

A Life of
Faith Action

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

Throughout the Gospels, we see Jesus challenging the legalistic rituals of the religion of those days, a religion in which so few found it possible to measure up. Why? Because it was unnatural. But through His life, Jesus was constantly restoring people to the place where they could be fulfilled. Sinners were drawn to His message because it reflected the true nature of God.

Because He understood the true nature of the Father as no one else did, the Son operated in complete *faith action*—a faith that served by love. Jesus was always confident and His testimony was positive: “I will speak the Word and you shall be healed.” He knew that the Father would hear and answer His prayer. He was always absolutely certain it would work, and He never lost this confidence. We, too, can have the confidence of Jesus. Because He lives in us, we can act in faith.

Allow the thoughts in this booklet to be used to develop intimacy with God in the chambers of grace and the rooms of mercy being built in our souls. My prayer is that we will continue to be led by God on the road of victory, and that we will witness permanent restorations to the *normal* Christian life: life as God intended it—life in the power of faith action.

Chapter One

OUR EXAMPLE OF OBEDIENCE

“Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared: Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered” (Hebrews 5:7-8).

Because Jesus learned obedience by the things that He suffered in His humanity, He learned a secret: *He knew the Father*. He knew the Father’s nature. He knew His justice. He knew His love. Therefore, Jesus Christ, God the Son, could trust God the Father. And because He could trust Him, He could obey.

The Order of Faith Obedience

Jesus’ life is an example that is not beyond us, because He is alive *in* us. This is the way to live. First, I get to know the Master. Then, I can

trust Him. And then, I can obey Him. That's the order. It doesn't matter what I am dealing with. "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him," the apostle Paul wrote in 2 Timothy 1:12b. Paul knew the Master.

Once we know Him, we can trust Him for the worst situation in our marriage. Once we know Him, we can trust Him to deliver us from any kind of mental illness, emotional problem, or physical sickness. It all rests on getting to know Him. Then, as we trust Him, as we act in faith because of knowing Him, we desire to obey Him. As we enter into faith obedience to His Word, He imparts to us the very authority of God.

The Manifestation of God's Presence

God is interested in manifesting His presence. It's not enough to have a grasp of knowledge, a catalog of theology in the mind. Seminary professors have all that. But I would dare to say that very few of them experience the manifestation of His presence.

The soil of our hearts must be broken up. Once this is done, the Bible becomes rich. Every verse and every line becomes so precious to us,

leaping out as the Spirit brings it to life. Everything is recognized as sacred and the dynamics of God's Word are realized in our midst.

This is revival, fired and fueled by the Word of God. As a result, fields of faith are built up. The manifestation of His presence becomes so strong that distractions are minimized. Capacities are enlarged as believers are taken from one degree of faith to another. Hearts are fixed upon Christ, so nothing can hinder the move of God. Obedience flows freely and becomes the master of the revival; not feelings, not emotional outbursts, but obedience.

It's so simple. Jesus sends the Word to heal; as we believe it, our faith goes into action.

Jesus told the man at the pool called Bethesda in John 5:1-9, "take up your bed and walk." He obeyed and was healed. To another he said, "Stretch out your withered hand"—he obeyed. To blind Bartimaeus He said, "Go to the pool and wash." This man, too, obeyed. In each case, the issue was obedience to the words of Jesus. Three obeyed, three were healed.

How can you look at Jesus and be anxious, angry, petty, or distracted? You can't! When the fallow ground is broken up, there's a fellowship of light, a fellowship of life, a fellowship of love,

a fellowship of power, and God goes into action.

The God Man In Action

The key thing for us to understand is that in His humanity, Jesus was committed to His Father. Jesus did not use His deity to perform miracles, even though He was and *is* God. Rather, He wanted the focus to be upon His obedience to preach the Gospel, proclaiming the Good News—His mission on earth.

Chapter Two

THE SUBSTANCE OF THE WORD

The Bible remains the most precious book in all the world. It's still the best seller after all these years. It is precious because 2 Timothy 3:16 says "*All* Scripture is given by inspiration of God." In light of this, we must take heed *what* we hear and *how* we hear (Mark 4:24; Luke 8:18). What we listen to must be the Word of God.

"... It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4).

These are words from the Bible. We do not live by what our spouses may say or what society may expect of us. We are to live by *every* word that proceeds from the mouth of God. I'm not expressing my opinion here, but what God's Word says.

In Luke 8:11-15, we have the parable of the seed and the sower. The scattering of the seed represents the Word being scattered in people's

hearts. In some hearts, the Word cannot take root, because the soil—the capacity of the heart—is hard and rocky. For others, their hearts may be choked with thorns. Though the seed takes root, it is soon strangled, suffocated with the anxieties, cares, riches, and pleasures of life. The fruit does not ripen to maturity. But in Luke 8:15, those who allow the seed to fall on *good* soil have their hearts properly prepared. Hearing the Word and keeping it, they bring forth fruit with patience.

The Meaning of Substance

“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1).

Ponder that verse for a moment. *Substance* in the Greek text is *hupostasis*. *Hupo* means *under*, *stasis* means *to stand*. This means I stand under the absolute truth of the Word of God as my foundation. *Evidence* is the proof that something is real. It speaks of the ownership of personal property and the experience of fact.

Remember, faith comes by hearing the Word of God (Romans 10:17). A lot of talking won't do anything for your faith. But hearing the Word provides substance.

This is how it works. As I hear the Word, I believe with all my heart that every Word of God is pure (Proverbs 30:5). Then, I recognize it as profitable, as the source of abundant life that can transform my mind, revive my soul, and quicken my spirit.

As substance is developed, a durable foundation of absolute truth is formed. No longer do I live by what I can see; faith does not reveal truth to the senses (then it is no longer faith). In many cases, Jesus healed people by speaking the Word only. The substance of the Word in my soul brings in a conviction that what has not yet happened *will* happen. What I cannot see with my eyes, I can see with the heart of God. I have substance, and the things that aren't yet seen already exist in eternity because of the Word of God in my soul.

I'll never forget Jane, a girl in the first church I pastored in Maine. She was led to Christ in Sunday school at the age of nine. At fourteen, she had cancer. We all prayed and believed God. Unfortunately, the physical healing did not come. But her emotions were healed. Her mind was completely well. Every time I went to her hospital room, I could sense such contentment from her. She had such assurance and such con-

viction that God was there with her in the final two months of her life. She was convinced that God's will was being done; she was assured of His love for her.

When I think of Jane, I think of a hero of the faith. What a darling. In her last days, eleven people were led to Christ, including a doctor and two nurses. Her expression of faith was very simple. Her attitude was one of loving contentment. Her response to her illness was peaceful. She was just a teen-ager, yet what *substance* she had in her soul—evidence for her that she would soon be home with the Lord.

I remember a five-year-old boy whose father was in a terrible accident. This boy kept pleading with his father: "Don't die, Daddy. Don't die." Then he would pray, "Please Jesus, don't let Daddy die." Everyone thought the man was unconscious, but three months later, after he had recovered, he said that during those days he could hear his son and he trusted Jesus for the healing. Nine months later, the father was totally restored. The boy's cries had triggered something in the father's heart. It brought forth the substance that was there, the Word of God.

Christians need substance so that the cares and the challenges of this world, the deceitful-

ness of materialism and pleasure, will not strangle the Word of God. Even families and relationships cannot be exalted above the Word. When everything seems to contradict your faith, your feelings, and your reasoning, it doesn't matter. God's Truth goes beyond reason. His peace passes understanding. That's why, as a pastor, I'm very diligent and dogmatic to preach the Word in season and out of season. *This* is the substance—not the emotional foolishness, the superficial and counterfeit gifts that are being exalted in many places.

The Bible teaches us that God honors and rewards those who seek Him. Seek Him with earnestness (Proverbs 8:17). Seek Him with all your heart (Jeremiah 29:13). All who seek Him find Him. They find solutions and provisions for every situation.

The Christian finds a spiritual reality and an eternal dimension that brings warmth to the heart, a glow to the countenance and brokenness to the soul. The love of God motivates faith to action. And that action results in repentance and submission and victory in a surrendered vessel of Jesus Christ.

Chapter Three

HEROES OF FAITH ACTION

Consider all the men and women of God mentioned in Hebrews 11; they are called heroes of faith. We can read the Old Testament record of their lives and see their failures and sins. But here, the failures and sins are not recorded! These men and women had substance. They believed just what God said; that their sins would be washed away by the blood of the Lamb.

Abel is the first hero mentioned. His sacrifice was found to be more excellent than that of his brother Cain. Where Cain's sacrifice was the result of sweat and labor with his own hands, Abel's offering was the blood of a lamb. This was the first Old Testament picture of the kind of offering that would be acceptable to God: the blood of Jesus Christ, the Lamb. Abel's life represents faith worship. Today, his offering speaks of ministering to the Lord with true worship in

the power of the New Covenant.

Think of Enoch, the next man mentioned in Hebrews 11. He lived every day fellowshiping with God, believing His promises, and then it happened: Enoch was “translated that he should not see death” (Hebrews 11:5). This is what will happen during the Rapture of the Church. One day, we will all go to work—to the factories, the offices, the hospitals, and the stores. Then, as it says in I Thessalonians 4:16-17, the Lord shall descend from heaven and we will be caught up together to meet the Lord in the air, to spend eternity with Him. Our mortality will put on immortality, our corruptible will put on incorruptible. Death will have no sting (1 Corinthians 15:51-57). These truths are substance for our souls—evidence of what God *will* do.

Enoch’s life portrays a faith walk with God. Just as he walked in constant communion with God, so can we. We can walk in the power of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:2; Galatians 5:16). We can walk in wisdom and in the application of truth in all situations (Colossians 4:5).

The Obedience of Faith

Next in line we have Noah, a man moved with faith, reverence, and honor for God. What

substance his faith revealed. For 120 years he preached of the flood that was to come upon the whole earth. Though he continually warned people of the judgment to come, they refused to listen.

For us, Noah's life represents proclaiming the Gospel in obedience. Many witness for Jesus Christ and never see results. They knock on doors and get turned away; still, they keep on doing it. What motivates them? Faith obedience. Noah preached for 120 years and didn't have a single convert. How many pastors could stand that kind of test? When the flood finally came, God sealed Noah and his family in the Ark; but it was too late for the others.

When I think about the Great White Throne Judgment, in Revelation 20:11-15, I wonder: Of all those who have heard the Word of God preached in the cities of this nation, how many will stand before God only to be cast into hell for eternity? I remember when God gave me a sermon about the tears that would be shed on that day—the last looks, the last thoughts, the last words people would exchange before being separated for eternity. Those who were lost had postponed their obedience, and did not honor the Word of God.

Judgment day for unbelievers will be just like it was in the days of Noah. I imagine that when the rain began to pour down, many people rushed to the Ark, banging on the door. They probably cried, "Let us in. We believe you now!" That, however, isn't faith. Their evidence wasn't based on "things not seen."

The Call of Faith

In Genesis 12, Abraham left his friends and family behind in Haran so he could journey to Canaan where he would find his inheritance. Abraham honored God's call, and entered a new dimension of faith. He set out with no idea where God would take him, or how God would provide for him. But God told him to go, and he obeyed. He left his old position for a new position.

The life of Abraham represents faith that honors the call of God. Just as Abraham left his old position in Ur of the Chaldees, so we leave our position in the world, and stand against all forms of ungodliness and worldliness.

What a great thing it is to be moved by faith; for a husband to be moved to love his wife because of reverence for God; for a wife to be moved to love her husband with unconditional

love. How great it is when children and teenagers are moved to love God and their parents.

Fellowship with grace and Truth. Fellowship with love and mercy. Let the presence of God begin to impress your soul and give you personal illuminations. The Word will begin to dwell richly in you. Faith's substance will be revealed as you focus upon the character of Christ and the transforming power of His love. Faith believes without wavering, it knows without seeing.

It's a very beautiful and sacred thing to realize the potential of faith. Neither Satan nor sight can limit it. Senses and feelings cannot deprive it of the nurturing provision of power as the capacity for hearing the Word of God is developed in the heart and soul.

Chapter Four

THE PROGRESSION OF FAITH

Satan, the enemy of our souls, will try everything he can to oppose and overrule our faith. The devil tries to disguise his initiations in 'light'—bits of truth mixed with rationalization. Think of his program—counterfeiting, deceiving, making people feel worthless, and bringing in condemnation. That's why it is important to keep drawing near to the Word of God. Hear it. Meditate upon it. Cherish it.

The Word is our only defense against Satan's assault on the souls of people. This planet is polluted by false education, by entertainment that stimulates lust and sensuality. Then there is the pollution of self-righteousness—so-called believers who are not humble, judging people and circumstances by sight.

To all of this, the pure Word of God cries out. Jesus says, "Come to me and I'll forgive you. Come, and be delivered. Come, put Me first, and

I will add to you the things that you were trying to hold onto.” Discover life as it’s really meant to be—a life of substance. You will know without a wavering mind or a doubting heart that God will do just what He said he would do. Faith will see the unseen and go forward in action, walking with God, fellowshiping with Him, deriving substance from the evidence of the Word of God.

Picture it. The Lord Jesus Christ calls us by name (John 10:3). He is so intimately acquainted with us that He knows the number of hairs upon our heads, and He will know when there are no more.

God also numbers our steps. When you get to heaven, will you be interested in knowing how many steps you took on earth? The number will be there to look up. According to Psalm 56:8, He bottles our tears. He knows our thoughts afar off (Psalm 139:2). When we make our beds in hell, the Lord is there (Psalm 139:8). He fills up the whole earth and is hidden in the dark places (Jeremiah 23:24). We cannot hide from Him.

Our Savior is perfect. His sacrifice on the cross was perfect. His love and grace are perfect. When He met the demands of a Holy God and took our sins upon Himself, His sacrifice pro-

vided a perfect provision for the sinner's salvation. Saving faith comes when we truly believe in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, and that His shed blood makes us clean.

Through saving faith, God justifies us even when we are ungodly (Romans 4:5). But we must understand that saving faith leads us into an active faith. To develop active faith we enter into the process of hearing doctrine, which is able to deliver our souls from all of our weaknesses and frailties through God's perfect patience and love.

"But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?" (James 2:20). If a Christian doesn't have a faith that acts in the royal law of love operating in his soul, then that Christian's faith is dead, or inactive.

Faith in the Heart

"That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved" (Romans 10:9).

Faith takes its place in the heart. Knowledge will only leave a man drowning in his intellect with dignified confessions but an empty heart. Intellectual faith never delivers a woman from

emotional problems and pressures, and it only frustrates a man, never transforming him into the new creation God intended him to be.

The heart comprehends things that the mind cannot. There is no limitation to what the heart can comprehend in the Holy Spirit's illumination of life. The heart experiences what the mind cannot fathom; there is a love that passes by the knowledge of the mind, and a peace that passes by the understanding of the intellect. Still, the heart's experiences will be derived from truth in the mind. When faith comes into my heart, I will respond by reaching out to others. But until it does, I will keep drifting in my experience.

True faith serves in love. Let's say, for example, that two people come against me. I have a tendency to react because my perception is that they are being unfair. My self-defense mechanisms are ready to kick into gear. But by functioning in the perfect doctrine of the Finished Work, the Holy Spirit stirs in me the royal law of love toward these people. Then I see that there's nothing too good for them. My intellect would say they don't deserve it, but the love shed abroad in my heart says they were created in the image of God; they are fearfully and wonderfully made by the Creator.

In word and deed I love them beyond my understanding, not operating in morality which would legislate “an eye for an eye” in revenge. It’s beyond turning the other cheek, it’s turning my attitude over to the Spirit. More than praying for them, the love I express goes beyond knowledge. His mercy rejoices against my intellectual judgment. My faith goes beyond intellect, and becomes spiritual substance as it is manifested by God’s work of love.

The Justification of Faith

“Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon that altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God” (James 2:21-23).

These verses seem to indicate that Abraham had to do something in order to make himself righteous and to be justified before God—an incorrect assumption. Proper exegesis of the Greek text reveals that the verb tense used here—the historical aorist—indicates that Abraham’s righteousness was something he *received* from

God, not something he attained. For the rest of his life, Abraham received righteousness and faith from the Word of God. God was his source and his works were the expression of the Holy Spirit producing life through his obedience. In other words, Abraham's behavior corresponded to his belief.

Abraham had something beyond intellectual comprehension; he was giving God's love back to God. "Where's the lamb?" Isaac asked. "God will provide the Lamb," Abraham said, putting his son, whom he treasured, on the altar and raising the knife in obedience. But the angel of the Lord stopped the sacrifice (Genesis 22:10-13), and Abraham found the substitute—a ram—in the thicket. Through this test, Abraham revealed tremendous growth in his life. He trusted God's promise to always be gracious in response to obedience to truth.

In phase one of his life with God, Abraham believed and God justified him while he was still ungodly. But, phase two brings the inner work to outward manifestation. Likewise, God desires that every believer would grow in faith, continuing in the Finished Work revelation of Truth, until we become the hand of God, passing out His life in this world.

CONCLUSION

As Christians, we will face some great crises that will be very challenging. They may come suddenly, but if we function in a life of faith action, motivated by God's love, each crisis—no matter how overwhelming—can become an opportunity to praise God. What a precious thing to be a Bible-believing, Blood-washed Christian who fears God. How precious it is to love Him, to hate sin, to ever grow in the revelation of Truth through the glorified Christ.

Within each believer there is a force that overcomes the world—our faith (1 John 5:4). Within us there is an eternal incorruptible seed. We possess a life that cannot be explained. Educators cannot rationalize it. Religion cannot understand it. The worldly, the double-minded, and the distracted cannot fathom it. It is simple, it is deep. It is a precious faith that pleases God, in all of its nobility and virtue, in response to the Word of God.