

FOUNDATIONS FOR CHRISTIAN GROWTH

Lesson EIGHT FAITH — THE REST OF GOD

I. INTRODUCTION

Faith is of vital importance to every believer. The New Testament states plainly that only *faith* will get a person born again into God's kingdom (Ephesians 2:8). Only by *faith* can an unbeliever appropriate the righteousness which God has made available (Philippians 3:9; Romans 3:28). But even after a person has exercised faith to be born again, he still needs to **walk by faith**. "*As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith . . .*" (Colossians 2:6,7). You received the Lord by faith, and now you are to **walk by faith**.

The importance of faith can be seen in the fact that it is impossible to please God without it. "*And without faith, it is impossible to please Him; for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him*" (Hebrews 11:6). God is pleased with faith, for faith is the way in which we receive what He has provided for us. Those who come to God must make two judgments about Him. One must believe that *God is*. This is a judgment about God's existence *and* about His power (Romans 1:20). One must believe that *God is a rewarder* of those who seek Him. This is a judgment about God's character. So in order to please God, we must have faith; and faith is our conviction not only of God's power and ability, but also of His willingness to use that power and ability in our behalf.

II. RECEIVING THE PROMISES OF GOD

Through Christ's atoning work on the cross, God has given to us *all things* which pertain to life and godliness (II Peter 1:3). His death has provided for us redemption and salvation, both spiritually and physically. Through Jesus, total provision has been made for any need we might encounter in this life. The Word of God is full of God's promises to His children, and "*all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us*" (II Corinthians 1:20).

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

And may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith.
Philippians 3:9

For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law.
Romans 3:28

As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, and overflowing with gratitude.
Colossians 2:6,7

And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.
Hebrews 11:6

For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.
Romans 1:20

Seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence.
II Peter 1:3

For as many as may be the promises of God, in Him they are yea; wherefore also by Him is our Amen to the glory of God through us.
II Corinthians 1:20

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Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us — for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree” in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

Galatians 3:13,14

But while all this is available to the Christian, these promised blessings from God will not come automatically. There is a part which each person must play in receiving what God has provided. God promised the land of Canaan to the children of Israel, but He didn't magically transport them there out of Egypt. The children of Israel didn't wake up one morning to find themselves in the promised land. They had to go in and *possess* the land which God the Lord had already promised and given.

In much the same way, many believers need to go in and *possess* what God has already promised and provided for them through the Lord Jesus. God has done His part and now waits for His children to do their part. He waits for His children to exercise *FAITH* in what He has already done, and so receive and possess the provision that He has made for them.

A. REDEEMED FROM THE CURSE OF THE LAW

Perhaps the best statement as to the scope of our redemption is found in the book of Galatians. “*Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us — for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree’ — in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith*” (Galatians 3:13,14).

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1. The all-inclusive redemption

The curse of the Law mentioned here is listed in great detail in Deuteronomy chapter 28. That list sums up all that will happen to a person who sins by disobeying the laws of God. It includes sickness and disease (Deuteronomy 28:60,61), financial poverty (Deuteronomy 28:38,39), natural disaster (Deuteronomy 28:23,24), and political turmoil (Deuteronomy 28:49-52).

All these calamities listed are things from which Christ, by His sacrifice, has redeemed us. Every believer has been redeemed from the curse of the Law, the curse that followed being a sinful creature. Sin has had devastating effects upon creation, but Christ's sacrifice has redeemed us from those effects.

So Christ's redemption has not only purchased our release from sin, but also a release from the calamitous effects of sin. God's salvation is *all-inclusive*, taking in our whole spiritual, mental, and physical being. "*He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us ALL THINGS*" (Romans 8:32).

2. In this life

Yet to many believers, these great and precious promises are little more than a far away "promised land," never to be realized in this life. Some have relegated all these blessings to heaven or the Millennial kingdom. But, these promises of God are meant to be enjoyed by believers **in this life!** The reason so many do not obtain them is because they fail to *possess* them. Like the promised land to the children of Israel, the provisions of the New Covenant are already granted; the price has already been paid. But, just like the land of Canaan to the Israelites, these provisions must be appropriated into the life of every individual believer.

And He will bring back on you all the diseases of Egypt of which you were afraid, and they shall cling to you. Also every sickness and every plague which, not written in the book of this law, the Lord will bring on you until you are destroyed.

Deuteronomy 28:60,61

You shall bring out much seed to the field but you shall gather in little, for the locust shall consume it. You shall plant and cultivate vineyards, but you shall neither drink of the wine nor gather the grapes, for the worm shall devour them.

Deuteronomy 28:38,39

And the heaven which is over your head shall be bronze, and the earth which is under you iron. The Lord will make the rain of your land powder and dust; from heaven it shall come down on you until you are destroyed.

Deuteronomy 28:23,24

The Lord will bring a nation against you from afar, from the end of the earth, as the eagle swoops down, a nation whose language you shall not understand, a nation of fierce countenance who shall have no respect for the old, nor show favor to the young. Moreover, it shall eat the offspring of your herd and the produce of your ground until you are destroyed, who also leaves you no grain, new wine, or oil, nor the increase of your herd or the young of your flock until they have caused you to perish. And it shall besiege you in all your towns until your high and fortified walls in which you trusted come down throughout your land, and it shall besiege you in all your towns throughout your land which the Lord your God has given you.

Deuteronomy 28:49-52

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B. PARTAKING OF OUR REDEMPTION

Study of the atoning work of Christ will show how broad and far-reaching our redemption really is. The promises of God, given to us in the Word, tell of a *vast reservoir* of blessing, healing, and deliverance at the disposal of every believer. But, it is up to the individual believer to “tap” into that vast reservoir for himself. He must *possess* what God has promised and provided.

The possession of God’s promises and provisions is accomplished when a person exercises *faith* in God and in His Word. Faith is the spiritual quality which “taps” into God’s reservoir and receives the promises of God. All the power of God and of His Word is available to anyone who will believe. But, unless faith is exercised, that power will never be realized.

1. Plugging into the power source

A simple but effective illustration of this principle can be seen in the rules which govern electricity and its use. All the electrical power necessary to operate an appliance is present in any electrical outlet. But, no matter how close to that outlet the appliance may be placed, no electricity will flow into it unless it is plugged in. One can place the appliance within inches of the outlet, for long periods of time, but nothing will happen. The appliance will only receive the electrical power that is in that outlet when it is *plugged in*, and thus connected to the source of power.

In the same way, the only way anyone will ever receive from God’s power source is to “plug in.” Faith is the “plug” which will allow a person to tap the reservoir of God’s power and receive the provision which He has made available. Just going to church for long periods of time will have no effect on a person if he never uses faith to receive from God. Having hands laid on day after day will accomplish nothing for a person unless he exercises faith. He will be just like that appliance which is set within inches of the outlet, but never plugged in. Not until he plugs into God’s provision with his faith will that person possess what God has provided for him.

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2. The touch of faith

Read Mark 5:21-34

Jesus had within Himself the power of God to heal the sick. He would lay His hands on the sick to allow that power to be transferred from Himself to the sick person. In this particular instance, however, there were numerous people touching Jesus. In fact, they were crowding in on Him as He walked to Jairus' house (Mark 5:24). Many people were in physical contact with Jesus at that moment, so His disciples were perplexed at His inquiry as to who had "touched" Him (Mark 5:30,31).

But even though all those people were in physical contact with Jesus, only *one* had the power of God flow into her body. That was the woman who touched Jesus *in faith*. It was when someone touched Him in faith that Jesus knew that power had gone out of Him (Mark 5:30). Jesus commended the woman for her *faith* (Mark 5:34), stating that her faith had made her well. She was healed because her faith plugged into God's healing power and received what was necessary to drive that disease from her body and restore her to health.

It is plain to see from this passage that it is the **touch of faith** that releases God's power. When a person has faith in God and His Word, he begins to appropriate all the blessings which God has purchased for him. But unless that person exercises faith, he'll be like all the rest of the crowd that was pressing in on Jesus. They were right next to Him but did not experience the flow of God's power.

3. Failing to possess

The promise of God given to the children of Israel was that the land of Canaan belonged to them. All of God's power was at their disposal to enable them to possess what God had given them. Yet that particular generation never possessed God's provision for them because they would not believe the Word of God. They would not plug into God's power by faith.

"For we also have had the gospel preached to us, just as they did; but the message they heard was of no value to them, because those who heard did not combine it with faith" (Hebrews 4:2 NIV). The message that the children of Israel

And when Jesus had crossed over again in the boat to the other side, a great multitude gathered about Him; and He stayed by the seashore. And one of the synagogue officials named Jairus came up, and upon seeing Him, fell at His feet, and entreated Him earnestly, saying, "My little daughter is at the point of death; please come and lay Your hands on her, that she may get well and live." And He went off with him; and a great multitude was following Him and pressing in on Him.

And a woman who had had a hemorrhage for twelve years, and had endured much at the hands of many physicians, and had spent all that she had and was not helped at all, but rather had grown worse, after hearing about Jesus, came up in the crowd behind Him, and touched His cloak. For she thought, "If I just touch His garments, I shall get well." And immediately the flow of her blood was dried up; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her affliction.

And immediately Jesus, perceiving in Himself that the power proceeding from Him had gone forth, turned around in the crowd and said, "Who touched My garments?" And His disciples said to Him, "You see the multitude pressing in on You, and You say, 'Who touched Me?'" And He looked around to see the woman who had done this. But the woman fearing and trembling, aware of what had happened to her, came and fell down before Him, and told Him the whole truth. And He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your affliction."

Mark 5:21-34

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And behold, the Lord stood above it and said, "I am the Lord, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie, I will give it to you and to your descendants. Your descendants shall also be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread out to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south; and in you and in your descendants shall all the families of the earth be blessed."
Genesis 28:13,14

And Joseph said to his brothers, "I am about to die, but God will surely take care of you, and bring you up from this land to the land which He promised on oath to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob."
Genesis 50:24

For My angel will go before you and bring you in to the land of the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Canaanites, the Hivites and the Jebusites; and I will completely destroy them. I will send My terror ahead of you, and throw into confusion all the people among whom you come, and I will make all your enemies turn their backs to you. And I will send hornets ahead of you, that they may drive out the Hivites, the Canaanites, and the Hittites before you."
Exodus 23:23,27,28

And said to the men, "I know that the Lord has given you the land, and that the terror of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land have melted away before you."
Joshua 2:9

heard was that the land was theirs (Genesis 28:13,14; 50:24); God's Angel would go before them to drive out the inhabitants (Exodus 23:23); God would cause all their enemies to turn and run from them (Exodus 23:27,28). In fact, it was known among the heathen Canaanite nations that God had given them the land, and so they were terrified of the Israelites (Joshua 2:9).

And yet all the power of God, which was available to the children of Israel through God's Word, was of no avail to them because they would not "plug in" by faith. They didn't experience the blessings of God which belonged to them because of their unbelief, or lack of faith.

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C. RELEASING THE POWER OF GOD

These few examples are sufficient to show that it is *FAITH* in God and His Word that will enable us to possess fully all the blessings of our redemption. Christ has redeemed us from all the curse of the Law and has made available to us all the blessings of our father, Abraham. Abraham's blessings were both spiritual and physical. Abraham was spiritually blessed because he had a relationship with Almighty God (Genesis 17:7). But, Abraham was also materially blessed (Genesis 13:2) and physically blessed in his body, being able to sire a son at the age of one hundred years (Genesis 21:5).

All these things belong to us, but we must appropriate them. It is the touch of faith that will release these things in our lives. It was faith that released the power of God into the woman's body. It was faith that enabled Caleb and Joshua to go into the promised land (Numbers 14:6-9; 32:11,12). So too, it is faith that enables *us* to possess *all* that Christ has purchased for us in His great redemptive work on the cross.

"And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your descendants after you."

Genesis 17:7

Now Abraham was one hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him.

Genesis 21:5

And Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, of those who had spied out the land, tore their clothes; and they spoke to all the congregation of the sons of Israel, saying, "The land which we passed through to spy out is an exceedingly good land. If the Lord is pleased with us, then He will bring us into this land, and give it to us — a land which flows with milk and honey. Only do not rebel against the Lord; and do not fear the people of the land, for they shall be our prey. Their protection has been removed from them, and the Lord is with us; do not fear them."

Numbers 14:6-9

"None of the men who came up from Egypt, from twenty years old and upward, shall see the land which I swore to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob; for they did not follow Me fully, except Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite and Joshua the son of Nun, for they have followed the Lord fully."

Numbers 32:11,12

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III. FAITH — EVIDENCE OF SPIRITUAL REALITY

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

Hebrews 11:1

For with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.

Romans 10:10

While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

II Corinthians 4:18

For we walk by faith, not by sight.

II Corinthians 5:7

By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible.

Hebrews 11:3

Faith is the spiritual quality which connects us to the power of God. The Bible defines faith in the following way: "*Now faith is the assurance (the confirmation, the title-deed) of things (we) hope for, being the proof of things (we) do not see and the conviction of their reality — faith perceiving as real fact what is not revealed to the senses*" (Hebrews 11:1 Amplified).

Faith is an assurance of the heart. "*For with the heart man believes . . .*" (Romans 10:10). It is much more than a mere mental assent to certain information. It is a conviction of an unseen, spiritual reality. The promises of God are an unchanging, spiritual reality, whether they are being experienced in the life of a believer or not. Faith perceives and is assured of the reality of these promises in the face of physical evidence to the contrary.

A. GOD'S UNSEEN REALITY

Inherent in the definition of faith given in Hebrews 11:1, and indeed in any discussion of the subject of faith, is the concept of an *unseen reality*. Faith is understood as a conviction of "things" which are not experienced by the physical senses. To walk by faith, then, means to walk with one's attention fixed on what is *not* seen rather than on what is seen. "***While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal***" (II Corinthians 4:18).

Christians are called upon to "*walk by faith and not by sight*" (II Corinthians 5:7). This does not mean that we are to walk blind or in ignorance. It means rather that we are to fix our gaze on the unseen reality, the higher spiritual reality. The Bible says that the whole physical world that we see around us came into being out of the spiritual world which is physically "unseen" (Hebrews 11:3). So, the unseen spiritual reality of God is one which overrides and supercedes the seen physical reality which our senses experience.

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1. The unseen spiritual realm

There exists around us an unseen spiritual realm. It is the realm in which God lives and operates. It is the realm in which angels work and in which demons live. Though it is not physically seen, it is nonetheless very real. This is the realm out of which God created the physical world in which we live. In fact, the whole physical world is predicated upon and has its source in the spiritual realm.

This principle of an unseen realm is remarkably illustrated in II Kings 6:8-17. (Read this passage before proceeding.)

The Aramean (Syrian) king surrounded the city with a mighty army. In the physical realm, things looked rather grim. But, Elisha was aware of a higher reality. He was aware of the presence of an unseen host. The servant had to have his "eyes" opened to perceive it. Elisha's awareness of that unseen reality caused him to have great assurance about the outcome of the Aramean attack. He had confidence because he knew the spiritual reality outweighed the physical reality which his physical eyes were beholding.

Now the king of Aram was warring against Israel; and he counseled with his servants saying, "In such and such a place shall be my camp." And the man of God sent word to the king of Israel saying, "Beware that you do not pass this place, for the Arameans are coming down there." And the king of Israel sent to the place about which the man of God had told him; thus he warned him, so that he guarded himself there, more than once or twice. Now the heart of the king of Aram was enraged over this thing; and he called his servants and said to them, "Will you tell me which of us is for the king of Israel?" And one of his servants said, "No, my lord, O king; but Elisha, the prophet who is in Israel, tells the king of Israel the words that you speak in your bedroom." So he said, "Go and see where he is, that I may send and take him." And it was told him, saying, "Behold, he is in Dothan." and he sent horses and chariots and a great army there, and they came by night and surrounded the city. Now when the attendant of the man of God had risen early and gone out, behold, any army with horses and chariots was circling the city. And his servant said to him, "Alas, my master! What shall we do?" So he answered, "Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them." Then Elisha prayed and said, "O Lord, I pray, open his eyes that he may see." And the Lord opened the servant's eyes, and he saw; and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.

II Kings 6:8-17

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

While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.
II Corinthians 4:18

2. Walking by the superior reality

“For we walk by faith, not by sight” (II Corinthians 5:7). We are to walk by faith, and not by sight, because we daily confront situations in which the reality we “see” does not correspond with the unseen reality — God has given us “all things.” When this occurs, our conviction and assurance must be fixed upon that unseen reality, as was Elisha’s, and not upon physical circumstances. This is not to say that physical circumstances are illusionary. (That is what Christian Science teaches.) Physical circumstances are real, just as that Aramean army was real. But there is a higher principle of reality, which supercedes what our eyes see. That is the spiritual reality which Paul says we are to look to (II Corinthians 4:18).

3. Temporal vs. eternal reality

The things in the spiritual realm, which are unseen, are eternal; they never pass away. This cannot be said of this physical world. It is passing away. The things which are seen are “temporal”; they are subject to change. But the things which are unseen, those spiritual realities, are eternal; they will never change. Thus, it is easy to see why we should fix our confidence and assurance on the unseen things. Those are the things which remain. If one only puts confidence on what he can see, he is destined to fail, and not become a partaker of the marvelous things which God has purchased for him. But if a person will put his trust and confidence in God’s unseen realities, he’ll begin to *experience* those blessings in his own life.

4. Abraham’s assurance

Abraham was a man who was confronted with just such a contradiction. The physical circumstances said to Abraham that he and his wife, Sarah, could never have a son. He was 100 years old and she was 90. Yet God had spoken to them that they would bear a son. Abraham had a choice. He could believe what his body told him, or he could believe what God’s Word said. He could walk by sight, or he could walk by faith.

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Abraham chose to walk by faith, and so received from God a son in his old age. He was convinced of the reality and truth of God's Word, even though it was contradicted by what he could see. Abraham was assured that the unseen reality of God's Word was *more* real than, and superceded by, what he could perceive with his physical senses (Romans 4:17-21).

B. GOD'S WORD REVEALS THE UNSEEN

Our "window" into this unseen reality is the Word of God. It is God's Word which informs us of the fact that we are more than conquerors (Romans 8:37). It is the Word which tells us that we were healed by the wounds of Jesus (I Peter 2:24). God's Word gives us insight into our sonship through the Lord Jesus (I John 3:1). Without the Bible, our perception would be limited to what our senses could tell us. But with the Bible, we can receive information which is truer than what we perceive in the physical world.

(As it is written, "A father of many nations have I made you") in the sight of Him whom he believed, even God, who gives life to the dead and calls into being that which does not exist. In hope against hope he believed, in order that he might become a father of many nations, according to that which had been spoken, "So shall your descendants be." And without becoming weak in faith he contemplated his own body, now as good as dead since he was about a hundred years old, and the deadness of Sarah's womb; yet, with respect to the promise of God, he did not waver in unbelief, but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully assured that what He had promised, He was able also to perform.

Romans 4:17-21

But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us.

Romans 8:37

And He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed.

I Peter 2:24

See how great a love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God; and such we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.

I John 3:1

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Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things freely given to us by God.

I Corinthians 2:12

“But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.”

John 14:26

For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding.

Colossians 1:9

Pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.

Ephesians 1:18

1. Revelation knowledge

The Word of God will “open our eyes” in much the same way as Elisha’s servant had his “eyes” opened. This doesn’t refer to physical vision. It speaks of revelation knowledge given by the Holy Spirit, which enabled the man to see the true reality of things, the way things really were.

“Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, **that we might know the things freely given to us by God**” (I Corinthians 2:12). The Spirit of God will show us all that belongs to us by opening the Word to us (John 14:26). As we said, the Word describes reality, because it informs us of all that is ours in Jesus Christ. God has already given to us all things which pertain to life and godliness. As the Spirit unfolds to us from the scriptures what these “things” are, we will become more and more convinced of their reality in the face of seeming contradiction.

2. Spiritual perception

Walking by faith is walking by the Word. It is basing our judgments not upon what we see, but upon what the Bible says. If our body says we are sick, but the Word says that we *were* healed, then we must base our judgment of reality on the Word. **We are healed!** If we feel rejected, but the Bible says that God loves and accepts us, our conviction must rest with the Word. **We are loved and accepted by God!**

To live by the Word, and base our judgments upon it, we must *know* what the scriptures say. Ignorance of the Bible keeps people in bondage, because it keeps them blind to the reality of what God has done for them. Paul’s prayer for the churches was that they might *know*. “We have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be **filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding**” (Colossians 1:9). “I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, **so that you may know . . .**” (Ephesians 1:18).

Paul was praying for their spiritual perception in much the same way as Elisha prayed for his servant. God’s Word is what will give to us that perception of the unseen realm in which God lives, and in which He has given to us all the bles-

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sings and provisions of our redemption. The clearer our perception of those unseen realities, the more we will experience them in our lives.

C. FAITH THAT PLEASES GOD

A believer pleases God when he puts his confidence in the truth of God's Word, and is assured of a reality which he cannot see. This kind of person believes *before* he sees any result in the seen realm. A faithless person insists on physical evidence before he will believe. This kind of person will not believe in healing until he sees physical proof of recovery. He will not believe that God supplies all his needs unless his bank account is full. He does not please God, because he will never receive the blessings which God has given to him.

1. The problem of Thomas — faithlessness

Read John 20:24-29

Thomas made a statement which many are still making today. *"Unless I shall see in His hands the imprint of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe"* (John 20:25). Today's version is a little modified, but in essence, still the same — "Seeing is believing!" Jesus rebuked Thomas for his *faithlessness* because he wouldn't believe until he saw something with his own eyes. The promise of God and the Word of Jesus were not good enough for him. Jesus called this kind of attitude, one which demands physical proof before being convinced, *faithlessness!*

But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore were saying to him, "We have seen the Lord!" But he said to them, "Unless I shall see in His hands the imprint of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe." And after eight days again His disciples were inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors having been shut, and stood in their midst, and said, "Peace be with you." Then He said to Thomas, "Reach here your finger, and see My hands; and reach here your hand, and put it into My side; and be not unbelieving, but believing." Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said to him, "Because you have seen Me, have you believed? Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed."

John 20:24-29

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Jesus said to him, "Because you have seen Me, have you believed? Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed."

John 20:29

"And behold, you will conceive in your womb, and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus." And the angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy offspring shall be called the Son of God." And Mary said, "Behold, the bondservant of the Lord; be it done to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her.

Luke 1:31,35,38

But, Jesus pronounced a blessing upon those who would believe, having not yet seen. "*Because you have seen Me, have you believed? Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed*" (John 20:29). This is the kind of faith that pleases God. God is looking for people who will take Him at His Word and believe without having any physical evidence to prove the reality of what He has said.

2. The example of Mary — believing God's Word

The virgin Mary was a woman who believed what God said, even though what God told her was physically impossible and had never occurred before (Luke 1:31,35). Mary was convinced of God's Word, and so her response to God's messenger was: "*Behold the bondservant of the Lord; be it done to me according to your word*" (Luke 1:38).

The fact that she, a virgin, was to conceive by the Holy Spirit, and that this had never happened before was not enough to outweigh the reality of God's spoken Word. Given the choice to believe circumstances or God's Word, Mary chose to believe God's Word. She put her trust and assurance in the *unseen reality*, and so received exactly what God had promised.

D. POSSESSING GOD'S PROMISES THROUGH FAITH

Through the death of Jesus, God has given to us many great and precious promises. These promises sum up all that our redemption entails for us. But as we have said, the promises of God don't automatically fall on believers. They must be received or possessed, in much the same way in which the Israelites had to possess the promised land of Canaan.

The promises of God are received by *faith*. Faith is the factor which activates the power of God and brings those promises into physical reality in our lives.

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Faith connects us to God's provision, because faith is our assurance of that provision while it is yet unseen. Our assurance must be fixed firmly on the truth of God's Word, and on the reality that the provision has *already* been granted through the Lord Jesus. All the promises of God are Yes! and Amen! in Jesus, because Jesus has already paid the price for them.

1. Wondering & wishing

Wondering why one doesn't receive, or wishing that one would receive, won't release God's power to bring about an answer. Wondering and wishing are not the ways to possess the inheritance. Those who wish they had the provision sincerely desire it, but are convinced that they do not yet have it. They only believe what they can perceive with their five physical senses.

"Faith perceives as real fact what is not revealed to the senses" (Hebrews 11:1 Amplified). Before anyone can begin to experience the provision which redemption has given, he must begin to see as *real fact* what he does not yet see in physical manifestation. He must begin to see as real fact that he is healed, even though his body may be sick. He must be assured that all his needs are met, even though his bank account may be empty. This *assurance* of the reality of the unseen, as it is revealed in God's Word, is the thing that will bring into manifestation all the blessings of God's redemptive inheritance.

2. Bible faith

Jesus Himself taught this very principle of faith to His disciples. After telling them to have faith in God, He went on to say, *"Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you **have received it**, and it will be yours"* (Mark 11:24 NIV). The principle given here is clear. Believe that you have received (past tense) *before* you see anything, and then it will be yours.

This is *Biblical faith*, the faith which appropriates the blessings of God. We must believe that the promises and provisions of God, as they are shown in the scriptures, are already ours before we will experience them. Faith is our *assurance* and *conviction* that we have them even though we do not yet see them.

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

Hebrews 11:1

"Therefore I say to you, all things for which you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and they shall be granted you."

Mark 11:24

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IV. FAITH — A POSITION OF REST

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

Hebrews 11:6

But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all men generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him.

James 1:5

For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord gives grace and glory; no good thing does He withhold from those who walk uprightly.

Psalm 84:11

And he said, "Listen, all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem and King Jehoshaphat; thus says the Lord to you, 'Do not fear or be dismayed because of this great multitude, for the battle is not yours but God's.'"

II Chronicles 20:15

"Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart; and you shall find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My load is light."

Matthew 11:28-30

So that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fulness of God.

Ephesians 3:17-19

Faith that pleases God is that which believes that God is a *rewarder* of those who seek Him (Hebrews 11:6). To stand in the assurance of faith, one must be assured that God is a liberal giver (James 1:5) and *not* a withholder (Psalm 84:11). Thus, one can see that faith is not a struggle with God to try to get Him to move in our behalf. God already has moved in our behalf, by giving to us all things that pertain to life and godliness. Faith is not even a struggle to try to overcome difficulties by our own power or ability, "*for the battle is not yours, but God's*" (II Chronicles 20:15).

Faith is a **position of rest**, a confident assurance of what God has already done for us, and a conviction that it will come to pass in our own experience. When we believe, we enter into rest, because faith sees things from God's perspective — the way things really are. Thus, the walk of faith to which we have been called is one of *rest*, not of struggle and strain. Jesus said, "*Come unto Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart; and you shall find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy (pleasant), and My load is light*" (Matthew 11:28-30).

A. REVELATION OF GOD'S LOVE

Paul prayed for the Ephesian believers, that they would come to a full knowledge of the love of God (Ephesians 3:17-19). Many times, believers have trouble with faith because they have a very vague understanding of God's love and mercy. The enemy has portrayed God to them as an angry ogre, who will not give anything to them until a list of criteria has been met. In the eyes of these Christians, God is not a rewarder, but a withholder. Faith to them is a *formula*, which must be followed to the letter before God will move.

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This type of thinking exposes a fundamental misunderstanding about the nature of God. In Lesson 2, we established what the Bible says about God's character. God is Love (I John 4:16). He doesn't just *have* love; He *IS* love! God is not a demanding task-master who is waiting for His "servants" to "toe the line." God is a loving Father who longs to reward His *children*, and bestow "*good and perfect gifts*" upon them (James 1:17). So much did He love us, that He sent His Son to redeem us from sin and to give us "*all things*" (I Corinthians 3:21-23).

1. Faith responds to grace

Faith is our heart's response to the unmerited favor of God, as it is revealed in His Word. The Bible tells how much God loves us, by showing all that He has done for us through the death of His Son. When a person spends time meditating on the revelation of God's love, as it is shown in the Word, and begins to comprehend the love of God "*which surpasses knowledge*," his heart will respond with faith.

It was God's grace (unmerited favor) that caused us to be born again. "*For by **grace** you have been saved through faith; . . .*" (Ephesians 2:8). The unmerited favor of God is what caused Him to sacrifice His only Son. Faith is simply our response to that gracious act. Thus, faith is not a "work" by which we can earn God's love. God's love and favor cannot be earned. Faith is our assurance of what God, by His grace, has freely given to us.

2. Having faith in God's faithfulness

The rest of faith is a confidence in God's love and faithfulness. God is faithful. It was because Sarah judged Him so, that she received strength to conceive Isaac in her old age (Hebrews 11:11). Resting in faith is resting in the un-failing goodness and mercy of God. "*O give thanks unto the Lord; for He is good; for His mercy endureth for ever*" (Psalm 136:1 KJV).

And we have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.

I John 4:16

Every good thing bestowed and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation, or shifting shadow.

James 1:17

So then let no one boast in men. For all things belong to you, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or things present or things to come; all things belong to you, and you belong to Christ; and Christ belongs to God. *I Corinthians 3:21-23*

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

Ephesians 2:8

By faith even Sarah herself received ability to conceive, even beyond the proper time of life, since she considered Him faithful who had promised.

Hebrews 11:11

Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good; for His lovingkindness is everlasting.

Psalms 136:1

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And on that day, when evening had come, He said to them, "Let us go over to the other side." And leaving the multitude, they took Him along with them, just as He was, in the boat; and other boats were with Him. And there arose a fierce gale of wind, and the waves were breaking over the boat so much that the boat was already filling up. And He Himself was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they awoke Him and said to Him, "Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?" And being aroused, He rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Hush, be still." And the wind died down and it became perfectly calm.

Mark 4:35-39

r with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.

Romans 10:10

B. FAITH IS OF THE SPIRIT

The assurance of faith, which enables a man to hold himself calm in the midst of adversity, is a supernatural phenomenon. Jesus often exhibited this kind of assurance during His earthly ministry. When a storm almost sank the boat in which He was traveling, His disciples were beside themselves with fear. But, Jesus remained calm (Mark 4:35-39). This kind of calm assurance arose out of His spirit. It is with the heart that a man believes (Romans 10:10), and that is where the rest of faith comes from.

Faith is of the spirit. It is not a mental phenomenon, neither is it an emotional phenomenon. Faith is a spiritual force which comes out of a man's heart. It is from a man's heart that the restful assurance of the truth of God's Word will come. That spiritual force within will override any mental reservation or fears that a person may have if he will allow it to do so.

1. Faith is not intellectual (mental assent)

Faith is not of the mind. It is not a mental phenomenon. One must be careful not to confuse faith with mental assent. Mental assent superficially agrees with the Word of God, but when the pressure is on, it responds in much the same way as the disciples did during that storm. Mental assent will not give a person the assurance as to the reality of what the Word says. It will always agree with circumstances rather than with the Word, whenever there is a discrepancy between the two.

The rest of faith does not arise out of one's mind, because the rest which faith brings is supernatural. It is a rest which is not shaken by the winds of adversity. It remains assured of the Word of God and confident of God's faithfulness.

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2. Faith is not emotional excitement (feelings)

Faith is not of the emotions. It is not an emotional phenomenon. Often, well-meaning Christians will confuse *emotional zeal* with faith. Faith is a rest and assurance of the heart, not an excitement of the emotions. The assurance of faith will sometimes result in an emotional response, but if one has emotions with no real assurance to back it up, that emotional excitement will always wither in the face of contrary circumstances (Mark 4:16,17).

Peter, in a moment of great emotional excitement, said that he would never deny the Lord Jesus. Yet when the pressure was on, this is exactly what he did. He had no real faith to back up his zeal, and so his zeal withered in the face of adversity (Luke 22:33,34,60,61). Yet later, when faced with another adverse situation, Peter had real faith to back up his zeal. He confidently looked at the Pharisees of the Sanhedrin and said, "*We must obey God rather than men*" (Acts 5:27-29).

"Behold, God is my salvation, I will trust and not be afraid; for the Lord God is my strength and song, and He has become my salvation" (Isaiah 12:2). Faith is a position of rest, because faith recognizes that salvation is from the Lord, and from nowhere else. Putting assurance in anything else (e.g. intellectual ideas or emotional excitement) is bound to lead to disappointment. But, putting trust and assurance in the Living God will always result in our receiving from God what He desires for us to receive. As we cease from our own efforts, and put our confidence in the goodness and faithfulness of God, we'll experience that rest of faith to which Jesus has called us, and receive from the bountifulness of God's hand.

"And in a similar way these are the ones on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy; and they have no firm root in themselves, but are only temporary; then, when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately they fall away."
Mark 4:16,17

And he said to Him, "Lord, with You I am ready to go both to prison and to death!" And He said, "I tell you, Peter, the cock will not crow today until you have denied three times that you know Me." But Peter said, "Man, I do not know what you are talking about." And immediately, while he was still speaking, a cock crowed. And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had told him, "Before a cock crows today, you will deny Me three times."
Luke 22:33,34,60,61

And when they had brought them, they stood them before the Council. And the high priest questioned them, saying, "We gave you strict orders not to continue teaching in this name, and behold, you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us." But Peter and the apostles answered and said, "We must obey God rather than men."
Acts 5:27-29

Behold, God is my salvation, I will trust and not be afraid; for the Lord God is my strength and song, and He has become my salvation.
Isaiah 12:2

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V. SUMMARY — THE FAITH THAT PLEASES GOD

We must walk by faith in order to please God, believing that He is faithful and a rewarder of those who seek Him. This is the way in which we will experience all that God has purchased for us through His great salvation. Walking by faith means basing our judgments on what the Word of God says rather than on what physical circumstances say. We are to look to the unseen reality which the scriptures describe, and as we do, those unseen things will begin to be manifested in our experience. Real Bible faith involves believing that we have received *before* seeing physical proof. In this way, we will tap into all that God has purchased for us and so desires us to experience.