

JUNE 1977
THE INTERNATIONAL MAGAZINE
DEDICATED TO CHRISTIAN GROWTH

new wine



Living Faith

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OVERSEAS OUTREACH

Together with five other missionaries, I live on a small station in the semi-desert parts of northern Kenya amongst the Turkana people. There is much to challenge us in an environment which has been held by the powers of darkness for thousands of years. Yet in the midst of thick heathenism, the Lord Jesus is calling out a people unto Himself from amongst this tribe, and we praise Him for the young church which is growing in this corner of His vineyard.

Since our mission station is rather isolated and mail is flown in only once a month, we appreciate the fellowship of other Christians, which we feel reaches us through the magazine.

Miss J.S. Van der Klis
Nairobi, Kenya

A few days ago at work I picked up a magazine and started to read and found it was one called *New Wine*. My wife and I are born-again Christians and I took this magazine home for my wife also to read. On the front cover I find that it is the issue from May 1974. If you still publish the *New Wine*, I would love to have it sent to me.

Gerald Wagner
Lively, Ontario, Canada

Recently we started on a project to get every pastor in our island acquainted with *New Wine*. We have been posting out single copies with a subscription card enclosed. We do hope and pray it will bear much fruit, for we realize that as the shepherds are touched, the flocks are touched.

Rev. & Mrs. Michael Sayers
Barbados, W.I.

GENERAL COMMENTS

Thank you very much for your ministry. It always makes me feel like a member of a family, which is what I believe the Christian life is all about. Your teachings in *New Wine* always come at just the right time for me,

giving insight that I often overlook in a pressing situation. Your books and tapes minister the life of Jesus very effectively on various topics of my interest.

Edward Hofma
Orlando, FL

Dear Don Basham,

As pastor of the Lord's Chapel in Ocala, I wanted to write this little note of personal appreciation to you and the others responsible for the current issue of *New Wine*.

"Timely" is the best word that I can think of to describe the March issue and the January issue on prophecy. You are really hearing God on these matters, and giving encouraging confirmation to people like myself

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

who are seeking to care for His children in local church situations.

I have also been tremendously blessed by the way you and others related to Christian Growth Ministries have walked through the difficult days of the past year or so with dignity and an openness to God and others.

Gerald E. Simmons
Ocala, FL

Can you please tell me why the background map in the article "Waging War in the Heavens" (March 1977) by Jim Croft was chosen? I live in that area, and indeed, the battle is on! The article, by the way, was excellent, as

was the entire issue.

Mrs. Patsy Lymus
Kalispell, MT

No particular reason for choosing that map—it was just available. —Ed.

Thanks for sending *New Wine* for the last year. Even though I've written critical letters, I'm always able to find very constructive things to far outweigh the things that I question.

Thanks a lot, too, for contributing to my Christian growth.

Roger Slemmer
APO, NY

BIBLE STUDY

I really love the Bible studies you have in each month's issue. They help me greatly and encourage me to seek further.

Debra Lee Hessing
Russellville, AR

Maybe poll your readers and find out how many of them are really using the Bible study section each month. Not many people I know who take *New Wine* do this. I find them very edifying and useful myself.

David Winter
Tallahassee, FL

CASSETTE BOOKS

Praise the Lord for His Word!! I can't begin to tell you what the Cassette Books have done for me and for those with whom I have shared the books. Each one has had a special meaning to me and ministered to me in a different way.

Mrs. Duane Pearl
Ridgecrest, CA

I've enjoyed the Cassette Books and look forward to more of the same.

Sherry Collins
Kewaskum, WI

Thanks to our readers' enthusiastic response to the first set of Cassette Books, our second series will be made available in the coming months. —Ed.

Editorial

Did you notice anything distinctive about this month's *New Wine* cover? Through the years I've seen a number of paintings depicting the same scene. Unfortunately, they always show Peter sinking. But such pictures illustrate a single dark moment in an otherwise glorious incident. The truth is that despite the moment of testing in which he faltered, Peter did succeed in doing the impossible. He walked on the water! He walked *before* he faltered and he walked again *after* the Lord gave him a hand.

I like our cover illustration because it shows Peter walking in faith. It shows him in victory on top of the storm's waves, where he belongs; indeed, where all Christians belong! The fact that he faltered doesn't erase his victory. The Lord called Peter to trust Him and do the impossible, and he did it!

There's a lesson for us in Peter's amazing experience. At some time the Lord challenges every Christian, as He did Peter, to believe Him for power to do the impossible. And God promises the grace necessary to succeed when the challenge comes. We are meant to have a victorious faith.

Not that we won't falter occasionally, for we surely will. But remember, *to falter is not to fail!* Peter didn't sink; he only began to sink. When he cried for help, the Lord caught him and restored him to a victorious walk.

That's what we trust this issue of *New Wine* will do for you. First, to help you find the faith to step out of the boat when God's challenge comes, and second, to help you realize the Lord's arm is always long enough and His grace is always sufficient to reach and restore you when you falter.

The Bible makes it equally plain that to please God we must exercise faith and that our faith will be tested. But the promise of Jesus to each of us remains,

If ye have faith . . . nothing shall be impossible to you (Matt. 17:20).

Don Basham



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FAITH AS A GIFT

by Derek Prince

FAITH

TO LIVE BY

DEREK PRINCE

This article, the first in a series of two reprints from Derek Prince's newly-released book Faith to Live By, deals with the nature of faith as a gift.

Faith, as depicted in the New Testament, has various aspects. Its essential nature always agrees with the definition given in Hebrews 1:1—"the substance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." However, this nature expresses itself in a variety of distinct but related forms.

The three main forms of faith may be defined as follows:

1. Faith to live by,
2. Faith as a gift,
3. Faith as a fruit.

The first form of faith is a continuing personal relationship linking the believer directly to God and affecting every area of his life. It provides the motivation, the direction and the enabling for everything he does. It is, in fact, both the sole and the sufficient ground for righteous living. For this reason we call it "faith to live by."

In the book that I have written on the subject, I thoroughly examine this form of faith, but in this article we will examine the nature of faith as a *gift*. Then, in the chapter which will appear in next month's issue, we will examine the nature of faith as a *fruit*.

The Nature of Spiritual Gifts

In 1 Corinthians chapter 12 Paul deals with the gifts of the Holy Spirit. He opens the chapter with the statement, "Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware." Then in verses 7-11 he lists nine distinct gifts:

(7) But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

(8) For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit;

(9) to another faith by the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit,

(10) and to another the effecting of miracles, and to another prophecy, and to another the distinguishing of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues.

(11) But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills.*

*All Scripture quotations NAS unless otherwise indicated.



The key word that explains the distinctive nature of these gifts is "manifestation." The Holy Spirit Himself, dwelling in a believer, is invisible. But by these gifts operating through a believer, the presence of the Holy Spirit is made manifest to human senses. In each case the results produced are within the realm of the senses: they can be seen or heard or felt.

Since these gifts are manifestations, not of the believer's own personality, but of the Person of the Holy Spirit within the believer, all of them are supernatural in character. In every case, the results which they produce are on a higher level than the believer could ever achieve solely by his own ability. Each of them is possible only through a direct supernatural operation of the Holy Spirit. By these gifts, and through the believer, the Holy Spirit comes forth out of the invisible spiritual realm and makes a direct impact upon the physical world of space and time.

Paul establishes two important practical points concerning these gifts. First, they are distributed solely at the discretion of the Holy Spirit, according to His

sovereign purpose for the ministry of each believer. Human will or achievement are not the basis for receiving these spiritual gifts. Secondly, they are given "to each one . . . for the common good"—for a useful, practical purpose. As Bob Mumford has said, the gifts of the Spirit are tools, not toys.

It has often been pointed out that these nine gifts fall naturally into three groups of three:

Three gifts of *utterance*—gifts that operate through the believer's vocal organs: prophecy; tongues; and interpretation of tongues.

Three gifts of *revelation*—gifts that impart spiritual illumination: the word of wisdom; the word of knowledge; and distinguishing of spirits.

Three gifts of *power*—gifts that demonstrate God's supernatural power in the physical realm: faith; the gifts of healing; and the effecting of miracles.

"Have God's Faith"

The gift of faith, which we will now study, is the first of the three gifts of power. It is distinguished from the other forms of faith by the fact that it is a sovereign, supernatural manifestation of the Holy Spirit working through the believer. The two key words are *sovereign* and *supernatural*.

In Matthew chapter 21 and in Mark chapter 11 we read how Jesus, on his way into Jerusalem with His disciples, came to a fig tree by the wayside. Jesus was seeking fruit. When He found that the tree contained leaves only, but no fruit, He pronounced a curse upon it, saying, "May no man ever eat fruit from you again!" (Mark 11:14). Next day as they passed the same tree, the disciples were astonished to see that, within 24 hours, it had withered from the roots up. "Rabbi, behold," Peter commented, "the fig tree which You cursed has withered" (Mark 11:21).

To Peter's comment Jesus replied, "Have faith in God" (Mark 11:22). This is the normal English translation. However, what Jesus actually said, in its most literal form, was "Have God's faith." This brings out the special kind of faith we are speaking of here—that is,

faith as a *gift*. Faith has its origin not in man, but in God. It is an aspect of God's own eternal nature. Through the gift of faith, the Holy Spirit imparts a portion of God's own faith, directly and supernaturally, to the believer. This is faith on a divine level, as high above mere human faith as heaven is above earth.

In saying, "Have God's faith," Jesus challenged His disciples to receive and exercise this kind of faith, just as He Himself had done. He went on to tell them that with faith of this kind they would not only be able to do what they had seen Him do to the fig tree, but by speaking a word they would be able to move a mountain: "Truly I say to you, if you have faith, and do not doubt, you shall not only do what was done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, 'Be taken up and cast into the sea,' it shall happen" (Mt. 21:21).

on the human level. Normally the winds and the waters are not under man's control. But at the moment of need Jesus received a special impartation of God's own faith. Then, by a word spoken with that faith, He accomplished what otherwise only God alone could have done—the instantaneous calming of the storm.

When the danger had passed, Jesus turned to His disciples and said, "Where is *your* faith?" In other words, He asked, "Why couldn't *you* have done that? Why did *I* have to do it? He implied that it would have been just as easy for the disciples to calm the storm as it was for Him—if they had exercised the right kind of faith. But in the moment of crisis the impact of the storm on the disciples' senses had opened the way for fear to enter their hearts, thus excluding faith. Jesus, on the other hand, had opened His heart to the Father and

Jesus did not reprove Peter for wanting to walk on the water. He reproved him for losing faith halfway.

In Mark 11:23 Jesus speaks not merely to the disciples then present, "If you have faith . . .," but by the word "whoever" He extends His promise to all believers: "Truly I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be taken up and cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says is going to happen: it shall be granted him." Jesus sets no limit to the scope of this kind of faith. The phrases He uses are all-inclusive: "Whoever says . . . what he says . . . shall be granted him." There is no restriction as to the person who speaks or the words that are spoken. All that matters is the nature of the faith: it must be God's own faith.

In Luke 8:22–25 we have the story of Jesus and His disciples crossing the Sea of Galilee in a boat, suddenly overtaken by an unnaturally violent storm. The disciples awoke Jesus, who was asleep in the stern, saying, "Master, Master, we are perishing!" The record continues, "And being aroused, He rebuked the wind and the surging waves, and they stopped, and it became calm."

Obviously the faith that Jesus exercised here was not

received from Him the supernatural gift of faith needed to deal with the storm.

Quality, Not Quantity

Later, Jesus confronted a storm of a different kind—a boy rolling on the ground in an epileptic seizure and an agonized father imploring help. Jesus dealt with this storm as He had dealt with the one on the Sea of Galilee. He spoke an authoritative word of faith that drove the evil spirit out of the boy. When His disciples asked Him why they had not been able to do this, He told them plainly, "Because of the littleness of your faith." Then He went on to say, "If you have faith as a mustard seed, you shall say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it shall move; and nothing shall be impossible to you" (Mt. 17:20).

Jesus here uses a mustard seed as a measure of quantity. In Matthew 13:32 we are told that a mustard seed is "smaller than all other seeds." In other words, Jesus is telling us it is not the *quantity* of the faith that matters, but the *quality*. A mustard seed of this kind of faith is sufficient to move a mountain!

Near the climax of His earthly ministry, outside the tomb of Lazarus, Jesus once more demonstrated the power of words spoken with this kind of faith. He cried out with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth" (John 11:43). This brief command, energized by supernatural faith, caused a man who was both dead and buried to

come walking out of his tomb, alive and well.

The original pattern for this kind of faith is found in the act of creation itself. It was by faith in His own word that God brought the universe into being. "By the word of the LORD the heavens were made; and by the breath [literally, spirit] of His mouth all their host . . . For He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast" (Ps. 33:6,9). God's spoken word, energized by His Spirit, was the effective agent in all creation.

When the gift of faith is in operation, a man becomes, for a time, the channel of God's own faith. The *person* who speaks is no longer important, but only the *faith* that is expressed. If it is God's own faith at work, it is equally effective whether the words are spoken through God's mouth or whether they are uttered by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of a human believer. So long as a believer operates with this divine faith, his words are just as effective as if God Himself had spoken them. It is the *faith* that matters, not the person.

In the examples which we have considered hitherto, this supernatural faith was expressed through a spoken word. It was by a spoken word that Jesus caused the fig tree to wither. By a spoken word, too, He calmed the storm, cast the evil spirit out of the epileptic boy and called Lazarus out of the tomb. In Mark 11:23 He extended this promise to any word spoken in faith when He said, "Whoever says . . . what he says . . . shall be granted him."

Sometimes a word spoken in prayer becomes the channel for the gift of faith. In James 5:15 we are told that "the *prayer of faith** will restore the one who is sick." There is no room left for doubt as to the effect of such a prayer as is described here. Its results are guaranteed. Prayer prayed with this kind of God-given faith is irresistible. Neither sickness nor any other condition that is contrary to God's will can stand against it.

As an example of "the prayer of faith," James refers to Elijah, who by his prayer first withheld all rain for three and a half years, and then caused rain to fall again (James 5:17-18). The Scripture indicates that the giving and withholding of rain is a divine prerogative, exercised by God Himself (see, for example, Deut. 11:13-17 and Jer. 5:24; 14:22). Yet for three and a half years Elijah exercised this prerogative on God's behalf. James emphasizes that Elijah was "a man with a nature like

ours"—a human being just like the rest of us. But so long as he was enabled to pray with God's faith, the words he uttered were as effective as God's own decrees.

However, faith of this kind need not operate only through a spoken word. It was by the same kind of supernatural faith that Jesus was able to walk on the stormy Sea of Galilee (see Mt. 14:25-33). In this case He did not need to speak; He merely walked out over the water. Peter began to follow the example of Jesus and to exercise the same kind of faith. This enabled him to do just the same as Jesus was doing. But when he looked away from Jesus to the waves, his faith deserted him and he began to sink!

The comment that Jesus made is very illuminating. "O you of little faith, why did you doubt? (Mt. 14:31). Jesus did not reprove Peter for wanting to walk on the water. He reproved him for losing faith halfway. Don Basham has pointed out that there is a divine urge, implanted in every human heart, to step out in supernatural faith and walk on a plane above the level of our own ability. Since God Himself placed this urge in man, He does not reprove us for it. On the contrary, He is willing to give us the faith that will enable us to do it. He is disappointed, not when we reach out for this kind of faith, but only when we do not hold on to it long enough.

God Retains the Initiative

This supernatural kind of faith is given in a specific situation to meet a specific need. It remains under God's direct control. It must remain so, for it is God's own faith. He gives it or withholds it at His discretion. It is included with all the other supernatural gifts, concerning which Paul says, "But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills" (1 Cor. 12:11). The key phrase here is at the end—"just as *He* wills." God Himself determines when and to whom He will impart each of these gifts. The initiative is with God, not with man.

Just Around the Corner . . .

Our July/August issue of *New Wine* will be significant in several ways. Besides carrying the second in a series of two reprints from Derek Prince's new book, *Faith to Live By*, it will feature the first article in a series by Ern Baxter on the subject of the present ministry of Jesus Christ, as well as articles by the other teachers affiliated with Christian Growth Ministries. We hope you'll find this issue of *New Wine* both enjoyable and instructive.

*This is the literal translation given in the margin.

This was true even in the ministry of Jesus Himself. He did not curse every fruitless fig tree; He did not still every tempest; He did not call every dead man out of His tomb; He did not always walk on the water. He was careful to leave the initiative in the hands of His Father. In John 5:19 He said, "The Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner." Again, in John 14:10, "The words that I say to you I do not speak on My own initiative, but the Father abiding in me does His works." Always the initiative was with the Father.

We must learn to be as reverent and as careful in our relationship to the Father as Jesus was. The gift of faith is not ours to command. It is not intended to satisfy our personal whims or ambitions. It is made available at God's discretion to accomplish ends which originate in God's own eternal purposes. We cannot, and must not, wrest the initiative from God. Even if God should permit us to do so, it would ultimately be to our own loss.

Pictured as a "mustard seed," the gift of faith is similar to two of the gifts of revelation—the word of wisdom and the word of knowledge. Wisdom is directive; knowledge is informative. God has all wisdom and all knowledge, but, fortunately for us, He does not burden us with all of it. However, in a given situation where we need direction, He supernaturally imparts to us a "word" of wisdom—just one little "mustard seed" out of His total store of wisdom. Or in a situation where we need information, He imparts to us a "word" of knowledge—a little "mustard seed" out of His total store of knowledge.

So it is with the gift of faith. God has all faith, but He does not impart it all to us. In a given situation, where we need faith on a higher level than our own, God imparts to us a "mustard seed" out of His own total store. Once this special need has been met, God withdraws His faith and we are left once again to exercise our own.

Equipment for Evangelism

From another point of view, as we have seen earlier, the gift of faith is associated with the other two gifts of power: the gifts of healing and the effecting of miracles. In practice, the gift of faith often serves as a catalyst to bring the other two gifts into operation. This is

exemplified by the ministry of Philip in Samaria, as described in Acts 8:5–8:

(5) And Philip went down to the city of Samaria and began proclaiming Christ to them.

(6) And the multitudes with one accord were giving attention to what was said by Philip, as they heard and saw the signs which he was performing.

(7) For in the case of many who had unclean spirits, they were coming out of them shouting with a loud voice; and many who had been paralyzed and lame were healed.

(8) And there was much rejoicing in that city.

In the first phase of ministry, Philip cast out evil spirits. As we have seen from the example of Jesus—in Matthew 17:17–20 and elsewhere—this was done by the spoken word through the exercise of the gift of faith. In the second phase of Philip's ministry the two associated gifts of *healings* and *miracles* came into operation. As a result, miracles were performed and the paralyzed and the lame were healed.

In Acts 21:8 Philip is called "the evangelist." There are only two actual patterns of the ministry of evangelism presented to us in the New Testament: that of Jesus Himself and that of Philip. In each case, there was a strong emphasis on casting out evil spirits, followed by miracles and healings. The three gifts of faith, miracles and healings together constitute the supernatural equipment, endorsed by the New Testament, for the ministry of the evangelist.

Summary

The gift of faith is one of nine gifts of the Holy Spirit listed by Paul in 1 Corinthians 12:7–11. Each of these gifts is a supernatural manifestation of the Holy Spirit, dwelling in a believer and operating through him.

Through the gift of faith, the Holy Spirit temporarily imparts to a believer a portion of God's own faith. This is faith on a divine level, far above the human. It is not the quantity that matters, but the quality. A "mustard seed" of this kind of faith is sufficient to move a mountain.

The gift of faith operates frequently, but not exclusively, through a spoken word. Such a word may be spoken in prayer. Through this gift Jesus caused a fig tree to wither in 24 hours, calmed a storm at sea, drove an evil spirit out of an epileptic boy, called Lazarus out of his tomb and walked on the stormy waves.

God has implanted in man an urge to exercise this kind of faith. Therefore He does not reprove us for doing so. Rather, He is disappointed if we let go of it too soon. However, as in the ministry of Jesus, the initiative must always be left with God.

The gift of faith can serve as a catalyst for the related gifts of healing and miracles. These three gifts combined are the equipment endorsed by the New Testament for the ministry of an evangelist. ♣

STREET

Alan Wallace, one of our editorial assistants, attended the April 7-9 Jesus '77 Conference in Orlando, Florida as a representative of New Wine Magazine. Working at the New Wine booth there and participating in some of the conference sessions, Alan brought back the following report on Jesus '77 in Orlando.

Ever since 80,000 Christians gathered in Dallas, Texas in June 1972 for the Campus Crusade-sponsored Explo '72, believers have been coming together for massive outdoor conferences called "Jesus festivals." Typified by throngs of young people gathered around a large open-air platform, listening attentively to the teaching of a seasoned Bible scholar or singing along enthusiastically with the music of a popular Christian performer, such Jesus celebrations have become increasingly popular and well-attended.

In terms of attendance and enthusiasm, the Jesus '77 Conference in Orlando, one of a number of such Jesus '77 festivals planned for various locations, didn't fall behind any of its predecessors. But far from being "just another Jesus festival," Jesus '77 demonstrated the faithfulness of God to establish a particular keynote and emphasis which makes each of these conferences a unique event, different from all those that have preceded it.

The majority of the 20,000 or more participants at the Orlando event were under thirty, and most were Christians. The others came primarily with friends or groups just to see what was happening or discover more about Jesus and His message of life.

They converged on a few acres of farmland just south of Orlando (for the second year in a row)

for three solid days of teaching, worship and fellowship. Although some attendees opted for the relative comfort of a motel room, most stayed in tents, campers, trailers or makeshift shelters erected on the perimeter of the Jesus '77 meeting area.

But no one seemed to mind the inconveniences too much, for most of those present had come for spiritual edification; and if they had to do without their favorite creature comforts for a few days, it was worth the cost. Even so, nobody had to go hungry at Jesus '77—the planning committee had arranged for those two faithful servants of mankind to be on hand—Kentucky Fried Chicken and McDonalds, both of whom had concession booths at the festival site.

VARIETY OF MINISTRIES

Popular youth ministers, stalwart scholars of New Testament Greek, pastors of thriving churches, and hulking Christian athletes filled out the list of speakers. The conference schedule allowed for a morning and evening general assembly each day. But the real heart of the teaching portion of the festival was the morning and afternoon seminars.

Three times daily, each Jesus '77 participant went to the seminar of his choice, selected from the four which were offered. These sessions were held under three circus tents and in the outdoor arena, each of which could seat several thousand (and they were generally filled). Some of the teachers and their seminar topics were:

Roy Harthern, pastor of Calvary Assembly of God in Orlando, who taught on the power of faith;

Scott Ross, leader of Love

Inn—a Christian community in New York—who shared on current trends in music and worship;

Derek Prince, from Christian Growth Ministries, who taught in the mornings on basic principles of Christian living and in the afternoons on spiritual warfare;

C.J. Mahaney and Larry Tomczak of T.A.G. (Take and Give) Christian Ministry in Washington, D.C., who led seminars on the Christian's first love and principles of God's guidance, respectively.

Others who spoke at Jesus '77 included Alex Clattenburg, Winkie Pratney, Pat Robertson, David Wilkerson, Norm Evans, Pauline Harthern, Ann Kiemel, and Denny Duron.

A JOYFUL NOISE

Christian musicians, both individually and in groups, were plentiful. The music of groups such as the Archers, the Walter Hawkins Singers, Hope of Glory and Common Ground served to both start and end the day's activities. In addition, individual musicians Paul Clark, Jeannie Vee, Larnelle Harris and Dallas Holm helped complete a musical program that was entertaining and inspiring.

PASTOR'S SEMINAR

A special feature which was of particular value was the Jesus '77 Pastor's Seminar, held at a motel near the site of the other activities. The broad variety of topics examined at the meetings for members of the clergy ranged from "Reaching Your City for God" and "How to Grow a Church" to "New Testament Church in '77" and "Challenges of a Growing Church."

LASTING IMPRESSIONS

There were meaningful

moments at the Orlando conference, as there almost always are when that many believers come together to celebrate the Lordship of Jesus. But perhaps the most significant time of all was the final service on Saturday night before Easter.

In the concluding message C.J. Mahaney shared his concern to see the people of God enter into committed relationships with one another, noting that until we were willing to do so, the establishment of the Kingdom of God in the negative climate of today's world would be unbearably slow. He pointed out instances of wrong thinking among members of the Church who would rather think of the Church as a building on "34th and Main" than as a body of mutually committed believers. Mahaney stated that, ultimately, our success in fulfilling the commands of Christ to change the world and evangelize its people hinges on how fully we obey Jesus' command to "love one another" in ways that are visible and practical.

Following C.J. Mahaney's message, the participants joined in a candle-lighting ceremony. Ordinarily such services tend to be more emotional than spiritual, but this one seemed to be different. The initial plan was for the leaders on the platform to light their candles and then go out and light a few candles among the crowd. In turn, they would then light the candles of the other people in the congregation, symbolizing the way Christians are to be the light of the world.

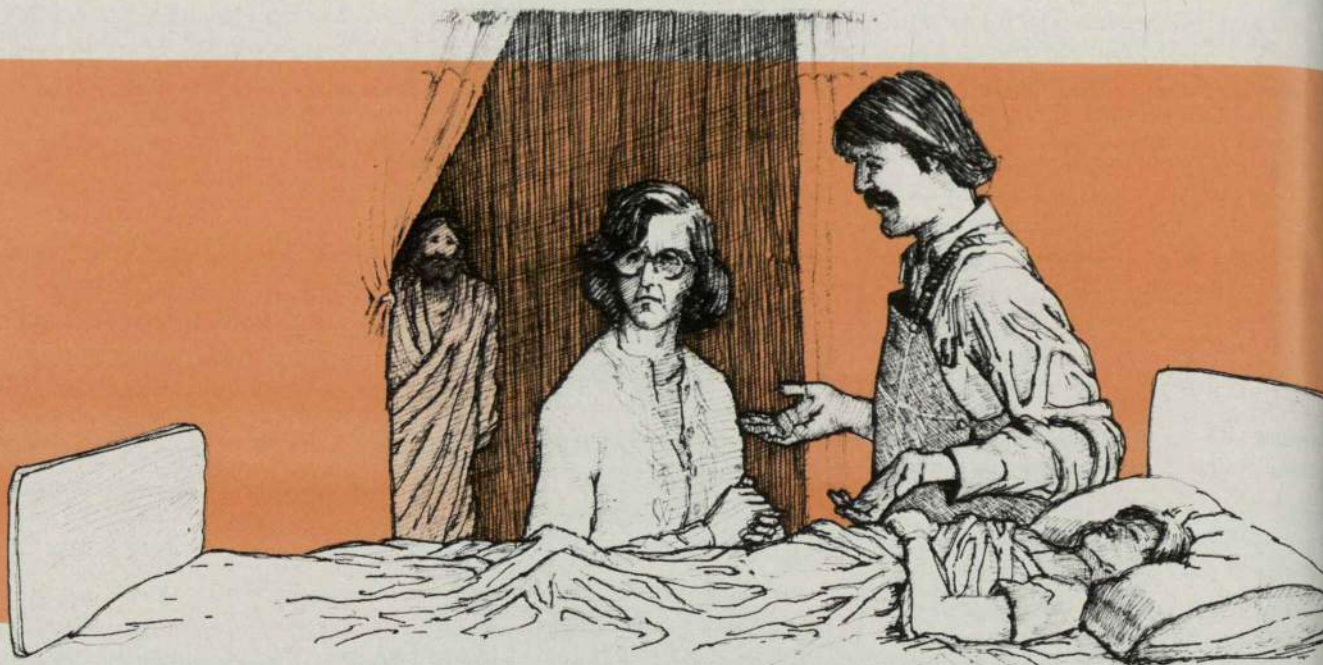
The wind, however, refused to cooperate with these plans, and so, instead of simply lighting one another's candles, everyone had problems even keeping his own candle lit. The solution which

developed was this: hundreds of small groups of four to eight people gathered all over the arena to shield each other's lights and to relight them whenever the wind happened to blow them out.

Alex Clattenburg, the youth minister at Calvary Assembly in Orlando, drew the obvious analogy. He pointed out that no one can be personally responsible for lighting and maintaining everyone else's "candle" in the Christian life. Each Christian needs to be committed to a small group of believers who are also committed to strengthening and upholding him. Whereas trying to meet the needs of everyone in the congregation (lighting and keeping lit everyone else's candle) is an impossible task, being closely committed to a few brothers, with the option of becoming interrelated with other groups, is an effective way to maintain the spiritual growth of all, while still reaching out to bring others into an atmosphere of security in the Lord.

At Jesus '77 in Orlando, there was very little of the emotional superfluity which sometimes marked the "Jesus movement" and earlier Jesus festivals. Even at the height of the final service, people were more concerned about the actual value of what was being said and its long-range implications than with the emotional appeal of the meeting.

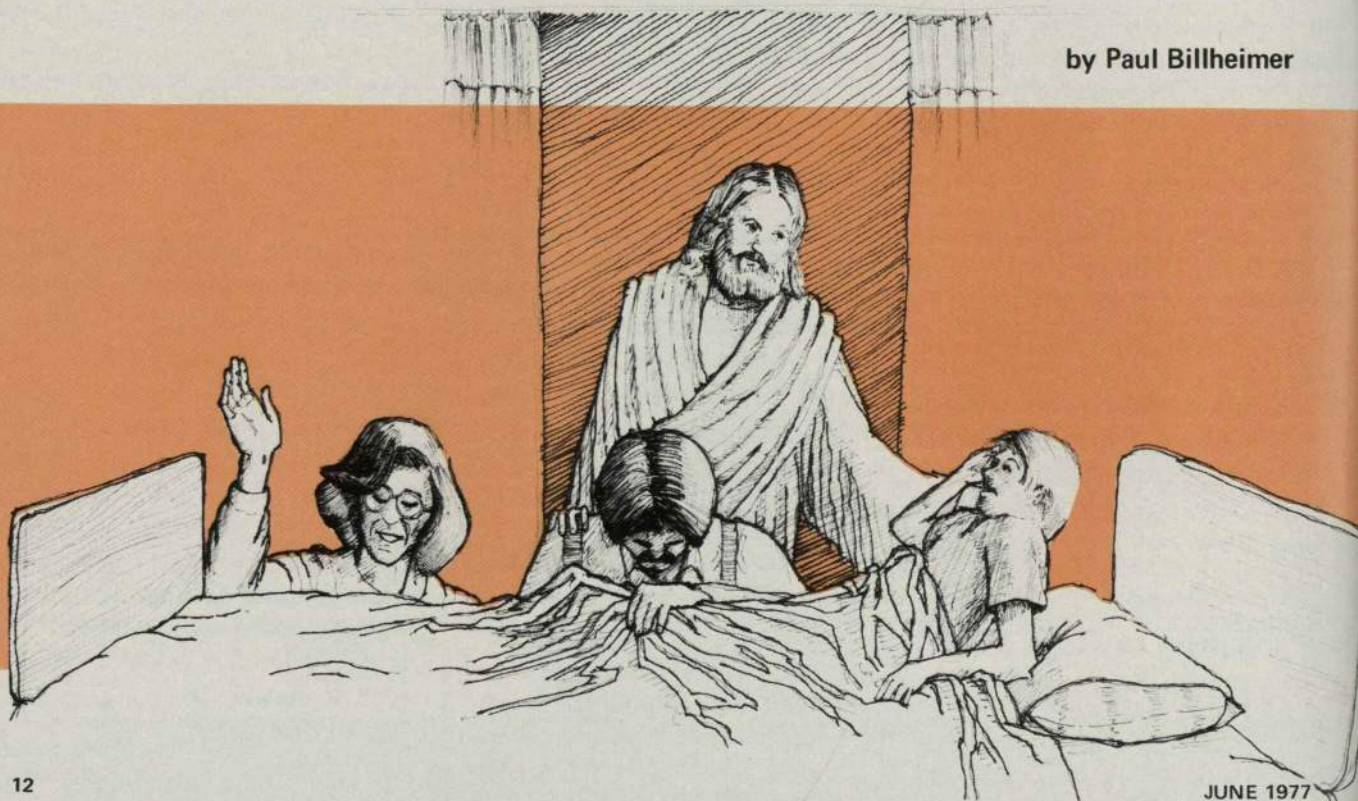
Perhaps the central note of the Orlando meeting was one of unity and mutual acceptance in the Lord. This continuing evidence of an attitude of love among brethren from various denominations and backgrounds is an encouraging indication of the stability and understanding which is steadily growing in the Body of Christ. ☞



God "helpless" without a man

"God will do nothing but in answer to prayer."

by Paul Billheimer



And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found none. Therefore have I poured out mine indignation upon them; I have consumed them with the fire of my wrath; their own way have I recompensed upon their heads, saith the Lord God. (Ezekiel 22:30-31).

PRAYER A DIVINE MYSTERY

Has it ever occurred to you that the design of prayer in the divine economy is a fantastically puzzling mystery? Why should there be a system or plan of prayer at all? Is not God almighty and self-sufficient? Could He possibly need any help outside of Himself? Self-sufficiency is one of the attributes of God. Does He need anything which man or any other of His creatures can supply? Could not He who spoke the worlds into existence and who upholds them by that same word accomplish His purposes without the help of puny man? Then *why* did He devise the plan of prayer? Why and how did He become "dependent" upon the intercession of men? Why can He do nothing in the realm of human redemption apart from human cooperation through prayer and faith? How did He get Himself into such a "fix"? When God is wholly self-sufficient—when He, by His will and spoken word, can accomplish any conceivable end—why does He not arbitrarily and without reference to any other being or intelligence or will, proceed to speak the word?

GOD "HELPLESS" WITHOUT A MAN

The mystery of the design of prayer is pointed up in Ezekiel 22:30-31. During a

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time of national apostasy, God said, "And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found none. Therefore have I poured out mine indignation upon them; I have consumed them with the fire of my wrath; and their own way have I recompensed upon their heads."

Here we see God seeking to avoid exercising just and deserved judgment. He, Himself, longs to spare the nation. But, strangely, He is "helpless" without a man, without an intercessor. If no one will intercede, God cannot withhold judgment. *Why* should He be "dependent" upon the prayers of a man to defend the nation from the judgments which He, Himself, wishes to withhold? God is the almighty and supreme Sovereign of the universe. He is Himself the ultimate Judge, Jury, and Executive and Enforcement Authority. *Or is He?* If He longed to withhold judgment against His people, if He yearned to show mercy, why did He not exercise His supreme sovereignty and do so, regardless of the prayers—or lack of prayers—of any man? Moreover, since God's will is supreme in all things, when He wills or plans certain divine purposes such as the salvation of a soul or a revival in a specific area, why doesn't He arbitrarily go over our heads and carry out His will? Why did He set up a system which made Him "dependent" upon a man? Is this not a baffling mystery?

GOD BEGS MEN TO PRAY

That He will do nothing in the realm of human redemption, since its inception, outside of this scheme of prayer and intercession is indicated by God's many pressing invitations to prayer in His Word. He not only invites us; He intreats, He importunes, He urges. He even begs us to exercise this

privilege. One translator has paraphrased Matthew 7:7 thus: "Ask, I ask you to ask; seek, I intreat you to seek; knock, I urge you to knock." Evidently He can do nothing without our prayers.

He not only invites and exhorts us to pray, He also commands: "Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest" (Matt. 9:38). He is Himself the Lord of the harvest. The harvest is His. The laborers are His. *Why* should He stand "helplessly" by while urging men to pray reapers into the fields? Why does He send forth laborers only in answer to the prayers of the redeemed?

GOD "CATEGORICALLY" PROMISES TO ANSWER

The fundamental importance of this scheme of prayer in God's economy is further emphasized by God's binding Himself unequivocally to answer. God's promises to answer prayer are so sweeping and "categorical," over such a broad spectrum, as to constitute a veritable carte blanche, that is, a blank card bearing the authority of His own signature. It is as though God handed us His scepter and begged us to use it. Here are some examples: "And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do. . . . If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it" (John 14:13-14). "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will and it shall be done unto you" (John 15:7). "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name; ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full" (John 16:23-24).

HIS PLAN OF PRAYER "WATERTIGHT"

I call these categorical promises, meaning they are unqualified

or unconditional. When I use that term I mean that no conditions are attached which constitute a hedge on God's part. In other words, there are no conditions which are not fair or which are not within the reasonable capacity of a truly dedicated child of God. The condition of abiding in Him and His words abiding in us is possible for any ordinary, earnest and sincere born-again believer. If it is not possible for such believers, then we would have to say that God is hedging, that is, seeking to avoid the risk involved in making such sweeping promises—and that is impossible for Him. But if God is not hedging, *then the entire responsibility for prayerlessness or ineffective prayer falls entirely upon us.* And if asking in the name of the Lord Jesus is not something that any fully devoted believer can normally do, then again God is hedging. But God is not hedging. He is dealing honorably. Therefore, the responsibility for prayerlessness or unanswered prayer must fall upon us. The scheme of prayer, so far as God is concerned, is "watertight." His part is already done. While His promise to answer is always circumscribed by His will, this is in no sense a hedge since any truly yielded child of God never wills anything but God's will. In other words, there is no "fine print" in God's prayer contract.

GOD PROPOSES— A HOLY CHURCH DISPOSES

God's offer of His scepter to redeemed humanity is, therefore, a bona fide offer. It is an offer in good faith. Through the plan of prayer God actually is inviting redeemed man into FULL partnership with Him, not in *making* the divine decisions, but in *implementing* those decisions in the affairs of humankind. Independently and of His own will God makes the decisions governing the affairs of

earth. *The responsibility and authority for the enforcement and administration of those decisions He has placed upon the shoulders of His Church.* "I say also unto thee that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever thou shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matt. 16:18-19). This promise is repeated to the Church in general in Matthew 18:18: "Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." "Behold, I give unto *you* power [authority] to tread on serpents and scorpions and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing shall by any means hurt you" (Luke 10:19). "As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained" (John 20:21-23).

GOD DEPUTIZES HIS CHURCH

In commenting on John 20:21-23 as a part of the Easter Sunday School lesson for April 14, 1968, Dr. Wilbur T. Dayton says, "After the removal of His bodily presence from among them, His followers must be His representatives, must take His place. This is the apostle's commission and ours. We are His proxies with power of attorney to do His bidding." "As the Father hath sent me, even so send I you" can mean nothing less than that we are His deputies with full authority to enforce the divine will and program. The deputy is invested with the full power of the office of his Chief, and is fully au-

thorized to act in His stead.

WHY?

The question is: *Why* did God choose to work within the framework of this system of prayer? *Why* did He place the full responsibility for the enforcement and administration of the divine government of earth and its affairs upon the shoulders of fallen but redeemed humanity? *Why* will He do nothing in earthly affairs apart from the cooperation of His Church? While we rightly reject the Roman idea that the Pope is God's vicegerent on earth, *have we not failed to act upon the sweeping authority God has delegated to His corporate body in the world?* And that authority to implement the will and decision of God concerning earthly affairs operates solely within the framework and system of prayer which God has ordained. By God's own decree, all of this vast delegated authority is wholly inoperative apart from the prayers of man (Ezekiel 20:30-31). What is the explanation of this plan? *Why* did God do it?

PRAYER PRIVILEGE— THE BADGE OF RANK

God had something infinitely great in mind when He planned the system of prayer. God's eternal purpose in the creation of the universe and the human race was to obtain an Eternal Companion for His Son. This fact is a part of the mystery revealed in the Book of Ephesians, reaching its illuminative climax in chapter five. This chapter expounds the divinely revealed parallel between God's human and divine marriage programs. Verse 32 clarifies the mystery when Paul unequivocally declares that the partners in the marriage program are Christ and His Church. In God's eternal purpose the Church, as Christ's Eternal Companion, is to occupy the

highest position in the universe short of the Godhead itself. As the Bride of the Eternal Son she is to share with Him universal sovereignty. "Don't you know that some day we Christians are going to judge and govern the world? . . . Don't you realize that we Christians will judge and reward the very angels in heaven?" (1 Cor. 6:2a,3aLB). "If we suffer, we shall also reign with him" (2 Tim. 2:12). "And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power [authority] over the nations" (Rev. 2:26). "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne" (Rev. 3:21). "And they sang a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals; for thou wast slain, and has redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God a kingdom of priests, and we shall reign on the earth (Rev. 5:9-10 *New Scofield*). *This Eternal Companion is being selected from redeemed members of the human race, the only race in all creation that was made in the image of God. Since this companion is to share the throne of the universe with her Lover and Lord she must be trained, educated, and prepared for her queenly role.*

PRAYER IS "ON-THE-JOB" TRAINING FOR SOVEREIGNTY

By delegating His authority to her for administering His decisions and enforcing His will upon earth, God placed the Church in apprenticeship for eternal sovereignty with Christ. By practicing in her prayer closet the enforcement of Heaven's decisions in mundane affairs, the Church is in "on-the-job" training for co-sovereignty with Christ over His universal empire. She must learn the art of spiritual

warfare, of overcoming evil forces in preparation for her assumption of the throne following the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. *To enable her to learn the technique of overcoming, God devised the scheme of prayer. To give her "on-the-job" training, God delegated to her the authority to enforce His will right here on earth. In order to enable her to acquire the character and the "know how" she will need as co-sovereign, He has placed upon her the responsibility and authority to enforce God's will and administer His decisions in the affairs of earth.*

Notice how often *earth*, as her sphere of action, is emphasized: "Whatsoever thou shalt bind on *earth*"; "Whatsoever thou shalt loose on *earth*"; "If any two of you shall agree on *earth*." (Matt. 16:19, Matt. 18:18-19). This delegation of authority and administrative responsibility for earthly affairs constitutes the highest honor and elevates her to the highest rank of all created beings. No angel nor archangel will ever achieve this rank, because not angels but redeemed humanity alone is qualified by original creation in the image and likeness of God to constitute the Bride and share the Bridegroom's throne.

SUPREME RANK—GOD'S ORIGINAL PURPOSE

It may seem irreverent, but it is nevertheless true, that God cannot exalt redeemed humanity any higher in the divine economy without infringing upon the Godhead. While we must understand that infinity separates the Creator from the created, yet from the beginning God planned in Jesus Christ so completely to bridge this gap that redeemed humanity ends up as a full-blooded (generic) member of the family of God, seated with Christ on the throne of the universe as His Bride and Companion. "To him that over-

cometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne" (Rev. 3:21). This was no afterthought. It was God's plan from all eternity. "He hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world" (Eph. 1:4). *This was God's original purpose in the creation of the universe and the human race. And God's prayer program is His method of preparing the Bride for her future queenly role.*

IF THE CHURCH WILL NOT PRAY, GOD WILL NOT ACT

This is why God never goes "over the head" of His Church to enforce His decisions. He will not take things out of her hands. To do so would sabotage His training program. Only by bearing this overwhelming weight of responsibility can she be brought to her full stature as co-sovereign of the universe. This is why when she fails He will wait. This is why He will do nothing in the realm of human redemption until she accepts her responsibility and uses her privilege and prerogative of intercession. If she will not pray God will not act because this would abort His purpose to bring His Church to her full potential as His co-sovereign.

This was God's plan from the beginning. He will not spoil it now by taking things out of her hands. *He will let the whole world go to destruction first.* His part of the work of redemption is full and complete. But He will not override His Church. *His eternal purpose is the qualifying of His Eternal Companion for entering into full partnership with her Lord in the governing process of the universe.* She can be qualified only through the apprenticeship of prayer and intercession. Only thus does she learn to enter into and participate in the eternal purpose of her Lord. *Therefore, God will do nothing apart from His Church.*

PRAYER—THE MAIN BUSINESS OF THE CHURCH

This is why John Wesley said, "God will do nothing but in answer to prayer." This is why S. D. Gordon said that "The greatest thing anyone can do for God and for man is to pray." This is why he also said, "You can do more than pray *after* you have prayed, but you cannot do more than pray *until* you have prayed." This also explains his statement, "Prayer is striking the winning blow . . . service is gathering up the results." It likewise explains the statement of E. M. Bounds about prayer: "God shapes the world by prayer. The more praying there is in the world the better the world will be, the mightier the forces against evil . . . The prayers of God's saints are the capital stock of heaven by which God carries on His great work upon earth. God conditions the very life and prosperity of His cause on prayer." If these things are true, then "prayer should be the main business of our day."

THE CHURCH HOLDS THE KEY

Checks used by some business firms require the signatures of two individuals to make them valid. One signature is not enough. Both parties must sign. This illustrates God's method of operating through the prayers and faith of His people. His promises are His checks signed in His own blood. His part was fully completed at Calvary. But no promise is made good until a redeemed man enters the throne room of the universe and, by prayer and faith, writes his name beside God's. Then, and not until then, are the check's resources released. It is like a safety deposit box in the bank vault. The keeper has a key and you have a key. Neither key alone will open the box. But, when you give the keeper your key, she in-

serts *both* keys and the door flies open, making available all of the treasure stored in the box. *Heaven holds the key by which decisions governing earthly affairs are made but we hold the key by which those decisions are implemented.* This being so, then prayer takes on a very different dimension from the conventional notion or understanding. *Prayer is not overcoming reluctance in God.* It is not persuading Him to do something He is unwilling to do. It is "binding upon earth" that which already has been bound in heaven (Matt. 16:19 *Amplified*). *It is implementing His decision. It is enforcing His will upon earth.* Prayer makes possible God's accomplishing what He wants and what He cannot do without it. The content of all true prayer originates in the heart of God. So it is He who inspires the prayer in the heart of man, and the answer to every God-inspired petition is already prepared before the prayer is uttered. When we are convinced of this, then faith for the answer is easy—far easier than it would be otherwise.

TOO BUSY TO PRAY

No angel was ever invited to share this high privilege. No archangel was ever invited into the throne room of the universe. Only redeemed humanity. And many of us are too busy—watching television, following sports, hunting and fishing, bathing and boating, engaging in farming or business, moonlighting, etc., etc. We are so busy with the cares and pleasures of this life, trying to keep up with the trend in new cars, new homes, new appliances, new furniture, etc., that we do not have time to pray.

Someone has described a modern American as a person who drives a bank-financed car over a bond-financed highway on credit card gas to open a charge account at a department store so he can

fill his Savings and Loan financed home with installment-purchased furniture. May this not also be a description of many modern professed Christians? And may this not be one reason why modern Christians have so little time to pray?

Perhaps some may be thinking: Are we to have nothing at all for ourselves? The answer is, NO. Christ is to be ALL and in all. You are not your own. You are bought with a price (1 Cor. 6: 19–20). "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10:31). If you can buy the new car, the new home, the new furniture, the new gadgets, hold down two jobs, etc., for the glory of God—well and good. But if we didn't have to have such a high standard of living would we not have more time to pray? If we were not so intoxicated with travel, pleasure, vacations, and recreation, would we not have more time to pray? If we were not so enamored of sports and entertainment, would we not have more time to pray? We have more leisure than ever before—but less time to pray. We are not only cheating God and the world but we are cheating ourselves. By our failure to pray we are frustrating God's high purpose in the ages. We are robbing the world of God's best plan for it and we are limiting our rank in eternity.

**"AND I SOUGHT FOR A MAN
AMONG THEM AND FOUND
NONE." ♣**

Book Available

If you would like a copy of *Destined for the Throne*, the book by Paul Billheimer from which we excerpted the article "God Helpless without a Man," you may order it using the form on the inside back cover.

Bible Study

examining faith

BY JIM CROFT

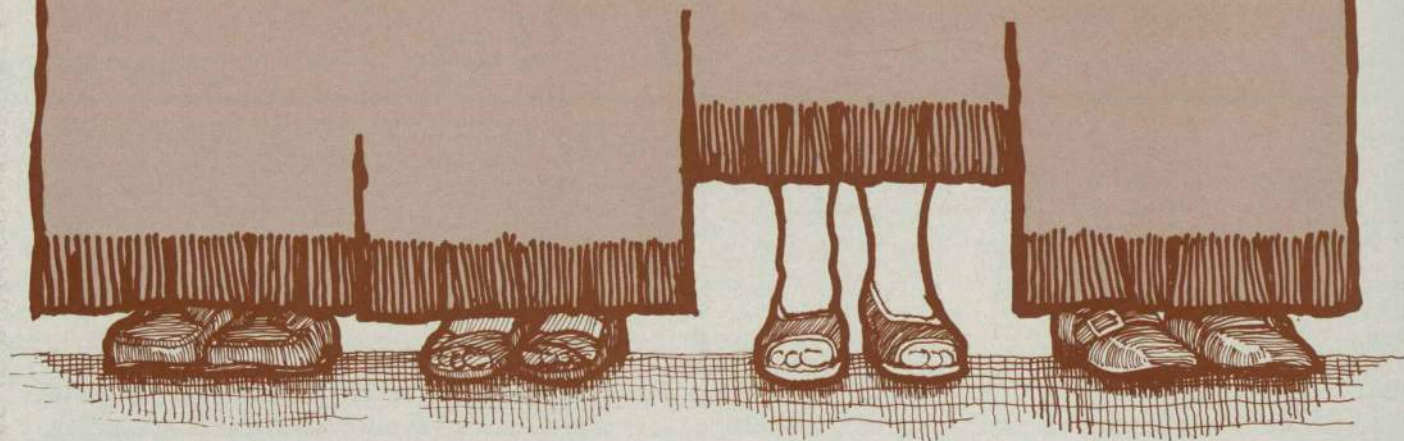
The writer of Hebrews makes it quite clear that none of us can really go on into maturity until the foundation principles of Christian doctrine are firmly established in our hearts. The doctrine of "Faith toward God" is perhaps the most important of the six foundational truths. Every believer, from time to time, should examine himself to insure that he is making satisfactory progress in his faith (Heb. 6:1-3 and 2 Cor. 13:5).

(Bible Study answers are found on page 26.)

1. With God all things are possible, but just how much is possible if one believes? (Mk. 9:23) _____
2. The _____ are to live by _____ (Heb. 10:38-39).
3. If a person draws back from his present level of faith, whose soul will be displeased with him? _____
4. Without _____ it is _____ to please God (Heb. 11:6).
5. What does God do for those who diligently seek Him? _____
6. Compare Hebrews 11:1-3 with 2 Corinthians 5:7 and circle the best answer to this question. Faith always relates to a. the now, b. the evidence, c. the hope, d. the unseen.
7. Whom did God see by faith before he was ever born? (Ps. 139:15-16) _____
8. What would have happened to the psalmist had he not had faith to know that he would see the goodness of God in his lifetime? (Ps. 27:13) _____
9. Ephesians 6:13-17 gives us a list of the armor of a Christian warrior with which we are to all gird ourselves. According to 1 Thessalonians 5:8, what makes up the breastplate and what makes up the helmet? _____
10. When a person is baptized in the Holy Spirit and speaks in tongues, the Lord is testifying to them that their _____ have been _____ by _____ (Acts 15:6-9 and Acts 10:44-47).
11. Is it possible that the gospel can be unprofitable to someone who hears it? (Heb. 4:2) _____
12. If so, why? _____
13. When miracles are done in an assembly, to what can they be attributed? (Gal. 3:5-6) _____
14. Jesus Christ, by character, is _____ and His name is _____ and _____ (1 Thess. 5:24 and Rev. 19:11).
15. Scripture tells us that we go from faith to faith. What is the working mechanism behind increasing faith? (Gal. 5:6) _____
16. Those who eat certain foods and observe certain days as holy because of religious conviction exemplify what state of faith? (Rom. 14:1-5) a. weak, b. insincere, c. strong
17. The most important thing is that each believer be _____ in his own _____.
18. Anything not done in faith is _____.
19. Paul encouraged the Romans to take a sane, sober view of their spiritual aptitude in Romans 12:3-6. In the light of Paul's admonition, would you say that we all have the same measure of faith or that we have different proportions of faith according to our ministry? _____
20. If a person has the _____ of faith he will _____ even as he has _____ in his heart (2 Cor. 4:13).
21. Paul sent _____ to the _____ because he wanted to _____ the state of their _____ (1 Thess. 3:1-5).
22. Praise the Lord! He found that their faith was _____ at an _____ rate (2 Thess. 1:3).

THE DAY JENNY GREW

by Dick Coleman



A miracle that came from the "Faith which worketh by love."

Recently we received news from Rev. Dick Coleman, pastor of Westside Baptist Church in Leesburg, Florida and long-time associate of Charles Simpson, of an unusual miracle. Buck Atwell, an elder at Westside, had been motivated by compassion to pray for Jenny Lester, a member of the same congregation, that she would grow. The Lord answered his prayer in a miraculous way. We feel that the following interview with Buck Atwell and Jenny Lester by Dick Coleman will inspire and encourage your faith as it has ours.

COLEMAN: I have Jenny Lester and Brother Buck Atwell here with me for an interview about something the Lord recently did in their lives. Jenny is a member of Westside Baptist Church and Buck is an elder there. First I want to ask Brother Buck just how it came about that he prayed with Jenny, and then we'll hear from Jenny, who is a young housewife and mother, concerning her rather unusual miracle of growth.

Brother Buck, you've been an elder here at Westside for several years, and you've had a devout interest in divine healing and in ministry. Why don't you explain just how it happened that you received this burden to pray for Jenny?

ATWELL: Well, I came to the church office on the morning after our home prayer group meeting to bring some tithes and offerings to our church secretary. When I arrived, our secretary's sister Jenny was there. Well, I had never noticed it before, but I observed that morning that Jenny was extremely short. I knew her husband, Ken, real well, but I had never really gotten to know her. She always sat across the church from me, and I guess each time I saw her, she had on high heels, so I had never really observed her being as short as she really was.

So I walked into the office that morning, and Jenny was standing there in front of the desk. I think she must have had on low-heeled shoes that morning, and as I looked at her, I couldn't get over how short she seemed to be. All of a sudden—I guess the Holy Spirit just moved upon me, quickened me — I looked at her and said, "Well, Jenny, wouldn't you like to grow?" And she said, "By all means I would." Then I said, "Well, I believe the Lord will give you the desires of your heart," and I simply put my hands on her and prayed, "Father, I just ask you in the name of Jesus to let her grow, Lord . . . for Your glory . . . and I thank You for it, in Jesus name."

It was just a simple prayer, and as I recall, I turned around and walked out the door right afterward, got in my car, and went on back to the house. I really just dismissed it from my mind. And then there was nothing else said about it until the following morning. Our telephone rang very early in the morning, and my wife, Ann, answered it. When she picked it up, Jenny was on the line, and she was very excited as she started telling Ann about the miracle that had happened.

COLEMAN: All right. Now let's talk with Jenny Lester, the one who experienced this unusual miracle, and let her just tell what happened.

JENNY: Well, let me start when Brother Buck came into the church office. He asked, "Who's driving the big car outside?" And I explained, "Well, I am. I have to drive a large car in order to maneuver the seat up and forward so that I can reach the pedals because I'm so short. I've just always been too short." So he said, "Have you ever asked the Lord to make you grow?" I answered, "Well, I did one time when I had my legs checked. I told the Lord then that He could

add a couple of inches if He wanted to." Then Buck said, "Well, did they grow?" And I said, "No." And he replied, "Well, I'm going to pray for you right now, and you just believe that you're gonna grow"; and so he did. But since I was having a lot of company that night, I just afterwards dismissed it from my mind, too.

The next morning when I woke up and bent down to get my shoes, the floor was farther away than usual. I felt different looking down—the floor just seemed so far away. So, I hollered to my husband and said, "I've grown! I've really grown!" Then I grabbed the phone and called Ann Atwell, and I said, "Do you have two telephones? Get Brother Buck on the other one." They got on the phone, and I told them my husband had measured me with a tape measure and I had definitely grown. I was 4'9" before and had grown to 4'11½".

COLEMAN: Jenny, what about the matter with your clothes? Do you want to elaborate on that a little bit?

JENNY: Since the growth period, which was at the end of November, there have been several different ways that I've noticed I've grown. One is that I'm a hairdresser by trade, and because of my shortness, I've had to work on my toes for about ten years now fixing people's hair—and that has always given me pain in my back. Well, now I don't have any lower-back pain like I used to, even with standing on my feet and doing work all day.

Another way is that I noticed the bones from my hip to my knee, the thigh bones, are longer. When I cross my legs, my knee is out further. It's hard to explain it to somebody else — I'm the only person who knows where my knee should be. But this joint seems to be much longer. And then I'm also having to rebuild my wardrobe because I've got my ankles hanging out of my long skirts. But it's a nice thing to have to replace your clothes because of the growth.

COLEMAN: So then, there are three ways you've noticed the growth: the length of the thigh bone seems to indicate that most of the growth was in that area; and then, of course, the length of the clothes; and then the release from the back pain. These are the three ways by which you noticed you had grown.

Now, Jenny, in talking with you previously, you mentioned some changes in your work, both at home and as a hairdresser. Can you tell us the ways that your growth has affected you in these areas of your life?

JENNY: Yes, I used to work on my toes a lot. I've always been teased about that, but I've just accepted it. Of course, being a hairdresser, I work with my arms up, and I think this caused a lot of my back trouble — having to stand on my toes and raise my arms to fix people's hair. Like I said, I don't have this lower back pain any more, even though I had it for years.

“Most people at age 28 are too old to grow except when God wants to do a miracle...”

Also, I used to have trouble in the kitchen — I had to use tongs to get cereal down from the cupboard and had never been able to see out my kitchen window. Well, the next day or so after I grew, I was in the kitchen doing my dishes. I turned around and could see out my kitchen window. I said, “Now I can see our neighbor's house across the way,” and I can see so much out my kitchen window. That's important to a woman when she's working in the kitchen.

COLEMAN: How old are you now, Jenny?

JENNY: Twenty-eight.

COLEMAN: And how many children do you have?

JENNY: Two.

COLEMAN: OK. Now, let me give a little personal commentary here in relation to Jenny's testimony. I suggested to Jenny that we get some official authentication of her growth. I knew that she belonged to a nationally recognized weight-reducing organization which meets regularly, and I also knew that when this particular organization weighs you in and measures your height, they take very precise measurements and keep accurate records

because they believe the ratio between body weight and height to be very important in their program. We knew this organization had a record of both Jenny's former height and present height officially in their records, and we just recently went down there—Jenny and myself—and I watched them measure her height. Her previous height recorded in the records of this organization was 4'9", but as I watched them measure her height that day, it was 4'11½". So Jenny has received a miracle growth to the tune of 2½ inches.

She was told by one person that this could not be possible because she was too old to grow. Well, generally speaking, most people at age 28 are too old to grow except when God wants to do a miracle by His own sovereign act. That's exactly what happened in this particular case and we rejoice in that fact.

I also want to ask Jenny how she felt about being only 4'9". Did you feel some sense of inferiority and were you sometimes self-conscious? Would you like to describe that part of it?

JENNY: Well, first of all, one of my foremost problems, as it is for most people who are very short, is that I definitely had a weight problem. I battled with my weight for years and that was the main reason I joined this club that you mentioned. I had a problem with clothes because I couldn't wear certain styles.

Also, I can take teasing, but my husband teased me for ten or eleven years about being a midget. When he would get into the car, he had to adjust three mirrors and adjust the seat three ways. He would say, “Who's the midget that's been driving the car?”

When we were first married and we were out dancing, my husband used to tease me and say that when we danced together, it looked like I had my nose hooked in his pocket. It was just little things like that, but they built up for years and years. And, of course, when you're 4'9", you're dying to be just a couple of inches taller. Anything would help.

COLEMAN: So then you'd say that growing even 2½ inches has helped to solve the problem of self-consciousness to some extent. What other ways has it affected your life in general?

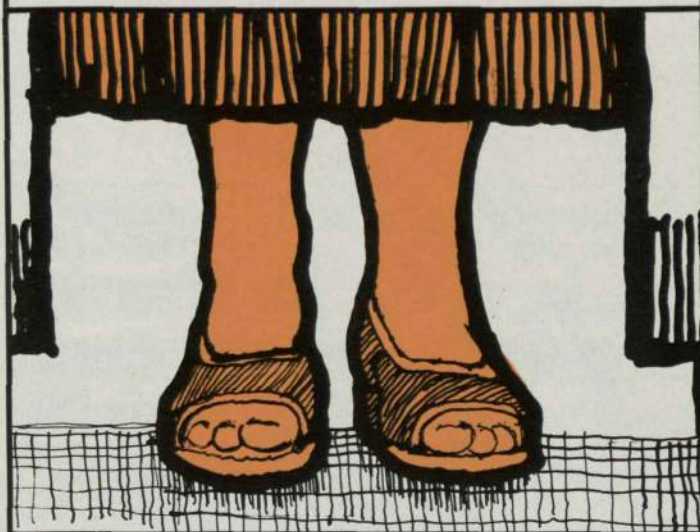
JENNY: Well, since our children are in school

now and I have gone back to work part-time, in my day-to-day work as a part-time hairdresser, I notice that I'm having to pump up the hairdresser-chair a little instead of having to work on my toes just to reach it at its normal height as before. And as I mentioned earlier, I don't have the strain and the back pressure I used to. So just in everyday living, it helps.

COLEMAN: Now, Jenny, on what specific days did these events take place? Some people may be interested in being able to identify them on the calendar. Now your height was measured on November 11, 1976, and recorded as 4'9". The next time you had your height measured was December 2, and it was 4'11½". And I went down to the organization with you on March 30, 1977, and watched the president of the group measure your height at 4' 11½".

Now, you were prayed for on Tuesday, November 30, and you grew during that night. And Wednesday morning, December 1, you called Brother Buck Atwell, who had prayed for you, and told him of the good news. Am I right? Is this the way it was?

JENNY: Yes.



COLEMAN: In conclusion, Jenny, how did this experience affect you spiritually? I know that you must have a testimony along this line.

JENNY: Well, right after I was prayed for and received my growth, I was very joyful and so grateful—it was such a practical miracle for God to do for me. It was something that I needed, and I was very grateful for it. I went around doing my work giving thanks all the time, and I must have told my husband fifteen or twenty times a day—"Look how tall I am! Look how tall I am!" This continued through December and January, and then, I guess, I started to go through a dry season. I don't really know why; I guess I got my eyes off the Lord or failed to be as thankful as I had been. Anyway, I kept saying, "God, where are You? Look what You did for me, and now all of a sudden I don't know where You are." I felt wrung-out and empty. I wanted my heart to be in the right place, but I guess it wasn't.

Then one morning Brother Dick called on the phone and said he just wanted to throw a couple of things out to see what I thought. He asked what I thought about giving this testimony to *New Wine*, and I think that was the second miracle I needed. I tell you, I just jumped up and sang and rejoiced, and I still wake up singing and go to bed singing. I think maybe that's what I needed to bring me out of this dry spell. God, first of all, did the miracle by making me grow, and then He did a second miracle by letting me be able to share it with everybody.

COLEMAN: Amen . . . that's great. 🍷

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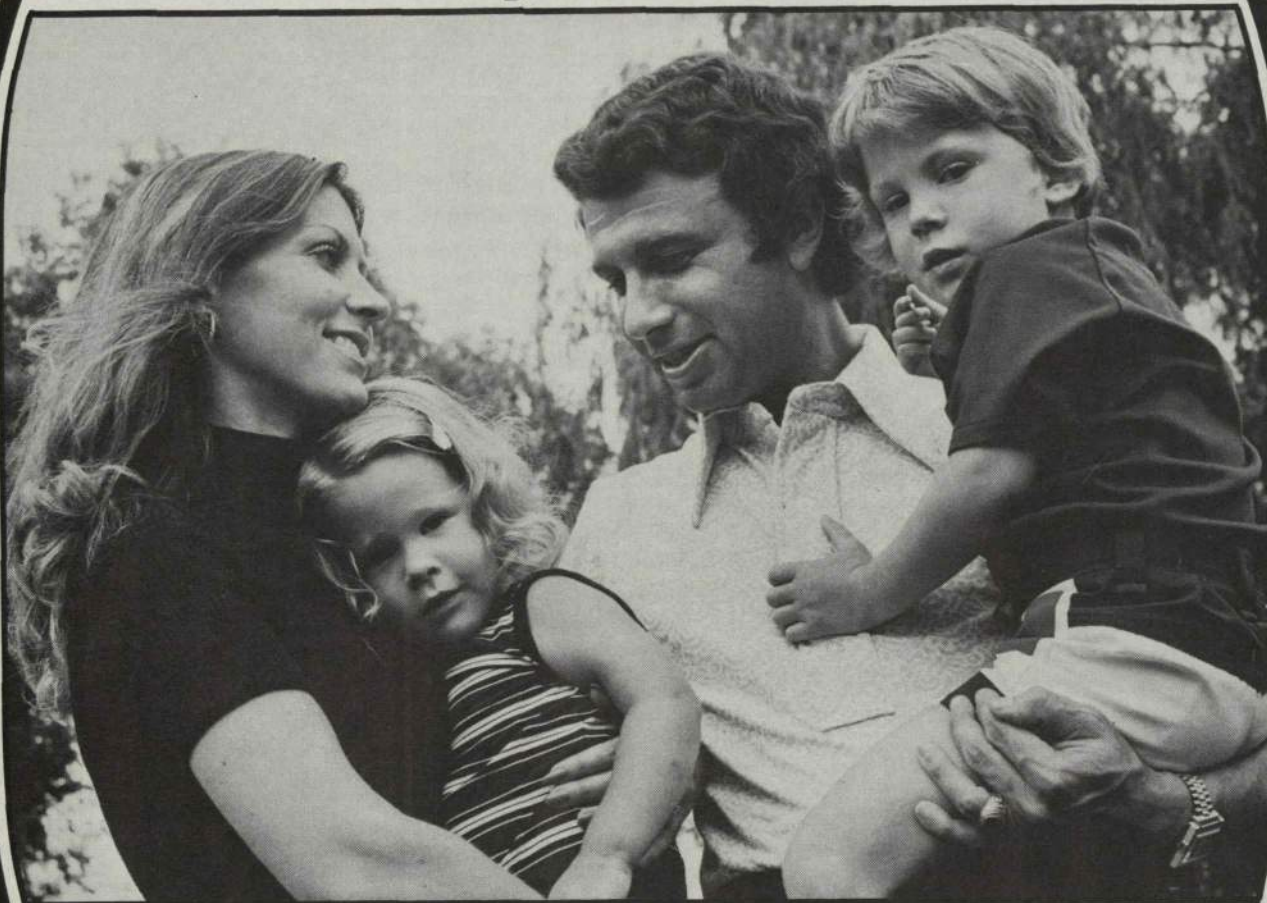
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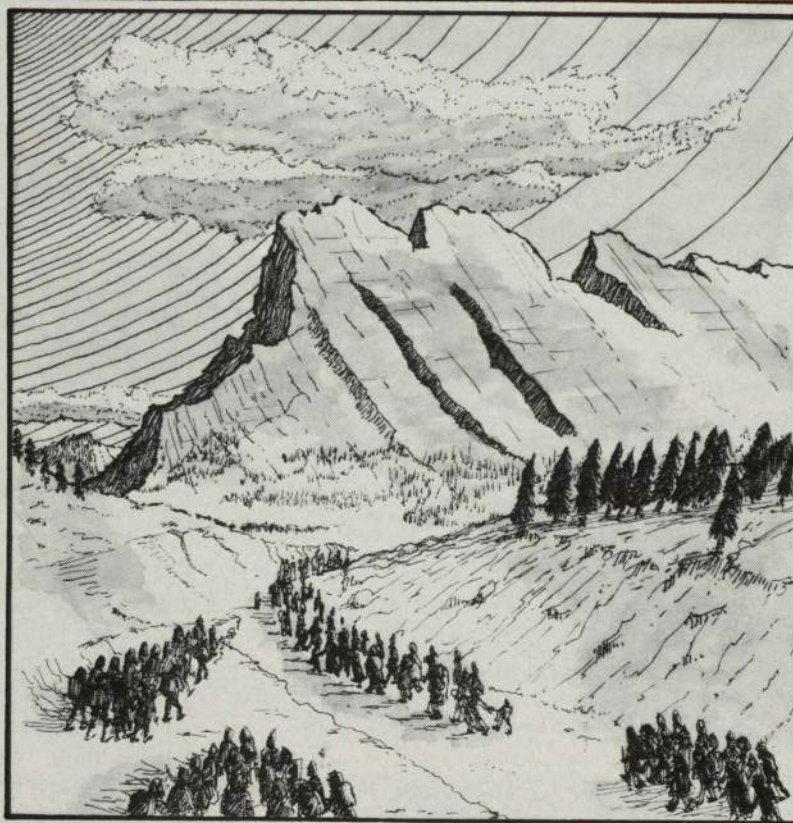
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PEOPLE OF FAITH



by John Poole

The difference between *acts* of faith and an *attitude* of faith.

All of my life I remember being challenged to have faith. Sermons were preached about the necessity of a Christian's having faith so that God would be pleased with him. Illustrations were continually given of individuals who, facing difficult and trying circumstances, had overcome them by faith, and we were urged to do the same.

Whenever a crisis would arise in my own life—sickness, trouble, problems—I found myself trying to have faith so

that God would be pleased with me and intervene in the situation. Over the last few years, I have looked back with some honesty at the condemnation I endured when it appeared to me that I didn't have the kind of faith for which God was looking or that others expected me to have, or, perhaps most important of all, that I expected from myself. I *wanted* to be a man of faith, yet I often found myself disappointed when my faith couldn't produce the miraculous answers I expected.

I recall many perplexing occasions such as the time I stood wondering whether or not God was mad at me because I had taken one of my children who was desperately ill to the hospital emergency ward. I can also remember the feeling of satisfaction I had whenever it became known to friends and associates that I never (well, hardly ever) took a pill.

As I look back on it now, I believe that the biggest mistake I made was in misunderstanding the difference between *acts of faith* and a *life of faith*. It is an inescapable fact that, both in Scripture and in history, there have been a multitude of people who, at various times in their lives, have received a gift of faith from God that enabled them to do things in a particular crisis that otherwise they could never have done. Sometimes they saw miraculous intervention in seemingly hopeless situations. Faced with financial problems, sickness, death, rebellious children, and unconverted relatives, men and women I have known have found themselves with a word from the Lord that gave them confidence to pray and thank God for things they knew were going to be done, long before they ever became a reality.

What I want to deal with in this article, however, is something different. Within me there is a deep conviction that we live in a time when it is vital *that our whole lives be characterized by an attitude of faith*. By that I mean a conviction and assurance that governs our lives, not just helping us cope with problems, hardships and dangers, but enabling us to face *all of life* with a confidence rooted in the fulfillment of divine promises. Above and beyond anything else, the Christian must be characterized by this attitude. In the middle of a world that preaches through its bumper stickers, "Honk if you believe in anything," we who are called to be the light of the world and the salt of the earth must have an understanding of our existence and destiny that is totally different from that which is held by those around us.

This faith attitude is based on an inward perception, a real seeing. It is not based on the gathering and sorting of information revealed to the senses, but is the apprehension of that which is revealed by His Spirit to our spirits.

There are unseen things that have become real to us. We believe deeply in the invisible God who has revealed Himself in Jesus Christ and now resides within us by the Holy Spirit. We believe in the ministry of unseen angels who work on behalf of the heirs of salvation. Therefore we do not accept that life is a series of unconnected, accidental happenings. We know all things are working together for our good because we love God and are called according to His purpose.

This faith attitude is not based on the senses, but is the apprehension of that which is revealed by His Spirit to our spirits.

We know the power of unseen things. We have tasted the fruit of the age to come. We seek to be the true heirs of men like Moses, "who held on course and never flinched, like one who saw the King invisible" (Heb. 11:27, paraphrase).

In the eleventh chapter of Hebrews there is a list of men and women who are often called the "heroes of faith." Some time ago my reading of this chapter led me to a discovery. Here were people with no Bibles, no church services, no books on how to build faith, no teaching on how to make their faith stronger; yet they exhibited the following attitudes and traits.

They were worshippers of God and blessers of men.

They were courageous explorers, seekers, and adventurers.

They were builders: men and women who shaped their times and influenced their generations.

They were initiators who were flexible, hopeful for the future, and full of surprises.

They made choices and mistakes.

They were sometimes wrong, but when they failed, they tried again.

They were not trapped by their fears, weaknesses or personal limitations. They were real.

More often than not, though, we display just the opposite of the above qualities. Many of us are fearful, timid, reactors, inflexible, predictable, trapped, limited, cautious, conservative, careful. Now, my conviction is that basically we are the same kind of people they were—no better, no worse. I don't think these Bible characters possessed a holiness that prompted God to favor them over us. So why are they so noted for their faith? The reason lies not so much in the "spirituality" they possessed as in the way they inwardly perceived God.

In three areas I see a definite difference in the way these individuals looked at things and the way many of us see things. *It all hinges on the image that we have of God.* Remember the statement in Hebrews 11:27 regarding Moses, one of the men listed in the "faith" chapter: "He held on his course, never flinched, like one who saw the King Invisible." The key to a life of faith lies in having an individual revelation of God. We must see Him as He is: preeminent over all, Creator, Sustainer, Designer, Eternally Existent One, the Lord over all lords, the King over all kings. 1—*They viewed God as having chosen them.* When I read about the men and women whose stories are recorded in Scripture, I get the impression that these people had a definite sense of being called and chosen by God. What is at stake here is far more than a theological statement. It is not my purpose, nor will it serve any real end, to argue the merits of one doctrinal position over another.

What I am speaking to is this:

life as I have known it to be—life as I see it lived by the people with whom I am in community—is filled with starts and stops, successes and failures, attempts and mistakes, new hope and old disappointments. To continue to face this kind of life with confidence and assurance, one must have an underlying conviction that this whole idea of a life by faith was not yours or mine in the first place. The matter of growing, changing, becoming is the result of a choice. God has chosen us and called us to Himself. Certainly you made a choice to welcome the Lordship of Jesus, but before any such event took place, this loving, all-powerful God chose you.

Listen to what the Scriptures say about this matter: "Brothers loved by God, we know that He has chosen you . . ." (1 Thess. 1:4, NIV). "You did not choose me, but I chose you" (Jn. 15:16, NIV). "I have chosen you out of the world" (Jn. 15:19, NIV). "Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you" (2 Pet. 1:10, NAS).

Now remember, He chose us knowing exactly what we were. He knew everything about us. All of our past mistakes and failures were before Him, and not only that, but all of the sins of the future . . . everything we would do after He called us to Himself was also entirely visible to Him. And yet He *chose* us. Why? Because He loves. He has set His love upon us. The love that He has toward us is not something that springs up out of His emotions. Rather it is an act of His will. HE SET HIS LOVE ON US. He decided to do it and did it. We are the objects of His love.

He has chosen us to be His people. We are not Christians because we decided that we needed a change or because we were tired of our own way or because we were in deep trouble and needed help. Long before any of these things became true, God was ordering the circumstances, bringing us to the end of ourselves so that we would receive

His love and be open to His choice.

2—*They viewed God as giving promises to them.* Once again, take a careful look at the people whose lives are recorded in Hebrews 11. They were not individuals who were involved in a lifelong attempt to convince God to do something for them. Rather, they saw themselves as people to whom God had given promises. They had not asked for them, often did not seek them, and on more than one occasion had to be convinced that God really meant what He said. But ultimately they all arrived at the same conclusion: the God who had called and chosen them had given them a set of promises.

Seen in this light, 2 Peter 1:3,4 is very important. His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and goodness. Through these He has given us *His very great and precious promises* so that through them we may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

It becomes clear, then, that we who have been chosen and called by God have been given promises just as the men and women of Hebrews 11 were. The list of these promises is nearly endless, but for the sake of clarifying the issue at hand, let me concentrate on Paul's statement in 1 Thessalonians 5:12. In this part of his letter, Paul encourages Christians to walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls us into His kingdom and glory. The call of God and His promises to us revolve, then, around an invitation to enter His glorious Kingdom. However, far too few people understand the practical implications of such an invitation. They have forgotten that the Kingdom of God is defined in Scripture as a life lived in righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit (Rom. 14:17).

Putting it all together, then, what we see so far is that the Supreme Being who has revealed Himself in

Jesus Christ has called us to Himself, invited us into His righteousness, peace and joy, and promised that if we submit ourselves to His Lordship and walk in His ways, His Kingdom will be the place of our habitation.

“Your confidence has to rest not in your skill as a student, but in God’s ability as a teacher.”

Now, let's remember that God is the originator of us all. We did not come begging to Him, asking to be allowed into His Kingdom. He offers it to us. It is the promise of God that we are responding to. God is not responding to our demands and pleas; we are responding to His invitation and offers.

3—*They viewed God as possessing the power to bring about what He had promised.* If we go back again to the place where the record is given of the men and women of faith, we find that these people believed that the God who had called them and given them these great promises had the ability to do what He promised. This to me is what made them so certain, so confident. In the face of disappointment, contradiction, frustration, opposition, they were upheld by this conviction: "God chose me. God gave me promises. God has the power to do whatever He desires." Therefore, they knew their lives were in the hands of One who had at His disposal all

the resources needed to bring about what He had purposed.

This, I believe, is the place that awaits us; but first we must realize this for ourselves. God has promised to bring us into His Kingdom. Through much tribulation, we are going to enter in fullness to the Kingdom of God.

How can we be sure we're going to make it? How can we be sure we're going to live in righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit? For most of us any attempt at such a confident attitude inevitably brings us back to our own weaknesses, shortcomings, mistakes and failures; and instead of finding ourselves joining the ranks of the courageous, adventurous, flexible, hopeful people of Hebrews 11, we see ourselves trapped, fearful, timid and weak. How often, after listening to a message about the great and wonderful things God desires to do in and through His people, do we say to ourselves, "That's wonderful. How I wish it could be true for me, but . . ." But here's the key: The God who has called you, chosen you, and given you great and wonderful promises has the power to bring about *in your life* the things that He has promised. And if we go back to basics, the most important thing He ever said to you was that He would cause you to live in His Kingdom—that is, in His righteousness, peace and joy.

Let me give you a practical illustration. Your confidence has to rest not in your skill as a student, but in God's ability as a teacher. You must stop thinking about how difficult it is for you to learn and begin to concentrate on how capable God is to teach. He has hundreds of ways to get you to learn the lessons that are vital for your living successfully. If He can't bring you to maturity by one method, He has a great variety of alternative means at His disposal. He has been working with people for thousands of years. Besides all that, He knows you perfectly and intimately. Every hair of your head is numbered. He knows

the thoughts of your heart afar off. He knows what motivates and inspires you and what discourages you. He has perfect knowledge of you and your surroundings. And, on top of that, He has full control of all the circumstances of your life. He's able to cause all things to work together for your good.

The only thing He cannot do is make you believe that. That's a choice you must make. He cannot force you to accept that all of your life is in His hands and that nothing comes to you without His kind and loving permission—that nothing happens to you without purpose and design. His stated goal is to fill heaven with a multitude of mature children, and He is not going to be satisfied until He has accomplished His purpose.

In Philippians 1:3–6, Paul expresses his attitude on this subject. He says about the Christians of Philippi, "I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, *being confident of this, that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus*" (NIV).

Paul said that the reason he had such joy over the Philippians was not only because they were kind in their treatment of him, but because he had a certainty regarding their maturity and their growth. He knew it was going to be done. Why? Were the Philippians a different kind of people than we? Did they have some secret to spirituality that we have not discovered? No. I believe the key for the Philippians *and* for us lies in the attitude and emphasis Paul expressed; for this man saw God's ability to do what He had promised in the lives of these people.

This, then, becomes my attitude toward life. The events—the circum-

stances—that come to me, I believe to be part of a plan—a plan that is designed by God for my good and His glory. He is going to teach me how to live righteously, in peace and with joy, and He has all the skills that are necessary to accomplish this task. He has promised me that He will never give up on me. His Word tells me that He will never leave me, nor forsake me (Heb. 13:5). The longer I live, the more convinced I become that He means exactly what He says.

We live in a world that is hungry for people who can face life with confidence and excitement, and as despair grips more and more men and women, the opportunity to lead individuals into a redemptive life grows greater and greater. The challenge is to leave our fears, our timidity, our limitations and our weakness, and to move courageously, adventurously, in hope and in trust, into a future that is totally in God's hands. ☞

Bible Study Answers

(From page 17)

1. all things; 2. just, faith; 3. God's; 4. faith, impossible; 5. He rewards them; 6. d. the unseen; 7. King David; 8. He would have fainted; 9. Faith and Love, hope; 10. hearts, purified, faith; 11. yes; 12. Because it's not mixed with faith; 13. the hearing of faith; 14. faithful, Faithful, True; 15. Love; 16. a. weak; 17. fully persuaded, mind; 18. sin, unbelief, evil; 19. different proportions; 20. spirit, speak, believed; 21. Timothy, Thessalonians, know, faith; 22. growing, exceeding.

INTERCESSORS

KANSAS CITY: A TOP PRAYER PRIORITY

Usually, the significance of an historic event is not realized until well after the event occurs. Rarely do we know before or during such an event that it will bring permanent change. Even at Pentecost, the 120 had little to go on as they gathered in the upper room except Jesus' simple instruction to wait for the promise of the Father. Because of their obedience, they participated in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and were transformed "from timid believers to irresistible apostles," to quote E. Stanley Jones. This small band went on to challenge and permanently alter the world with the truth of Jesus' claims.

Today bold claims are being made about Kansas City and the 1977 *Conference on Charismatic Renewal in the Christian Churches*, July 20-24. Some, indeed, view it as the most significant gathering since Pentecost or at least since the Reformation. Whether such "advance-billing" reflects the place this conference will have in history will, of course, have to be determined by history—but not by history alone!

What we do in the remaining weeks before the conference will largely determine its place in history, but, more importantly, its place in God's redemptive plan. Our *prayers*, if we are willing, can catapult this inspired undertaking from its hoped-for potential into dramatic reality.

"Why," we ask, "does this gathering warrant our intercessory prayer? Why is there such significance to these five days during the heat of a Kansas summer?"

It's partly the numbers. Fifty or sixty thousand Christians gathering together for any reason is significant. But God doesn't seem too impressed with numbers, *per se*. He generally looks to small and often unnoticed groups when there's something impor-

tant to do.

It's partly the speakers. The sixty or more men and women who will bring messages and lead workshops constitute one of the most impressive arrays of outstanding Christian leadership ever assembled. Praise God that such gifted people are willing to share from their wealth of insight and experience. But that's not the full answer either; nor is the planning, as skillfully conceived and meticulously executed as it has been; nor the location or facilities, as suitable as they are.

The great significance of the conference only emerges as we consider the ultimate goals towards which God is taking us. Foremost among these goals is the unity of His Body. Our divisions and our discord have brought reproach to the Kingdom of God, and have been one of the major barriers to non-believers accepting Christ. Our inability to "get it together" has been a prime tool in the hands of a cunning enemy—he has used our disunity to blunt the life-changing message of redemption. In our fragmented state, we've held far less appeal to would-be followers of Jesus than we would as a unified Body. And we've fallen far short of our potential to exercise spiritual authority over the powers of darkness.

Kansas City can, by God's grace and our effort, permanently alter this condition. For if the world can see that we love Jesus and one another more than our denominations or our traditions, and if together we faithfully exalt Him as the true Head of our Body, the impact will absolutely exceed our ability to measure.

There has never been a gathering like this before: charismatic leadership in ten major denominations and groups have thrown their full support into this conference. From Roman Catholic, Messianic Jewish, the black Church of God in Christ and numerous other protestant denominations will

come brothers and sisters who are filled with God's Spirit. Like tribes that went on pilgrimages to Jerusalem and camped about the city, diverse elements will soon merge in spiritual Jerusalem. For many it will require adjustments and even sacrifice to join in this pilgrimage, and yet, even this is part of the challenge that makes this a very special event.

Will we honor what God is doing by interceding for this conference? Can we by faith expect this time together to bring healing to a disjointed Body? Can we affirm that Jesus will be the sole focus of our attention and affection, and that our love for Him will empower us to love those who need Him? Can we stand united against demonic forces that would hinder what God wishes to accomplish in Kansas City and beyond? Can we proclaim victory, beginning now, and continuing through July?

If we will do those things, we will see the potential for this gathering fulfilled in a thrilling way. But our prayers are essential for this to occur. God's desire is that the Body of Christ come together in unity—and Kansas City provides an opportunity for that on an unprecedented scale. Prayer during these next weeks is the key. Let's give it priority, and whether we plan to attend the conference or not, see God move in our midst.

Day of Prayer and Fasting

At the Chicago Summit Conference in September 1975, national Christian leaders established the first Friday of each month as a day of united prayer and fasting for all Christians in America.

As a reminder to those who participate in this day of prayer and fasting, we want to point out that the day set aside this month is: **June 3.**

Writing this article, especially on a topic as challenging and as frequently discussed by great Bible commentators as *faith*, I feel somewhat like

Faith Under

Agur, the oracle mentioned in Proverbs 30: "Surely I am more stupid than any man, . . . and I have not learned wisdom." However, one thing did qualify Agur to proclaim God's Word: "But I have knowledge of the Holy One!" (Pr. 30:2,3, NAS). The same is true of us. Our personal knowledge of Christ qualifies each of us with a measure of God's authority to share the reality of our life in Him with others. In simple words, we testify what God has done for us, and this is the basis of our faith.

And they (the saints) overcame him (the devil) because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even to death (Rev. 12:11, NAS).

Our testimony, is that, by faith, we are victors through the blood of the Lamb, and by faith we have been made righteous. This righteousness, through faith in the living God, is both the means and the end to the life of faith.

As I understand the Bible, there are two types of righteousness: man's and God's. Man's righteousness has never been able to stand in the sight of a truly righteous God. As Isaiah 64:6 states, "But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags." And God's righteousness has always been on the basis of faith.

For what does the Scripture say? "And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness" (Rom. 4:3, NAS).

But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets;

even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe (Rom. 3:21, 22, NAS).

To really appreciate this truth, we need to understand something of man's unredeemed state. Before becoming a Christian, I was a psychology instructor at a large university. Understandably, by my exposure to such an atmosphere of sophisticated high-mindedness, I had a difficult time relating to the concept of sin. To me, sin seemed like the "no-no's" of one person or group being projected on another. But eventually, through the conviction of the Holy Spirit, I came to see how sin was more than acts of wrongdoing. Sin also included man's separation from God through his rebellion—the fallen con-

Fire

by **Erik Krueger**

dition from which those sinful acts emerged, called the "self," which was totally selfish, self-centered, self-loving. What I particularly began to realize was that even when I tried by my own strength to be proper or religious, I was still rooted in "self," and that condition exposed itself as self-righteousness.

SELF VS. FAITH

At times, even after we are Christians, our old self-nature will try to reassert itself in this way by attempting to gain righteousness with religious ritual and pious acts. We mistakenly attempt to earn God's favor on the basis of doing and saying the "right thing." But God's righteousness is neither established nor kept on this basis. Rather, it is based solely on faith. Depending on our own good works places *us* at the center of our lives, but faith places *God* at the center—on the throne—where *He* belongs and where *He is Lord*. When I finally recognized the futility of my own attempts to make myself righteous, I clearly saw for the first time that circumstances, situations and people were not primarily responsible

for my problems: I myself was the culprit! Through my own efforts, I had been rebelling against my Creator through I-ndependence (I will, I want, I need, I think, I feel, etc.) and insisting upon occupying the throne of my own life. But the day I gave my life and its throne to Christ, the Holy Spirit spoke to me a profoundly simple truth: "Let God be God. For He knows what is best for you."

This simple statement helped me as a young Christian to know that the Christian walk was one of faith. I took the Holy Spirit at His word, and believing God each day, I felt that He could do anything! It seemed that when I walked in that posture before Him, I could receive unlimited blessing from Him. But from time to time, what I had thought to

Erik Krueger grew up with a strong desire to right the wrongs of humanity and build a better world. His approach to humanity's problems was that of a professional psychologist and he became an ardent follower of Chairman Mao. However, a dramatic encounter with Christ completely reoriented his life. His wife, Mary, was converted at the same time and also healed of an incurable disease of the pancreas. It was not long before Erik's concern to build a better world found a new expression. He became the leader of a covenant community of Christians, called Shiloh Fellowship, in East Lansing, Michigan, on the doorstep of Michigan State University where Erik had previously been a psychology instructor. The basis of this community is a strong mutual commitment by its members to love and serve Christ and their fellow members. It consists mainly of young adults, with a sprinkling of some older couples.

Derek Prince
Derek Prince



Erik Krueger was deeply involved in the counter-culture movements of the sixties. While a psychology instructor at Michigan State University, he was dramatically converted to Christ and thrust into ministry with young adults. This ministry has since evolved into Shiloh Fellowship, a Christian community in East Lansing, Michigan, comprising approximately 300 adults, where Erik is the presiding elder. He and his wife, Mary have a daughter, Amy who is 4 years old.

be faith actually turned out to be presumption and self-will. After being "burned" a few times through presumption, I saw that I needed to add other virtues to my faith, one of which was knowledge (2 Pet. 1:5-10). However, a subtle overemphasis on knowledge caused me to drift away from the basic simplicity and centrality of faith in my devotion to Christ. Like many, I did not take seriously enough the exhortation of the Son to *live* by faith, for I hadn't realized that it is one thing to "have faith" and quite another to "live by faith." An ever-present danger we face is that of becoming so absorbed in our knowledge of God that we lose our first love and the ability to approach Him with childlike simplicity, or becoming so "mature" in our knowledge that we get puffed up and proud, and consequently judgmental, critical, skeptical and suspicious. True faith excludes this proud path. But I had to learn the hard way.

PURGED BY TRIALS

God's dealings with me concerning this weakness in my faith began a little over a year ago when I went through one of the most difficult trials of my Christian life. The trial came at a time when everything seemed to be going quite well. Consciously, I was doing everything I thought possible to walk close to the Lord; there were no overt sins or problems in my life; the primary thing I desired was more of God, and to do His will was my daily prayer. I even prayed, "... if there be any evil way in me, purge it out that I might not sin against Thee!" And that's when all the trials began.

Without warning, I suddenly found myself engulfed by the most devastating barrage of negative events I had ever faced—serious personal accusations from friends and associates, aspersions of my motives as a Christian, defamation of my position in the Body of Christ, all resulting in eventual ostracism.

Because I had felt that I was being "so sincere" at this point in my Christian life, these trials in their severity seemed unwarranted, even unfair. But in retrospect, I realize my prayers were being answered. It was one of those cases where I had prayed for something and didn't realize until much later that God had answered, mainly because His answer came with unexpected difficulties and unanticipated sufferings.

Many times the method God uses to build our faith and bring forth His righteousness in us is a refining or purging process.

In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials,

that the *proof of your faith*, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire . . . (1 Pet. 1:6,7, NAS).

The fiery trial which refined my faith and exposed my self-righteousness was that of *unjust sufferings*, and in that crucible, God dealt with two of the most basic rights of self: the demands to be *understood* and to be *appreciated*.

Someone has said, "Christians are like tea bags; put them in hot water and their true colors come out." When things start happening to us that are unjust, we cry out for our rights. We give in to the temptation to blame others or even God: we become angry, resentful and bitter; we feel sorry for ourselves; we become discouraged and want to give up. "But why, God? I was just trying to do the right thing!"

CHRIST, OUR EXAMPLE

However, times of unjust suffering provide opportunities to receive an abundant measure of God's grace to build our faith if we have the proper attitude, that is, the attitude Jesus displayed when He was punished undeservedly.

For this finds favor (grace), if for the sake of conscience toward God a man bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly.

For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor (grace) with God.

For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps,

"who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth";

and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously . . . (1 Pet. 2:19-23, NAS).

Hebrews 12 states that Jesus was the Author (the *Leader* or *Forerunner*) and Perfecter (*Finisher* or *Maturer*) of faith. By His life, He left us an example to follow. By His death He made it possible for us to receive the grace both to begin and finish the

race. We are to run this race and take courage in it by simply considering Jesus—the proven champion of the event. He started in *faith*, and *authored* the faith. He was matured *through* faith and completed *the faith*, in spite of tremendous suffering. He did this out of love for the Father and for us.

Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance, and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,

fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of *faith*, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you may not grow weary and lose heart (Heb. 12:1-3, NAS).

One may think it hard to continue to walk in faith, especially in very difficult situations. But no matter how difficult the walk, we must not give up our faith—because if we do, things will get even worse. But if we hold on in faith, God is *faithful*! The invaluable lesson God wants us to learn is that we can always find Him, approach Him and reach Him by *faith*, no matter how we feel or how things may appear.

But remember the former days, when, after being enlightened, you endured a great conflict of sufferings, . . .

"But My righteous one shall live by faith; And if he shrinks back, My soul has no pleasure in him" (Heb. 10:32,38, NAS).

"But my righteous one shall live by faith" (Hab. 2:4) is one of the Old Testament scriptures often quoted in the New Testament; and when God repeats Himself, we need to *listen*!

God's intention for each of us is that we live by faith, and His promise to us is that if we press on, even through fiery trials and testings, that He will be pleased by our abiding faith. And having endured, even as Jesus our example did, we will have gained by our personal experience the authority to give this triumphant testimony:

"This is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith" (1 Jn. 5:4, NAS).☞

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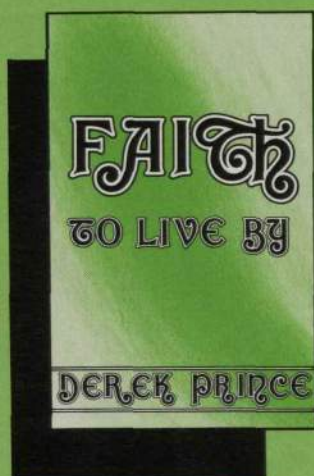
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