

# **The Art of Praying**



# Contents

<i>Chapter One</i> .....	5
The Art of Praying .....	5
Scriptural References: Gen. 24:63; Psa. 63:6 Mat. 5:44, 6:6-13; John 17:1-26; Rom. 8:26, 27; I Tim. 2:8 .....	5
The Lord’s Prayer .....	6
The Lord’s Prayer with Comments .....	7
<i>Chapter Two</i> .....	17
The Puzzle of Unanswered Prayer .....	17
Where Is God When We Need Him? .....	17
<i>Chapter Three</i> .....	20
What Is All This Talk about Faith?.....	20
What Does It Take to be Holy?.....	21
We Walk with Christ by Faith .....	22
<i>Chapter Four</i> .....	24
Beware of Unbelief.....	24
Fighting the Beginnings of Doubt.....	24
The Results of Unbelief .....	25
It Is Foolish to Worry about Something God Can Fix in an Instant.....	30
It Is Pointless to Fret about the Prosperity of the Wicked .....	31
<i>Chapter Five</i> .....	33
Faith Cannot Stand Alone .....	33
Faith Must Be Based on a Divine Person .....	33
Time Cannot Erode Faith.....	36
Faith Does Not Abolish All Adversities .....	37
There Is Help for You .....	38
What Is a ‘Saving Faith’?.....	38
Dealing with the Occasional Doubt .....	39
The Prayer of Faith.....	41
The Wrath of God Is Soon Coming.....	43



# ***Chapter One***

## **The Art of Praying**

Scriptural References: Gen. 24:63; Psa. 63:6 Mat. 5:44, 6:6-13; John 17:1-26;  
Rom. 8:26, 27; I Tim. 2:8

*A word of caution: We do not want to get so caught up with the definition and the mechanics of prayer that it becomes a mechanical effort and ceases to be a free-flowing expression from the heart. But there are certain aspects about prayer that are good for the believer to consider.*

### **Defining Prayer**

To pray is to be in deliberate, conscious contact with God and includes

A. Praise and Worship

Praise and Worship is the proper way to come before God, as the Psalmist exhorts:

"Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise." Psalms 100:4.

B. Supplication

Making a request(s) of God

C. Meditation

Waiting in the presence of God and reflecting on His many facets of goodness and/or just thinking on His Word.

D. Communion

Communion is to hear from God as one waits in His presence. This may be by voice, inner urge or divine thought direction.

We shall now examine each of these items more closely.

#### A. Praise and Worship

The prayer components of this item are self-explanatory. We should remember, though, that the most effective way to come into or feel the presence of God is to worship and praise Him. Worship and praise usher us into God's throne room. Jesus Himself has given us a blueprint for prayer in the model of prayer He gave His disciples.

### **The Lord's Prayer**

One day, as Jesus was praying "in a certain place" His disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray as John the Baptist had taught his disciples to pray. Luke 11:1-36. Jesus' life was a prayerful one and it is evident here that the disciples were affected by it. It was always Jesus' intent to show His disciples by word and life what it meant to be a son of God.

Jesus gave His followers a prayer, one that He did not mean for them to repeat word-for-word all the time, but that they could use as a pattern in their own approach to God in prayer. We shall look at the Lord's Prayer as it is given by Matthew in the Revised Standard version.

This can by no means be taken as a full study on prayer, and I must repeat: the Lord's Prayer is only a pattern. Jesus showed in His daily routine that there was more to praying than a mere saying of words or making requests of the Father. If the participant has been well-taught, prayer will take him deep into the heart of God. Regular periods of communion with God will give the one who prays a close relationship with God that simple begging for "things" can never do.

The Lord's Prayer is the foundation on which the believer must build his own prayer life.

## The Lord's Prayer with Comments<sup>1</sup>

<b>Praise and Worship</b>	
<b>Our Father</b>	We must acknowledge God as Creator of all; <sup>2</sup>
<b>Who art in Heaven</b>	We must confess to His total supremacy and that He is above all creatures and all His created works; <sup>3</sup>
<b>Hallowed be Thy name</b>	He alone in all creation is holy. Our holiness comes from Him; <sup>4</sup>
<b>Acquiescence to the Divine Will</b>	
<b>Thy Kingdom Come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven</b>	The furtherance of God's Kingdom and His will throughout the whole earth (and indeed throughout all creation) must begin with oneself. If each believer does not believe this, how else can God's will even begin to be done on earth? <sup>5</sup>
<b>P e t i t i o n s</b>	
<b>Give us this day our daily bread</b>	This includes natural and spiritual sustenance; <sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Mat. 6.9-13

<sup>2</sup> Gen. 1.1-31

<sup>3</sup> Isa. 40.25, 26

<sup>4</sup> Lev. 19.2

<sup>5</sup> Rom. 12.1, 2; Heb.10.36; 1 Pet. 4.2; 1 John 2.17

<sup>6</sup> Mat. 6.31-33

<b>And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors</b>	If we do not forgive, we shall not be forgiven and our prayers will do us no good; <sup>7</sup>
<b>And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil</b>	And this is what Christ came for: our deliverance from all evil. This is what the great Plan of Salvation is all about. <sup>8</sup>

B. The Supplicatory Prayer (cf. chart, “The Lord’s Prayer”: “Petitions”)

The supplicatory prayer may be divided into three kinds:

1. Prayers made for Christ's sake.
2. Prayers made for the petitioner's sake.
3. Prayers made for the sake of others: the intercessory prayer.

Again a little more scrutiny is in order. We will look at items B-1 through 3:

B-1. Prayers for Christ's Sake

There are some requests the saint makes that belong in all three of the categories above. But every petition directed to God should be of the first type: It must in some way be for Christ's sake. It should help in the accomplishing of God's will, promote His Kingdom, glorify His name or simply be for the good of one who is called by the name of Christ or one who needs Christ in his or her life.<sup>9</sup>

B-2. For the Petitioner Himself (Herself)

It is not an unchristian thing for the believer in Christ to

<sup>7</sup> Mat. 6.14, 15

<sup>8</sup> Luke 22.40, 46; John 17.15

<sup>9</sup> 2 Cor. 1.11

pray for himself if that prayer is grounded in the first category: for Christ's sake.<sup>10</sup> Praying for his natural needs is not displeasing to God if the petitioner keeps his priorities straight and "seek[s] first the kingdom of God and his righteousness."<sup>11</sup> In praying for himself as one on whom the name of Christ is called, the prayer can indeed be for Christ's sake. God knows that the petitioner feels a need to call on Him when the larder is nearly bare and the finances are low. But how much better it is if he calls on God at such a time for more grace, more faith, more help to his fellow humans who are in need. Do we have the faith to pray, in the midst of our natural needs piled high around us, for such things as the furtherance of the Kingdom of God? We surely realize by now that God demands that anyone who calls on Him put God's business first in his concerns and prayers.

This is not to say that praying for natural needs is wrong; it is only opening up for us a "better way."<sup>12</sup> When we are hungry or pressed by financial needs, can we believe that God will provide those needs and then, in love, cry to Him earnestly for our brother's and our own spiritual lack? If we can do that, we are indeed blessed. And God will in His mercy and grace provide ALL our needs – natural and spiritual. This type of prayer – praying for others in need – is what our next category is about:

### B-3. The Intercessory Prayer

The gem of all prayers is the intercessory prayer, that cry made to God on behalf of others.<sup>13</sup> If the children of God love as they should, they will spend at least as much time petitioning God for their fellowman as they do for themselves. It is an elementary fact of Christianity that the love of God reaches out to help others. It follows, then, that the requests the sincere

<sup>10</sup> Psa. 119.5, 133-135; Luke 17.5

<sup>11</sup> Mat. 6.25-33

<sup>12</sup> 1 Cor. 13

<sup>13</sup> Ex. 32.30-32; Num. 16.44-48

Christian makes are made primarily for others or for interests outside of himself.

But beyond this, there is a specific talent or gift of intercessory prayer that the Spirit of God gives to a select number of believers. The Scriptures do not name it as a gift of the Spirit, but evidently they do not list all the gifts. Paul deals with gifts of the Spirit and he cites specific ones, but intercessory prayer is not mentioned. Yet he informs his readers (RSV):

"And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, then healers, HELPERS, administrators, speakers in various kinds of tongues."<sup>14</sup>

The word "helpers" quite obviously covers various areas of aiding and assisting the body of Christ. One of these areas is the gift of intercessory prayer or that prayer that specifically intercedes with God for someone else. Clearly, no Christian can truly be Christ-like, as the name Christian connotes, without praying for others. This type of prayer consists of a particular aptitude for getting within the hearts and minds of others and feeling and assuming their burdens. The recipient of this valuable gift has the specific ability to pray effectively for his or her burdened, oppressed brother or sister.

Feeling the Need.

No one is alone in the world. Somewhere he or she has a brother who is in great pain, a sister who has been wounded and left dying. This calls for love, a heart that reaches out for a sufferer and feels what he is feeling. It is a heart that hurts when its brother hurts, weeps with its brother, and, when the brother's heart is broken, this kindred heart is also torn apart.

<sup>14</sup> I Cor. 12.28

<sup>15</sup> 1 Cor. 13

<sup>16</sup> Rom. 8.26, 27

But we do not like to hurt, even in this vicarious type of situation. The pain is so real at times for the one who prays that he almost literally feels his brother's or sister's anguish. And we dislike being stressed. We have no wish to be extremely discomfited. That is why we subliminally avoid getting into our brother's and sister's shoes of distress. The pain is too real, too great. So we pray for our suffering fellow saints a little. We gingerly reach out a delicate hand that recoils from the muck of distress and agony and try to help the victim from an arm's length away.

We have to forget such genteel efforts and clasp to our bosom this man or woman who needs more than a delicate touch. Love requires us to get ourselves down in the sweaty grime of pain.<sup>15</sup> It demands that we agonize and cry aloud repeatedly to God until our brother's torturous moment has passed. We must, we must, feel the need even if it wrenches our own souls in two.

Apostle Paul writes of the Holy Spirit's interceding to God for the saints.<sup>16</sup> This occurs when the Holy Spirit within the believer takes over the believer's being and literally prays through him. The prayer may be in an unknown tongue, or it may not even be in words; it may be in groaning ("sighs": RSV) that only God Himself can interpret.. The Holy Spirit has felt the anguish of the one for whom the prayer is being raised and He has sensed the empathic anguish of the one who is praying. The Holy Spirit realizes the inability of the petitioner to frame his impassioned pleas properly and He (the Holy Spirit) has Himself petitioned God - through the human petitioner - for the anguished individual. This is in fact an intercessory prayer made by the Holy Spirit and the supplicant (the one who is making the prayer). There is no better Christian teamwork. It is intercessory prayer at its zenith.

God does not fail to notice these unspoken sighs of the intercessor. It is quite the contrary. This is where God delights in interposing Himself to help His grievously burdened child:

"[for] he who searches the hearts of men knows

what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God."

There are many gifted Christians who travail in prayer long and persistently for others. As a rule these nameless, faceless persons pray in the privacy of their own closets. They get little glory from men; they receive no monetary reward, but it matters not. Their reward is in doing what God requires of them and knowing that they are causing Him to smile in approval. It is more than enough.

#### B-4. The Length of a Prayer Matters Little

The biblical examples of supplicatory prayer range from Elijah's short sixty-three-word supplication on Mt. Carmel<sup>17</sup> to King <sup>(18)</sup>Solomon's lengthy prayer of dedication for the new temple he had built on Mt. Moriah.<sup>18</sup>

Solomon's prayer was much, much longer than Elijah's. It remains, however, that both prayers were made in faith and both prayers were answered. Some of Solomon's requests did not call for immediate fulfillment. They were answered in the future, and some have yet to be fulfilled because the time is not yet right. We know this: God will always answer the prayer of faith according to His will.

#### C/D. Meditation/Communion

Jesus' hours of prayer during His retreats into the hills were not the same as His praying to the Father to heal a disease-ravaged body or to restore a person to life.<sup>19</sup> These extended, close sessions with the Father were personal dialogues with, and private revelations from His Father, and there was undoubtedly a simple relaxing in the divine Presence that Jesus needed for His mental and physical health. During His prayer sessions Jesus drew on heavenly resources of guidance, grace, wisdom,

<sup>17</sup> I King 18:36, 37

<sup>18</sup> II Chron. 6:14-42

<sup>19</sup> Mat. 14.23, 6.46; Luke 6.12; John 6.15

comfort and resolve. We can see the effects of Jesus' prayer life not only in the miracles He performed directly on others, but in the things that happened of an unmiraculous nature in His daily life.

There are at least three occasions in which Jesus went into a mountain to pray and we can trace the aftereffects to the period He had just spent in prayer.

1. On the first occasion Jesus had passed the preceding night in prayer.<sup>20</sup> He evidently came down from the mountain with a mandate from the Father. How often this happens, even if on a lesser scale, with the one who communes with God! Jesus called the disciples to Him and from their midst He chose twelve whom He called apostles. This move was critical to the survival and propagation of the Church, which was yet unborn.

2. The second account of the effects of Jesus' communion with God was shortly after miraculously feeding five thousand men, women and children. Jesus "went up into a mountain apart to pray."<sup>21</sup> Meanwhile His disciples had entered a small boat to cross to the other side of the Sea of Galilee. During the night, as Jesus prayed, the disciples encountered strong winds and dangerously high waves.

Jesus perceived their predicament as He prayed because Mark writes, "he saw them toiling in rowing." Jesus could not have seen them with His physical, unaided eye as it was nighttime and they were far from land. The Father with whom Jesus was then communing revealed their perilous situation to His Son. Jesus arose from His session of prayer and went to their aid. He had no boat, so He did what was necessary. He walked on the water to go to them!

Jesus saw the disciples in their peril despite the darkness of the night; He walked to them on the water; He stilled the

<sup>20</sup> Mark 3:13-19; Luke 6:12-19

<sup>21</sup> Matthew 14:22-31; Mark 6:45-51; John 6:15-21

<sup>22</sup> Matthew 17:1-8; Luke 9:28-36

unruly elements by an unspoken command. All these things were possible because He did more than ask favors of the Father. Jesus *prayed* in the full meaning of the word.

3. On the third occasion Jesus took Peter, James and John with Him when He went up into a mountain to pray.<sup>22</sup> While He was praying, the three disciples observed a great change come over Him.

"And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his garments became white as light" (RSV).

The three extraordinary events depicted above happened because in each instance Jesus had not just been making requests of the Father. He had been *communing* with Him. Note too that these unusual happenings were not direct answers to prayer requests. They were gratifying results of (not answers to) a close association with the Father. When occurrences like these (although on a smaller scale) come in the life of the believer, they light a very special glow within him because God has deigned to bless him so.

#### More on Meditation/Communion

An idea does not always come to the mind of one who meditates full-blown, nor does it always come merely by chance. As the worshiper waits in prayer and meditation before God, the Spirit of God at times seems to brood over his being. Bits and pieces of thoughts swirl through his consciousness. While these undeveloped beginnings of thoughts drift through his mind, some touch together and fuse. They then begin to develop slowly much as a zygote (a new entity formed by the union of two specialized cells) develops in the uterus.

The Spirit of God does not necessarily originate the meditations or musings that produce such embryonic ideas. But the Spirit watches over the entire range of thoughts within the one who is meditating. At times the Spirit sees fit to interpose His hand to rearrange, to bring together and to set incipient ideas in motion. He does this in the same fashion that He orders the life of the believer. He lets random wisps of thought arise of

themselves (just like the "chance" happenings in life). Yet, when He chooses, He takes these flitting ideas - or those He has deliberately placed in the mind of the believer - and causes them to combine with other flecks of thought. Gradually they grow into a full-fledged concept.

Occasionally, due to human frailty, an embryonic thought takes a wrong turn. It becomes deformed and unscriptural, resulting in a presumption or premise that is not viable. Now the reader should mark this: If the one who is meditating does not attempt too hurriedly to bring his errant thought to the light of day, the Spirit of God will cause the ill-formed premise to abort.

However, this is an orderly process that depends on the believer's waiting in the presence of God. Waiting in the presence of God is always a prime key to correct scriptural concepts.

There is no doubt that many erroneous interpretations of Scripture or wrong theology occur because the propounders of the theories have failed to wait long enough and/or often enough before God. Their mistaken idea comes to birth before the Spirit of God can bring it to its deserved and untimely end. With regard to the key spoken of above, there are really three keys to avoiding egregious error (not that anyone can ever be completely error-free). They are: 1) studying the Word of God, 2) waiting in His presence, and 3) yielding oneself completely to His control.

#### A Summary

As Jesus' followers, we should look at prayer in the same manner that He did. We need a prayer life so that we can bring our petitions and needs before God. Our welfare demands that God answer our petitions, but we need more, much more. We have to have the close association with God that brings on an assimilation of His characteristics. And we need happenings, not necessarily miracles. We need simple yet significant incidents that arise out of communion with God. The nature of life in a contrary world demands that we experience more than a granting of gifts from God. There must be those seemingly casual

occurrences that we can discern then or later as the hand of God moving in and directing our lives.

The conclusion of the matter is that there can be no substitute for a well-rounded prayer life. This is because, of ourselves, we're not at all what God wants us to be. To live up to His expectations for us we must have a life of continual prayer in all its glorious, uplifting aspects.

## ***Chapter Two***

### **The Puzzle of Unanswered Prayer**

#### **Where Is God When We Need Him?**

Many children of God are perplexed because their prayers are going unanswered. They want to know why. "Am I not a part of the Church?" they ask. They want to know if God is a respecter of persons who answers the petitions of some and rejects those of others. They wonder if their faith is weak. Let's be practical here. We lose our way when we demand that God do such-and-such for us because we have faith. We never give a thought to the will of God in specific situations. We insist that God should heal where He does not want to heal (surprise!) We insist that God work miracles for us. Good scriptural common sense should tell us that we cannot always equate faith with miraculous happenings.

It is evident that the Apostle Paul could not heal irrespective of God's will in the matter. He writes in II Timothy 4:20b, "...Trophimus have I left at Miletum sick." Now think: Why didn't Paul heal Trophimus? Trophimus was apparently a valued worker with Paul. (Acts 20:4, 21:29.) Yet here was Paul who had the gift of healing, and Trophimus a trusted worker in the Kingdom, who could not accompany Paul on his journeys because he was sick. Why did Paul not heal him? The truth almost jumps out at you. It was not God's will at the time to heal Trophimus.

There is yet another example that tells us that even a miracle worker cannot work miracles outside of the will of God. In Philippians 2:25-27 Paul told the Philippians that Epaphroditus had been very seriously ill but that God had mercifully healed him. It does not seem from the context that Paul had miraculously healed Epaphroditus, but that it had been a natural occurrence. God let him experience physical distress

for a time and then brought him out of it because that was what God wanted at that time for Epaphroditus.

All of today's so-called healers die. (Don't misread me: I firmly believe there are people who have the gift of healing.) Their own families die. The healers are not infallible or they and their own would continue to live, that is, according to their own pronouncements. They are the ones who declare that, if we have faith in God, He will not let us be ill or poor.

“Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.” (3 John 1:2)

This is the health-prosperity Bible passage many sincere preachers continually din at their listeners. That is what they firmly believe. But hear me well: If I don't begrudge you your health and prosperity (and I don't), then if you should see me in my rags, slowly dying of some undiagnosed disease, don't look at me with a jaundiced eye. I know I love God. I know I am His follower. Furthermore, I am committed to trusting Him whatever my lot, rich or poor, sick or well. God has given us (me and others who believe the will of God is paramount) what might be termed a superseding faith, that is, a faith that goes beyond the banal boundaries of the if-you-believe-you-gotta-be-healed faith. Whereas the majority of believers seem to be stuck in the “faith healing” mode, there are those who see beyond what they want and are concerned about the will of God.

Well! – There it is; that is my faith, there for all to see. Now, show me your faith, not now in the rosy glow of success, but when your monetary well runs dry and your robust health fails. Oh certainly, you will still believe in God, but what will your failing health and depleted bankroll do to your morale? Can you take whatever God lets happen to you without finding fault with your faith or yourself – or even your God?

I am reluctant to take the space to refute this caviar-on-every-plate, bubbling-health-for-everyone tenet, but someone has to do it. We are misappropriating the promises made to the Israelites of old, under the Old Covenant in which outward glory and material prosperity were often the signs of the

blessings of God. And, concerning John's wish that his friend Gaius might be well and financially successful, that is a normal desire of anyone for his brother or sister. It certainly is not a dictum of faith.

What is the secret to having your prayers answered? It's simple. You pray and you pray and you pray -and then you pray again and again. If your petition is scripturally sound and if you believe, God will hear you. Never give up. Don't lose faith. Immerse yourself in your prayer life. Some of your prayers you may present in a time formally set aside for sweet communion with God. Others can be the many prayers you whisper inwardly during the course of a busy day. God hears in a crowded workspace or a noisy traffic jam just as surely as He does in your prayer cubicle. He is by no means hearing impaired. Let your supplications flow in a continuous stream so that you inundate heaven with their flood.

If the wicked judge of the Parable (Luke 18:1-8) answered the widow's petition because she wearied him, how much more will a righteous God respond to our continued crying to Him? The Unjust Judge answered out of desperation. He was tired of the woman's incessant pleading. God will answer out of a loving heart. He hears; He sees; He knows your requests before they are made. He will answer -in His own way, but He will answer without fail if you don't lose faith.

“And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?” Luke 18:7-8.

## ***Chapter Three***

### **What Is All This Talk about Faith?**

There is not necessarily any mysticism about faith (in God) – other than God is a mystic Being. Aside from that, faith is simple. It works on this wise: 1) I believe, and 2) God works as He sees the need and as He wills. You will note that my faith does not of itself bring about the filling of my needs. Effective faith has to be based on an effective *something*. It is faith in *GOD* that powers through obstacles and demolishes all opposition.

### **The Life of Faith Is a Balancing Act**

The pragmatist sees things the way they actually are. He refuses to see them the way he wants to see them as that would be mere wishful thinking. At first this would seem to clash with faith, which sees things the way we want to see them. But there is no clash if faith acknowledges the way things are and then declares the way things are going to be, that is, as God wills for them to be. Any other so-called faith is merely wishful thinking, and God does not operate in the sphere of wishful thinking.

Wishful thinking refuses to see the actual situation. It says, through lips trembling with fear, “There is no danger, there is no danger...” God cannot accept that. Why would He rescue you if there is no situation from which to be delivered? What glory would accrue to God?

We know that without faith it is impossible to please God, and “he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and *that* he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.” (Heb. 11.6) If we don’t believe there is a God, then for us there is no need for salvation inasmuch as it is the righteousness of God that condemns our sins (and us also if we cling to our sins). Indeed, if there be no God, there can be no salvation because salvation is available to us only through the blood of Jesus Christ who was God manifested in a body of flesh.

If you will, faith is the medium by which we hit the jackpot. All the incredible riches of glory in Christ can be accessed only if we believe in Him. We cannot obtain these inexpressible riches without Christ; they are an integral part of Him. Likewise, we cannot have the riches in glory if we don't *believe* in Christ, not just with an intellectual belief, but with that which springs from the heart.

If you want joy and peace and glory and salvation, you must come the right way. You must have a faith that is based on Jesus Christ. No other person and no other God can give you these items for which your soul longs. You must believe in Jesus. And you must come to Him in His own way. You cannot serve Him in a casual manner; He is a holy God and He wants you to be holy.

### **What Does It Take to be Holy?**

We have a problem: We want to be all that God wants us to be, living up to the full potential He has invested in us. Now that is a tall order and it requires much of us. A basic requirement is that we have to realize we are new creatures **by faith**. The old carnal nature is not literally dead. It is still crouching nearby, ready to pounce on us and devour us if we forget that we are indeed new creatures. Paul reminds us,

“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a **new creature**: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become **new**.”

Yet he cautions us,

“How shall we, that are dead to sin [we are new creatures], live any longer therein?”

We cannot — if we walk by faith and not by sight. Someone has said there is no such thing as “blind faith.” In answer to that, all I can say is this: I cannot always literally see where God is taking me; that means I can't see the way, therefore I am walking blind. But then – considering it from another perspective, I am not really tap-tapping my way through the dark that envelops me because God sees the way for me. So

perhaps I am not walking blind. What better way to see can there be than through the eyes of God?

Let's dispense with the white cane for the blind and the seeing-eye dog and the special high-tech devices that depend on man's ingenuity. Let's throw away all other aids than God and stretch our hands out to Him and confidently allow Him to lead us where He wants us to go. Yes, there may be a yawning chasm lying ahead of us, on either side of us and behind us. In other words, we are stuck on a pinpoint of land in space, with a limbo of nothingness all around us. But remember: We are walking by faith, not by sight. We can't see the potential disasters waiting to engulf us. Therefore, if God gives us a gentle tug to move ahead or to turn right or left, we are sure that, as we take each step in the dark, God will put solid ground under each footstep taken in faith.

### **We Walk with Christ by Faith**

The Christian's whole life is theoretically centered on his trust in his God. This Holy Way is without a doubt a walk of faith; we do not literally walk (that is, in bodily manner) with Christ. We walk with Him by faith. Jesus told Thomas,

“...I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. <sup>7</sup>If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him.” (John 14:6 through John 14:7)

By Jesus' saying He is the Way, the truth, and the life, we know that our walk is one of faith. How else could we walk with One who is not physically on this earth? Moreover, Jesus said later in this last extended talk with His disciples, “If ye love me, keep my commandments.” By keeping His commandments we are walking in the Way, the Truth and the Life to which He previously referred. We show our love to Christ by our obedience. Furthermore, our obedience is prompted not only by love but by our living faith in Christ as James states it so forcefully in Jas. 2.14-20.

We are not literally perfect nor are we literally righteous. We have attained to His righteousness and His perfection only because we believe in Him. It is not that we just *believe* Him—many believe there was a Jesus who are not His disciples. We believe *IN* Him. That means that we give ourselves totally to Jesus and we obey His commandments, and His commandments are certainly not grievous.

They are, in fact, “a lamp unto [our] feet, and a light unto [our] path.” (Psa. 119.105)

## ***Chapter Four***

### **Beware of Unbelief**

#### **Fighting the Beginnings of Doubt**

“Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called Today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.”  
(Heb 3:12, 13)

There will always be an adversary in this life trying to break down the relationship you have with your Maker. If the adversary can't push you into overt sin, he will go the devious route and attempt to inject just the smallest seeds of doubt into your thoughts. As the frail creature that he is, man is particularly subject to disbeliefs easing themselves insidiously into his consciousness. We have to deal with the possibility of doubt at this point because no one is immune to it and, if it is left unchecked, it can destroy the Christian's fellowship with God.

The mind (heart) is the critical area that Satan seeks to control fully, so it is a matter of guarding your mind as well as possible against the unwanted intrusion of doubt. Somewhat akin to the Parable of the Sower is the analogy between the heart of the believer and a natural garden. Both have a gardener tending them. In this analogy, however, the gardener of the Christian's heart is the Christian himself. You the gardener have to expend much care on your garden to see that it produces the right plants and that once a seedling or bulb is planted it grows to perfection. The area of utmost importance is to keep weeds from springing up in the midst of the good plants.

The nature of a weed is exactly the opposite of a good plant in that it needs no tending. If a good plant is left untended it fares poorly and may soon wither. On the contrary, a weed

shoots up unwanted at any time and flourishes as though it were given the best of care. Further, it is hard to root it all out of your garden. The proper method of handling weeds, therefore, is a preventative one. We must keep them from taking root or, failing that, we must promptly get rid of them.

Like good plants in a garden, faith is not an automatic thing that grows unplanted and untended in your heart. God offered you the incipient faith you had when you were first saved. When you (the gardener) accepted God's offer, God planted the beginning faith in your heart. From that point it is up to you to tend the seedling of faith so that it may germinate and sprout upward like any other good plant.

Doubt, like its counterpart the weed, is a hardy growth and is just the opposite of faith. Doubt is wafted into your heart like the seed of a weed that has been blown into a natural garden by a capricious breeze. The seed of doubt needs no tending to grow from a small insignificant growth into a large, unsightly and dangerous weed of unbelief.

## **The Results of Unbelief**

Eve, the mother of us all and the first human to encounter doubt, presents an example of the characteristics of doubt. In her case the doubt was not wafted in by chance; it was deliberately implanted there by Lucifer. Nevertheless, he had to have Eve's cooperation. God had told Adam,

“Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat:  
but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil,  
thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest  
thereof thou shalt surely die.” Gen. 2:16b, 17.

Eve was formed from Adam's rib after the commandment was given, nevertheless she was aware of the commandment because she repeated to Lucifer what God had told Adam. Lucifer brushed what she said aside. “Ye shall not surely die,” he said. “For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.”

Eve gullibly allowed Lucifer to plant the doubt in her heart. Then, instead of realizing her mistake and rooting out the offensive plant, she began to consider the matter. That was a very serious mistake. God had given a commandment and no thought should have been given to evading it. She should have rejected Lucifer's proposition out of hand. But, as she looked at the tree and saw how appealing its fruit was and considered the contradicting words of Lucifer, the small plant of doubt within her heart grew with a rush into a rank growth of unbelief. She did not believe what God had commanded.

“And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.” Gen. 3:6.

There we have the picture of the planting of the seed of doubt and the growth of the seed into gross unbelief.

Adam's unbelief was at once the most harmless-appearing and yet the most devastating sin in all human history. You may scoff and accuse me of sensationalism, but the sensationalism lies only in the hard reality of what that one sin has brought down on every single descendant of Adam.

We only have to look at what happened after doubt intruded its unwelcome self into the peaceful Garden of Eden, resulting in Adam's fall. This is what happened to the human race:

1. The pattern of living of the entire animal world, man included, was changed and creature lived off of creature. Each species lived (and does yet today) by killing and eating that which was weaker or less defensible. Life prolonged itself through death.

A constant hatred manifests itself among Adam's descendants. There are innumerable wars, with the indescribable carnage and suffering that wars bring. There are men who at one time were reasoning, reasonably decent individuals who, since their return

from these wars have been guilty of outbursts of savagery and cruelty. These eruptions are triggered by their prior involvement in the legalized form of the same savagery and cruelty known as “defending one’s homeland” or “fighting for freedom.” But perhaps there is some sort of bizarre logic here: If a man does not yield himself fully to God and receive God’s protection, he had better ravage his brother before his brother has the chance to do the same to him.

2. There are famines and pestilences, diseases running rampant even while other scourges of mankind are being eliminated by man’s accumulating knowledge. It is as though God has said, “Try as you will, you will never escape the suffering that sin is bound to bring to you.”
3. In various parts of the world lives are being wasted before they are barely started. Parents watch devastated while the lives of their children slip away from them. Children watch in dismay while the lives of their parents are gradually sloughed off in what is generally called the “Golden Years.” Or, if the parents do not slip away in the mental fog of senility or Alzheimer’s disease, they are forced to endure terrible pain until death, as a friend, comes and delivers them.
4. Even the most fortunate persons encounter their share of suffering in this life. Then, to cap all this present human torment, there is the “second death” that lies ahead for the unbelieving. This unknown horror will confront all who persist, stubborn and unlearning, in Adam’s simple little sin of unbelief. Unlike the anguish of this life, there will be there no pain-killers nor can it be escaped by death.
5. In this mortal life sometimes the dread of death is nullified by experiences “worse than death.” There

will be no fleeing from the second death, and those who are now rejecting eternal life will have made their choice, *willingly* and forever, for damnation. All of this suffering, now and hereafter, will have been precipitated by the one minor act of disobedience committed by Adam!

There is indeed no little sin. Even the smallest of doubts has the potential to lead one who entertains it to hell. At the time He pronounced the curse on man, God did not specify what “thou shalt surely die” meant. He said only that “dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.” But as time went by, the anguish of the dying of hope and the horror of “forever death” began to impinge on the consciousness of man. Then, when Jesus came into the world, he painfully sharpened their image of death. He warned the people:

“And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.” Mat. 10:28.

The hell to which Jesus referred is not just hades, the abode of the dead, as is often the case where hell is used in the King James version. The Greek in this instance refers to the fires of hell, Gehenna, the lake of fire.

### We Are No Better Than the Israelites of Old

“Take heed lest there be in you an evil heart of unbelief.” You will note that the writer of the book of Hebrews is not saying these things to the unsaved; he is talking to believers. The words are stern; the warning is direct. Our salvation is sure and eternal only if we continue to believe God. We must beware of the doubts that seem to be harmless. For example, if God would tell me that the sky is green, that would appear to be illogical. I can see that the sky is blue, so God wouldn’t mind if I did not believe the sky is green. But unbelief is unbelief. What God says is not the whimsy of some foolish man; it is always truth. If my senses tell me that what God is saying to me is in error, my senses are wrong, not God.

We are all in danger from our own logical, arrogant minds. We certainly don't want to be "...children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive..." as Paul warns us in Ephesians 4:14, but he was warning the Ephesians about the lies of men. It is vastly different when God tells us what He wants us to believe. His opinions are not just any "wind of doctrine" nor are they worthless like the crafty ideologies of men. What God declares to us is always truth and there is an ever-present danger of failing to believe Him because we think we know better. We are far too wise in our own conceits. We do indeed need to be like children when it comes to what our heavenly Father is telling us.

I am warning you and I am warning myself: Believe, believe, *believe*. An evil heart of unbelief can steal our peace, it can take away our joy, it can dismantle our very salvation. We must believe God in the smallest matters. If we don't, the unbelief can grow like a cancer and take away our spiritual lives.

In another place, the writer of Hebrews says,

"Therefore, since the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it. For we also have had the gospel preached to us, just as they [the Israelites] did; but the message they heard was of no value to them, because those who heard did not combine it with faith." (Heb 4:1, 2 NIV)

The Israelites died in the wilderness because they didn't believe. Times without number God had shown them His great power and His ability to lead them, to feed them and to protect them. The psalm was true that said,

"He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth shall be thy shield and buckler. Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day; Nor for the pestilence that

walketh in darkness; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday. A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee.” (Psa 91:4-7)

With such assurances the nation of Israel had no reason to fear any man or devil. They had seen the mighty arm of God working time and again – but it seemed not to increase their love for Him nor cause them to trust Him and devote themselves only to Him. They continually turned away from God and put their trust in idols that could not hear nor speak nor deliver them from their adversaries. What a reprehensible sin against the Almighty God!

But we have done much the same things today. Then when some national calamity hits and topples our gods of money and pride and sex, we run to God who forgives our sins and soothes us and whisper words of peace to us. But as soon as the crisis is past, we return to the ineffective gods from whom we had just turned away yesterday. The root of all this defection is unbelief. We really don't believe that God will ever reject us in wrath. We think He will forgive forever.

### **It Is Foolish to Worry about Something God Can Fix in an Instant**

We often are overly concerned with dire things that may happen in our lives. When the rain comes down we say there is going to be a devastating flood. When the wind blows we immediately foresee a terrible hurricane or tornado. When we have a mild headache, right away we know we are going to have a stroke.

Tell me: What do we have a God for? Give a thought for a moment to who God is; dig into your memory banks and search your Bible and rediscover this Person to whom you have given your all and whom you say you trust implicitly. Is He a fairy tale foisted on us by our elders to banish our childhood fears? Rediscover your God. Look at the wonder of Deity. Rekindle the fire of hope.

There are very many attributes and facets of the Supreme Being we know simply as “God” and not one of them can be described by a simple statement. This one only God constitutes an extremely complicated subject about whom countless tomes have been written and not one has yet penetrated the complexities that are God.

For example, in describing God we could simply say He is love, which is without doubt incontrovertible truth. But it is not all of the truth; there are volumes more to be said about God just in that area alone.

Anyone who has walked with God two, three or more years and has studied the Bible and been drawn close to this God, knows there is more, much more to the statement, “God is love.” The person may not be wise and knowledgeable enough to assimilate the vastness of the statement in his own mind, but he can grasp it enough to realize that no one can know, much less tell, the awesome, terrible and wondrous complexity of God.

### **It Is Pointless to Fret about the Prosperity of the Wicked**

Evil men will often prosper while the upright too often will find themselves in dire circumstances, but the righteous principle still stands, namely that they who do righteously will prevail over the wicked in due time. The “due time” may be in this life or in the life to come, but it is coming as surely as there is a God.

“Fret not thyself because of evildoers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity. For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb. (Psa 37:1-2)

Then, there are these words of assurance:

“A little that a righteous man hath *is* better than the riches of many wicked. For the arms of the wicked shall be broken: but the LORD upholdeth the righteous. The LORD knoweth

the days of the upright: and their inheritance shall be for ever.” (Psa 37:16-18)

“Though he [the righteous person] fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholdeth *him with* his hand.” (Psa 37:24)

“Wait on the LORD, and keep his way, and he shall exalt thee to inherit the land: when the wicked are cut off, thou shalt see *it*.” (Psa 37:34)

“But the salvation of the righteous *is* of the LORD: *he is* their strength in the time of trouble. And the LORD shall help them, and deliver them: he shall deliver them from the wicked, and save them, because they trust in him.” (Psa 37:39-40)

## ***Chapter Five***

### **Faith Cannot Stand Alone**

#### Faith Must Be Based on a Divine Person

In almost any field of endeavor the potency of faith is acknowledged. To test this theory, in the medical field doctors have conducted “placebo” tests. They would give one group of patients who were seriously ill a medication that was known to be highly effective against the disease afflicting them. The patients would respond as expected. Their confidence in the medication was justified. The doctors at the same time would give another seriously ill group an inert medication or one that was medically nothing more than a sugar pill. The purpose was to see what effect the mind plays in the healing process.

To their surprise, the doctors discovered that often the patients who were given the placebo recovered without any real medication. They believed they were taking a potent medication and responded as well as the patients who were given the real drug. The conclusion the doctors drew was that the mind does indeed have a strong input in the healing process. The faith the second group of patients had in the placebo was so strong that their own minds healed them.

This should say something to the Christian whose faith is a vital part of his life. The obvious thing it should say is that we are healed and we overcome by faith. That is good and it is backed up by Scripture. But there is another less obvious fact that surfaces after careful thought. The less obvious fact is this: with the Christian, faith alone is not enough. The Christian must be sure that he has the right type of faith and that it is based on the right object. In this discourse we are looking at two kinds of faith: subjective and objective. The subjective kind is not founded on anything external; it is simply a belief in an idea. It is self-contained like an intransitive verb. Objective faith reaches

out to, and is based on something outside the believer, perhaps even on a placebo.

So, contrary to some of our assumptions, it is not faith of itself that gives us the victory over any obstacle or opposition. Wait—don't leave me; I am not saying the scripture is in error when it tells us that faith is the victory that overcomes the world (1 John 5:4b), but any student of the Scriptures knows that the faith John is talking about is based on God alone. All believers can choose what they will have faith in. Will it be in the plain idea that things will work out for us, or will it be, not in the idea, but in the God who makes the idea practical? Ideas or concepts are simply mental vehicles that lead the one entertaining them to practical results. It is God alone who gives faith, which is merely a nebulous thought, its invincibility.

We have to accept that faith, whether it is subjective or objective, is of itself limited. Faith in placebos or any other less-than-divine objects can lead to serious consequences at times. A person's strong belief that he or she can conquer the sin that prevails in the world and in the person's own carnal nature can never make that belief a reality. An ironclad faith in a false god or a wrong idea cannot raise the person's dead body to eternal life. Houdini the magician firmly believed that he would come back after death to contact his wife and friends. He has been dead many decades now and has yet to keep that promise.

When Peter essayed to walk on the water at Jesus' command to "Come!" he had to have more than a strong belief that he could surmount the rolling waters. He had to know that Jesus could make it possible. The belief in Jesus made Peter get out of the relative safety of the boat to walk to Jesus. But Peter could stay above the turbulent seas only as long as he put forth the effort, and he could exert the effort only as long as he believed Jesus could uphold him. The boisterous elements threw him into a fear-induced panic. The fear paralyzed his leg muscles and he began to sink like a stone despite having the Master of the seas there to help him. Fear had negated his faith. "O thou of little faith," Jesus chided as He lifted Peter up out of the water, "wherefore didst thou doubt?"

In similar manner, we have to first call on the Master and then we have to step out of our boat in faith and walk on the waters that are towering over us on every side. It's one thing to have Jesus, with His unlimited power and absolute knowledge saying, "Come!" but it's another matter to trust Him implicitly and to confidently walk on the sea of troubles all around us. When we step out in faith the sea will be still and supportive only where we place our feet. The waters may still thrash wildly all around us, but they can never overcome us. We will not be swallowed up by our adversities, but through the blood of Jesus we'll trample them under our feet.

God's power without our faith is like a powerful engine without a transmission. Without the transmission of faith, the power of the Almighty will not be transmitted to our legs and feet to enable us to do the impossible. Before Jesus, who had ever heard of a man walking on water? But now Jesus has come and we perform the impossible every day. It's so very clear that the Christian must place his faith only in his God. The bare-bones idea of believing just for the sake of believing, no matter how unfounded the belief, will land us only on the broad way leading to destruction. We will have plenty of company along the way, but our final destination will be a lonely, utter and never ending destruction.

Of what does this faith consist, this faith for rising above the seas violent around us? Faith is 1) to realize that God has all power in His hands and knows all things; 2) to take that knowledge of Him into your mind and let it sink down into your heart: you **know** beyond all doubt that God is there for you; and 3) not to go timidly, startled out of your senses by every thunder crash. **Walk on the waters as if you owned them.**

We know too that faith is "...the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." (Heb 11:1) Hope, on the other hand, is the *desire* and the *expectation* that, however miserable today is, tomorrow will be better. Biblical hope is much more than ordinary hope that wishes for something good, but is not certain of getting it. Biblical hope is the firm expectation of attaining that good thing, while faith goes even beyond that: Faith is the *solid assurance* that, whatever happens

in the next twenty-four hours, there is coming beyond question a great Tomorrow that will be forever good.

Hope alone, the proverbial light at the end of a long, dark tunnel, cannot always sustain a worm inching along the tunnel in its wretchedness. Hope no doubt makes the way easier to travel, but without faith the worm will eventually die a bitter death. Faith, “the *substance* of things *hoped* for,” transports the worm, in spirit, to the end of the tunnel so far away and continually sustains it despite the hard reality of the painful shards and searing embers through which it must burrow each day. We know from experience that faith can keep the hopes of a Church awaiting her Lord’s return through the two thousand years since her Lord made the promise. We hold fast to our belief and hope while unbelievers are scoffing and asking “Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.” But faith has kept the believing bride of Christ waiting and waiting and waiting for His “soon” coming—and it will keep her for another two thousand years, if God so wills.

### **Time Cannot Erode Faith**

When I came to the Lord in 1933 the saints were expecting Christ to return for His Church at any moment. The condition of the world even back there was deplorable and we had no idea the Church would still be here seventy-some years later well into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. But we who have lived until now still have no doubt that Christ will return, and we still believe it will be “soon.” We are aware that “one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.” (2 Peter 3.8b) The passage of time cannot kill faith when it is centered on Jesus Christ. He is not dependent on, nor limited by, time.

### **A Living Faith Will Grow**

By its very nature a living faith will grow. From a saving faith it will branch into other areas such as faith for everyday living, faith to believe what is not understood, faith to move mountains, and faith to endure adversity and not be delivered as

soon as one might wish. Every man of faith in the Scriptures and among God's people today has had his faith grow in this manner. This is simply the nature of a living faith. Always, in the life of a man of faith, God will let misfortunes happen that are not to God's liking, but which He knows are for the good of the one who trusts Him.

Whatever adversity you are facing at this moment is certainly not something you want. But if you are indeed a man of faith in God, you know He has a purpose in permitting the misfortune to happen—to *you*. You are also aware that He never leaves you to sink or swim in your sea of adversity: He is your life preserver. He is doing for you what a wise parent does for his child at times: He is letting the rough seas buffet you just hard enough and long enough to make you a better person. Your continued distress is not necessarily due to a lack of faith. In some instances this may be true, but if you believe and wait, that is evidence of itself that you do have the necessary faith.

### **Faith Does Not Abolish All Adversities**

Faith is incontrovertibly the key to our salvation, but we Christians have been lulled into believing that the mere idea of faith is a cure-all for everything of an adverse nature. This is a lie that Satan wants you to believe so that he can eventually erode your weakened faith until it is nonexistent. Listen to me: The faith that God wants you to have is not a miracle pill that you can pop into your mouth every time you get sick or encounter misfortune. It is not a pill that makes everything turn out right so that you are always immediately healed, your enemies like you and the stock market smiles on you. Grow up! That is not what God is looking for. God wants more than such mediocrity. He is seeking to instill in you a faith that doesn't look only at presently good surroundings or rejoice only in pleasant circumstances. Anyone can thrive in such a favorable climate.

God wants you to have a faith that will believe when absolutely nothing seems to go right, even when you pop the miracle pill of faith into your mouth—and you wait and wait and

nothing happens. God is looking for you to reach the advanced stage where you will rejoice not only that you can cast out demons (Luke 10.20), but that your name is written in heaven. There will be people in hell who at one time cast demons out of those who were possessed. God wants more than that. He wants you to know and daily function in the strength of the fact that you belong solely to God. If you have that kind of faith, you are invincible. No demon, circumstance or man can erase that heavenly record.

### **There Is Help for You**

You do not need to wallow in the pitiful state in which all mankind finds itself. As a Christian you are a special breed of man, not by birth but by rebirth and there is a better way of life for you. While the "better way" will not take you out of this life of tragedies, it softens life's hurts. When God condemned man to a lifetime and an eternity of suffering, in love He gave man an escape. It can be seen by closely looking at the curse that God invoked on Lucifer (who inhabited the body of the serpent):

"And I will put enmity between thee and the woman,  
and between thy seed and her seed; it [he] shall  
bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."  
(Gen. 32:15)

The seed of the woman was Jesus Christ who, in dying on the cross, would in truth be bruised by Lucifer [Satan]. But Christ would in turn bruise the serpent's head (signifying a mortal wound) through the very wound He would allow Satan to inflict on Him. This was that for which Jesus lived, suffered and died: By His dying He freed man from the clutches of eternal death.

### **What Is a 'Saving Faith'?**

It is true that Jesus died for man's salvation; but man must believe in Christ before he can benefit by His death. It is not enough, however, to believe only that Jesus lived at one time and suffered horribly and died a grotesque death on the cross and

then rose again. This is not the faith that is required to save a person. Many of the Jews in Christ's day believed that He lived. They had to believe because there He was, walking and talking in their midst. Others went so far as to believe what He was saying, but they did not believe *in* Jesus. They did not commit themselves to Him. The point we are trying diligently to make here is that biblical faith is a firm belief in, and a personal commitment to God in the Person of Jesus Christ.

This is the faith that will hold you even when you have failed God in some respect. It is an anchor of the soul, and without it no one can begin to know Christ or to have the salvation He brings. With this faith a person will stand in spite of the world, the flesh and the devil, and in spite of the occasional failure in which he does not choose to wallow.

Consider what Jesus said about faith to Peter. "Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that *thy faith fail not*"; not "that *you* may not fail," but that Peter's faith in Christ would not die. Observe this: If Jesus could have prevented Peter's defection – or ours – He would have done so. But that would have negated the concept of free choice.

When Jesus prayed His memorable prayer of intercession shortly after celebrating His last Passover with the disciples, He did not pray that the Father would never let them fail. He prayed that the Father would "keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me..." John 17:11b.

Jesus could not pray that Peter would not stumble in his walk, as Jesus fully knew how ignominiously Peter would fall. If Jesus had prayed that His children would never falter, His petition would not have been answered. There *is* faltering and stumbling among the faithful. Jesus prayed more than once in that intercessory prayer that the Father would *keep* the faithful (and implicit in the prayer is that God would keep them despite their failures), just as He kept Peter despite his failure.

## **Dealing with the Occasional Doubt**

All believers encounter doubts. If they didn't they would not be human and would then need no salvation. It is the adversary's

business to cast the seed of doubt into your mind. But when doubt intrudes itself into the Christian's consciousness, he has to treat it as he would any other evil thought that Satan or his own carnal nature puts into his mind. As quickly as the evil seed intrudes into the garden of the mind, the gardener must cast it out. He must resist the inclination to think on it and inspect it closely. Suppose that God has said one thing and there arises a doubt about the veracity of what God has said. That is not the time to mull it over; it is time to eradicate the doubt. All doubts, even the small harmless-looking ones, have the potential to grow and grow until they are just about impossible to uproot.

The Christian must resist and reject all doubts about God's ability to do anything He has promised. For the Christian to do this, he has to exercise the faith he already has. We are not now referring to saving faith but that which results from that faith: the faith to believe that God will deliver you from any and every contrary situation. This is the faith we need so greatly. It is not so much that we need faith to move mountains (that God may not want moved at that time anyway). We need faith for our day-to-day life to counteract the extreme efforts of the enemy to defeat us.

When a small voice of doubt whispers, "God won't do this for you even though He says He loves you," we have to cling hard to our faith and act as though the doubt were not there. This is not self-delusion; it is merely exercising the little faith we have. There is deep down inside every believer, in addition to his saving faith, a spark of trust that God will work wonders for him. The spark needs only to be nurtured and fanned into flame; and this is done by believing adamantly that God is good and will *do* good despite nagging doubts that we have to persistently reject.

The question for you now is this: What is it that you believe? That God will move a mountain or stop the sun in its tracks? What is it that you should believe so strongly? To answer that we should look at what the prayer of faith comprises.

## The Prayer of Faith

Let's review the passage from a few paragraphs above concerning Jesus' prayer that Peter would not fail altogether. In the passage we said,

“Consider what Jesus said about faith to Peter.  
‘Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not’; not ‘that you may not fail,’ but that Peter’s faith in Christ would not die.  
Observe this: If Jesus could have prevented Peter’s defection (or ours), He would have done so...”

The plea that Jesus made to the Father on Peter’s behalf illustrates the true prayer of faith. It is consonant with what God wants and what He *allows* to happen. And of course all things, whether good or evil, happen within the framework of God’s will, else they could not occur. This does not mean that God ever wants evil things to happen to a person whether he be saint or sinner. But God does will to permit certain undesirable events to occur even in your own life.

This doesn't need to be confusing when we consider that there are two aspects to the will of God. One aspect is what God wants in the final end. In other words, what God’s consummate will is. The other aspect or phase of God’s will is that which permits certain things to happen that are not at all what He wants for you in the final analysis. But God still has to will for these things to occur. Being the all-powerful God that He is, if He did not consciously permit these unlovely things to happen or those unlovable persons to commit their ungodly deeds, the happenings could not occur nor could the unlovable persons exist.

To repeat: The true prayer of faith has to be according to the way Jesus prayed – that Peter’s faith might not fail, all the while *not* praying that Peter himself might not fail. Of course there is an important difference between Jesus and us. Jesus knew beforehand that Peter would fail. We would not have known, so we could and should have prayed that Peter would not

fail – and God would have answered as He did by not letting Peter fall ultimately. Jesus knew, however, and He prayed for the stability of Peter’s faith, which faith was the basic and undergirding saving faith of every believer, that by which salvation comes.

The prayer of faith, as Jesus demonstrated it in his prayer for Peter and in His intercessory prayer at the Passover Feast, is dependent on saving faith and is an outgrowth of it. The prayer of faith is intertwined with three very closely related and vital elements:

1. The mind of Christ, which is always in tune with the will of God.
2. The believer’s close relationship with Christ.
3. The subjection of the supplicant’s will to the will of God.

Although it is imperative that we have the mind of Christ when we pray, it does not mean that we have to know specifically what God wills in regard to our prayer. Having the mind of Christ cannot absolutely indicate that the believing human, whose frailties and limitations are endless, can know in every instance the full mind of God for that instance.

This finite mortal breathes one breath at a time and is forced to face his insufficiencies in all areas. Therefore, he has to pray with the positive faith that God will do what he asks, *if it is God’s will*. Further, he has to believe firmly that, if God does not do what he requests, he has not asked within the will of God at that time.

Saying to God, “Lord, do thus-and-so if it is your will,” does not have to be, as the so-called faith advocates claim, a sign of a weak or nonexistent faith. It could indicate rather that the petitioner has a passion that the will of God should be done in any and all instances in his life.

The believer who is intent on doing the will of God has to be aware that whatever God lets happen or whatever He causes to happen in the believer’s life is for the best. It will be for the best in a direct fashion or it will work with other events in his

life to promote his well-being. When he prays in this manner, he is not left crushed when God in His wisdom lets occur that which he prayed would not happen. When the apparent evil strikes the believer, he is sustained through the ordeal because he knows that God Himself let it happen for what God deemed best at the time.

The faith that God will answer prayer according to His will – this is the Christian’s true miracle-working faith. But it is unusual in that it is a requirement for all believers, not just a select few; and it continually works on a base element to make a valuable commodity out of it. It takes a worthless life and transforms it into a thing of beauty. This is the faith that will bring the greatest glory to God.

Now I feel that I must end this little talk with a word of admonition:

### **The Wrath of God Is Soon Coming**

I don’t want to frighten you, but the wrath of God is slowly rising until soon it will reach the brim and spill on the sinful heads of humankind with calamitous effect.

I have to warn you who believe about even the smallest beginnings of unbelief. Unbelief can be a “terror by night” (Psa 91:4-7) to the Christian. Lack of faith can be the “arrow that flieth by day,” doubt “the pestilence that walketh in darkness.” But it doesn’t have to be that way. Look at what He is saying to us: While the terror and the arrow and the pestilence are destroying others who don’t believe, we can rest safe in His arms of love, if we only believe from the heart.

As indicated previously, it is not so much the literal arrow nor the natural pestilence nor the physical destruction from which God is promising deliverance today. We now have greater enemies, and unbelief is one of them. So I am urging you my brother and my sister: Cling tenaciously to whatever God has said. He’ll protect you.

Has God set you on a pathway that seems to lead to disaster? If He placed your feet on the path, then you have the assurance that nothing can harm you in an ultimate way. Don't panic, and don't give way to the so-called logic that your human pride boasts in. Trust only and totally in God.







