spirit will choose them for us. He will tell us where to go and what to do. He will tell us where to position ourselves and where to stand our ground. As we follow we will enter into the overcoming life and begin to possess our possessions. This is the portion of Zion.

Obadiah 17

“But on Mount Zion there will be those who escape, and it will be holy. And the house of Jacob will possess their possessions.”

This theme is carried forward into the last book of the Bible, for we see the overcomers on Mount Zion, and we see an important thing spoken of them.

Revelation 14:1-4

Then I looked, and behold, the Lamb was standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His name and the name of His Father written on their foreheads... **These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes.** These have been purchased from among men as first fruits to God and to the Lamb.

The 144,000 represent the overcomers in Christ. It says particularly of them that they follow the Lamb wherever He goes. This is our calling if we are to be overcomers, firstfruits unto God. Where He leads we must follow. Though He leads through the valley of the shadow of death, we must follow. He will be with us. He will never forsake us. We will be kept secure in Him at all times. He will take us into our inheritance, and part of this inheritance is peace.

Prayer:

Father, we have let unclean inhabitants dwell in our land for far too long. We desire to take possession of our souls and to have the temple of our bodies thoroughly cleansed. Your disappointment must be great that Your chosen people have failed to dispossess the enemies in the land. We have fallen short of doing all that You have commanded. I ask that You would release to us great grace that we might follow wherever You lead, that we would stand and fight and see the enemy flee. May we

come fully into our inheritance. Lead us into battle, and settle us in a land of righteousness, peace and joy, for Your word declares that this is our portion. You are our portion, and surely our inheritance is beautiful.

Faith to Suffer

The Spirit has told me to be gentle in writing this chapter, being very sensitive to my own weakness and frailty that has manifested when I have been brought to places of suffering for Christ. Like most other humans, I have been inclined to seek to avoid suffering if at all possible, for neither my flesh nor my soul enjoy it. I am not some type of masochist who likes to have pain inflicted upon me, and I strongly suspect that those who read this book are not either.

I have been concerned that even writing a chapter on suffering would instantly turn many people off, for most saints do not want to hear that they are called to suffer in any way, and I have been one of these saints. I have thought of writing a book on suffering, but I thought “Who would read it?” I can imagine a book titled “Called to Suffer” being posted on the Internet and being avoided like the plague. I have had to ask myself, would I want to read a book on suffering, and the answer that returns from my soul is “No!”

Yet the truth is that I read a book on suffering nearly every day of my life. That book is the Bible. The central character of the entire Bible is Yahshua the Messiah and He is called “the suffering servant”. Isaiah described Him as “a man of sorrows and well acquainted with grief.” One Scripture passage that reveals the centrality of suffering in the life of the Messiah is the following:

Isaiah 53:3-12

He was despised and forsaken of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and like one from whom men hide their face He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. Surely our griefs He Himself bore, and our sorrows He carried; yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed. All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; But Yahweh has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him. He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He did not open His mouth; like a lamb that is led to slaughter, and like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, so He did not open His mouth. By oppression and judgment He was taken away; and as for His generation, who considered that He was cut off out of the land of the living for the transgression of my people, to whom the stroke was due? His grave was assigned with wicked men, yet He was with a rich man in His death, because He had done no violence, nor was there any deceit in His mouth. But Yahweh was pleased to crush Him, putting Him to grief; if He would render Himself as a guilt offering, He will see His offspring, He will prolong His days, and the good pleasure of Yahweh will prosper in His hand. As a result of the anguish of His soul,

He will see it and be satisfied; by His knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many, as He will bear their iniquities. Therefore, I will allot Him a portion with the great, and He will divide the booty with the strong; because He poured out Himself to death, and was numbered with the transgressors; yet He Himself bore the sin of many, and interceded for the transgressors.

There are many ways in which Christ suffered. He endured rejection by His own people. The reproaches that fell upon Him in His life were many. He was considered the son of an adulteress. He was accused of being demon possessed and of being a half breed, a Samaritan. His own family thought He was mad. He was accused of being a Sabbath breaker, which was an offense worthy of death. He was called a blasphemer for saying He was the Son of God. He was constantly misunderstood, and His words were twisted to be used against Him. He had no home, beginning His life in a stable and spending the last years of His life as a vagrant and a wanderer. He was often weary and hungry, and He experienced grief when His own disciples failed to believe in Him, or to understand His words.

We see then, that even before He went to the cross, Yahshua's life was one of much grief, sorrow and suffering. Yet God had a purpose for it. We are told:

Hebrews 5:7-9

In the days of His flesh, He offered up both prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears to the One able to save Him from death, and He was heard because of His piety. Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered. And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation...

Christ both learned obedience, and was made perfect through His suffering. It is through suffering that every saint of God must also learn obedience and be made perfect (mature). There is no other way.

There is a teaching present in this hour that states that the saints do not have to suffer because Christ suffered in their place. It says that the saints need not bear the cross for Yahshua bore it for them. Though our flesh may wish that this were so, such teachings are contrary to the word of God.

Matthew 16:24-25

Then Yahshua said to His disciples, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it."

Hebrews 12:5-11

"My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor faint when you are reproved by Him; for those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, and He scourges every son whom He receives." It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, that we may share His holiness. All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.

It is not hard to pick out many verses and passages that deal with suffering, for it is one of the main themes of Scripture, both of the Old and New Testaments. After Yahweh delivered Israel from the bondage of Egypt, typifying salvation, He led them into the wilderness where He tested them for forty years. Salvation for us is also an entrance into a prolonged period of testing, as Paul wrote:

Philippians 1:29

For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake...

If you are ready to move on to the next chapter, I cannot blame you. I do not much care for this message of suffering either. There is much in the prosperity messages of the day that hold attraction to my soul. It would be nice to think that God saved me so that I could embark on a life of endless blessing until the day came that I am to depart this life and go to heaven. There is just one thing wrong with this message of ease, it is a fable devised to tickle the ears of those who despise the message of the cross. There is no truth in it, and those who follow messages of ease and prosperity will fail to learn obedience and they will fall short of maturity in their lives. They will remain babes in Christ, crying out for God to satisfy the demands of their flesh, and they will forfeit all the reward that belongs to the overcomer in Christ.

Yahshua said that ALL who would desire to follow Him must take up their cross daily. He did not bear the cross so that we would be relieved of this task. He was the pattern Son who showed us the way to victory. Where He walked, we are to follow. It was because of the high cost of discipleship that He said that all those who followed Him should first count the cost. If He were inviting the saints to a life of prosperity and ease there would be no cost to consider. It is because He will lead His followers down roads of suffering, heartache and pain that they must count the cost.

It requires faith to follow Christ down paths of suffering. We must reckon that a

reward awaits us that far exceeds the trials we will go through. Yahshua looked to the joy that was set before Him. Isaiah wrote, “Therefore, I will allot Him a portion with the great, and He will divide the booty with the strong.” Paul also wrote:

Romans 8:18

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

II Corinthians 4:17

For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison...

When we consider the things that Paul endured it seems incredible that he described them as “momentary, light affliction.” Yet the promise of God is true that an eternal weight of glory awaits the overcomers that will make all suffering seem but the most fleeting and light experience, unworthy to be compared with the prize set before us. Much could be written about the glory that awaits the saints, but consider just one verse and what it is saying.

I John 3:2

Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is.

We will be like the Son of God in His glory! Think of this. This is not some blasphemy. This is the word of God. We are called to share the glory of Christ (John 17). Christ quoted the words of the Psalmist to the Jews:

Psalms 82:6

I said, “You are gods, and all of you are sons of the Most High.”

Before we can appear in glory as gods, and sons of the Most high, being like Christ, we must learn obedience, and we must be perfected (matured). Suffering is the tool to bring us to this conformity to Christ. To despise and avoid suffering is to refuse the glory which God desires to adorn us with. Not all saints will share the same inheritance. Yahshua said that when He returns He will render unto every man according to his own work (Revelation 22:12). There will be vast differences among the saints in glory. Some will have little glory for they refused the path of suffering, while some will have great glory.

I Corinthians 15:41-42

There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for star differs from star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead.

In the introduction to this book I wrote that the things to be explored in its pages represent a foundational truth that is deeper than the books that have preceded it. The apostle Paul wrote:

I Corinthians 13:13

But now faith, hope, love, abide these three; but the greatest of these is love.

Faith is listed among the three great graces of God. I am using the word grace here in keeping with the definition found in my 1930's Webster's Dictionary.

Grace: any excellence, characteristic attraction, or endowment, natural or acquired.

The chief of these graces listed is love and, as we have seen, faith flows out of love for the truest essence of faith is a knowledge of, and confidence in, the love of Yahweh toward man. We have seen how a lack of faith has led to so many tragedies and ills that man suffers from to this day. We have also seen that when faith is found in the hearts of men and women that God is greatly glorified.

How precious then is this faith. The eyes of Yahweh have been searching to and fro throughout the earth to find faith dwelling in the hearts of men and women. This faith is like a great treasure that is highly esteemed in the eyes of the Creator. He is ever seeking for it, and when He finds it resident in the heart of one of His children, He sets about to purify and refine it. He seeks to make that which is precious to Him shine forth with the highest luster, devoid of any clinging impurity.

This is why we read of the great men and women of faith as suffering many trials. They were roughly treated, rejected, reproached, scorned and suffered numerous indignities. They were outcasts, persecuted by brethren and disowned by family. Many suffered hunger and cold and many terrors, and not a few of them were put to death. These trials were not signs of God's displeasure, but rather they were signs of His highest favor as He sought to perfect their faith through suffering.

I Peter 1:6-7

[You should] be exceedingly glad on this account, though now for a little while you may be distressed by trials and suffer temptations, so that [the genuineness] of your faith may be tested, [your faith] which is infinitely more precious than the perishable gold which is tested and purified by fire. [This proving of your faith is intended] to redound to [your] praise and glory and honor when Jesus Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed one) is revealed.

(Amplified Bible)

Peter tells us that our faith is infinitely more precious than perishable gold, though it is tested and purified by fire. The faith of the saints is not perishable. It will result in praise and glory that is unending and which will not fade away. Consider how much effort man has expended in his search for gold, this perishable metal that is precious to man. Wars have been fought over gold and entire nations have given themselves to the pursuit of it. Men have risked life and limb to recover gold that was lost in ancient shipwrecks. Men and women have cast all to the wind and embarked with great rigor and under the harshest of conditions when they have merely heard a rumor of gold.

There are many incredible tales of men who have sought for gold. Vast migrations of men have ensued when gold was discovered in some remote area. It is reported that in 1897-1898 that 20,000 to 30,000 men traversed the Chilkoot Pass on their way to the Yukon gold fields of Canada. A more remote area for prospecting can hardly be imagined. The Chilkoot Pass was itself over 500 miles from the gold fields, yet its rigors are typical of the hardships men and women endured in their search for this prized metal.

The Chilkoot Trail stretches for 33 miles from Dyea to Lake Bennett. The Trail was rough, steep, and snow covered. The destination was Lake Bennett where the prospectors would have to build a boat to travel 550 miles down river to Dawson and the gold fields. The Canadian government knew that many hardships lay ahead for the gold seekers, and they required each person to carry a ton of goods up the pass, enough to last them approximately one year. This had the benefit of saving many lives, but it was an arduous task.

On average a man could carry about seventy pounds worth of supplies on his back, and this required that he would have to make the journey up and down the pass about thirty times. It took an average of several months for each man to carry his quota up the mountainous terrain. With all the trips back and forth along the trail, some men had to walk upwards of 2,000 miles, and half of this walk was with a heavy load on their back. All told, some gold seekers traveled nearly 5,000 miles from their homes to get to the gold fields.

The summit of the pass was reached with a final climb up 1,200 steps that were cut into the ice. These were called the “golden stairs”. The gold seeker had to leave his supplies at the top of the pass and mark his spot with a tall stake so that he could find it in the deep snow that was falling. Over seventy feet of snow was recorded in the years mentioned, and at one point the snow built up so deep along the trail that

when a few warm days occurred in April a tremendous avalanche occurred that buried 63 people. As soon as the bodies were dug out and carried downhill, the trek began again.

All this time men and women were having to live in the most primitive of accommodations. They slept in tents in the frigid weather, and lived on the most basic of diets. Once the prospectors reached the lake with their supplies they had to build a boat, which was a task most had never done before. Trees for miles around the lake were cut down, and each board had to be hand sawn using a whipsaw, a two man saw, and this was more back breaking labor. This was no small boat that had to be constructed, for it had to carry a ton of supplies, and many men worked in teams and were therefore transporting two tons of goods.

How were men able to bring themselves to endure such rigors? They had their eye on the prize set before them. They dreamed of gold and all that it could buy them. How much greater is the prize that lies ahead of the overcomer in Christ? It is of immeasurably greater value. Should we not be willing to endure some hardship as we pursue this faith which Yahweh so highly esteems? The apostle Paul stated that the glory to be revealed in the overcomer is not worthy to even be compared to the suffering that is the portion of the saints in Christ.

There were those among the gold seekers who traveled the Chilkoot Pass on the way to the Yukon who became millionaires. The satisfaction that was theirs upon receiving the prize they sought was made all the sweeter as they recounted the arduous path they trod to attain it. There were also many men and women who arrived at the Pass, and upon seeing the great difficulty of it, they turned back and returned home. Those who endured had a satisfaction that could not be bought. I can imagine them telling their children and grandchildren of the struggle, the suffering, and the final victory they achieved. Yet all this was merely in pursuit of the gold that perishes. The overcomer in Christ has a much more illustrious, valuable and enduring prize set before them.

As much as I detest suffering in my flesh and my soul, it is a matter that I do not dare ignore. This life here on earth is fleeting, yet what we do in this mortal body will determine immense things for many long ages to come. We must grow past being so temporally minded.

Our faith, that is, our confidence in the love of God toward us, has much to do with our willingness to follow Christ down paths of suffering. We must believe that God only subjects us to that which is necessary to help us that we might be presented before Him perfect and entire, lacking in nothing. We must be assured that all trials and testing have a good goal in mind. God never tests us to make us fail, but rather

that we might stand, and He provides tremendous grace that we might stand. The Son of God knows the difficulty of bearing the cross and drinking the cup of suffering. He therefore is perfectly equipped to stand as a High Priest on our behalf, making intercession for us, and bestowing an abundance of mercy and grace.

Hebrews 4:15-16

For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Besides the Bible being a book of suffering, it is also a book of assurance. These two things, suffering and assurance comprise the bulk of the message of Scripture. God does not just call the saints to suffer and then leave them on their own. He has given us plenteous assurance that He will be with us in everything, and that nothing can separate us from His love. The Old Testament is filled with histories of men and women who were led through trials and difficulties, and the victory that was theirs as God supported them, encouraged them, and gave them numerous confirmations of His love and presence with them.

Those who will go on to maturity and receive the reward of the overcomer are those who stand firm in their confidence of God's love for them. Those who are like the Israelites when God tested them at the Red Sea, who display no confidence in His love for them, will fail to follow Him down the paths He would lead them down. These will form gods after the fashion of the ones in Egypt; gods that will allow them to party and celebrate all the excesses of the flesh.

This is the message of the golden calf that Aaron made for the people of Israel to worship. Yahweh was too severe for them. Yahweh was hard on the flesh of the people, and they wanted a god that would not lead them to suffering, but to pleasure instead. So they fashioned this god of their own imagination and then they frolicked before it. Has not the church done the same thing today? Has not the church despised the message of the cross and the true image of Christ and formed for themselves another Christ and adopted another gospel that will allow their flesh to remain untouched, and which will allow their soul to pursue all that it desires?

Yet there is a remnant people, like unto the tribe of Levi of old, who have not joined in the worship of this false god. These ones will be selected as kings and priests to serve in the presence of Yahweh. These will be given access to His presence and to His most holy things. These will bear the image of Christ and share in His glory.

I do not blame anyone for not desiring to suffer. Christ Himself has sympathy for us

in our trials. Yet He has testified that there is no other path to glory. The road is narrow and few there are that find it. I hope to be able to encourage my brothers and sisters in some small way to pursue the course before them. Do not shrink back, but cast yourself unreservedly into the hands of God. He is a just, merciful and loving God. In all we go through we will never be separated from His love. Is there anything more needful than the love of the One who holds our lives in His hands?

Prayer:

Father, may You have a host of glorified sons to come forth after the image of Your firstborn Son. Hold us to the course before us. You know our frame, that we are but dust. Have mercy upon us and pull us through when our strength and courage fails. Into Your hands we do commend our lives and we ask that You would deal with us as a loving Father with His willing children. Your mercies are new every morning. Lead us on the narrow path and hold tightly to our hand. Our hearts trust in You.

The Prayer of Faith

Beginning at the wedding of Cana, the disciples of Christ had seen Him perform one miraculous work after another. He had turned the water into wine. He had healed the sick. He had cast out devils. He spoke with a wisdom that was divine in origin, and the disciples rightly connected all of these things with the prayer life of Yahshua. It was the Father working through Christ that performed all of these things (John 14:10).

It is understandable then, that the disciples should come to Christ and ask Him to teach them how to pray. The saints today also need to know how to pray if they want to see God working through them in power. We have mentioned that there are many wrong ideas about faith today, such as is evidenced in the prosperity doctrine which I would define as ‘conceive it and believe it’, but others have called ‘name it and claim it’, or a host of other unflattering titles. Where do such false doctrines arise from? Often they arise from taking a single Scripture in isolation, without comparing Scripture to Scripture to get the full understanding of the mind of God. One such Scripture is as follows.

Matthew 7:7-8

“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.”

Let us suppose that these two verses are the only verses in the Bible that give instructions about prayer. If we were to take them by themselves we could well support the conceive it and believe it doctrine, and we could proclaim to all the saints that they can have anything their heart desires if they will simply ask, seek and knock. No other stipulations are listed here, so we could teach that the saint will receive a positive answer to their prayer every time that such a prayer is uttered.

Some in the prosperity camp do teach such a thing, and this passage above is often cited, yet some go a bit further by adding one more verse as a requirement, for they realize that not every prayer is answered. If every prayer is not answered, then it would be quickly obvious to all who have the least discernment that something is wrong with this teaching. Therefore, the following Scripture is cited.

Matthew 21:22

"And all things you ask in prayer, **believing**, you will receive."

Ah, this adds one more requirement to prayer! One must not only ask, seek and

knock, but they must believe that they will receive what they ask for. Now we have the two main tenets of the conceive it and believe it camp. There are a host of people who are proclaiming that Scriptural prayer that pleases God can be taught from these two passages I have cited. No other conditions apply, and any prayer that meets these two conditions will receive an answer. Many poor saints have been harangued by ministers and Christian brothers and sisters when their prayers were not answered. They have been told that they must be doubters, and that they have not prayed the prayer of faith.

Many years ago I read the book "Joni" that told the story of Joni Eareckson Tada. As a teenager she was involved in a diving accident and was paralyzed from the neck down. She has a worldwide ministry today and has impacted the lives of millions of people with a positive witness of the love of God in the midst of suffering. In the book she told of some saints who told her that she would be healed of her paralysis if she only prayed believing. Condemnation was put upon her, and she was told that her unbelief and sin were what prevented her from receiving healing.

There is an expression that speaks of 'kicking someone while they are down', and this speaks of a very low and diabolical action. It is something that the saints should not do, and certainly not to another child of God. Yet as Joni struggled to come to grips with the devastating physical suffering that had come upon her, she had saints add to her trial by heaping condemnation upon her. Joni testified that she did pray fervently for healing, yet God did not grant her request. Instead a great work of grace was wrought in her life where she learned to live joyfully before Christ without being delivered from her physical condition. The apostle Paul demonstrated this same thing many hundreds of years earlier.

II Corinthians 12:7-10

Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me -- to keep me from exalting myself! Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me. And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.

What was Paul's thorn in the flesh? I believe it was a physical condition that affected his eyesight and rendered him practically blind. I would not be contentious about this identification of his thorn in the flesh, but there is much evidence which I base this conclusion upon.

We can get an idea of what type of thorn in the flesh Paul had by reading the context of this passage. After stating that he was given a thorn in the flesh, he then states that he has learned to be content with it, and then he mentions specific things he is content with: weaknesses, insults, distresses, persecutions, and difficulties. We can then understand that Paul's thorn was one of these things, and he actually experienced all of them from time to time, and they are all types of messengers of Satan that keep us from exalting ourselves.

I think we can actually pinpoint Paul's specific thorn in the flesh by examining his writings to other churches. We know that when Paul first encountered Christ that he was blinded, and later something like scales fell from his eyes. He also refers to the awesome visions he was given in this same passage where he speaks of his thorn in the flesh. As mentioned, I believe his thorn was that his physical eyesight was impaired. It was so bad that he could not even write most of his own letters, but had to dictate them to others. We see evidence of his visual impairment in the following verses:

Galatians 4:12-15

I beg of you, brethren, become as I am, for I also have become as you are. You have done me no wrong; but you know that it was because of **a bodily illness** that I preached the gospel to you the first time; and that which was a trial to you in my bodily condition you did not despise or loathe, but you received me as an angel of God, as Christ Yahshua Himself. Where then is that sense of blessing you had? For I bear you witness that, **if possible, you would have plucked out your eyes and given them to me.**

Galatians 6:11

See with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand.

Paul spoke of a bodily illness to the Galatians, and he says that he knows the Galatian believers would have given him their own eyes if they could have, so the illness was one that affected his sight. He further gives evidence that it is he that is writing to them because he is writing in such large letters, again being evidence of his poor eyesight. In his epistle to the church in Rome we also read:

Romans 16:22

I, Tertius, who write this letter, greet you in the Lord.

Speaking of taking verses by themselves, this one is a good example of the trouble we could get in by coming to false conclusions. How many saints today have been taught that Tertius was the author of the book of Romans? If we took this verse by itself, we

could certainly conclude this was true. However, Tertius was not the author, he was merely the scribe. Paul dictated and Tertius wrote. This again is owing to Paul's poor eyesight. Paul did not even pen the book to the church in Corinth. He dictated it, and the only part he actually wrote was the greeting.

I Corinthians 16:21

The greeting is in my own hand -- Paul.

So we see from these words that Paul was troubled by poor eyesight that today would have been as bad as many who are considered legally blind. One can imagine how such a malady could be used to keep Paul humble. He could have the same reproach hurled at him that the Jews used to insult the Messiah, "He healed others, let him heal himself." Perhaps he even had to be led around by the hand when he met with the saints, in the same way that he had to be led to Damascus when he first encountered Christ.

Acts 9:8

Saul got up from the ground, and though his eyes were open, he could see nothing; and leading him by the hand, they brought him into Damascus.

This would certainly be a humbling thing. Consider then, whether I have correctly identified Paul's thorn or not, that Paul prayed three times for this thorn in his flesh to be removed, yet God did not remove it. This messes up the conceive it and believe it doctrine that is very popular today. Are we to accuse Paul of lacking faith to believe he would be healed? We know a lack of faith was not the reason, for Paul has declared that God spoke to him regarding this matter. God told him that it was His will for Paul to bear this infirmity to keep him from being exalted.

There must be more to godly prayer than just asking and believing. Some have gone a bit further and have added one more verse to their understanding.

I John 5:14

This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, *if we ask anything according to His will*, He hears us.

Now we are making some real progress in coming to discern what constitutes the true prayer of faith. It must be according to the will of God. In the previous chapter called "Faith Comes by Hearing" we saw that all faith arises out of a word from God. We must have a word to stand upon. We must know God's will in a matter. When we align ourselves with the will of God in any matter, and we pray according to the will of God while believing, we will have an answer. When the disciples asked Yahshua to teach them how to pray he began:

Matthew 6:9-10

Pray, then, in this way: “Our Father who is in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. **Your will be done**, on earth as it is in heaven.”

With these words, Yahshua revealed to His disciples that right prayer is that which seeks the will of the Father. When Paul discerned that it was not the will of the Father for his thorn in the flesh to be removed, he quit praying for God to remove it. He accepted the will of God, knowing that God is not obligated to answer any prayer that is not in accord with His will. How foolish we would be to continue seeking something that we know is not God’s will for us.

I have been led to read some books about the life of George Muller recently, and towards the end of his remarkable life he preached a message on prayer. What he shared is exactly what the Spirit has been expressing to my own heart. He did not hold to a conceive it and believe it attitude regarding prayer. He knew that other matters were involved. In 1880 he preached a sermon where he shared the following:

Had it been left to us to make promises concerning prayer, I do not know that you or I could have done any more than say, “Ask, and ye shall receive.” Yet, while the promise is so full, so deep, so broad, so precious in every way, we have here, as becomes us with other parts of the word of God, to compare Scripture with Scripture, because in other parts additions are made, or conditions are given, which, if we neglect, will hinder our getting the full benefit of prayer.

George Muller then went on to detail a number of conditions that were attached to the simple “Ask, and ye shall receive.” First, our petitions must be according to the will of God as is revealed in I John 5:14. Second, we must not ask on behalf of our goodness or merit, but in the name of the Lord Yahshua the Messiah.

John 14:13-14

“Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it.”

This is a very critical point. We are not to present our petitions, asking for an answer based upon our obedience or faithfulness to God, for this is to come to God in pride. We have nothing that He did not give to us. If we are faithful and obedient, it is because He has caused us to stand. We are to present our petitions in the name of His Son alone. We are accepted because of the work of Christ, and we need to humbly acknowledge this fact. We must all conclude that we are unworthy in ourselves to merit any favor from God, but in Yahshua we are considered worthy,

and in His name the Father is pleased to bestow great favor upon us.

Mr. Muller also mentioned Psalm 66.

Psalms 66:18

If I regard iniquity in my heart, Yahweh will not hear...

Mr. Muller expounded on this verse, “That is, if I live in sin, and go on a course hateful to God, I may not expect my prayers to be answered.” He went on to share that we must also exercise faith in the power and willingness of God to answer our prayers. This has been the central theme of this book. We must believe not only in God’s power, but in His willingness to act on our behalf. We must believe that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him. Mr. Muller pointed to the love of God in not withholding His own Son, but in sending Him to the cross on our behalf as the evidence of His love for us. He then gave one more point that is equally important, and failing in this point has led to many aborted answers to prayer.

We have to continue patiently waiting on God till the blessing we seek is granted. For observe, nothing is said in the text as to the time in which, or the circumstances under which, the prayer is to answered. “Ask, and it shall be given you.” There is a positive promise, but nothing as to time...

Moreover, we are never to lose sight of the fact that there may be particular reasons why prayer may not at once be answered. One reason may be the need for the exercise of our faith, for by exercise faith is strengthened. We all know that if our faith were not exercised it would remain as it were at the first. By the trial it is strengthened. Another reason may be that we may glorify God by the manifestation of patience. This is a grace by which God is greatly magnified. Our manifestation of patience glorifies God. There may be another reason. Our heart may not yet be prepared for the answer to our prayer.

I have often found that God will delay in answering my prayers, and at times He will be uncomfortably late and I will be tried severely. Yet as I have waited, and have not abandoned the course, but have continued looking intently at God to meet my need, my faith has been strengthened when the answer arrived. Back in November of 2002 I was working at the job God had provided for me, and He would allow me to seek no other employment even though my hours had been cut to only ten hours a week. Our bills were getting behind, and we were daily praying for the Father’s provision.

At this time I was particularly concerned about our power bill, as the power company was known to not show much grace to their customers who had fallen behind, and with the bill only a few days late they would send out a notice that service would be

discontinued if payment was not received in the next week. When the bill was due the Father had not yet provided the means to pay it. The notice came, and I was still unable to pay. The day that the notice said our power could be cut off on came and went, and still there was no money to pay the bill. I was expecting to see an employee of the power company show up any day to cut our power off, yet I continued to pray for God's provision to be manifested.

I only received a paycheck from my job once a month, this being on the last working day of each month. This date was several weeks past the cut-off date on the notice we received. Yet one week went by, and then two, and no one showed up to cut off our power. As the last week before I was to get paid arrived I thought we would perhaps make it, and no one would show up before I received my paycheck and was able to pay my bill.

On the day before I was to get paid my son came running into my room and said a man was in our yard, and he was from the power company. I looked out the window and I saw that he was at our meter and he was about to cut off our power, leaving us unable to cook, and all of our groceries in the refrigerator would spoil, and since it was November, we would also be left in a cold house. I walked out in the yard and spoke with the man. I told him I was to get paid the very next day and would be able to pay my bill then. He said that since he had never been to our house before on a similar call, that he would give us grace and not cut the power off. In the end, we never knew a loss of power, and God did meet our need, though He tested us severely. A couple days later we celebrated Thanksgiving, and we truly had much for which to be thankful.

God has tried us in similar ways many times, yet not once has He failed in providing what we needed. He has testified to us that He is our shepherd, and we will not want for any necessary thing.

The prayer of faith that pleases God is not one that is based upon a formula, but that which is founded upon our relationship with Him as our loving heavenly Father. All of the things spoken of prayer in this chapter will lead the saint to press into relationship with God. Prayer begins with discerning His will, and this requires an understanding of God, and His will for us. We must often press in to Him to discern a specific word for our circumstance, and this also necessitates communion with Him. Having discerned His will, we must then believe that He is able and willing to meet our request. Finally, we must wait patiently, trusting in His character, as we look for the answer to come. All of this leads the saint to an ever deepening fellowship with their heavenly Father.

The conceive it and believe it pattern of prayer does not bring forth this same

intimacy with the Father. Instead, it causes men and women to focus upon themselves as they determine for themselves what they want to pray for, and they then look inside themselves to find the faith necessary to obtain their desire. God is merely a distant and impersonal being who, not unlike a vending machine, provides the thing that the seeker requests. They put in their coin of faith, and out pops the answer.

I would think that anyone who truly desires to know God, Who called them to be His child, would find this latter form of prayer to be totally unsatisfying. It is also often ineffective, and leads people to many doubts about God's presence and care for them. Some have even abandoned the faith when they met with great disappointment and God did not meet them according to their expectation.

Prayer:

Father, we thank You for Your many tremendous assurances of Your love toward us. We thank You for so designing prayer that we are forced to seek Your face when we are seeking something from Your hand. As we come to You with our needs we are blessed by receiving much more than our petition, for we also gain a greater intimacy with You, learning of Your will, Your love, and Your faithfulness. May you receive glory as we wait patiently for Your provision and blessing.

A Final Word

In the pages of this book I have shared how my heavenly Father has wrought a number of tremendous deliverances in my life and that of my family. From healing my son of a hereditary bone disease that has no known cure, to healing my body from diabetes, to providing financially for us over the course of many months when He had called me out from wage earning, in all of these things we have seen the mighty hand of God supporting us and providing help in the time of need. We have also looked at examples found in Scripture of men like Abraham, Gideon, Joseph and David who have received children, won battles, received promotion and seen the faithfulness of God in a myriad of ways as they have stood firm in their confidence in Yahweh's love for them.

I do not want any child of God to think that such faith is the heritage of a few select men and women. The faith spoken of in this book is that which God desires to see present in the heart of ALL of His children. It is not some supernatural gift of faith, as that gift mentioned in I Corinthians 12:8 and 9, that is spoken of here, but rather that faith that is allotted to EVERY child of God.

Romans 12:3

For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith.

The saints do not need some supernatural gift of faith to manifest confidence in the love of God. They need only the measure that is given to them to follow Christ wherever He would lead them. Christ will not lead us into places that are beyond the measure of our faith to follow. Yet our faith, can be exercised and grow over time. We need not remain with the same measure of faith that we began with. The principle of God is true that those who are faithful with little things will be given greater things. Christ spoke a parable to His disciples that revealed the way to a greater faith.

Luke 19:12-26

So He said, "A nobleman went to a distant country to receive a kingdom for himself, and then return. And he called ten of his slaves, and gave them ten minas and said to them, 'Do business with this until I come back...' When he returned, after receiving the kingdom, he ordered that these slaves, to whom he had given the money, be called to him so that he might know what business they had done. The first appeared, saying, 'Master, your mina has made ten minas more.' And he said to him, 'Well done, good slave, because you have been faithful in a very little thing, you are to be in authority over ten cities.' The second came, saying, 'Your mina, master,

has made five minas.’ And he said to him also, ‘And you are to be over five cities.’ Another came, saying, ‘Master, here is your mina, which I kept put away in a handkerchief; for I was afraid of you, because you are an exacting man; you take up what you did not lay down and reap what you did not sow.’ He said to him, ‘By your own words I will judge you, you worthless slave. Did you know that I am an exacting man, taking up what I did not lay down and reaping what I did not sow? Then why did you not put my money in the bank, and having come, I would have collected it with interest?’ Then he said to the bystanders, ‘Take the mina away from him and give it to the one who has the ten minas.’ And they said to him, ‘Master, he has ten minas already.’ I tell you that to everyone who has, more shall be given, but from the one who does not have, even what he does have shall be taken away.”

If we take the measure of faith we have been allotted and we exercise it in obedience to God, bringing Him glory, He will bestow upon us a greater faith. However, if we take what we have and hide it in the dirt of this flesh (Matthew 25:25), bringing no increase or benefit to our Father in heaven, then even that which we had will be taken from us.

Matthew 25:29

For to everyone who has, more shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but from the one who does not have, even what he does have shall be taken away.

The Scriptures are plain that our faith can grow, and it is the normal course of things for faith to do so. Paul wrote to the Corinthian saints:

II Corinthians 10:15

But with the hope that **as your faith grows**, we will be, within our sphere, enlarged even more by you...

George Muller was a man who lived an extraordinary life of faith, and he has given much hope and encouragement to the saints who have heard of his life, and read about him in the many books that were written by him and about him. Mr. Muller was intensely interested in seeing the faith of God’s children built up, and he gave much advice on the matter, including the following quote taken from a biography of his life written by Roger Steer.

Muller’s answer to those who asked how they might have their faith strengthened was as follows. He would begin by quoting James 1:17: “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness or shadow of turning.” Then he would point out that as the increase of faith is a good gift, it must come from God, and therefore He ought to be asked for the blessing. But, in addition, he recommended four steps which those who wished

to see their faith increased could take to help the process along.

First, he advised ‘the careful reading of the word of God, combined with meditation on it.’ This, he said, is how the believer learns more of the nature and character of God and ‘thus sees more and more, besides His holiness and justice, what a kind, loving, gracious, merciful, mighty, wise and faithful being He is’, and therefore when difficulties arise ‘will repose upon the **ability** of God to help him’, having ‘seen instance upon instance in the Holy Scriptures in which His almighty power and infinite wisdom have been actually exercised in helping and delivering His people; and he will repose upon the **willingness** of God to help him, because he has not only learned from the Scriptures what a kind, good, merciful, gracious and faithful being God is, but because he has also seen in the word of God, how in a great variety of instances He has proved Himself to be so.’

Secondly, he warned that ‘it is of the utmost importance that we seek to maintain an upright heart and a good conscience, and, therefore, do not knowingly and habitually indulge in those things that are contrary to the mind of God... All my confidence towards God, all my leaning upon Him in the hour of trial will be gone, if I have a guilty conscience, and do not seek to put away this guilty conscience, but still continue to do things which are contrary to the mind of God. And if, in any particular instance, I cannot trust in God, because of the guilty conscience, then my faith is weakened by that instance of distrust; for faith with every fresh trial of it either increases by trusting God, and thus getting help, or it decreases by not trusting Him; and then there is less power of looking simply and directly to Him, and a habit of self-dependence is begotten and encouraged.’

Thirdly, he advised those who wanted their faith increased not to shrink from situations where their faith might be tested and thus strengthened. ‘In our natural state we dislike dealing with God alone... This cleaves to us, more or less, even after our regeneration. Hence it is, that, more or less, even as believers, we have the same shrinking from standing with God alone - from depending on God alone - from looking to Him alone - and yet this is the very position in which we ought to be, if we wish our faith to be strengthened.’ It is in trying situations, depending on God alone, that Muller said the believer ‘may see the hand of God stretched out on his behalf.’

Finally, Muller said it is important that ‘we let God work for us, when the hour of the trial of our faith comes, and do not do a work of deliverance of our own... However weak our faith may be, God will try it; only with this restriction, that as, in every way, He leads on gently, gradually, patiently, so as with reference to the trial of our faith... God never lays more upon us than He is willing to enable us to bear. Now when the trial of faith comes, we are naturally inclined to distrust God, and to trust rather in ourselves, or in our friends, or in our circumstances. We will rather work a

deliverance of our own somehow or another, than simply look to God and wait for His help... Would the believer, therefore, have his faith strengthened, he must especially, ***give time to God***, who tries his faith in order to prove to His child, in the end, how willing He is to help and deliver him, the moment it is good for him.' (From "George Muller - Delighted in God!" by Roger Steer.)

I have found my own faith strengthened as I have meditated on the lives and words of men of faith, such as Mr. Muller. It should be our aim to edify one another in this way, and I hope that this book in some measure has accomplished that aim. Paul wrote of the effect that the saints have on one another as the faith of one is brought into contact with the faith of another.

Romans 1:11-12

For I long to see you so that I may impart some spiritual gift to you, that you may be established; that is, ***that I may be encouraged together with you while among you, each of us by the other's faith, both yours and mine.***

Faith is such a precious thing. It is what Yahweh is searching for in the hearts of men and women. May Christ receive a positive answer to the question that lingers with such pregnant expectation to this day,

Luke 18:8

"When the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?"

May it be so, Father!

Amen!

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