

FIRST
PRINCIPLES

A STUDY OF THE ELEMENTARY PRINCIPLES OF CHRIST

FAITH

BOOK THREE

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Hebrews 6:1-2 *Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of **faith toward God**, of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.*

INTRODUCTION

We live in an exciting age in which signs and wonders are following those who are walking in faith through the power of the Holy Spirit. God is demonstrating the glory of His presence and the power of His touch in ways that have us on our faces before His awesome majesty. Additionally, He is responding to believing prayer by graciously healing and restoring us physically, mentally and emotionally. Yet, some Christians are not fully partaking of the benefits of their birthright and of the Kingdom. It seems hard for them to function in the realm of the spirit rather than the soul (intellect, will and emotions).

For new believers (or perhaps even those who have been Christians for many years) the answer may lie in the foundation of their faith. If the foundation is faulty, the whole house is in danger. However, when the foundation of faith is securely laid, the house will stand in times of testing (Matthew 7:24-27).

Who pursue different doctrines concerning faith which have lead them astray from the foundation. This has led to heresy, majoring on minor things, losing the first love, and building one's own kingdom rather than Christ's. When faith is not built on Jesus Christ, it will eventually become shipwrecked or ruined. Shipwrecked faith was mentioned numerous times throughout the New Testament times as those who:

- Fell into error regarding faith..... 1 Timothy 6:10, 21
- Denied the faith..... 1 Timothy 5:8
- Rejected the faith I Timothy 1:19

What then is the foundation of faith upon which all else is built? The Scriptures plainly indicate that the foundation of our faith is relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 3:11). It is responding to Him as Lord through obedience to His commands, then growing in maturity through continually abiding in His presence.

REPENTANCE AND FAITH

There is a basic fundamental relationship between repentance and faith that every Christian must understand in order to walk the path of faith. This relationship is stated in Hebrews 6 as repentance **from** dead works and faith **toward** God. Paul illustrated this fact clearly by preaching "... to Jews, and also to Greeks, *repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ*" (Acts 20:21). Repentance, which is a "turning from," is really not complete without a "facing toward" God.

Both repentance and faith are gifts from God, freely initiated according to His grace. They are inseparable; one cannot exist without the other. The

same Holy Spirit who creates within us the response of repentance also creates within us the ability to believe.

Ephesians 2:8 *For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God ...*

2 Timothy 2:25 *... if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth ...*

THE IMPORTANCE OF FAITH

Faith is the basic necessity of the Christian life. Only with faith can we perform what is necessary to live as a Christian.

It is by faith that we are saved (Ephesians 2:8; Romans 3:28).

It is by faith that the basic principles are established in a believer's heart and life (Hebrews 6:1).

It is only by faith that we can please God (Hebrews 11:6). It is by faith that we are sanctified (Acts 26:18).

It is by faith that we wage spiritual warfare (Ephesians 6:16; Hebrews 11:32-34).

It is by faith that we receive the promises of God (Hebrews 11:32-34). It is by faith that we live the Christian life (Galatians 2:20).

These Scriptures make it obvious that faith is vitally important to the Christian. It is absolutely impossible to be a Christian without faith, and it is also impossible to live the Christian life without faith. In fact, Romans 14:22-23 states that anything in our lives that is not of faith is sin. Faith is the basis of the Christian life. Since faith is so important, we need a better understanding of it.

DEFINITION OF FAITH

The Greek word for faith is "pistis," which means "firm persuasion; strong belief; conviction of the truth of anything; reliance upon this truth."

2 Timothy 1:12 *... for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day.*

Faith is not imagination nor the wishing of things into being. It is the conviction of truth by the inner working of the Holy Spirit, who only persuades us to believe what actually exists. If God gives us the faith for something, we can be sure that in the mind of God that thing really exists.

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

We cannot work ourselves up into believing. Faith is not the result of mental gymnastics. The Holy Spirit must place the ability to believe God within our hearts.

Ephesians 2:8 *For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God...*

God communicates His thoughts through His Word. When He enables us to hear what He is saying to us by the Spirit, He creates within us the response of believing, of being persuaded that what He is saying is indeed true and directed to us.

Romans 10:17 *So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*

Faith is more than merely believing certain things to be true. It is more than mentally agreeing with a set of facts. For example, it is not enough just to know and believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God who died for our sins. We must act on that belief by placing our trust and dependence in His blood and His finished work at Calvary. We must know the truth, we must believe the truth, but we must also commit ourselves totally to the truth. Faith is absolute trust, reliance and dependence on God.

Paul presents three basic kinds of faith: saving faith, doctrinal faith and practical faith. Saving faith is the initial faith which God bestows by grace to the unbeliever enabling him to repent and trust God (Ephesians 2:8).

KINDS OF FAITH

John 1:12-13 *But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.*

Doctrinal faith includes the convictions within the heart, the presuppositions which determine the acts of our will, and the principles which we live by or die for. It is by these life principles that choices are made. Doctrinal beliefs are those things we believe God has said concerning Himself and us.

1 Corinthians 16:13 *Watch, stand fast in the faith ...*

Jude 3 *... I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.*

Colossians 2:7 *...rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving.*

Practical faith is a lifestyle of daily confidence in God and obedience to God, placing no confidence in ourselves or our own abilities. When we abandon ourselves and throw ourselves completely upon God as our source, provision, strength, ability and authority; our total dependence and security is in Him. Obedient faith then appropriates the promises and provisions of the Word of God and the lifestyle of practical faith develops as we walk in them. We will further study this kind of faith in later lessons.

2 Corinthians 5:7 *For we walk by faith, not by sight.*

Romans 1:19-21 *And not being weak in faith, he did not consider his own body, already dead (since he was about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah's womb. He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform.*

FAITH TOWARD GOD

Faith is not simply the ability to look on the bright side or the power to cause impossible things to happen. Faith, like love and hope, is a matter of relationship. It is not "faith" that is the foundation of Hebrews 6:1, but "faith toward God." This means an attitude of complete confidence in the Person of God, rather than simply in the great things He can do.

When God spoke to Abraham concerning His desire to bless him and make him the father of many nations, He said first, "*I am Almighty God.*" Then He added, "*... I will make My covenant between Me and you, and will multiply you exceedingly ... I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you... .*" (Genesis 17:1-6). All the "I wills" depend on the one "I Am." It is the character of God that guarantees His promise.

Faith is the response in the heart of the believer to trust God's character and to take His Word as true and absolutely reliable.

All biblical faith begins with a divine revelation of God. "*... he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him*" (Hebrews 11:6). Before faith can be planted in the heart of a person, he must receive a word from God which reveals His character and His will. God honors faith and is always looking for a man who will believe the revelation of His character and His word. Faith is based upon the character of God, that is, knowing who God is and what God says.

FOUR EXAMPLES OF FAITH

1. **Abel** - Hebrews 11:4 tells us that faith is an offering—a sacrifice. Abel offered up his sacrifice and he also offered up his life. You and I must offer up our lives, too. Even as Abel's faith cost him his very life, your faith will also cost your life. You are no longer your own; you were bought with a price (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). You died with Christ and now live by His faith (Galatians 2:20). Abel's sacrifice speaks of His faith, for it was an act of worship based on what God had spoken.
2. **Enoch** - Faith is not only an offering, it is also a walk (Hebrews 11:5). Faith is a way of life that pleases God because it believes that He is and that He rewards those who seek Him (Hebrews 11:6). The Bible gives no indication that Enoch's walk was free of obstacles, trials or frustration, yet he continued on with God until God took him to heaven.
3. **Abraham** - Faith is not only an offering and a walk, but also a pilgrimage (Hebrews 11:8). Actually, Christians are foreigners—strangers in an alien society. We, like Abraham, are looking for "*... the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God*" (Hebrew 11:10).

4. **Moses** - Faith is also a choice (Hebrews 11:24-25). By faith, Moses chose to suffer afflictions with the children of God rather than enjoy the temporary pleasures of sin. This was not an easy choice, but choices of such magnitude and consequence will never be easy for anyone. Every person who is confronted with God's Word must make this choice.

Having repented and confessed faith in God, the new believer no longer lives according to the law of sin and death, but according to the law of faith.

Galatians 3:9-11 *So then those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham. For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them." But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for "The just shall live by faith."*

Herein is the law of faith: a man is justified before God by **faith** in the finished work of Christ (Romans 3:28), not by keeping a set of rules or by doing good works. We are reconciled to God and made righteous through the work of Christ as we identify ourselves with Him by faith. This faith is based on a thorough turning from self-reliance and dead works to a complete trust in the work of another-Jesus Christ. Instead of working to merit righteousness, we agree with God that this is impossible, and we accept His alternative, which is to credit us with the righteousness of Christ.

Romans 5:18-19 *Therefore, as through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous.*

It is true for each of us that the foundation of our faith must be based on Jesus Christ and His finished work on the Cross. God's decision to declare sinners righteous came from His own initiative. From before the foundation of the earth, even before all men sinned, God had planned a means of reconciliation through Christ. He had predetermined to justify man by identifying him with Jesus Christ. Therefore, together with the apostle Paul we can say, "... I know whom I have believed " (2 Timothy 1:12), and as a result of this personal acquaintance we have a solid confidence concerning the well-being of our soul. Jesus **is** the rock of our salvation!

RESPONSIVE READING

Question 1: What is faith?

- a. Faith means to be persuaded or convinced of a truth.

Romans 4:20-21 He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform.

- b. Faith is a placing of confidence.

Ephesians 3:12 *...in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him.*

- c. Faith is the substance or conviction of things hoped for, the assurance of things not seen.

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

Question 2: Where should our faith be directed?

Our faith must be directed toward God.

Hebrews 6:1-2 *Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God... .*

Question 3: Is it possible to be saved apart from faith?

- a. No, faith is absolutely essential to the new birth.

Ephesians 2:8 *For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God... .*

- b. Faith is the acceptance of Christ as the substitute for sin and as our Savior whereby we receive salvation.

Ephesians 1:13 *In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.*

Question 4: Is faith still necessary after we are born again?

Yes, faith is absolutely necessary to live the Christian life.

Galatians 2:20 *I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.*

HOMEWORK

1. What is the foundation of faith upon which all else is built?
2. What is the relationship between repentance and faith? Please explain.
3. What is the definition of faith?
4. Complete the following: Before _____ can be planted in the heart of a person, he must receive a _____ from God which reveals His _____ and His.
5. Have you found living by faith to be something that is difficult for you? How have you grown in faith in your experience with Jesus Christ?

In our study, we have come to understand that faith is the basic necessity of the Christian life. We are saved by faith and we now live by faith. Our nature, which was once turned toward the world and all it had to offer, has been completely changed. When we were brought into the family of God, we received the nature of God with the impartation of the Holy Spirit. We were made complete in Him (Colossians 2:10).

THE CRUCIFIED RESURRECTED LIFE

The life we now live as believers is not our own; it belongs to Christ. It is through faith that the truth of this reality is made possible within the life of the believer. When Jesus Christ was nailed to the cross, we were placed on the same cross with Him and actually died with Him. The realities of the new birth are enhanced with the understanding that as He was crucified, we actually **were crucified** with Him (Galatians 2:20). When He was raised, we were raised through the same operation of the power of God (Colossians 2:12). **We are dead** but yet **we live**. The life that we now live, we live by faith in the Son of God (Galatians 2:20). We were resurrected to a life of faith and power and a new dimension in a new kingdom. We are **in** the world, but no longer **of** this world. Everything about us is different from the way the world operates. What the world says is foolish (the cross) has become the foundation of our faith.

Romans 6:6 *...knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.*

It is through faith that we know we were crucified with Christ. The term "knowing" is a revelatory word meaning "to know that you know that you know." Just as we know by revelation that we are saved, we can also know that we have been crucified with our Lord. The Spirit within us must signify the truth to our spirit. "Yes, I am crucified; nevertheless, I live"-it is not until we receive this revelation through the Spirit that faith will be manifested, allowing us to believe what the Word shows us.

Romans 6:11 *Likewise you also, **reckon** yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Once we receive this revelation, it becomes necessary to reckon ourselves dead unto sin but alive unto God. To reckon is an accounting term which means to add up the facts. What are the facts? We have been crucified with Christ, and the Holy Spirit bears witness with our spirits that we are now sons of God. Note the order indicated in Romans: first comes the knowing (revelation) then comes the reckoning. It is impossible to reckon before knowing. It is only after we receive revelation that we can act upon it. Faith is the key to possessing the truths of the Kingdom. Without faith there is no maturing in the knowledge of God. Without faith there is no possessing. Without faith it is impossible to walk in a pleasing and confident relationship with the Father (Hebrews 11:6).

The Word of God is the source where all revelation is clearly defined. It has many things to say regarding our position in Christ. Positional truths are specific statements in the Bible concerning the believer's place or position provided

WHO WE ARE IN CHRIST

through Christ. It is through application of these precious truths that we begin to be conformed into the image of Christ (2 Peter 1:4). This is just a small portion of what the Word says about a believer:

I am in Christ, and Christ is in me (John 14:20)
I am forgiven of sins through Christ (Acts 13:38)
I am no longer a slave to sin (Romans 6:6)
I am being renewed day by day (2 Corinthians 4:16)
I am a holy temple of God (1 Corinthians 3:17)
I am made righteous in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:21)
I am complete in Christ (Colossians 2:10)
I am seated with Christ in the heavenly places (Ephesians 2:6)

Many believers do not experience these truths in their daily walk. They have been taught the positional truths of Christ without being taught that they can actually walk in these truths by faith. The positional promises are not just for when we walk through the gates of heaven one day, but are to be experienced in the overcoming life of the believer now.

We have seen the necessity of knowing the truth of who we are in Christ and of reckoning ourselves dead to sin and alive to God. We must begin to act like who we really are by putting off the old man and putting on the new (Ephesians 4:22-24). Romans 6:6-14 tells us that we must then present ourselves to God rather than to sin. We all know how to yield to sin, but we must learn to yield to God instead. By an act of our will we must say "No" to sin and "Yes" to God. By doing this we are presenting ourselves "... a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God..." (Romans 12:1).

ABIDING FAITH

Everyone who has a heart for God wants to know what it means to live in the realm of faith. There is more emphasis today on the teaching of faith than ever before. In some instances, there has been an overemphasis on faith that whole movements have been built on. People are hungry for real faith, but faith is more than "confessing and possessing." A faith-filled life is a relationship of complete and continual trust in God. It is a life whereby the believer puts no confidence in the flesh (Philippians 3:3), but all confidence in God. This life of total dependence upon God is called abiding faith. Jesus taught the principles of **abiding faith** throughout the Gospels. A major passage covering this truth is in John 15.

John 15:4-5, 7 *"Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. ... If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you."*

The word "abide" simply means "to stay." Our relationship to Christ can be better understood by comparing it with the relationship of the branch to the vine. The branch has no life of its own but is totally dependent on the vine. The branch cannot bear fruit apart from the vine. In fact, if the branch becomes separated

from the vine it dies, because it loses its source of life. As the branch must remain attached to the vine to survive, so must we continually abide in Christ.

We cannot have a life of faith outside of this branch-vine relationship because Jesus is our life (John 14:6). Faith will not bear eternal fruit outside of relationship with Him for He is the source of true faith. Without Him we can do nothing (John 15:5). Yet, through Him we can do all things (Philippians 4:13).

Through faith, we abide in active relationship with Christ. We approach Him in faith, and we abide in faith. _ It is through the revelation of this "in Him" principle that we understand where He has placed us positionally. We can come to know and experience an active relationship with Christ daily. It is not something that we experience only once in awhile, but it is a position in which we should remain. We experience it because we have been joined to Christ. The book of Romans compares this to a literal marriage relationship with Christ (Romans 7:4). At this present time, we are to bear fruit in this relationship and interchange of life. It is through the realization of this "in Christ" relationship that we enter into rest.

When Jesus issued His great invitation to enter into rest, He offered it in a twofold way. First, He offered rest to those who needed deliverance from the bondage of the world or the burden of living without a relationship with the Father. Second, He also talked of an inner rest for those who desire to know Him.

THE REST OF FAITH

Matthew 11:28-30 *"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you **rest**. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find **rest for your souls**. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."*

True faith rests upon the character of God and comes out of relationship with Him. As we come to find Him absolutely true and trustworthy and begin to understand His love and concern for us, a deep, bedrock trust develops in our hearts. We become convinced beyond any possible doubt that God is altogether worthy of our trust. Even when we do not understand God's ways, we must trust in His character. As long as we question the wisdom of any of God's ways, our faith is still undeveloped and lacking (Hebrews 11:6).

Jesus taught about coming to a rest of faith where we are no longer anxious about the things of life (Matthew 6:25-34). If by faith we believe that the Father cares for us and is in control of the circumstances and events of our lives, then all anxiety may be released. To do otherwise is to control our own lives. The Lord desires us to come to the place where we can say in faith with the apostle Paul, *"... I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content"* (Philippians 4:11). The "roll call of faith," Hebrews Chapter 11, focuses on maintaining **our confidence in God** and being willing to glorify and obey Him, even at great personal cost.

Our whole lives should be characterized by an attitude of faith which finds its strength in the character of God. The key to the life of faith lies in having an individual revelation of God. We must see Him as He is:

1. God is Pre-eminent over all, Creator, Sustainer, Designer, Eternally, Existent, Lord over all lords and King over all kings (Revelation 19).
2. God has chosen us, so we need a definite sense of being called and special to Him (1 Thessalonians 1:4, 1 Peter 2:9).
3. God has given great and precious promises to us (2 Peter 1:3-4).
4. God possesses the power to bring about what He has promised. Our lives are in His hands to complete what He began in us (Philippians 1:3-6).

Romans 4:16-25 portrays Abraham as an example of faith for all believers. In studying these verses, we find that Abraham had a **revelation of God's character** (verse 17, 21) and of **God's will** (verse 18). He responded by accepting God's promise (verse 18), renouncing all confidence in human ability (verse 19, 20) and resting on the faithfulness of God (verse 21). He did not waver through unbelief.

The life of faith is characterized by throwing ourselves completely upon God in dependence, confidence and trust. When we do this, we are able to say, "*Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him*" (Job 13:15). Faith means to trust absolutely in and depend upon God, no matter what the circumstances. This life of dependency on God is also exemplified in the lives of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. When they were ordered by King Nebuchadnezzar to worship the gold idol under the threat of being burned alive, the three Israelites demonstrated their complete dependency upon God by saying:

Daniel 3:16-18 ... "*O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. If that is the case, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and **He will deliver us** from your hand, O king. **But if not**, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up.*"

This "but if not" kind of faith absolutely trusts in God no matter what. It means to trust God in the good times as well as the bad, in times of plenty as well as lack, and in times of joy as well as mourning. This is what Paul meant when he said, "*I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me*" (Philippians 4:13). He did not mean that we will always do great and magnificent things for God. He meant that we can face whatever comes our way through abiding faith in Christ.

Moses, when beseeching the Lord to show His glory, wanted to enter into a deeper relationship with Him. God answered and promised Moses that he and the nation of Israel would have two characteristics which would distinguish them from all the other nations of the earth. The first was God's presence in their midst and the second was the fact that they would enter into His rest (Exodus 33:14).

The **rest** which the nation of Israel experienced was:

Daily provision with manna from heaven and water from the Rock.

Daily protection from the elements and their enemies.

Daily direction with the cloud by day and the fire by night.

Faith is the key required to enter into the rest of the Lord. We have the promise of rest and it is through this promise that faith can be appropriated, and rest obtained. We enter into rest when we cease from our labors, dead works, strivings and frustrations, and allow Jesus to live His life through us. We then know His daily provision, protection and direction through the Holy Spirit living within us. We can only enter this rest through faith. The children of Israel could not enter into the promised rest because of unbelief and neither will we if we do not believe (Hebrews 4).

Faith is the substance of the whole Christian life upon which a relationship with God is built. As we come to know God and understand His ways, we are able to cast ourselves upon Him, allowing Him to prove Himself as a faithful God who is caring and understanding about our daily needs. Out of our dependency upon God, faith begins to grow and mature. Faith, then, is bringing one's self under total submission to God's will.

SUMMARY

God does indeed want to bless His children. The real issue, however, is the purpose for which God blesses us. God's blessing is not just for our personal gain but is intended to benefit and bless all the peoples of the earth. To understand this distinction makes all the difference in the world. We need to view ourselves in partnership with God, participating in making the Kingdom of God a reality in our spheres of influence.

Every true Christian has faith. When we are born again, the Holy Spirit comes to impart God's divine nature to us (2 Corinthians 5:17) and we become partakers of the character of God (2 Peter 1:4). Now we need to cultivate this character within us, and let Jesus be manifested through us by the power of the Holy Spirit. We must live like Jesus lived on earth by listening to the Father and doing the works of the Father (John 8:28). To live by faith is to be so in communion with God that when He speaks, we are instantly obedient.

RESPONSIVE READING

Question 1: What is abiding faith?

Abiding faith is a life of total dependence upon God.

John 15:4-5 *"Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine; you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing."*

Question 2: What are some of the results of abiding faith?

- a. Abiding faith brings a Christ-like walk.

1 John 2:6 *He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.*

- b. Abiding faith brings answer to prayer.

John 15:7 *"If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you."*

- c. Abiding faith brings fruitfulness in Christ.

John 15:5 *"I am the vine; you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing."*

Question 3: What does the Bible say concerning a believer in Christ?

- a. I am in Christ, and Christ is in me.

John 14:20 *"At that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you."*

- b. I am the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus.

2 Corinthians 5:21 *For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*

- c. I am seated with Christ in heavenly places.

Ephesians 2:6 *And raised us up together and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.*

- d. I am complete in Christ.

Colossians 2:10 *And you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.*

- e. I am more than a conqueror in Christ.

Romans 8:37 *Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.*

In the previous lesson we discussed the importance of walking in an abiding faith relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. We need to know Him as the author and finisher of our faith. We must be persuaded that He is able to do what He has promised to do. Without this relationship of trust and reliance upon God, it is impossible to please Him (Hebrews 11:6). It is through this relationship that we are to begin developing a mature faith.

In this lesson we will answer some important questions about faith:

1. What is faith's relationship to the Scriptures?
2. What is the difference between the Word of God and a word from God?
3. What is the difference between "logos" and "rhema"?
4. Can one take any promise in the Bible and try to possess it by faith, or is it necessary to personally hear from God concerning each promise?
5. How do you know you are hearing the voice of God?

These are only a few of many questions that arise in our hearts when it comes to understanding and building personal faith. The Bible does have a clear answer pertaining to all these questions. There is a clear biblical teaching on faith that doesn't make God the servant of the believer or bring the believer back under legalism.

The Christian life is a life of faith, but the question is, upon **what** is this faith based? The true foundation of the Christian life is Jesus Christ Himself! It is not a set of beliefs, not a church, denomination or creed. It is Jesus Christ Himself, for "*... no other foundation can anyone lay...*" (1 Corinthians 3:11, Isaiah 28:16, 1 Peter 2:6). This refers to the individual and personal experience of Jesus Christ the Son of God as revealed by the Holy Spirit. "*And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent*" (John 17:3).

FAITH'S RELATIONSHIP TO SCRIPTURE

Now we come to a very important point: the relationship between Jesus Christ and the Word of God. It goes without saying that throughout the scriptures the Bible declares itself to be the "Word of God." On the other hand, there are a number of passages in Scripture where the same title-the Word or the Word of God-is given to Jesus Christ Himself (John 1: 1, 14; Revelation 19:13). Before the foundations of the world, Christ was the eternal Word with the Father. In his incarnation Christ is the Word made flesh. In this sense, Christ is perfectly one with the Scripture. Both are the Word of God since each is a divine, authoritative, perfect revelation of God and each agrees perfectly with the other. The Scripture perfectly and prophetically reveals Christ and Christ perfectly fulfills the Scripture. Scriptures are the written Word of God; Christ is the living Word of God. There is absolutely no disagreement between the Bible and what Jesus said, did, or is doing.

The source of true biblical faith is the Word of God (Romans 10:17), which means to hear the Lord Jesus Christ speak to our hearts by the Holy Spirit. The Living Word, Jesus Christ, is the author and finisher of our faith (Hebrews 12:2). The source of true faith then is both Christ, the Living Word, and-Scripture, the written Word.

With this respect for the authority of the Bible, coupled with a desire to mature in Christ, the believer is in a position to receive faith as he hears the Lord speak from the Word and then obediently applies the teachings to his life. In this way, Christ manifests Himself to each disciple (John 14:23) and a personal relationship with the Lord is built. It is in relationship with the Living Word that God uses the Scripture to speak to His people, reveal Himself to His people, guide and direct His people, and consequently establish faith in His people.

LOGOS The Bible teaches that the natural mind cannot understand spiritual things unless they are revealed by the Spirit of God (1 Corinthians 2:10-14). Revelation and faith come through the Holy Spirit breathing life upon the Word of God. However, there is a difference between the Word of God in general and the word of God which is spoken specifically to you. In the Greek New Testament this is usually differentiated by the two words, "logos" and "rhema."

According to Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, "**logos** denotes the expression of thought – not the mere name of an object – as embodying a conception or idea." The full meaning of logos extends beyond a specific word that is spoken or written. Logos actually refers to the whole communication process. This includes the forming of thoughts, the choosing of words, the speaking forth of these words, and the reception and understanding of these words in the mind of the hearer.

Logos as used in Scripture can refer to man-to-man communication or it may signify communication from God to man. Several instances are observed in the New Testament where logos refers to the Old Testament. An example is when Jesus accused the Jews of making void the word of God by their traditions (Mark 7:13). Jesus Himself was also an agent of God's communication. Luke recorded that the crowd was pressing upon Jesus "... to hear the word of God" (Luke 5:1).

Logos is the sum total of God's utterances, including the law, the prophets and the gospels. It is God's speech, His discourse, which is true everywhere under all conditions. In this sense, logos is the unchanging, self-existent Word of God. It is God's counsel, settled in eternity before time began and due to continue into eternity long after time has run its course. David spoke of this divine logos in Psalm 119:89 when he said, "*Forever, O LORD, Your word is settled in heaven.*" Nothing that happens on earth can ever affect or change this word that is eternal in heaven.

Most significantly, logos is used as a name for the eternal Christ who became flesh—the living expression of God's will, and the perfect revelation of His character to man. The first chapter of the Gospel of John states that Jesus is the Logos of God. W. E. Vine says that Jesus, "...was the Shekinah glory in open manifestation. 'The only begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him,' thus fulfilling the significance of the title "Logos," the Word, the personal manifestation, not a part of the Divine nature, but of the whole Deity."

Hallelujah! The eternal God became flesh, clothed with manhood. The **logos was clothed with flesh** to win our eternal salvation. Without a doubt this is the highest use of logos in the history of literature; the Word was God (John 1:1)! The ultimate meaning of **Logos** is the incarnate Word of God, Jesus Christ. The Word who was present at the beginning is God's last Word to man: Jesus, the eternal Word of the eternal God (Hebrews 1:2). In Jesus, the Word of God, the Logos of God took final and absolute form.

In the Old Testament man spoke as God gave utterance. The "word of God" came upon the prophet and he spoke it without regard to his personal condition (Numbers 23:5-12). God's word flowed through him without the feelings or opinions of the man being expressed. However, a physical body was prepared for the Word of God (Hebrews 10:5), and the Word became flesh (John 1:14). Jesus, as the Logos of God, was the pure Word of God.

Think about a "word" for a moment. When someone speaks a word, what are they saying? They are speaking themselves. Whatever you are, that is what you are saying. The sound or articulation that you put to "you" are the clothes that are on your thoughts so that you can be understood. Clothes that are on your words are not flesh but sound. A word is a thought expressed in such a way that it is understood by someone else.

When Jesus came, He was God and He was God's word. When God spoke, He spoke Himself. God's word became flesh; God's word became man. Everything that God spoke was gathered in a body of flesh. Now the Word was dressed in a man so that it had human thoughts, human feelings and human opinions. Jesus was (and is) all God and all man. Now the Word (Logos), instead of coming upon a man, is embodied in a man. Something has changed. God's Word has become flesh and uses all the feelings of man. In Jesus the human thoughts and feelings are also God's thoughts and feelings. Here was a man who, when He expressed thoughts, expressed God's thoughts. Here was a man who was the Word of God, the Logos, and as He expressed it with human feelings, it was God's feelings toward man. God did not want His word to be **just** words, but He wanted His Word to be a Person.

Rhema is defined by Vine's as "...that which is spoken, what is uttered in speech or writing; in the singular, a word; in the plural, speech, discourse... .The significance of rhema (as distinct from logos) is exemplified in the injunction to take 'the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God,' Ephesians 6:17; here the reference is not to the whole Bible as such, but to the individual scripture which the Spirit brings to our remembrance for use in time of need, a prerequisite being the regular storing of the mind with Scripture."

RHEMA

Rhema is derived from a verb meaning "to speak," and denotes specifically a **word that is spoken** – something that occurs in time and space. In Romans 10:17, when Paul said, "...*faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God,*" he used the word **rhema**, not **logos**. This agrees with the fact that he couples "word" with "hearing." Logically, in order to be heard, a word, must be spoken.

Some people "have twisted Romans 10:17 to mean, "faith comes by the word of God." This is not what this passage says or means. Faith does not come by the word of God; faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. We are responsible to read the Bible and as we do, God will speak to us. When He speaks, hearing His rhema word will impart faith to us.

Rhema often refers to a word which is spoken so that a particular action can be taken. In John 1 logos is divine, while rhema may be a human word. The logos tends to be general, while the rhema is often used in the specific sense. The logos is objective, while the rhema is often subjective, a word spoken for a particular occasion to a particular person. The logos is eternal, while the rhema is for the present. This means that when we read the Bible, we need to distinguish between the rhema – the word which is spoken to a particular person, and the logos – the word which is eternal.

This is not to say that we may ignore the logos while waiting for a rhema. The Bible is the expressed will of God. Obedience to the logos is obedience to the expressed will of God. God expands our understanding of His will as we are obedient to His word. Disobedience stops this flow of revelation. The emphasis of rhema is on the actual word spoken. Many of us heard the gospel many times before we responded to it. When we heard the gospel, was it not logos the first time we heard it? Of course, it was, but as we listened, the Holy Spirit brought increasing conviction to us. Then one wonderful day the word became rhema to us, we heard the voice of God and responded to Him. This is precisely what Romans 10:17 means. The word (rhema) of God causes us to hear and hearing brings about faith.

So then, rhema refers to an **event** of revelation. That is to say, when God shows up something happens, and that "thing" is called rhema. An illustration regarding initial salvation will be helpful here. The event of Christ's death and resurrection can be seen as a mere historical fact. Believing this truth would be sufficient if salvation was determined by passing a true-false examination. On the other hand, if a man participates in the "rhema" of the event, that is, if he died with Christ was buried with him and raised to walk in newness of life-then his faith is no longer an intellectual exercise related to an historical event. His faith becomes a spiritual reality as a result of being "audience" to the divine rhema. This changes his very being at the core.

The Holy Spirit is the agency of the rhema, the specific word of God. As noted earlier, the logos of revelation is identified with God ("*the word was God*"). Jesus came as Son to manifest the Father. As Jesus, the Logos, became flesh, He bore witness of His Father. God the Son is the one who reveals God the Father. However, it is the Holy Spirit who imparts the reality of that revelation to man through rhema.

The Holy Spirit will take the very words that will meet your need at a particular moment and impart His life to them. They become a rhema – something you can "hear" – a living voice speaking to your heart. This agrees with Paul's statement in 2 Corinthians 3:6, "... *the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.*" Apart from the

Holy Spirit, there is no rhema. In the Bible, the logos – the total counsel of God – is made available to us, but logos is too vast and complex to comprehend or assimilate in its totality. Rhema is the means by which the Holy Spirit takes a portion of logos and relates it to our time and human experience. Rhema is that portion of the total logos that the Holy Spirit applies at a certain point in time to a particular situation. Through rhema, logos is divinely applied to our lives and thus becomes specific and personal to us. We cannot, by our own study and will, convert logos to rhema; the action of the Holy Spirit is required for logos to become rhema. .

Rhema is not merely teaching or preaching **about** Christ. It is the event itself being made real to the individual by the Holy Spirit. This might "happen" while listening to a sermon or a teaching or while reading the Bible. Rhema does not come as a result of studying logical proofs, though one might be studying proofs at the time. Rhema might even come in a flash of light when one is going against God. This is what happened to Saul of Tarsus; rhema came as an event of God presenting Himself to man as the Redeemer. Rhema always comes as "Emmanuel," God with us here and now for this situation.

We may sum up the relationship between logos and rhema in the following statements:

- Rhema takes the eternal logos and injects it into time.
- Rhema takes the heavenly logos and brings it down to earth.
- Rhema takes the potential logos and makes it actual.
- Rhema takes the general logos and makes it specific.
- Rhema takes a portion of the total logos and presents it in a form that man can understand.

At this point, the response required from us is "hearing." To the extent that we "hear," we receive faith. What then is involved in "hearing?" Sometimes it is simply a "knowing," an inner sense that a particular logos has been enlightened by the Holy Spirit. Another time a word may "show up" again and again without it becoming a rhema, but as we meditate upon it in patience, the revelation will be given by the Holy Spirit. Similarly, when we are in need of a word on which to stand in faith, it must be possessed in patience. While resting in the absolute character of God, we give close, undivided attention to what God is saying to us by His Holy Spirit. We incline our ears and adopt a humble, teachable attitude toward God. We renounce our own prejudices and preconceptions and accept what God says in its most plain and practical meaning. We focus our eyes on the words to which God has directed us. Even when the words are no longer before our eyes, we continue to meditate on them in our hearts. In this way, we retain them continually at the center of our being and their influence permeates every area of our lives.

HEARING AND KNOWING

As God's rhema comes to us in this way, it is both specific and personal; it comes to each of us directly and individually from God. It is appropriate to a specific time and place. It presupposes an ongoing, personal relationship with God. By each successive rhema, God guides us in the individual walk of faith to which He

has called us. A rhema that is given to one believer may not be appropriate for another believer or even for the same believer in another stage of his experience.

The life of continual dependence upon God's rhema is clearly seen in the words which Jesus used to answer Satan's first temptation in the wilderness: *"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word (rhema) that proceeds from the mouth of God"* (Matthew 4:4). The word "proceeds" is in the continuous present tense. We could say "every word as it proceeds (or is proceeding) out of the mouth of God." Jesus is referring here to a specific word proceeding directly from God and energized by "the breath of His mouth," which is the Holy Spirit. This is our "daily bread"-always fresh, always "proceeding." As we live in continual dependence upon God's Word, it imparts to us, day by day, the faith by which "the righteous man will live."

HAVING A GOOD REPORT

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

Throughout Hebrews Chapter 11, there are many great examples of Bible "faith people." What was it that distinguished these people as men and women of faith? The answer is that each heard and obeyed a rhema word from the Lord. This can be best explained in the following way:

Elders (vs. 2).....obtained a good report
Abel (vs. 4).....obtained witness regarding his sacrifice
Enoch (vs. 5)..... had testimony from God that he pleased Him
Noah (vs. 7)was warned by God of the coming flood
Abraham (vs. 8) was called out by God
Sarah (vs. 11)..... knew God was faithful because He promised
Isaac and Jacob (vs. 20-21)had the same promise as their father

All the others mentioned in Hebrews 11 obtained a good report through faith (vs. 39). These are all examples of people who obtained a good report by believing that what God had said would come to pass. They saw the promises afar off and embraced them, even though they did not see the fulfillment of the promises in their day (Hebrews 11:13, 39). They received rhema from God many times through personal visitations from the Lord. We today have the same opportunity to obtain a good report by receiving God's promises through the rhema of the Spirit and possessing them as our own through faith and patience.

SUMMARY

Finally, let's summarize the answers to the questions we asked at the beginning of the lesson.

1. What is faith's relationship to the Scriptures?

The source of true biblical faith is hearing the Word (rhema) of God (Romans 10:17), which is to hear the Lord Jesus Christ speak to the heart. Most of the time He speaks through the Bible.

2. What is the difference between the Word of God and a word from God?

The Word of God is the Bible, the Logos, the Scriptures, and is God's general word to all. A word from God is a specific word to a specific person.

3. What is the difference between "logos" and "rhema"?

Logos is God's general, unchanging counsel manifested in the Bible and in Jesus. Rhema is a specific word from God for a particular person at a particular time.

4. Can one take any promise in the Bible and try to possess it by faith, or is it necessary to personally hear from God concerning each promise?

Any promise must be made alive (rhema) to us personally by the Holy Spirit before it can be possessed. Sometimes patiently waiting on God is a necessary part of the process.

5. How do you know you are hearing the voice of God?

There is an inner intuitive "knowing" in your spirit which will always line up with the written Word of God.

RESPONSIVE READING

Question 1: What is the Word of God?

- a. The Bible is the written Word of God.

2 Timothy 3:16 *All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.*

- b. Jesus Christ is the living Word of God.

John 1:1, 14 *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ... And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.*

Revelation 19:13 **He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God.**

Question 2: Can we understand the Word of God on our own?

No, we need the Holy Spirit to reveal truth to us.

1 Corinthians 2:11-12 *... Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.*

John 16:13 *However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth...*

Question 3: Does the Word of God produce faith?

The Word of God causes us to hear, and hearing produces faith.

Romans 10:17 *So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*

Question 4: Can we produce faith on our own?

No, we must depend upon the Lord to begin and complete our faith.

Hebrews 12:2 *Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

Ephesians 2:8 *For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God.*

HOMEWORK

1. What is the source of true biblical faith?
2. What is the best definition of the word "logos?"
3. What is the best definition of the word "rhema?"
4. What does it mean to obtain a good report?
5. Do you consider it important to have rhema regarding faith? Please explain.

INTRODUCTION

In studying faith, we have covered some very important principles concerning the foundation of our faith. God is the object of our faith as well as the source of our faith. Faith originates with God and not within the heart of man. Faith is an eternal principle that has come from God as a gift to us through grace (Ephesians 2:8-9). As we keep our sight continually on God, the source of revelation, we find that we are in a cycle of ever-increasing faith. We recognize that faith's beginning and completion is in Christ, who is the author and finisher of our faith (Hebrews 12:2).

By revelation, God has placed within man a measure of faith (Romans 12:3). This faith must begin to grow and develop into mature faith through active relationship with Him. We learned that "...*faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*" (Romans 10:17). This verse gives us the key to developing faith. We must learn to hear God's voice by spending time with Him in prayer and in the Word. As we commune with Him, He will reveal His heart to us. It is by the realization that we have touched God's heart and heard from Him that our faith is built.

Hebrews 11: 1 describes faith as the "... *substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.*" If faith is going to become a tangible reality, we must understand and believe in our hearts that the basis of faith is Christ in us, the hope of glory (Colossians 1:27). Our faith is not in methods, formulas, confessions or even in our own faith. Our faith is in the reality of the Living God who is alive in us. As Christ is being formed in us through death to self, the renewing of our minds and the believing of our hearts, then His faith can be manifested through us. We cannot even hope to manifest God's kind of faith outside of relationship with Him. Let us first look at the process of renewing the mind.

The mind is the battlefield where the fight of faith takes place. It is here that Satan fights to control man. Since the Fall, the mind of man has been blinded (2 Corinthians 3:14, 4:4) and controlled by Satan (Ephesians 2:3, Colossians 1:21, Romans 8:7). After regeneration the child of God has a new heart and life but retains the same mind which will continue to be assaulted and can be deceived (2 Corinthians 11:3-4). He has a heart after God with pure intentions, but his thoughts may be confused. It is possible to have a heart full of love yet lack mental perception in spiritual matters. If the believer is to live a full life, his mind must be renewed. Every believer must deal with this question: "**Who controls my mind?**"

RENEWING THE MIND

Romans 12:2 *And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.*

The Word of God exhorts us to have a renewed mind. How we think determines whether or not we will be transformed to the Word of God or conformed to the world. Our actions are determined by the choices we make. Our choices are determined by what is in our hearts and consciences. These in turn are affected

by what we allow to enter our minds through the eye or ear gates. This is the reason it is so important that we be selective in what we watch or hear. There is a high-tech law for computers called GIGO, "garbage in, garbage out." In other words, what is put in is what comes out. This simply states that we are a product of what we see and hear. This agrees entirely with the Scripture.

Matthew 6:22-23 *"The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness ..."*

Proverbs 23:7 *For as he thinks in his heart, so is he.*

Matthew 15:18 *"But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man."*

The spiritual principle of sowing and reaping applies to the mind:

If You: Sow a Thought.....	You: Reap an Action
Sow an Action.....	Reap a Habit
Sow a Habit	Reap a Character
Sow a Character	Reap a Destiny

The transforming of the believer by the renewing of the mind is accomplished by a continual abiding relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. Spending time in the presence of God provides the atmosphere and desire for change.

2 Corinthians 3:18 *But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.*

As we spend time with God, we get to know Him better. As we cultivate this relationship, hear from Him and obey His voice, our minds are renewed. Simply stated, the renewed mind becomes reality when we choose to believe God's Word above everything else. Believing God's Word is the first step into the realm of the renewed mind.

**IS FAITH
CONTRARY TO
KNOWLEDGE?**

Several years ago a Bible teacher asked a very important question, "Does faith need to be based on blind trust or is there such a thing as intelligent faith?" Faith is based upon a higher knowledge which can only come from God. Revelation does not contradict historical and scientific fact when these are based on truth and not on incomplete evidence. Some things men call knowledge are only conjecture or opinion rather than fact. Faith rests solidly on truth as revealed by God. Faith therefore gives us understanding of all that is real. Faith is based on fact (truth).

Hebrews 11:3 *By faith we understand...*

Faith is the acceptance of God's truth as it is revealed to us; it is not limited to what can be learned through our senses or scientific investigation. Since God is Spirit, some things can only be spiritually discerned (1 Corinthians 2:10-16).

Faith is based on the most objective truth in the universe. Nothing is more solid and reliable than God (Hebrews 6:13-19). Faith is not merely a "working hypothesis." The Christian has a commitment to absolute truth, to a God who cannot lie.

Hebrews 8:10 *"For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put **My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts**; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people."*

**DIFFERENTIATING
BETWEEN THE
MIND AND THE
HEART**

The Greek word for "mind" in the above verse is "dianoia," which means "deep thought or understanding." It is a derivative of the more prevalent Greek word in the New Testament, "nous," which means "the intellect; mind; the understanding." Both Greek terms are from a root word which means "to know." When God puts His laws in our minds, He is depositing them in our memory, our understanding, our intellect. Borrowing again from computer terminology, our mind is both our central processing unit which processes information in an established manner and our memory bank which stores information.

The word "heart" in Hebrews 8:10 is "kardia" in the Greek, from which we derive several medical terms. Its Greek meaning is quite enlightening: aside from "heart," it also means "the thoughts or feelings of the mind." So, what are thoughts? In the simplest of terms, our thoughts are the medium of communication which operates within our soul (mind, will and emotions) and our spirit. To complete the comparison with computers, thoughts are comparable to a computer's software. When the laws of God are written on our hearts, the laws of God become our thoughts. We meditate on the Word and law of God in our soul and spirit. When we receive a new heart from God at regeneration, the focus of our thoughts is changed from the things of this world to the things of God.

Ezekiel 11:19-20 *"Then I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within them, and take the stony heart out of their flesh, and give them a heart of flesh, that they may walk in My statutes and keep My judgments and do them; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God."*

Faith is unable to take root and develop in a hardened heart (Mark 3:5, 16:14), so a "heart transplant" was necessary for us to believe in and follow after God. As we study the Scriptures with an understanding that the word "heart" can often be interchanged with thoughts, we can see that the mind (knowledge and intellect) and heart (thoughts and feelings) must respond together for faith to be active, real and alive. If we are only responding to the Word through the mind, then we become as legalistic as the Pharisees. If we only respond to the Word through the heart, we may become overly emotional and our minds fail to become renewed. We may also become the prey of those who deceive through abuse of the Word or those who draw upon the emotions to manipulate.

Romans 10:8-10 *But what does it say? "The word is near you, even in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith which we preach): that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes to righteousness, and with **the mouth** confession is made to salvation.*

It is with the heart (thoughts) that man believes. The mind must be renewed to think the thoughts of God and provide an understanding of what we believe. The mouth then speaks forth as a confession an expression of our belief that is contained in our heart and mind (thoughts and understanding).

Many people say that they believe the Word from Genesis to Revelation. They boast of having a good relationship with Jesus, but there is not a corresponding attitude or action that portrays this in their lives. They are talkers about the Word, but not doers. They are dreamers, not realists. They have **mentally assented** that the Word is true, but it does them no good for they do not possess the Word in their hearts and are not making it part of their lives.

True believing becomes an attitude of the mind which will result in godly actions as we receive information and make decisions. This is why renewing the mind is so important. If God instantly gave us a new mind (sovereignly replaced our memory, understanding and intellect), we would be like robots instead of adopted children of God with the ability to make decisions. As believers, we must freely believe with the heart and the mind before we can act in faith or be effective for God in any way. Our thinking must be in line with God before we can do anything for Him.

DEFINING THE WORD "BELIEVE"

The people of the early church were called "believers," which in the Greek means "a believing one." The word "believer" really means "a possessor, one who has accepted Christ, received eternal life, and has taken his place within the family of God."

The word "**believe**" is a verb; the word "**faith**" is a **noun**.

Everywhere the word believe is used, it implies an action of possessing. Let's look at some passages that draw this principle out further:

Mark 16:17 *"And these signs will follow those who **believe**"*

John 6:47 *"Most assuredly, I say to you, he who **believes in Me** has everlasting life."*

John 14:12 *"Most assuredly, I say to you, he who **believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father.**"*

We respond daily in certain beliefs without really thinking about them. For example, we put the key in the ignition of our automobile and know that it is constructed in such a way that when we turn the key, it will start. We believe that when we go to the grocery store the food we are buying is good. If our boss tells us we are going to get a raise, we don't question it. In the same way, when we come to know Jesus through the Word, we begin to mature in our relationship with the Father. We then begin to respond to the Word from the Father and responding to it becomes as natural as responding to the word of the man we are working for.

2 Corinthians 10:4-5 *For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down **arguments** and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing **every thought** into captivity to the obedience of Christ.*

OUR MIND – A BATTLEFIELD

After we have believed in Christ and started down the path of the renewed mind, there comes another consideration in order to live the life of faith: the Christian is the enemy of Satan. Satan wants to defeat the Christian. He wants to deceive him. Satan wants to keep you from **hearing** and **acting** on the **truth**, for he knows the "truth will set you free."

The primary place of attack by Satan is the mind and the thought life! It is in our thoughts that he begins his battle. Few Christians realize this fact; they care little for the guarding of their minds. Their minds are filled with television programs, radio programs, newspaper articles, magazines and the conversation of the world. Thousands of thoughts enter their minds which concern the world. They set their minds on the things of the world exclusively and then wonder why they have ungodly thoughts. We must realize that ungodly thoughts are Satan's strongholds.

The Scriptures say that we can "*cast down arguments*" and bring "*every thought into captivity.*" We are to have the mind of Christ (Philippians 2:5). We do not have to be controlled by ungodly thoughts because we can control what we think about. David knew the secret of guarding his mind. He said, "*I will set nothing wicked before my eyes*" (Psalm 101:3). Likewise, we must guard what enters our minds.

Wicked imaginations are from the devil. We are to pull down Satan's strongholds and cast down his thoughts. We do this by testing every thought by the Word of God. As we do this, our minds are renewed and our faith is developed. Remember, the arena of our thought-life is a battlefield! The warfare is in the mind before our thoughts become actions. If we win the battle of the mind, we will rejoice in the victory God gives us all the days of our lives.

RESPONSIVE READING

Question 1: What does it mean to be a believer?

A believer is one who has accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and who possesses eternal life.

John 6:47 *"Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me has everlasting life."*

Question 2: How are believers transformed into the likeness of Jesus Christ?

- a. We are transformed by having our minds renewed by the Word of God.

Romans 12:2 *And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.*

- b. We are transformed by spending time in God's presence.

2 Corinthians 3:18 *But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.*

Question 3: Why is it important to have our minds renewed?

It is important to have a renewed mind because our actions are based on our thoughts.

Proverbs 23:7 *For as he thinks in his heart, so is he.*

Question 4: Does a believer have to be at the mercy of an uncontrolled thought life?

No, the Bible says that we can control our thoughts.

2 Corinthians 10:4-5 *For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.*

1 Corinthians 13:11 *When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things.*

HOMEWORK

1. If faith is going to be a tangible reality, then what must we place our faith in?
2. What is a good definition of the word "believe?"
3. In a short paragraph explain the difference between the heart and the mind in relationship to faith.
4. What is the relationship between faith and knowledge?
5. In the way of testimony, what has been one of the greatest faith-building experiences of your life?

THE RESPONSE OF FAITH

In the previous lessons on faith we considered the development of our faith relationship with the Father and our position of abiding in Him through faith. We also considered how, our faith is developed through revelation and the renewing of our minds. In the last lesson we learned what it means to believe with the heart. In this lesson we will look at the response of faith, which includes right confession, right thinking and right actions. Without the proper response of faith, we will never mature in our Christian walk. Let's look first at the relationship between confession and faith.

INTRODUCTION

God has required confession from His people down through the ages. When Adam transgressed the commandment of God in the Garden of Eden, God came to him and asked for a confession. God spoke to Adam and asked, "What is this you have done?" (Genesis 3:13). God knew very well what Adam had done. He knew that Adam had openly and defiantly transgressed His commandment. Adam had done the very thing which God had specifically instructed him not to do. But, God wanted Adam to confess his transgression in order that he might be forgiven and restored into right relationship and fellowship with his heavenly Creator.

THE NECESSITY OF CONFESSION

1 John 1:9 *If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

Confession of sin is necessary for forgiveness and restoration of fellowship, but confession is also necessary for the work of faith to be released or activated in our lives. For example, two blind men desired for Jesus to perform a miracle by opening their blind eyes. But before Jesus did anything, He required a confession from them.

Matthew 9:28 *And when He had come into the house, the blind men came to Him. And Jesus said to them, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?" They said to Him, "Yes, Lord." Then He touched their eyes, saying, "According to your faith let it be to you."*

Bartimaeus also had to **confess** his need before Jesus healed his blindness (Mark 10:46-52). This was not a negative confession, because Bartimaeus really was blind. He confessed God as his source of health, confessed his condition, and received healing. Since confession is so necessary, we must be sure that we know what true confession is.

The dictionary says that to confess means "to acknowledge or to own, to acknowledge faith in." To confess means to make confession of one's fault, but it also means to make confession of one's faith. The English word "confess" is translated from the Greek word "homologeo." Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words defines confess as "to speak the same thing, to assent, accord, agree with." It is used in the New Testament to mean:

DEFINITION OF CONFESSION

1. To declare or admit (Acts 24:14),
2. To confess by way of admitting oneself guilty of what one is accused of, the result of an inward conviction (1 John 1:9),

3. To declare openly by speaking out freely, such confession being the effect of a deep conviction of facts (Matthew 10:32),
4. To confess by way of celebrating with praise (Hebrews 13:15), and
5. To promise (Matthew 14:7).

The Hebrew word translated confession is "yadah," which means "to praise, worship or revere with extended hands." From these biblical definitions, we can define confession as affirming something we believe, testifying to something we know, declaring a truth we have embraced, and celebrating truth by praising God.

Our confession should center around five things:

1. What God in Christ has done for us in His plan of redemption.
2. What God has done in us through the new birth and the infilling of the Holy Spirit.
3. Who we are to God the Father in Christ Jesus.
4. What Jesus is doing for us now at the right hand of the Father, where He ever lives to make intercession for us.
5. What God can do through us as we respond to Him in faith.

Confession is faith's way of expressing itself!

THE IMPORTANCE AND POWER OF CONFESSION

Few Christians realize the place that confession holds in God's plan for us. It is regrettable that whenever we use the word "confession" people invariably think of confessing sins, weaknesses, faults and failures. That is the negative side of confession, but there is also a positive side. The Bible has more to say about the positive aspects of confession than the negative.

Our confession is merely a reflection of our inner state of being. Our words are an expression of our faith. It is always possible to tell if a person is believing right by what he says. *"For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks"* (Matthew 12:34). If a person's confession is wrong, his believing is wrong. If his believing is wrong, his thinking is wrong. If his thinking is wrong, it is because his mind has not been renewed by the Word of God. All three-thinking, believing and saying-go together. Wrong thinking, wrong believing and wrong talking defeat many people in the area of faith.

Many Christians do not realize the power and effect that their confession has upon their lives as well as the lives of others. The Word of God says much about the confession of our mouth and the words of our lips. Let's look at several examples from the book of Proverbs:

Proverbs 12:14 *A man will be satisfied with good by the fruit of his mouth, and the recompense of a man's hands will be rendered to him.*

Proverbs 13:3 *He who guards his mouth preserves his life, but he who opens wide his lips shall have destruction.*

Proverbs 18:21 *Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit.*

Proverbs 21:23 *Whoever guards his mouth and tongue keeps his soul from troubles.*

Faith and confession are inseparably linked in the Word of God. Both Jesus and Paul spoke of the relationship between faith and the words of our mouth.

CONFESSION AND FAITH

Mark 11:22-24 *So Jesus answered and said to them, "Have faith in God. For assuredly, I say to you, whoever **says** to this mountain, 'Be removed and be cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things **he says** will come to pass, he will have whatever **he says**. Therefore, I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them."*

In the Word of God we find that our faith in God is revealed and released by the way we talk. **It is not enough to just believe, but it is what we believe and speak that produces action.** Jesus always spoke His faith. He spoke to the sea and it immediately calmed. He spoke to a corpse and life came into it instantly. He spoke to a tree and it withered. So powerful and productive were the words of Jesus that Peter declared *"You have the words of eternal life"* (John 6:68).

Paul not only practiced open, positive confession, but he also proclaimed it in writing to others.

Romans 10:8-10 *But what does it say? "The word is near you, even in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith which we preach): that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes to righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made to salvation.*

The key to conversion and new birth is the confession of the Lordship of Jesus, not merely believing it in our hearts. We must not only **see** Jesus as our Lord and Savior, but we must also say what we see. We need to hear our mouth confess it, the spirit world needs to be informed of our confession, and God requires hearing our confession of His Son as our Lord and Savior. It is a fundamental truth that there is no release of faith without confession. However, our confession only releases faith; it does not create faith. It is our confession that gives expression to the faith we have already received from God.

Until faith has been committed to us (James 1:17-18), it cannot be confessed by us. The success of our confession is dependent upon having faith in (or of) God (Mark 11:22-23). It is a dangerous oversimplification of truth to declare that we determine what we shall have by the words that we speak. This theology leads to half-truths, disappointments, frustrations and deep guilt. This distortion of the words of Jesus incorrectly attributes all things that are negative to Satan, while all that is good is ascribed to God. This teaching has also caused some to lust after things rather than seek God's will for their lives.

We must learn to focus on God's purposes rather than ours, on God's kingdom rather than ours, on the eternal rather than the temporal, and on the imperishable

rather than the perishable. Self-centeredness is evident in newborns and infants, but maturity causes us to adjust to the will of the Father (Psalm 40:8). To confess what **I** want for my life is one thing; to confess what **God** wants for my life is quite another.

Doesn't the Bible teach that God through Christ is the sovereign Lord of all? There is great insecurity and frustration in being totally in charge of our destiny, of believing that one slip of the tongue could bring sickness, accident or ruin. Being secure in our faith means to trust in the Lord rather than in our positive confession. Granted, the church has underplayed her authority in Christ, but is it justifiable to overstate her authority? We must come into balance as believers, place our trust in God's creative ability and become His dependent children, gladly confessing what He has said to us and done for us. The first step in faith is dependence upon God. **He** is the Creator, not us. We submit to **Him**, not He to us. **He** speaks into existence; we speak what He says.

The purpose of confession is to release faith to the problem or circumstance – to say to the situation what God says. By speaking what God has already said, we employ God's power of attorney. Our authority is **totally** delegated; our power is conferred and our faith has been received. We create none of it; we only proclaim it.

WRONG CONFESSION

Wrong confession tends to deny the reality of our present situation. The act of denying difficulties and problems does not mean they do not exist. In fact, by doing so, a person can be hindered from receiving God's solution to those problems.

Some people confuse positive confession with denial. They think that verbally denying their condition will make it better. For example, they may say, "I don't have a cold," yet they have a cough, a runny nose and a fever. Rather than denying our situation, we should confess the Word. The biblical way of confession is to call those things that do not exist as though they do (Romans 4:17). It is not to deny the existence of reality. When God created light, He said, "Let there be light." He did not say, "There is no darkness." So, if we are sick we should confess that "by His stripes I am healed" rather than denying our condition as the Christian Scientists do.

By the spoken response to our circumstances, our course is determined. For example, every Christian has at one time or another suffered innocently at the hands of a fellow Christian. But how do we handle it? Do we dwell on the past offense? Do we constantly resurrect the incident? Is it on our lips continually? This is the type of confession that can destroy us.

James 3:6 *And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell.*

There are several bad results from not controlling our tongues:

1. *"It defiles the whole body"* (James 3:6). There are many Christians who are sick and stay sick because they are constantly poisoning their bodies with wrong confession--confessions that deny the power of God to bring forgiveness and restoration.
2. *"It sets on fire the course of nature"* or the flow of life. In other words, the great plans that God has for us (and He does have plans for each of us) are seriously hindered because a wrong confession delays His hand in blessing, aiding and supporting us.
3. *"It is set on fire by hell."* This means that wrong confession has its roots in Satan, not God. Satan desires us to speak against God rather than with God.

We do not have to live under the control of our tongues; we can control what we say by lining our confession up with the Word of God. If the tongue is brought under the power of the Holy Spirit, then the whole body can be bridled.

Real faith in God simply says about oneself what the Word says. If God says that *"... by whose stripes you were healed"* (1 Peter 2:24), then we are healed. If His Word says that *"The Lord is the strength of my life"* (Psalm 27:1), then He is. If God says we can do all things through Christ, then we can (Philippians 4:13). If He says He cares for us, then He does. We have what the Word says we have. We are who the Word says we are.

**RIGHT
CONFESSION**

Hebrews 4:14 *Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.*

The Greek word for "confession" means "to say the same thing." It simply means to agree with God. Since Jesus, our High Priest, sits at the right hand of God making intercession for us, we are to say the same thing He is saying. Because He is victorious, we can be also. You see, positive confession has its beginning and its end in God and what God has said in His Word, not what we may think, reason, or speculate. A mature confession leads to another important response of faith – godly actions.

One of the greatest mistakes many believers make is to confess their faith in the Word of God, but at the same time contradict that confession by wrong actions. We say we are trusting **God** to provide for all our needs, but at the same time **we** worry about how **we** are going to take care of ourselves. There is no corresponding action here. One minute we confess the Word as truth and the next we repudiate everything we say by wrong actions. Our actions have to correspond with our believing if we are to receive anything from God. The actions of a doer of the Word coincide with his confession. True biblical faith requires that we **do** what we **say**.

**WALKING OUT OUR
FAITH**

James 2:14-17 *What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister is naked and*

destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, "Depart in peace, be warmed and filled," but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead...

As we have mentioned in previous lessons, true faith is relational. It is based on knowing God in an intimate way through consistent fellowship and communion. Jesus said eternal life was knowing God and Jesus Christ whom He had sent (John 17:3). Out of this knowing will issue the works of God in our lives.

Daniel 11:32 ... *the people who know their God shall be strong, and carry out great exploits.*

These are not our works, but His works through us, and because they are His, they are good works. Any other works are merely "works of the law" which cannot save (Galatians 2:16), "works of the flesh" (Galatians 5:19-21), "works of darkness" (Romans 13:12, Ephesians 5:11) or "dead works" (Hebrews 9:14). These are all the result of walking in the vanity of our own minds, but good works are the result of walking in covenant relationship with God.

WHAT ARE GOOD WORKS?

An unsaved man may be capable of doing good deeds in a natural sense, but when it comes to spiritual works he comes far short of those things God requires. This is because his heart is not pure (Hebrews 9:14). He may do those things which externally are good, such as reading the Bible, attending church and giving to the poor. Yet, the source of such actions render them as filthy rags in the sight of God. The unregenerate have no power to perform works in a spiritual manner- "... *there is none who does good, no, not one*" (Romans 3:12). They are totally unable to do so; they are "... *not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be*" (Romans 8:7). Nor are believers able to think a good thought or perform a good work of themselves. "*Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God*" (2 Corinthians 3:5). "*For it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure*" (Philippians 2:13).

We know that we are not saved **by** good works, but we are "... *created in Christ Jesus for good works*" (Ephesians 2:8-10). We have God's grace implanted in our hearts as Christ has apportioned it (Ephesians 4:7). It is through the grace of God that we are what we are and, as Paul stated, it was through this grace that he was able to carry on the ministry which had been placed into his hands (1 Corinthians 15:10).

Good works are the result of true faith. The implanted Word mixed with the grace of God gives us the desire to walk in responsive obedience. Every true believer is predestined to be conformed to the likeness of Jesus (Romans 8:29). Our good works were prepared even before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 2:10). We can conclude that good works are our obedience to those things that the Father has initiated.

The book of James brings a balance between the Word and works (James 1:19-26). As we are quick to listen to the Word of God, it becomes implanted in the heart. This produces change and saves our soul from destruction. However, we are not only to listen, but we are to respond to the Word. If there is not a response to the Word, then we will walk in self-deception. There have been many times in the past when we have literally walked away from the blessings of God. A man who has truth revealed to him and does not respond in faith, will not receive the blessing that the Word will produce. He is like a man who looks into a mirror and promptly forgets what he had seen. We must take the Word of God seriously, receive it as our own and respond to it in faith.

GOOD WORKS AND THE IMPLANTED WORD

Until we add actions to our faith, there will be nothing but continual failure in our lives. We can confess that God is the strength of our lives, but if our walk demonstrates weakness and lack of faith, we will be defeated because there is no response to the implanted Word.

The wise man in Matthew 7:24-27 built his house upon the rock, a solid foundation, and was able to stand the testing because he acted upon the Word. The foolish man, however, did not have a solid foundation because he did not act upon the Word. Hearing the Word is not enough; we must also obey it. Hearing and doing the Word results in a solid foundation in our lives. All through the New Testament, the idea of wisdom and foolishness is connected with hearing and doing. The wise man hears and does; the foolish man hears and does nothing.

Matthew 7:21 *"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven."*

The nature of good works was perfectly exemplified by the Lord Jesus. All that He did was done in obedience to His Father. *"My Father has been working until now, and I have been working. ...I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner"* (John 5:17-19). He *"... did not please Himself"* (Romans 15:3), but was always performing the bidding of the One who had sent him (John 6:38).

THE NATURE OF GOOD WORKS

He could say, *"I always do those things that please Him"* (John 8:29). There was no limit to Christ's subjection to His Father's will – He *"...became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross"* (Philippians 2:8). We are told that our attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus (Philippians 2:5) and it certainly can be, for we have the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:16).

The life that Jesus lived was not based on a list of "Dos and Don'ts," but proceeded from a heart of love for the Father and for His neighbor. Love is the fulfilling of the Law; without love, compliance with the Law is nothing but servitude (dead works) and is unacceptable to Him who is Love. *"For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love"* (Galatians 5:6).

Matthew 25:31-46 tells the parable of the sheep and the goats. The goats' attitude is this: *"Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?"* But the sheep – the righteous – will say, *"Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?"* To them Jesus will say, *"Inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me."*

This passage shows that good works flow spontaneously out of a heart of love. The believer who loves will often be unaware of the works that he is doing. These verses also show that giving is a response of faith. It takes faith to give to the Lord and to others in His name. Just as the farmer must exercise faith to plant seed, so must we give in faith on order to see the harvest (2 Corinthians 9:6-15).

THE IMPORTANCE AND PURPOSES OF GOOD WORKS

The Scripture gives us several reasons for the importance and purpose of maintaining good works in our lives:

3. By good works God is glorified (Matthew 5:16).
4. By good works the mouths of those who speak against us are closed (1 Peter 2:12).
5. By good works we evidence the genuineness of our profession of faith (James 2:13-17, 1 Corinthians 16:15-16).

CONCLUSION

Spiritual faith based on a love relationship with the Word of God – Jesus -will enable us to walk as He walks. Walking and confessing this faith will result in maturity and we will begin to do the works of Jesus. Nothing brings more honor to Jesus than that those who bear His name are found living as He lived.

RESPONSIVE READING

Question 1: Is confession important to the Christian life?

Yes, we begin our Christian lives by confessing our faith.

Romans 10:8-10 *But what does it say? "The word is near you, even in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith which we preach): that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes to righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made to salvation.*

Question 2: What does our confession reveal?

Our confession reveals what is in our hearts.

Luke 6:45 *"A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks."*

Question 3: Is it possible to be saved by good works?

No, we are saved by grace through faith, not by works.

Ephesians 2:8-9 *For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.*

Question 4: If works do not save us, do they have any place in our lives?

- a. Yes, the Bible says that faith without works is-dead.

James 2:17 *Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.*

- b. We are not saved by good works; we are saved for good works.

Ephesians 2:10 *For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.*

Titus 3:8 *This is a faithful saying, and these things I want you to affirm constantly, that those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable to men.*

HOMEWORK

1. Define confession.
2. Why is confession necessary?
3. How are faith and confession linked?
4. Define goods works.
5. How has God dealt with you concerning wrong confession and wrong actions?

1 Peter 1:6-7 *In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ.*

1 Peter 4:12-13 *Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.*

Now that we have laid a foundation in faith, we need to be aware of a very important truth: **God always tests faith.** We can be certain that our faith will be tested because God tests all things (Hebrews 12:25-27). Whatever can be shaken in us will be removed so that the things which are unshakable may remain.

To test means "to try or prove." Testing can have either a positive or negative motivation, but its goal is to reveal what we are really made of. Testing serves to reveal our strengths and weaknesses. The root of the word "test" actually comes from the ancient process of refining metals. When a metal was melted down and molded into an object, it was then tested to be sure it was strong, without any weak spots. Likewise, testing serves to reveal any hidden weak spots in us.

For example, when we go to school to learn a subject, the teacher gives us tests. These tests are for our good because they serve to show whether or not we really understand what has been taught. The teacher does not test us with the idea of causing us to fail. The teacher's motivation is to reveal 'what is in us with the intention of approving us. This is the goal of God's testing our faith: to show where we are in our faith, and to reveal areas that need improvement.

You may say you believe the Word and you may even be confessing the Word, but do you really trust God? The only way to know is by proving it with your life. God wants more than our "lip-service." He wants our lives!

As we previously stated, testing can come from either a positive or a negative source. God tests us in order to approve us; Satan tempts us to fall. God tests us for our good; Satan tempts us for evil. God tests us in order to build our faith; Satan tempts us in order to tear us down. This is how we know the source of a test: God never tempts us with evil (James 1:13). Therefore, if we are tempted with evil, it is not of God, but of Satan. However, even when a test does not originate with God, He still watches over us during the time of testing and uses it for our good (Romans 8:28).

God wants man to choose to love, serve and obey Him. He could have created us unable to sin, with no choice but to love Him. However, in His infinite wisdom, God created us with the ability to choose. In order for us to choose, we must have not only the ability to make choices, but there must also be more than one option for us to choose from. Otherwise, there is no real choice.

INTRODUCTION

THE GOAL OF TESTING

THE SOURCE OF TESTING

THE HISTORY OF TESTING

We can see the truth of this from the beginning of creation. God created Adam and Eve perfectly innocent of sin. He placed them in the garden with instructions to tend it and take dominion over it. He told them that they could partake of anything in the garden except for the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 2:15-17). Why did God give this one negative command? Why did He place this one forbidden tree in the garden? Simply because He wanted Adam to choose to obey Him. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil served to test Adam's faith. Today we are faced with the same choice: either partake of the tree of life or of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This decision between God's way and our way continually tests our faith. The following are biblical examples of the testing of faith.

Abraham was a man of great faith (Romans 4:13-22), so God put him through a great test (Genesis 22:1-19). God asked him to offer up the son He had promised to make into a great nation. Abraham passed this test because he believed that God would fulfill His word, even if he had to raise Isaac from the dead (Hebrews 11:17-19).

Joseph received visions from God concerning his exaltation in the future (Genesis 37:1-11). However, he went through years of slavery and imprisonment before he saw the fulfillment of God's promises. *"Until the time that his word came to pass, the word of the LORD tested him"* (Psalm 105:19). Joseph stood on God's word, even in the times of testing, and God exalted him in due time.

God tested the **children of Israel** many times while in the wilderness. Each time He was looking for one ingredient: faith. However, they murmured, complained and doubted even though they had seen the hand of God move time and time again. Think of what God did for them. He saved them, redeemed them, cared for them and worked signs and wonders in their midst. Every day they saw something new. They saw the fire by night and the cloud by day. They saw the Red Sea open up. They saw God's glorious provision, but there was absolutely no faith among them. Only Caleb and Joshua came through the test. A whole generation died because of one thing – unbelief. They failed God's tests and as a result, did not enter into the promised land (Hebrews 3:7-19).

Even **Jesus**, the greatest example of faith, went through trials and testings. Matthew 4:1 says that *".. Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil."* This was a real temptation, not a symbolic one. Temptation is not real unless it involves the possibility of actually failing. He was tempted in all points just as we are, yet without sin (Hebrews 4:15). Jesus was the Son of God, *"... yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered"* (Hebrews 5:8). Surely, if God tested the faith and obedience of Jesus, He will also, test our faith and obedience. Some people think that they can get to the place where they are above testing and trials. However, we can see from biblical history that no one is immune from God's testing.

1 Peter 4:12 *Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange things happened to you.*

1 Peter 1:6-7 *In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ.*

These passages were written by the Apostle **Peter**, who had a deep understanding of testing. Luke 22 records one instance where Peter's faith was tested. Jesus told Peter that Satan had asked to sift him and that Peter would deny the Lord three times. Peter refused to believe that it was possible for him to deny Jesus, but testing revealed what was really in his heart. He failed this test, but through repentance returned to the Lord and was strengthened in faith (Luke 22:32).

God tests us in many different ways. We are all different, and God knows the best way to test each of us. Here are some of the ways He tests us:

HOW GOD TESTS

1. By giving us a choice (Genesis 2:16-17).
2. By requiring us to sacrifice something (Genesis 22:1-19).
3. By His manifested presence (Exodus 20:18-21).
4. By wilderness experiences (Deuteronomy 8:2).
5. By other people's opinions of us (Proverbs 27:21).
6. By allowing the enemy to tempt us (Judges 2:21-3:4; Matthew 4:1).
7. By persecution (1 Peter 4:12-19).
8. By fiery trials (1 Peter 1:6-7; 4:12-13; Proverbs 17:3).
9. By the loss of possessions (Job 1-2).
10. By affliction (Psalm 66:8-12; 119:65-75).
11. By His Word (Psalm 105:19).

Romans 5:1-5 *Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope.*

THE RESULTS OF TESTING

We must always remember that God never tempts a man to do wrong. God always tests us for good purposes. The passage in Romans Chapter 5 reveals that tribulation is not meaningless because it accomplishes God's purpose of developing His character in our lives. God is conforming us to the image of Jesus Christ and He uses "all things" to do this (Romans 8:28-29). The result of the refiner's fire is purity (Proverbs 17:3). Likewise, God's testings result in purity in our lives.

James 1:2-4 *My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.*

Romans 5:3-4 *And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope.*

When we know God's purpose in testing us, we can "...*glory in tribulations*" (Romans 5:3). Notice that we glory "in" tribulations, not "because of" tribulations. This time of testing serves to confirm our faith, strengthen our resistance to sin, produce character and conform us to the image of Jesus.

RESPONSIVE READING

Question 1: What is the biblical purpose of testing?

Testing reveals what we are really made of, including our strengths and weaknesses.

1 Peter 1:6-7 *In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ.*

Question 2: Does God tempt us with evil?

No, God's tests strengthen us and build our faith. Satan tempts in order to tear us down.

James 1:13 *Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone.*

Question 3: Can we arrive at a place in our Christian walk where we will never be tested again?

- a. No, testing is part of the Christian life.

1 Peter 4:12-13 *Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.*

- b. Even Jesus, the perfect Son of God was tested.

Matthew 4:1 *Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.*

Hebrews 4:15 *For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.*

Question 4: How does God test us?

God tests in many ways. Some of the ways He tests are:

- a. By giving us a choice.

Genesis 2:16-17 *And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."*

- b. By wilderness experiences.

Deuteronomy 8:2 *"And you shall remember that the LORD your God led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you and test you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not."*

c. By His Word.

Psalm 105:19 *Until the time that his word came to pass, the word of the LORD tested him.*

A Study of the Elementary Principles of Christ

This series, based on Hebrews 6:1-2, is designed to lay a firm foundation in your life. It is necessary to be grounded in these basic principles in order to “go on to maturity.” It is our prayer that God will richly bless you through your study of FIRST PRINCIPLES.

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