

FAITH OR PRESUMPTION?

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TRANSFORMED
WORKING LIFE

PETER MICHELL



ICCC

INTERNATIONAL CHRISTIAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE™



Published by
International Christian Chamber of Commerce
Grusgropvagen 5
702 36 Örebro
Sweden

Tel: +46/19-24 70 00
Email: info@iccc.net

First published in 1997 by Peter Michell
This edition 2016

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Design and typesetting - CR (madebycr.com)

Other titles in the Transformed Working Life series:

Work is a first class calling

No one can serve two masters

Hope –the certainty of future blessing

Faith or presumption

Hearing God speak

Renewing the mind

Working from rest

Be strong in the battle

Anointing

Fruitfulness

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INTRODUCTION

‘Without faith it is impossible to please Him.’

Hebrews 11:6

‘The just shall live by faith’

Hebrews 10:38

From just these two references we can see that faith is a very important subject.

But what is faith?

Where does faith end and presumption begin?

In this booklet we are going to try to give an explanation of the meaning of faith and see the difference between faith and presumption - in so doing we hope to enhance our ability to walk in step with Jesus and to benefit from His intervening hand.

CHAPTER 1

JESUS AND THE TEMPTATION IN THE WILDERNESS.

'This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased'
Matthew 3:17.

Jesus had just been baptised by John - God, Himself spoke the words above, confirming Jesus as His own Son - immediately Jesus is led by the Spirit to face His rival in the wilderness.

We should not find this fact too surprising - we will also face some of our greatest tests following times of great spiritual blessing or advancement. It is clear that, on this occasion, God's hand and direction was overseeing the events - for it was the Spirit who led Jesus to the wilderness. However, we should be careful not to assume that every event in life is directly orchestrated by God - we know that this particular event was orchestrated by God because the scripture tells us so.

In the wilderness, and by now very hungry, Jesus meets His first challenge. By the time the human body has been without food for forty days and forty nights the body is 'eating itself,' in the sense that tissue is being consumed to keep vital organs functioning. Not only does hunger become acute, but also, there is some degree of physical pain as the tissues reduce. (Particularly muscle tissue.)

Along comes satan with his challenge. It is straight to the point. 'Jesus you are hungry. If you are the Son of God meet your own immediate need - turn the stones into bread.'

It almost looks like a very reasonable challenge - but Jesus, the Son of God, is not in the business of doing what a fallen angel tells Him to do!

'Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.' Matthew 4:4 (Jesus quoted from Deuteronomy 8:3.)

Later in the booklet we will try to give more understanding as to Jesus reply - for the moment please note that, although Jesus is quoting from the Old Testament, and, although that passage was talking about the time the Israelites were fed manna in the wilderness, the statement is given in the present tense. Man lives by every word that 'is proceeding' from the mouth of God.

Satan tries again. Satan has noticed that Jesus is relying on the written word of scripture - so he tries to trap Him with this same principle:

Having led Him to the pinnacle of the temple, satan challenges:

'If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down. For it is written, 'He shall give His angels charge over you,' and, 'in their hand they shall bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone.'

Evidently satan knows the scripture well for he was quoting from Psalm 91:11-12. Purists will argue that satan was mis-quoting because he omits one phrase from the passage. 'For He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways

However, it is in the normal course of life that angels are available to keep you in all your ways - angels are not for you to call upon, as a way of proving God by way of some sort of test.

Jesus replies from scripture again - *'It is written again, you shall not tempt the Lord your God.'* Deuteronomy 6:16.

This time Jesus does not even finish the sentence of the scripture He was quoting.

(Jesus was quoting from an incident which occurred when the Israelites were wandering in the wilderness. They had come to a place called Rephidim - there was no water to drink. The scripture tells us that the people contended with Moses, demanding water. They should, of course, have known that God already knew their need and had provision in hand. They did not need to put God to the test - rather they should simply have called upon Him in trust.)

Satan comes with his third attack. Taking Jesus to an exceedingly high mountain satan says, 'I will give you all of this.... just fall down and worship me.' However we must remember that this was never a real option. Although satan could have given some degree of rulership to Jesus¹, he would not have done - because satan is a liar from the beginning.

John 8:44

"You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it."

Jesus third rebuttal of satan again comes from scripture:

'Away with you satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only shall you serve.' Matthew 4:10 and Deuteronomy 6:13

The temptation of Jesus is over - satan has failed - now angels come and minister to Jesus.

Jesus did not live by bread alone, instead He defeated His rival by relying upon every word proceeding (present tense) from the mouth of God. He invites us to do the same.

¹ Satan had taken over the right to dominion on earth from man when Adam and Eve fell into sin. At that time creation itself fell, and from that point on, there was the need for a redeemer to come, to pay the penalty of sin and bring restoration.

CHAPTER 2

THE MEANING OF HOPE

So we have seen how Jesus relied on every word proceeding from the mouth of God. There needs to be a link to take us from our present position into the expectation that God will speak good things to us. We find the link in the Old Testament:

In Joshua 1:8 we find Joshua being instructed to meditate upon the scriptures - then he will make his way successful and prosperous:

'This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.'

Joshua only had Genesis through to Deuteronomy and probably Job to meditate upon - but that was enough - if he would really get to know the scripture, he would make his way successful. It was all in Joshua's own grasp!

Christian meditation is the act of 'chewing over' the written word of God. If you or I will meditate upon the scripture, then we will benefit from the same promise that the Lord gave to Joshua.

Meditation is not trying to give an interpretation to scripture - rather it is letting scripture 'grow' inside, so that over a period of time, the meaning of God's word grows within us. (Refer to 'Hope - the certainty of future blessing' in this series)

According to John an anointing dwells within us - such that we do not need anyone to teach us:

'But the anointing that you have received from him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you.'

1 John 2:27

The scripture is not saying that teachers are redundant - but it is saying that within us resides a special anointing that will recognise deception (see verse 26) and thus teach us.

Within us resides the Holy Spirit, and He is charged with the job of leading us into all truth. John 14:26.

The raw material that the Holy Spirit will use to help us is the written word of God - that is why we are advised to meditate in the scripture continually.

The point is that God has revealed a great deal about Himself in His word, and as we meditate upon the word and are careful to do what is written, then we will find ourselves growing in belief.

For example, consider the message God gave the Jews in Deuteronomy 6. First He is telling them that this is 'the commandment' and to be careful to 'observe it, that it may be well with you.'

'Hear, O Israel, the Lord your God is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your strength.'

The scripture went on to instruct the Jews to take this so seriously that it was to be bound on their hand and on their foreheads and on the doorposts of their houses. The Jews took this literally, and, even today, the 'Mezuzah' is found fixed to the doorpost of a Jew's house and 'phylacteries' are worn in some synagogues.

(A phylactery is a small box which contains certain scriptures and is attached to the hand, the arm and the forehead by strings. The phylactery contains the following scriptures: Deuteronomy 6:4-9 and 11:13-21 and Exodus 13:1-16)
(The Mezuzah is a small box which contains the following scriptures: Deuteronomy 6:4-9 and 11:13-21)

However, the main message of the passage is a call to love. 'You shall love the Lord.' The wearing of a phylactery was worthless unless it reminded the wearer to be a doer of the actual command. Watch out for ritual instead of reality - the reality is that the Lord wants a love relationship with His people.

The truth grows within

As you and I meditate upon the scripture we will find the truth growing within - the more you meditate upon the concept of loving the Lord - the more you chew over the scriptures - then the more opportunity there is for the reality to form within you. The effect of meditating upon the command to love the Lord, should be an increased desire to love the Lord, matched with an increased inability to actually do it. This is where we turn to the New

testament to read - *'you have not because you ask not'* James 4:2 and *'ask and it will be given you'* John 16:24

So we are led to ask that we will be filled with love for the Lord - now that scripture starts to become actual reality in our daily lives. The more we ask the more we are filled - so we find ourselves more and more in love with Jesus.

Now we will find ourselves more readily saying 'Amen' to the truth. When Jesus says, 'the first command is to love the Lord with all your heart, all your soul and all your mind,' we are now able to say, 'Yes, I love you Lord - please fill me with more and more love for You.'

To have a successful and prosperous journey through life is part of our inheritance. It does not mean that there will not be problems along the way - but it does mean that, as we know God, then we know Him who has the answers to our every need.

The bible is full of many many statements about the character of God. Part of our meditation will reveal His character. For example we could spend some time just meditating upon the names of God.

Jehovah Jireh - the Lord my provider. As we chew over and chew over even His name, the truth will develop within. I am not reliant upon my own effort - the Lord is my provider. He is able to meet my needs - indeed the scripture tells us that He can do immeasurably more than we think or ask.

Ephesians 3:20

'Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us,'

The more we meditate upon the truth, the more it becomes real to us, it will become life itself. This is the nature of hope. Hope is established when we are absolutely certain of being blessed in the future. We become certain of being blessed in the future when we know God's character and His promises - and we know His character and his promises from His word - and we know they are life itself when they have grown within us. The truth grows within us as we meditate upon the word of God.

The practice of scripture meditation

My own practice of meditation goes like this:

I get into a very comfortable position - for me that means lying down on my bed with no distractions.

Then I will start to slow down my body - i.e. become still. So I am now lying on the bed totally still.

The next thing is to start to pray - maybe thanksgiving, maybe praise, maybe repentance- whatever comes to mind.

After a little while (a few minutes) I will be ready to start to receive input from the scripture - already I will have chosen a line of scripture or a verse. Now I start to speak that line or verse out loud.

My chosen scripture could be speaking into an area of known weakness - or it could be on any subject. Obviously, if I know that my belief is weak in a certain area - then it would be wise to choose scripture that speaks into that weakness

My chosen verse will be repeated a number of times over- maybe 20, 30 or more. Each time I will leave a short gap for reflection. What is happening? Am I perhaps brain washing myself?

Most certainly! I am washing my brain with the water of the word. Within me the truth is growing - the thinking of this world is being replaced with the thinking of the next world. Within me truth is taking root - hope is being established - now I know that God is going to bless me in the future. Indeed the foundation is being laid for a successful and prosperous journey through life.

And the scriptural justification for this process:

'Meditate within your heart on your bed, and be still.'

Psalm 4:4.

Often I will spend some of my 'meditation' time just telling the Lord I love Him. Awareness of His presence will frequently accompany meditation, and, as we develop the ability to hear His voice (See 'Hearing God Speak' in this series), the time of meditation will become rich in communication.

No wonder Joshua was instructed to meditate upon the scripture frequently

1 Peter 1:3-9

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a **living hope** through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.*

In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have

been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honour, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith-- the salvation of your souls.

We are called into a living hope - that means our hope has life. In the rest of this passage Peter tells us just how valuable our living hope is - it will take us through every thing that comes against us in our walk of faith.

The outcome is the salvation, or more literally, deliverance from danger, of our souls - this is reigning in life and it starts with living hope.

(This subject is more fully dealt with in the booklet, 'Hope, the certainty of future blessing' in this series)

CHAPTER 3

THE MEANING OF TRUST

In the last chapter we saw the need for, and the benefit of hope - indeed the scripture calls hope an anchor for the soul.

'This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil.'

Hebrews 6:19

Hope is vital - it is the lost who are without hope in this world -

'that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.'

Ephesians 2:12

Christians are entitled to be absolutely full of hope - because of the very nature of God and His precious promises to those who know Him.

If your hope level is low, it is probably because you have not spent enough time meditating upon the scripture.

Hope, when fully developed, results in trust. In the book of Job we read, *'though he slay me I will hope in Him.'* - what a statement of trust in God!

So we find that hope and trust are closely linked together.

In the New Testament the Greek word 'pisteo' is translated as 'faith.' However most of the time it would be better rendered as 'trust.' Indeed in his translation, David Stern translates it as 'trust' most of the time. ('The Jewish New Testament' by David Stern, - a translation by a Messianic Jew - highly recommended)

So we will discover that the word faith is used with a number of different meanings:

- 1) It is used as meaning ‘the faith’ - the recognition that Jesus is Lord of Lords and King of Kings, the recognition that He is the sovereign ruler and coming King. The placing of one’s trust in His sacrifice as a substitute - we should have died to pay the penalty of sin, but He did so in our place. The knowledge that God created the world and that He will bring His purposes through to His designed completion. The trust in the efficacy of the blood of Jesus to wash away sin, guilt and shame. The belief that Jesus did and will heal those who trust Him. We could go on describing various facets of what we know as ‘The Christian Faith’ or ‘The Faith.’
- 2) It is used meaning trust - a position of reliance. I adopt a basic position of reliance upon the grace of God. For instance - when something goes wrong I can remind myself of Romans 8:28 - *‘we know that God will bring good out of every situation for those who love Him.’* When we start to believe a scripture like this, then, there is a fundamental trust involved - trust is the natural development of hope.

Hope says, ‘I am certain God will bless me in the future,’ and trust, as it were, relaxes into that certainty. Trust takes all the facets of the faith and progressively adopts them as one’s own. The word faith is used many times in this way in the scripture - to represent the principles by which the Christian Faith is worked out in trusting the Lord.

This chapter is about faith when its meaning is interpreted as trust.

Can God be trusted? The answer is most certainly yes. That does not mean there will never be bad events in our experience - God has not wrapped us in cotton wool. Jesus warns of tribulation in this world, and He specifically tells us that satan is out to rob, kill and destroy. (John 10:10)

Trust says that God is always reliable. He will always do what He promises to do. God is reliable. Problems arise when we don’t know the difference between faith and presumption. Faith will always succeed because the author of faith is reliable.

Presumption might succeed or it might fail. I think it is much more likely to fail than succeed, especially in the long run, because presumption has only our own human strength to rely on. When we are moving in presumption we cannot expect God to be behind what we are doing. Presumption is, by definition, not faith - everything that is not of faith is sin.

For the moment we need to ask ourselves - Do I trust the Lord? No matter what my experiences might be and no matter what seems to come against me, do I trust the Lord. If so, I can say I have faith, in the sense of trust.

- 3) The third use of the word faith could best be summed up by quoting scripture:

'So Jesus said to them, "Because of your unbelief; for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you.'

Matthew 17:20

It should be quite obvious that this is different in nature from basic trust. Now we are talking specific, active, power packed, mountain moving faith. Sometimes we need faith like this.

CHAPTER 4

THE INTERVENING HAND OF GOD.

Sometimes we need a miracle - there is no other alternative.

How do we 'obtain' faith that will move mountains It is here that we really need to know the difference faith and presumption. For if we 'move out' on presumption we are likely to fail - and the consequences can be serious.

Romans 10:17

'So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.'

Here the scripture is telling us how faith will come - it will come by hearing the word of God.

Let us remind ourselves of the time when Jesus was tested in the wilderness. His first reply was *'man does not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God,'* We saw that Jesus was quoting from Deuteronomy - and we noted that the quotation is in the present tense.

If we were to read this passage in the original Greek we would note that 'word' is translated from 'rhema.' Looking at a good Greek Lexicon would inform us that 'rhema' means 'a little phrase or saying.'

If we took our investigation a little further we would find that there is another Greek word, 'logos,' which is also translated 'word.' When we understand the difference between the two, then, the difference between faith and presumption becomes clear.

'Logos' is really the whole revelation of God - it includes the scripture (which in Greek is the 'graphe' or writings) - it includes all God has said and will say. It becomes easier to appreciate that, in its fullness, it is the total revelation of God when you recognise that it is one of the personal names of Jesus. Quoting from John 1:

*In the beginning was the word (logos), and the word (logos) was with God
..... and the word (logos) became flesh and dwelt among us.*

In Colossians 2:9 we are told that the fullness of the Godhead dwells in Jesus in bodily form.

So 'logos' is the full revelation of God, including all the parts that make up that full revelation.

'Rhema' is a little phrase or saying. So every 'rhema' will be a part of the 'logos.' It is also true to say that any part of the 'logos' can become a 'rhema' - but only when it is proceeding out of the mouth of God NOW. We would refer to this as 'quickenened' by the Spirit to us NOW.

This is the description of the meaning of 'rhema' taken from 'Vines' expository dictionary:

'The significance of rhema (as distinct from logos) is exemplified in the injunction to take "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God," <Eph. 6:17>; here the reference is not to the whole Bible as such, but to the individual scripture which the Spirit brings to our remembrance for use in time of need [Just as Jesus did when tempted by satan in the wilderness], a prerequisite being the regular storing of the mind with Scripture.'

(from Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words)
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In our understanding a 'rhema' word from God is by no means restricted to being a quickened scripture. (See 'Hearing God Speak' in this series)

Here is the difference between faith and presumption:

When God speaks to us a rhema word - it might be a 'quickenened' verse from scripture or it might not - He is giving us the opportunity to take hold of His specific instruction for our need. If we will take hold of His rhema - then we will receive the specific promise - because he is well able to do what He says He will do.

On the other hand if we, out of our own thinking and effort, try to twist God's arm to meet our need, we shall surely fail - even if we are continually quoting scripture after scripture. God is sovereign and He wants a living relationship with us - a relationship in which we expect to, and do, hear His voice.

If you have any doubt about God's desire for two way communication, why not undertake a study of the number of times He calls upon the Israelites to listen to His voice. We place a lot of emphasis on obeying the written word - and rightly so, because it tells us so much of God. But the written word tells us time and again that God wants a living relationship with us, that involves hearing His voice.

'My sheep hear My voice.'

John 10:2

Just look at the role of the Holy Spirit for a moment. The indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit is the great advantage of the born again believer. Look at His ministry:

John 16:13-14

"However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.

"He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you."

**In summary you could say that mountain moving faith is like this -
When God tells you His power is available to move your specific
mountain - then that mountain shall surely move - in these circumstances
nothing is impossible because God is God.**

CHAPTER 5

THE MEANING OF FAITH

So now we have established the meaning of faith for the purpose of this booklet.

'Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word (rhema) of God.'
Romans 10:17

Sometimes we think that hearing God is very difficult or very rare - or maybe we think God does not speak today - or maybe just He doesn't speak to me.

Yet the scripture says:

'My sheep hear My voice' (John 10:27) and....
'The word (rhema) is near you, in your mouth and in your heart' Romans 10:8

Perhaps we are waiting for God to speak in a very loud voice - or to come in some sort of positive demonstration of His presence. We forget that God is Spirit - and that it is the ministry of the Holy Spirit to bring us the words of Jesus.

Listening in the Spirit is a developed skill - it takes practice to discern the different voices - it is easy to miss God by having the wrong expectation of how He will speak.

Once again the love relationship is very important - as the depth of your love relationship increases, you get to know how the Lord speaks. Your expectation of hearing Him speak also increases, as the depth of your love increases. Paul said he counted everything rubbish for the joy of knowing Jesus - it is at this level that it becomes easier to hear the Lord.

Even then hearing God speak is not a perfect science - we need each other, and we need care to check what we are hearing. We first check against scripture - for the voice of the Lord will never contradict the written revelation of truth in the bible. We can ask the Lord to confirm His word by

two or three witnesses, and, we can share our revelations with those closest to us.

When the Lord speaks to us we are faced with a choice. We can believe it, and act upon it, or we can doubt it and leave it. When the Lord speaks, and we act in accordance with His rhema word - then the power of God flows into action.

Let me give you as an example a personal testimony:

Background:

I am a practising chartered accountant, with a general practice. I cover financial advice on investments, life insurance and pensions as a part of my business.

Situation:

My client has a number of companies and a number of pension plans.

He is nearing retirement age.

Some of his plans must be taken at retirement age.

He does not want to retire and start his pensions now - he wants to delay for a couple more years and he wants to be able to sell some of the businesses.

Supposed solution:

Transfer all the pension plans into a suitable new fund.

Problem:

Having taken advice from two of the UK's leading financial institutions - i.e. top experts, we are told that what we want to do is impossible under UK law.

Dilemma:

Client wants to rearrange funds. I want to be able to complete this to satisfy client and earn a fee. The law of the land says it is impossible.

Holy Spirit solution:

As I sat at my desk, contemplating telling my client we could not proceed, the Holy Spirit spoke: 'Vote him a retrospective bonus.'

Pension transfer values are calculated by reference to income and the funds we wanted to transfer were 'overfunded.' This meant that they could not be transferred. Increasing his remuneration retrospectively would change the calculations.

I looked at the Holy Spirit's advice. It meant going back four years and voting a bonus for 1992. (We were in 1996 at this time).

Challenge:

My accounting training and knowledge said, 'This is impossible, the accounts for 1992 were finished and lodged with Companies House and the Tax Inspector years ago.'

The Spirit's instructions seemed impossible. Was I going to take His advice or rely on my training and skill? Was I going to risk my professional reputation?

Action:

My client was advised to vote a bonus for 1992. As he was the only shareholder in the company this was easily arranged. The case was presented to the institutions. The institutions that were going to pay out the money thought this was illegal and referred it to the government pension supervision office. Only two weeks to his birthday deadline. (The case could not be transferred after that date in any event.)

Result:

The government office replied immediately (miracle!). They confirmed that this course of action was all right. The case was completed. The client was satisfied. A significant fee was earned.

Key to success:

Recognising the voice of the Spirit and acting upon His instruction. The Spirit of God knows all about our business activities - indeed He is the greatest expert in every area of activity.

Follow up:

I know that there is no human expert who could have advised this course of action. In the first place the experts in the institutions did not think it was possible. Secondly, shortly after this case was completed, I was speaking at a meeting of the Christian group in one of the world's largest accounting firms. Present was their pensions expert. So this is the expert for one of the top 4 accounting firms in the world. He was not aware that it was possible to do what the Spirit told me to do and very pleased to know it.

The Lord is very ready and very willing to act on our behalf. Just look at Hebrews 4:16:

'Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.'

There is an abundance of grace available for us - enough to enable us to reign in life.

Romans 5:17

'much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.'

We have a part to play - we must come to the throne of grace to receive!

This then is faith - knowing that God is good. Knowing that He expects us to come to Him with our needs. Knowing that He has provided grace in abundance. Knowing that as we hear His voice and do what He says - then what He says will certainly come to pass.

Actually faith is simple. We make it difficult by our doubts, by our unbelief and by our presumption.

CHAPTER 6

THE ERROR OF PRESUMPTION

It is important for us to recognise that God is sovereign. He is not a slot machine!

We have established that He is willing and able to work miracles on our behalf - but He is sovereign.

We come to Him with our need - not with the answer to our need. He is the answer, and the way in which He wants to accomplish His answer is up to Him.

It is no good our coming to God with the concept or attitude of ‘twisting His arm.’

The Lord does not respond to being brow beaten through prayer - the relationship with us is that of a loving Father.

It is no good coming to Him trying to force Him into a course of action - even when we see it written in the word. For example - in the scripture it says Jesus healed everyone who came to Him. Jesus was physically present on earth at the time. Repeating this scripture time and again will have no effect in the present age - unless and until it forms part of a rhema word from God.

It is clear from other New Testament scriptures that believers get sick and have physical weaknesses. Paul had an eye problem in Galatia (4:15), he left Trophimus sick in Miletum (2Timothy 4:20), and he told Timothy to take wine for his stomach weakness (1 Timothy 5:23).

When God moves on our behalf it is out of grace - His grace towards us. Just look at this scripture from Acts:

Acts 14:3

‘Therefore they stayed there a long time, speaking boldly in the Lord, who was bearing witness to the word of His grace, granting signs and wonders to

be done by their hands.'

The key word is grace. We come to God with our need - He knows how and when to answer. Frequently we will need to be patient¹ for the scripture says

Hebrews 6:12

'but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.'

So we need to be careful - the Lord wants us to love Him with a high degree of expectancy of His blessing - indeed the greatest hope we have is the hope of His return to earth - that has been delayed for nearly 2,000 years - yet it is described as the blessed hope:

'looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ,'

Titus 2:13

So now we have determined the error of presumption. Presumption does not allow God to be God - rather presumption says, 'Although you are God, I can tell you what to do because of the scripture.'

Presumption says, If I believe enough - then the Lord must answer.

¹ Patience may be needed in one of two ways:

a) We ask and God chooses to delay His answer. We patiently wait. During this period we may well remind the Lord of our petition. This is not lack of faith - for faith comes by hearing and we are waiting to hear.

b) The Lord gives His answer, telling us what to do when appropriate. There can often be a gap between the word of God and the manifestation of His answer in our experience. Now we wait patiently, standing on the rhema word of God.

Because the Lord is full of grace some of His answers come very quickly. However the scripture tells us that patience has a very important role to play in forming our character. Therefore we must expect that there will be occasions upon which the Lord expects us to exercise patience.

James 1:4

'But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.'

CHAPTER 7

FAITH COMES ONLY BY HEARING

There is a school of teaching which seems to say that faith comes by believing - and that we can somehow generate belief if we really try hard. The scripture says that faith comes by hearing.

Indeed - if we are able to generate faith by our effort in some way; perhaps by continually announcing our 'stand' on some scripture - then it would become a question of works rather than grace.

Unfortunately we see many cases of people misunderstanding faith. We see many make a 'stand' on what they consider the written word of God to say - only to be bitterly disappointed.

To assume that the Lord will give you the answer you demand, based on your use and interpretation of scripture is a misunderstanding of faith. Faith comes from the little phrase or saying proceeding from the mouth of God **now**.

The Lord God wants a living relationship with each of His children - a relationship of communication. That is why prayer is such an important thing. The Lord wants to hear from us! Also, He wants us to hear from Him.

Still unsure? Look at the example of scripture - every 'giant' of faith heard the Lord speak directly to them. Abraham, Moses, David, Gideon and so on.

Meditating on the written word produces hope - that produces faith in the sense of trust. Miracle working, mountain moving faith comes only by hearing God for yourself for the specific situation.

If we think again about the experience of Jesus in the wilderness - He said, *'Man does not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'*

Here, Jesus is comparing our need to hear God speak, to the physical need for bread. Indeed, you cannot live a full life just on bread - if you want real

life you must also hear the Lord speak to you. Physical bread, in the form of manna, was provided for the Israelites in the wilderness every day. Jesus is our spiritual bread. Hearing His voice is the additional element to make life abundant through grace. The Israelites had to go and collect the manna. We have Jesus in us all the time but are encouraged to 'go and listen' to pick up the spoken word of God.

Strategy

Really we are saying this - the Lord is the one who knows the strategy. We can have our strategy, but if it does not agree with His, then, it does not have His power to make it happen.

Faith comes when the Lord tells us the strategy.

There are five recorded occasions on which Jesus restored sight to a blind man. Because He only did what He saw and heard His Father doing He used four different strategies.

Presumption is there when we are telling the Lord the strategy - even if we are using the written word as our justification.

CHAPTER 8

WITHOUT FAITH IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO PLEASE GOD

Earlier we said that love has a very large part to play in developing a life of faith - that is because of the nature of love.

Part of the nature of love is the desire to please the one you love - hence the more one is in love with Jesus, the greater the desire to please Him - then we find we have an increasing desire to know what He is saying.

So to increase your ability to hear - become more in love with Jesus. We have already made the point - natural man is not in love with Jesus - we have to ask and keep asking the Holy Spirit to fill us with more and more love for Him.

At the same time we need an awareness of the ways in which the Lord speaks (See 'Hearing God Speak' in this series), and the boldness to begin to move out on what we think He is saying.

This then becomes a life of faith. The likelihood is that we will get it wrong - maybe lots of times - but it is definitely worth persevering until hearing Him becomes reality in our lives. Indeed without actually hearing Him speak to us, our belief can become a form of religion which denies power.

'For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!'

2 Timothy 3:2-5

On the other hand we are promised the concept of reigning in life:

Romans 5:17

‘For if by the one man’s offence death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.’

Surely the phrase ‘reign in life’ means to be able to rule over your circumstances - rather than be ruled by them. Sometimes that will mean enjoying victory even in what looks like defeat - other times it will mean seeing the circumstances changed by faith -by hearing what the Lord says and doing it.

Overcoming the works of the enemy - testimony

One day I was walking past my office when the Spirit of God spoke - ‘satan is trying to rob you of part of your business.’

This was a rhema word of God to forewarn me of our enemy’s intentions.

Again I was faced with a challenge - would I think - ‘It is only me, that is silly,’ or would I take the rhema and act upon it?

I acted - I took authority over the planned work of satan and I forbade him from doing it. This is an action in the Spirit for we have been given authority over all the works of satan. (Luke 10:19)

To make such an effective action I spoke out loud, knowing that I was coming from a position of authority in Christ, giving satan instructions - that is negative ones - you will not.....

The next day a letter comes from one of my customers - indeed this was a ‘sideline’ to my main business and he was the only customer. In the letter he said, ‘I can buy this product 16% cheaper elsewhere.’

This man is very aggressive on price - he is always negotiating the hardest deal. However, on this occasion I knew that it was not him - rather he had been put up to it by satan. Our business relationship had been long - I had helped him develop this product in the first place.

My reply was simple. ‘I know you can purchase this cheaper’ (16% was the profit margin I was making in arranging the manufacture of the product.) ‘I can’t reduce the price, but if you want to continue to purchase through me that is fine.’

Actually the ‘work’ had already been done in the Spirit. The business continued for another 10 years until he retired and sold the business.

Conclusion

God is for us and not against us. Sometimes He will warn us of the intended actions of the enemy. When He speaks His rhema word to us it is for us to agree and take and act - we (or those we are ministering with) will benefit and He will get all the glory.

CHAPTER 9

THE RIGHTEOUS SHALL LIVE BY FAITH

Now we are beginning to see that faith is very important - indeed it is so important to the Lord.

Look for a moment at Abraham.

Genesis 15:6

'And he believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness.'

Here we find the scripture telling us that Abraham believed God when He spoke to him, and that was credited to Abraham as righteousness. This is righteousness - believing the Lord.

Indeed, we could go further. For salvation we believe in the effective substitutionary work of Jesus on the cross at Calvary. We believe that His shed blood has purchased redemption - and this is true.

Yet the scripture says - righteousness is a gift, not by works lest any man should boast. The Lord even gave us a gift of faith to believe! Now of course we could have refused His gift - but we didn't - we accepted His gift and it was counted to us as righteousness.

So we should expect to go on living in righteousness. We should expect to go on living in communication with the Lord - accepting His gifts and reaping part of the inheritance as His children.

Oh the grace of God! His desire towards us is good, very good - and yet how easy it is to slip into negative and religious thinking. That is why we spent a chapter looking at hope. Hope comes by knowing His character and His promises.

We can never know enough of Him - so continue in the practice of meditating upon Him. Meditating upon the scripture will continually feed a life of hope,

trust and faith. God is a God of judgement - He will judge the unbeliever - but the judgement for us fell on Jesus and now it is our works which are judged for rewards.

Lets not fall into the trap of thinking that God is about to clamp down on us with judgement - He wants to lift us up. Jesus came that we might have life and have life more abundantly.

John 10:10

"The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly."

Many of our brothers and sisters fall into the trap of trying to please God by works - this is the work of God - believe in Him:

John 6:29

'Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent."

We won't please God by trying to create a righteousness of our own - we please Him by a walk of faith. The death and sacrifice of Jesus was enough to cover all our sin and to impart, to those who believe, the gift of righteousness.

I am not saying that we should go about deliberately sinning. I am saying in this life we will make mistakes. The scripture says:

I John 1:9

'If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.'

We should keep short accounts with God. At the same time, the more we love Him, the less we will find sin to be desirable.

'Jesus said 'If you love Me, My commands you will keep.' (Literal translation of John 14:15)

Here is a 'horse and cart' picture. The 'horse' of love for Jesus pulls behind it the 'cart' of obedience. This is true. The more we are in love with Jesus - the more we will find within us the desire to obey.

The righteous shall live by faith - not by a set of rules. The Law was a set of rules for behaviour and, together with the sacrifices and feasts, it was a tutor pointing to Jesus - but the Law was totally unable to produce righteousness in

us. Indeed the scripture tells that the letter (of the law) produces death.

2 Corinthians 3:6

'who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.'

The righteous shall live by faith. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the 'rhema' of God.

Faith is to live by.

CHAPTER 10

ABRAHAM'S CHILDREN AND THE EXAMPLE OF PETER - GRACE

In the book of Galatians (3:29) we are described as the children of Abraham - so let's consider for a moment our inheritance...

God spoke to Abraham:

'Now the LORD had said to Abram: "Get out of your country, from your family and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

Genesis 12:1-3

Did you carefully note the fact that God spoke to Abraham. God spoke to Him - this is not some idea that Abraham dreamed up. It is not a case of Abram saying, 'Lord I am going on this venture - please bless me.' Abram was responding to the instruction of God.

It is obvious that Abraham believed God - in fact in chapter 15 verse 6 the scripture tells that Abraham believed in the Lord and it was counted to him as righteousness.

We too believe in the Lord - and likewise it is counted as righteousness for us. So why do we find it so difficult to expect God to speak to us, and, to hear Him speak to us.

Why do we think that perhaps the Lord does not communicate with us today. Surely the scripture tells us that we are like our father Abraham and that we have been brought in to the same promises as he received.

The Lord spoke to Abraham and said, 'Get out of your country.' It was a very

specific instruction and yet it lacked in a certain amount of detail - the Lord didn't tell him where to go!

Abraham believed in the Lord and obeyed His voice. Certainly Abraham received from God a 'rhema' word - a specific instruction coming from the mouth of God NOW.

We are 'children' of Abraham - the Lord wants to be able to speak with us, to give us comfort, to give us encouragement, to give us help, to give us direction, to bring correction. So often we seek other Christians to hear on our behalf, when the Lord wants a direct line of communication with me and with you.

The Israelites, when they were in the wilderness, fell into a terrible mistake. God had told Moses to gather the people together - He was going to speak directly to the people. However, the people were full of fear - they said to Moses, *'you go and hear God on our behalf and we will do whatever you say.'* See Exodus 19 and 20.

The Israelites were choosing to relate to the Lord through Moses rather than directly - yet the Lord wanted to be able to speak directly with the people.

Why do we think things may have changed. Why do we seek each other's counsel more readily than the direct counsel of the Lord.

Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the voice of God. We are 'children' of Abraham - the Lord wants to speak with us directly - and when we hear His direction, His counsel, - then faith comes. If God has said this or that will happen - then it will surely come to pass.

If you continue to read in Genesis you will find that God speaks with Abraham on other occasions - in fact if we were to go back to the very beginning we would find that the Lord wanted to, and did, meet with Adam every day.

Abraham you will be mightily blessed - and so he was, because he believed God and acted on instructions. We are entitled to share the promise given to Abraham.

If you read Romans 4 - there you will find exactly this message - Abraham believed God and it was counted to him as righteousness - but not only that, it is also for us (verse 23-24). We too are called to a walk of faith just like Abraham. Like him in this respect, we can hear God speak to us and we can choose to do what He tells us to do.'

Peter's example.

Now lets get down to business! Peter was a fisherman - an expert at his job. Yet here we find that Jesus is a much more expert fisherman.

Quite early on in Jesus ministry we read of the occasion when He is teaching the multitude from Simon's boat.

'When He had stopped speaking, He said to Simon, "Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch."

But Simon answered and said to Him, "Master, we have toiled all night and caught nothing; nevertheless at Your word I will let down the net."

And when they had done this, they caught a great number of fish, and their net was breaking.

So they signalled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them.

And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink.

When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!"

For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish which they had taken;'

Luke 5:4-9

In this passage we see something quite amazing. Peter has been fishing all night - he knows that you catch fish at night. The night's fishing trip has been totally unproductive..

Jesus tells him to let down his nets for a catch. In Peter's thinking this was the wrong thing to do - it was the wrong time and probably the wrong place, yet, *'at your word I will let down the net.'*

Here Peter displays that same quality we saw in Abraham - obedience. "Jesus, You have said do it, so I will do it." Out into the deep, down go the nets and 'lo and behold,' a catch like no catch they have ever seen before in the whole of their lives as fishermen ...they were astonished.

This is their everyday work - certainly the Lord is using this event to speak to them about their future - but don't let that cause us to miss the point. In their everyday work Jesus knew best.

Sometimes the going can get really tough. The disciples felt that when Jesus was crucified. This seemed to be the end of all that was promised.

'I'm going back to fishing,' was Peter's response. But, again we find him toiling all night and catching nothing - until he receives some expert advice from a figure standing on the beach. *'Cast your net on the right side of the boat.'*

Another astonishing catch of fish! So much so that Peter immediately recognises it is Jesus on the shore - why, because he has had this experience only once before.

Have you ever considered that actually Jesus didn't need the fish Peter caught that morning - breakfast was already cooking on the beach barbecue. It is very much like that for us. Jesus does not need us in one sense. Jesus can accomplish what He wants to without our help. However scripture tells us that He chooses to use us as co-workers with Him.

'He has prepared good works for us to walk in.' Ephesians 2:10

Perhaps it should be obvious. If Jesus has called us to walk in certain good works - then He is ready, willing and available to assist us in those works, just as He was more expert in fishing than the disciples- so in the same way He is more expert than you are in your work.

Earlier I shared with you a practical example from my accountancy practice to demonstrate that the Lord is the great expert in every area of work - and that He is willing to speak to us in that area.

The Lord calls us to a 'walk' in the marketplace and in all of life - it is a walk with Him as co-workers. Let's increase our expectation that He will guide us as we become attentive to His voice.

We can learn from Peter and his fishing experiences. Peter wasn't going about demanding that God had to bless him. Peter wasn't 'making a stand on the word.'

Peter was responding to instructions. Who was sovereign in these situations? Jesus. Who was giving out the instructions? Jesus

Let us be aware - Jesus is Lord - as we walk with Him and listen to His voice, and then do what He tells us, even when it seems 'crazy,' we will have experiences like Peter. We will be astonished and the Lord will get all the glory

You and I are called to walk by faith and not by sight. Faith comes from hearing the specific instruction of our Sovereign God.

Finally - to prove that we need to hear His voice let us quickly consider how Jesus healed the blind men, mentioned earlier:

Matthew 9:27-30 - Jesus meets two blind men, He touches their eyes and they see.

20:29-34 - Jesus meets two blind men, He touches their eyes and they see.

Mark 8:22-25 - Jesus spits into the eyes of a blind man and puts His hands on them a second time. At first the man sees men like trees walking and then sees perfectly.

Mark 10:46-52 - Blind Bartimaeus is healed by the spoken word.

John 9:1-7 - The man blind from birth is healed as Jesus makes clay from spittle and he washes it off in the pool of Siloam.

So, here we have 5 examples of Jesus giving sight to the blind and four different strategies!

This is why we must hear the Lord speak to us - only He knows the appropriate strategy for the situation.

Let us go and do likewise so that we will fulfil Jesus words:

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

