

INSTALLMENT I – “FAITH”

By: Bob Stewart

I. INTRODUCTION AND LESSON I

The goal for this study is for us to come to a clear understanding of faith so we can exercise our time, energy and resources in a manner consistent with God's will, so that the result will be an experience of peace and clarity in an environment of confusion and chaos. We need to differentiate between false definitions of faith and the truth, so our confidence in what we do in our Christian lives will be at rest. The alternative, which most Christians suffer, is that of expending both physical and spiritual resources in a seemingly wasted effort, resulting in frustration and uncertainty.

The dimension of faith may be one of the most mysterious elements in the human experience. On the one hand, every person has a humanly generated faith in things that are part of the physical universe, and this is easily defined and understood. On the other, a human's faith in an object not part of the physical universe is a source of every kind of conflict - from controversy to war - when these two elements clash.

As Christians, we possess both kinds of faith. The first can be defined as a confidence based on certain data, whether experiential, physical, mathematical or, in other words, based on that which can provide evidence by either experiential or scientifically proven premises or facts. Some would include "wishful thinking" here or emotional motivation. The basis for action on this faith is a result of confidence in either a person or a thing, each of which has presented enough sufficient evidence for one to have confidence, trust or dependence in or upon. Illustrations: Sitting in a chair; turning on the water faucet; starting an automobile; accepting the word of a spouse, friend, etc. without question. "Confidence" men specialize in getting others to trust them through slick lies and charm. This is why Satan is so effective. He appears as an angel of "light" (truth) and sucks people right in.

Faith in a non-corporeal person, place or thing is a whole other matter. Demonstrable evidence is beyond scientific measurement. This is why science has no tools to determine if the non-physical exists, because the tools scientists use are all made from the stuff of this physical universe and cannot go beyond this limitation. Scientists neither recognize this of course, nor admit it, they just deny the existence of any other reality. But is there any evidence in this physical universe that is sufficient for spiritual faith, that is, enough sufficient evidence for one to have confidence, trust or dependence in or upon the object of faith? This is of course the subject of heated debate. Here is where many scientists deny the blatant truth, even when it is scientifically or historically demonstrated.¹

In addition, there are many definitions of faith. Religious practice can be defined as "faith". "He is of the Jewish faith", we say or "of the Catholic faith". The Bible sometimes uses the word faith in this sense. But, for believers, there is a "faith" that we want to examine closely, that transcends any of these but also includes them making our Christian faith in God and The Lord Jesus Christ an oddity. This "faith" is not measurable by any earthly method, but exists anyway. It is both in the realm of the earthly-human dimension and, at the same time a part of the spiritual dimension. It is neither fish nor fowl, hard to define in human words, or express from human experience. We will come back to this after some preliminary discussion. But the faith we want to zero in on is almost indefinable by words and totally non-demonstrative unless one experiences a true miracle. The difficulty of explaining our faith so that others will say, "Ah, now I see" reminds us of the story of

¹ See this author's work on "Something Must Be Eternal" and "Resurrection".

blind Bartimaeus who complained about being interrogated after being healed by Jesus but had no way of explaining what had happened. It is filled with humor.

John 9:13-34, 13: "They brought to the Pharisees the man who was formerly blind. 14: Now it was a Sabbath on the day when Jesus made the clay and opened his eyes. 15: Then the Pharisees also were asking him again how he received his sight. And he said to them, "He applied clay to my eyes, and I washed, and I see." 16: Therefore some of the Pharisees were saying, "This man is not from God, because He does not keep the Sabbath." But others were saying, "How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?" And there was a division among them. 17: So they said to the blind man again, "What do you say about Him, since He opened your eyes?" And he said, "He is a prophet." 18: The Jews then did not believe *it* of him, that he had been blind and had received sight, until they called the parents of the very one who had received his sight, 19: and questioned them, saying, "Is this your son, who you say was born blind? Then how does he now see?" 20: His parents answered them and said, "We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; 21: but how he now sees, we do not know; or who opened his eyes, we do not know. Ask him; he is of age, he will speak for himself."

22: His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews; for the Jews had already agreed that if anyone confessed Him to be Christ, he was to be put out of the synagogue. 23: For this reason his parents said, "He is of age; ask him." 24: So a second time they called the man who had been blind, and said to him, "Give glory to God; we know that this man is a sinner." 25: He then answered, "Whether He is a sinner, I do not know; one thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see." 26: So they said to him, "What did He do to you? How did He open your eyes?" 27: He answered them, "I told you already and you did not listen; why do you want to hear *it* again? You do not want to become His disciples too, do you?" 28: They reviled him and said, "You are His disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. 29: "We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where He is from." 30: The man answered and said to them, "Well, here is an amazing thing, that you do not know where He is from, and *yet* He opened my eyes. 31: "We know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is God-fearing and does His will, He hears him. 32: "Since the beginning of time it has never been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind. 33: "If this man were not from God, He could do nothing." 34: They answered him, "You were born entirely in sins, and are you teaching us?"¹ So they put him out."

So like this formerly blind man, we can try to explain all day long what happened to us to make us believers and the response will be much the same. Now strangely some will say of another, "He or she is a man or woman of faith" without believing even one ounce of what that person believes. Yet the world recognizes people of faith, and, for the most part think them fools. People admit "love" exists, and though it is not scientifically measurable, fall into it over and over again. I was watching a story of one actress who fell in love, got married, was shortly divorced, fell in love again, remarried, divorced again and repeated this behavior three or four times. She is presently in love and engaged again. The excitement over falling in love, or loving someone, or being in love, or whatever, is on the same plane as faith, that is, there is no scientific measurement for true love.

There is, however, the world's experience (which we are a part of) juxtaposed against a "real love" that is totally different. There is a worldly definition of faith but it is not the same as true spiritual faith. And, there is a worldly definition of love that is quite different from a true "spiritual" as

¹ NASB used throughout unless otherwise stated.

defined in the Scriptures. The Scripture tells us God is Love, the agape love the world can't experience is the love we enjoy and aspire to emulate in relationships like those with our mate, family, friends and even the lost. This love is rare, even among Christians, but we pray we grow in it all the same. We do this by faith.

II. WHAT FAITH IS EXPECTED TO COPE WITH.

Addiction
Anger
Anguish
Anxiety Loss
Anxiousness
Apprehension
Attacks
Bereavement
Boredom
Breakdowns
Chaos
Criticism
Condemnation
Conflict
Confusion
Death
Depression
Despair
Desperation
Difficulties
Discouragement
Disenchantment
Disillusionment
Disrespect
Doubt
Demons
Emotional turmoil
Evil
Exhaustion
Failure
Faithlessness
False teachings
Futility
Financial trouble
Frustration
Fear
Guilt
Grudges
Grief
Hardship

Hate
Health problems
Hopelessness
Hospitalization
Hostility
Hurt
Irritation
Insanity
Isolation
Injury
Laziness
Legal trouble
Loneliness
Misery
Misinterpretation of Scripture
Obsession
Oppression
Pain
Personal problems
Prejudice
Persecution
Rejection
Remorse
Regret
Restlessness
Sadness
Satan
Sin
Stress
Tears
Tension
Terror
Turmoil
Tragedy
Temptation
Vice
Victimization
War
Weariness
Worry

Faith is supposed to ward all this off, and more. It does actually, but we must understand how so we can have peace and rest.

LESSON II

Review²

The goal for this study is for us to come to a clear understanding of faith so we can exercise our time, energy and resources in a manner consistent with God's will, so that the result will be an experience of peace and clarity in an environment of confusion and chaos. We need to differentiate between false definitions of faith and the truth so our confidence in what we do in our Christian lives will be at rest. The alternative, which most Christians suffer, is that of expending both physical and spiritual resources in a seemingly wasted effort, resulting in frustration and uncertainty.

We mentioned last week that the dimension of faith may be one of the most mysterious elements in the human experience. On the one hand, every person has a humanly generated faith in things that are part of the physical universe, and this is easily defined and understood. On the other, a human's faith in an object that is not part of the physical universe is a source of every kind of conflict - from controversy to war when these two elements clash.

Now faith, though indefinable to an outsider, is illustratable to us Christians. But since we are so steeped in humanity's definitions of faith, it is hard to isolate the difference between the two and ultimately distill the real thing down to a pure and clear understanding of true, spiritual, Christian faith that we must have to carry on. Paul told the Corinthians, "We walk by faith, not by sight". That pretty much takes the visual stuff out of it doesn't it? I mean, how many Christians base their faith or their relationship with God on what they see, expect to see; or upon the circumstances of their lives? How about you?

We are going to look at what faith is and what faith isn't, and some of this may be provoking and controversial – I hope. Let me stir the pot by saying that the "mystery of the faith" Paul alludes to does not consist in what we do - that is: any works at all, even works of obedience, or in what we say, quote, pray, proclaim, confess or even by what we believe (our doctrine), or even whom we believe in. These may be expressions of faith or simple religion, but they do not define the true nature of faith..

Even Satan accomplishes these things. In fact Satan can do most everything a Christian can do (I think) except one thing...love. I don't think he prays either, and even though he possesses faith and belief in God, as most define it, he has no faith at all. Therefore I know he can't love, although he can fake it. How do I know this?

First, true Love is solely of God because God is Love. I John 4:7-8; 16; 7: "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. 8: The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love. 16: "We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him."

Second, Satan appears as an angel of light (truth) but cannot love. As far as faith not being defined by the fact we believe in God, remember what James said, "You believe that God is one. You do

² These lessons are reproduced from a series of weekly lectures (2007-2008). Review is a natural part of each succeeding lesson.

well; the demons also believe, and shudder” (2:19). Surveys tell us that roughly 90% of Americans believe in God. But observation tells me that we do not live in a very godly society. True faith should evoke some change in character shouldn't it? So could it be that their “faith” in God isn't true faith after all?

The faith we are talking about is not defined by our belief in: information, theology, truth, doctrine, scripture, any holy book, God, Christ, creed, church, practice, work, pious act or behavior or anything else similar to these because the most ignorant, uninformed, unread, illiterate, un-churched person could be a child of God through simple child like faith, couldn't he? Didn't Jesus say the same thing? Mark 10:15 "Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it *at all*." If faith is not any of these things, then what is it?

Allow me to illustrate in a couple of ways. If I were to ask you to describe the works God wants us to do, what would you say? Would it include loving others, proclamation of the Gospel, assisting the poor and needy, attending church on a regular basis, praying, fasting, reading the Bible, charitable giving and deeds among other things? Perhaps. Others might mention being Baptized, going to confession, being confirmed in the church, taking communion and so forth. But what is Jesus' answer?

John 6:27-29, 27: "Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you, for on Him the Father, God, has set His seal." 28: Therefore they said to Him, "What shall we do, so that we may work the works of God?" 29: Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent."

My uncle was a good example of typical “religious” faith which is not faith at all. When he was dying of cancer, my son and I tried to get him to see that his faith was not the real thing, it seemed to no avail. He was a member of a large denomination and had been baptized as a child. He had lived a good life, served his country in the military, attended church, took care of his wife when she was ill for years, and so on. Thus, he said, he was in good standing with God. He believed Jesus was the Son of God and ascended to the doctrine of the church. He had no reason to humble himself before God, recognizing his wretchedness because he had little to worry about. His life spoke for itself. He would stand before God with confidence that his life would keep in good stead.

So what is wrong with that? Two things. 1) There is a difference between believing in an historical Jesus and having a saving relationship with the living Christ. 2) Only in Christ by faith does one have assurance of Salvation. Not “faith” in one's self. 3) Being “in Christ” is a relationship without which one is lost. Why is that? Because it involves family ties. The inheritance of God is for family only and to be family one must be born again into God's family. This is done by faith, recognizing that regardless of one's moral life, he is not in God's family. We must be “in Christ” and “Christ in us” before faith becomes the type of faith establishing the power for our lives.

I told a parable to a friend of mine one time who is still not yet a believer-but I haven't given up: “A wealthy man had a large mansion on a hill”, I said. “His vast estate was surrounded by a large wrought iron fence so constructed that no one could enter no matter how hard they tried. Those on the outside of the fence could see in and when they did, they saw all kinds of people involved in various activities on the grounds. It was known by many that those inside the fence were the children of the wealthy man. But some of the people inside the fence did not seem to be conducting

themselves very well and were doing things the outsiders deemed improper or inappropriate for those living in an environment of such wealth and promise. Some of those outside thought, I am a better person than those inside. If those people are the heirs of the wealthy man they don't seem very deserving. I am a better person than any of them.

But the reality is that the wealthy man will leave his inheritance to his children and not to an outsider or stranger regardless of their immaturity or improper conduct. They are his children and he will discipline them as he sees fit to get them on track. The outsiders can jeer and complain and judge and compare all they want but the fact is, they will never be either children of the wealthy man or heirs of his estate. The promises of the wealthy man are not for them, and no matter how good they are, until they are born into the family, they will be left out of the inheritance, outside the grounds forever."

So, the first thing we are going to postulate is that true faith is not a mental ascent or belief. Some people still believe that the Earth is flat or that the holocaust never happened. People believe all sorts of things. So the first thing we must postulate is that "true faith" is inextricably meshed with a spiritual relationship based in truth, and in fact the core of faith is not only relational, but intimate, personal, real, and even "marital" in a real sense. The scripture defines it thus: We are "The bride of Christ"; Christ's "brothers and sisters"; God is our "Father"; we are each other's "brother's and sisters" and so forth. Paul and John use the term "brethren" in two ways, as does the writer of Hebrews. Sometimes they just talk to other Jews who are not even believers but brethren by the flesh or religious custom and sometimes they are addressing believers whether Gentile or Jew. In order to interpret Scripture correctly, one needs to know the difference at certain times.

LESSON III

The goal for this study is for us to come to a clear understanding of faith so we can exercise our time, energy and resources in a manner consistent with God's will, so that the result will be an experience of peace and clarity in an environment of confusion and chaos. We need to differentiate between false definitions of faith and the truth so our confidence in what we do in our Christian lives will be at rest. The alternative, which most Christians suffer, is that of expending both physical and spiritual resources in a seemingly wasted effort, resulting in frustration and uncertainty. We are talking the difference between a living faith in relationship with God and a "faith" that is works and belief oriented but is dead. So,

"True faith" is an alive, intimate personal relationship with God in Christ and based in Him and in truth because He is the "Way the Truth and the Life". (John 14:6)

In fact, the faith we are talking about, is a life and death matter in a lot of ways. Let's see, first, some scripture on this. The idea of life and death is a hint. We do possess it but it is often buried, masked or left in an untapped place because of all the other stuff we have misinterpreted as faith.

III. HAVING FAITH, A LIFE AND DEATH ISSUE - SELECTED SCRIPTURE:

The point of the following passages about faith apart from works will be reviewed shortly.

A. Deuteronomy 30:17-20, "But if your heart turns away and you will not obey, but are drawn away and worship other gods and serve them, 18: I declare to you today that you shall surely perish. You will not prolong *your* days in the land where you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess it. 19: "I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that ***I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse.*** So choose life in order that you may live, you and your descendants, 20: by loving the LORD your God, by obeying His voice, and by holding fast to Him; for this is your life and the length of your days, that you may live in the land which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them."

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

C. Romans 3:25-28, "*This was* to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; 26: for the demonstration, *I say*, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. 27: Where then is boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? Of works? No, but by a law of faith. 28: For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law."

D. Romans 4:3-5, "For what does the Scripture say? **ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS CREDITED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS.**" 4: Now to the one who works, his wage is not credited as a favor, but as what is due. 5: But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness,

E. Romans 4:13-16, "For the promise to Abraham or to his descendants that he would be heir of the world was not through the Law, but through the righteousness of faith. 14: For if those who are of the Law are heirs, faith is made void and the promise is nullified; 15: for the Law brings about wrath, but where there is no law, there also is no violation. 16: For this reason *it is* by faith, in

order that *it may be* in accordance with grace, so that the promise will be guaranteed to all the descendants, not only to those who are of the Law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all,”

F. Numbers 14:11, “The LORD said to Moses, “How long will this people spurn Me? And how long will they not believe in Me, despite all the signs which I have performed in their midst?” (The word “believe” and “faith” is the same)

G. II Corinthians 5:7, “for we walk by faith, not by sight-”

H. Psalm 78:21-22, “Therefore the LORD heard and was full of wrath; And a fire was kindled against Jacob and anger also mounted against Israel, 22: Because they did not believe in God and did not trust in His salvation.

I. Hebrews 4:2, “For indeed we have had good news preached to us, just as they also; but the word they heard did not profit them, because it was not united by faith in those who heard.”

Now people, like many of the Jews and Israelites, have “faith” – in the sense that they are practicing religious duties and customs - obeying God in as much detail as possible. But they, according to God, have no faith. Paul specifically describes the difference about this in Philippians 3:3-11,

“...for we are the *true* circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh, although I myself might have confidence even in the flesh. If anyone else has a mind to put confidence in the flesh, I far more: circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless. But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of *knowing* Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from *the* Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which *comes* from God on the basis of faith, that I may *know* Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.”

The goal of the Christian life for Paul is “to know Him”. The term “know” is a term of intimacy. For example, we are told that Adam “knew” his wife Eve and she conceived (KJV). The word is the word “to know” or “have knowledge”. If you ask Christians today, “What is your goal as a Christian, what do you hope to accomplish in your Christian Life? How many would respond with things like: “To do the best I can”, or, “To be faithful to God and my family”, or “To please or love God with all my heart, soul, mind and strength”, and so forth. These are formulas for discouragement, guilt, disappointment and failure. They are works of flesh and human will. Also grist for the mill of the spiritual wolves looking for just such a lamb to fleece. What would have been your response? How many do you know who would have answered like Paul? “All of it is trash except to know Him”.

Even Jesus said, “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven *will enter*. ‘Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your

name perform many miracles?' "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.'" Matthew 7:21-23

Once again,

1. "True faith" is an alive, intimate personal relationship with God in Christ and based in Him and in truth because He is the "Way the Truth and the Life". (John 14:6)

That is the first and most vital goal of the Christian, if one adopts Paul's goal.

We are talking the difference between a living faith in relationship with God and a “faith” that is works and belief oriented but is dead. So,

1. “True faith” is an alive, intimate personal relationship with God in Christ and based in Him and in truth because He is the “Way the Truth and the Life”. John 14:6
2. Faith is a spiritual reality not a tangible or mental reality. I can use the idea of an umbilical cord to illustrate faith. There is no direct connection between the two entities of mother and child yet there is a two-way flow through the umbilical cord that keeps the child alive and the child’s waste flows away to the mother. For this reason:

Though we have faith in terms of an intimate relationship with God,

FAITH STILL APPEARS TO BE A BIG MYSTERY. WHY? LET’S LOOK AT SOME REASONS:

IV. CREATION, DISOBEDIENCE AND FAITH: THE SEED OF FAITH OR HUMAN FAITH (EXPECTATIONS).

- A. At creation, (Genesis 2-3) faith in God is seen in terms of a relationship, a fellowship, a family environment. Note the familial words in Genesis 2:18, 21-24, 18: “Then the LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him." 21: So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh at that place. 22: The LORD God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man. 23: The man said, "This is now bone of my bones, And flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of Man." 24: For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.”

Could verse 24 be viewed as God the Father giving His son away in marriage? God’s role as “Father” was rejected by Adam and Eve when they decided to make their own decisions regardless of the counsel of their Father. Then we read this, demonstrating the close personal relationship they had with God until they were excluded from it. Genesis 3:8-10, “They heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. 9: Then the LORD God called to the man, and said to him, "Where are you?" 10: He said, "I heard the sound of You in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself." Does this not give us a picture of a relationship that became broken due to man’s self will?

- B. *Illustration of the fading relationship due to disobedience. Charging light fading out once device is unplugged. People can plug it in again. But the power comes from God.*

After the garden, faith deteriorated to a routine matter of human effort to obey God such as in the case of the antediluvian and postdiluvian patriarchs. A face-to-face personal relationship is no longer possible. God communicated to His chosen through angelic intermediaries. When it came to becoming righteous before God, true faith was replaced by works of the flesh, beginning with circumcision. Soon religious duties became the essence

of faith and those so involved assumed their actions would incur the favor of God. Expectations of blessing and reward, wealth and power are common, and soon religious works took the place of faith and became simply a means of manipulating God to fulfill man's wishes. It's simply switching the light switch on and off again repeatedly assuming this is faith. But darkness remains because the light fixture isn't plugged in.

Now, for many people, the "Judeo/Christian Faith" has become little different than any heathen or pagan practice. It often amounts to the same method and motivation heathens had when throwing a child into a fire to assure a good harvest. And to make matters even more pagan, priests rise up to impose whatever works on their people to assure a righteous stand before God. In some cases these are called ministers, or pastors. Their congregations are commanded to perform some work of "faith" or else God won't bless them. In fact, quite the contrary, some teach that unless the congregation performs these works of faith, they will come under a curse. Not only is this not Christian, it smells heavily of Sulphur. We will talk a lot more about this as we continue.

C. What faith isn't. Glasses of "clear liquids" illustrations – and truth. One is actually water, the rest poison chemicals. How do we know the truth without having to taste them?

Some will tell you to believe that faith is comprised of:

- A. Expectations
- B. Word(s) of Faith
- C. Confessions and Creeds
- D. Works of any kind
- E. Regular church attendance
- F. Doing or saying the "right" things
- G. Righteous, moral living
- H. Obedience to God
- I. Keeping the commandments.
- J. Observing the ordinances or sacraments
- K. Joining a church
- L. Praying
- M. Meditation
- N. Self denial (asceticism)
- O. Giving money
- P. Service
- Q. Formulas, chants, incantations, pronouncements in prayer or meditation
- R. Positive thinking
- S. Believing the right things
- T. Fasting
- U. Etc.

Faith may result in some of these actions but these actions are not a substitute for faith. In fact, anyone can do the above list without any faith or religious convictions at all if they wanted to. Actors portray these things in film. For example, many who have been "Baptized" assume that the act alone is sufficient to get them to "heaven". Paul clearly illustrates in Romans 6 that baptism portrays a reality having transpired in a person, but is neither the reality itself nor a substitute for the reality. Beginning with 5:1-2, "Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God

through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God”,

Paul notes in 6:1-11,

“What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? 2: May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it? 3: Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? 4: Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. 5: For if we have become united with *Him* in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be *in the likeness* of His resurrection, 6: knowing this, that our old self was crucified with *Him*, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; 7: for he who has died is freed from sin. 8: Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, 9: knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him. 10: For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. 11: Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.”

This passage is clear that the “action” of baptism is based on faith in Christ and it is that which makes a person have a righteous standing before God. But it does not, itself, bring about that standing any more than circumcision was “faith” bringing about a right standing before God. Note Paul’s point about that in Galatians 5:5-6, “For we through the Spirit, by faith, are waiting for the hope of righteousness. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor un-circumcision means anything, but faith working through love.” And in Galatians 6:14-15, “But may it never be that I would boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. For neither is circumcision anything, nor un-circumcision, but a new creation.”

Neither is anything included in the introductory list if it isn’t first prefaced by faith working through love.

What then is real faith? As we look at the scriptures, we see those of faith having a living, personal, relationship with God. Remember “we walk by faith and not by sight”. In Hebrews 11, The action of their faith stems from this relationship. Faith is the special relationship we now have with the Father in Christ. Faith is defined by relationship and not by all the stuff everyone throws at us from the pulpit. Faith is not defined or even revealed by what we say, do, quote, pray, proclaim, confess or even by what we believe.

F.B. Meyer, "Our Daily Walk" pg 339 is worthy of notice:

Faith is an attribute of the heart, rather than of the head. It is largely intuitive in its first promptings. It is impossible to argue men into faith. Do not think, discuss, or reason too much about Faith, or you will miss it. It is like Love in this, that when you turn the dissecting knife on it for the purpose of analysis, its spirit and life vanish, leaving only the faded relics of what was once a thing of beauty and joy forever. If, however, turning from Faith to any object which is worthy of it, you concentrate heart and mind there, almost unconsciously Faith will have arisen and thriven to maturity.

As we said last week, for Paul, the goal of the Christian life is “to know Him” (Philippians 3:9-10). This is relational, not informational. True, information can help, but it is not to be substituted for relationship or for faith. We are born into the family of God. We were born into God’s family and

saved from our sins not by the amount of information we had or understood, but by a simple faith and very limited information.

Even Jesus put it in this order, relationship first and then information.

John 14:16-20, "I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; *that is* the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, *but* you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you. "I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. "After a little while the world will no longer see Me, but you *will* see Me; because I live, you will live also. "In that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you."

Doesn't that describe the most intimate of relationships? Then later...

John 14:26 "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you."

LESSON V

Last week to help define real spiritual faith and truth as opposed to a worldly understanding of faith and truth, I placed eight bottles filled with clear liquid in front of you and told you that what I was going to say about them may or may not be the truth. Then I told you that they were either all filled with water or...that some or none were filled with water and the rest with chemicals. In asking how many thought they were all filled with water, many of you raised your hands whereupon I challenged anyone to come and just drink any one down without smelling or tasting it first. We discovered through examination that only one had water in it and the rest were filled with caustic or deadly chemicals. The point was made that many went on sight and personal deduction as a definitive expression of their faith. Since we are to walk by faith and not by sight and since faith is not of our own deductive ability, we saw how difficult it is to remove ourselves from the equation when it comes to real faith. Our faith was expressed in a very human way.

We have argued for a definition of faith that is outside of the normal human understanding of faith. We are talking the difference between a living faith in relationship with God and a "faith" that is works and belief oriented but is dead. So,

1. "True faith" is an alive, intimate personal relationship with God in Christ and based in Him and in truth because He is the "Way the Truth and the Life". John 14:6. it is a living reality, a living thing.
2. Faith is a spiritual reality not a tangible or mental reality. I used the idea of an umbilical cord to illustrate faith. There is no direct connection between the two entities of mother and child yet there is a two-way flow through the umbilical cord that keeps the child alive and the child's waste flows away to the mother.

Note the relational and living nature of faith in the following passages:

Romans 8:1-17, "Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God *did*: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and *as an offering* for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able *to do so*, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him. If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you. So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh-- for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, "Abba! Father!" The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God,

and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him.”

Ephesians 2:19-21, “So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner *stone*, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord,”

Colossians 1:24-28 Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I do my share on behalf of His body, which is the church, in filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions. 25 Of *this church* I was made a minister according to the stewardship from God bestowed on me for your benefit, so that I might fully carry out the *preaching of* the word of God, 26 *that is*, the mystery which has been hidden from the *past* ages and generations, but has now been manifested to His saints, 27 to whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. 28 We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ.”

Remember:

1. True Faith is an alive, intimate personal relationship with God in Christ and based in Him and the truth because He is the “Way the Truth and the Life”.

Then:

2. True faith is a connection between a human being and a spiritual being. It is like an invisible umbilical cord through which flows a two-way communication facilitated by the Spirit of God.

Boat Anchor illustration.

- A. When anchoring (casting the anchor or “seeking”) always face your boat toward open water, and not toward the shore.
- B. Seek for a rock to which your anchor will be securely held. When it is found tie the anchor line to the bow. The rock is invisible (we walk by faith and not by sight) but firm.
- C. Now your boat (salvation) is held by the rock (Christ) and you can rest assured that the boat will not be torn away even when the winds and storms come and the waves get rough. The rough water raises the front of the boat and does not flood in and sink it.
- D. Faith is pictured by the rope and anchor, but it is not you holding onto the rock, it is the rock holding onto the boat in which you rest in peace.
- E. Religion is like one constantly casting an anchor into the water and dragging the sandy bottom hoping to find a firm hold while rejecting a rock because being tied to a rock would interfere with the direction one wishes to face. So the boat faces the shore (the world) and when the wind and waves rise up, the boat is swamped from the stern and either sinks or is driven onto the shore where it breaks up and sinks taking its occupants with it.

3. Faith is a spiritual, unseen “bond”, a “connection” or “secure hold” between a human being in this physical universe or dimension and a spiritual being in another universe or dimension. The bond is maintained by the spiritual being (God) and not by the human being (man).

Who initiates the impulse that brings us to faith? God always initiates the action. In all human beings, there is a measure of wonder that prompts us to think of the possibility of something beyond this physical universe. This prompting is what Pascal called the “God shaped vacuum in the heart of every human being”. I would call it “seeking faith”. It is strictly human in nature but divinely placed there. It is not spiritual life. Though many say we are all children of God because this is sensed, we are not actually His children. Still, though we search for the filling of this vacuum, we are told a few things about how to find God Himself.

- A. Deuteronomy 4:29, "But from there you will seek the LORD your God, and you will find *Him* if you search for Him with all your heart and all your soul."
- B. Psalm 14:2-3, 2: "The LORD has looked down from heaven upon the sons of men To see if there are any who understand, Who seek after God. 3: They have all turned aside, together they have become corrupt; There is no one who does good, not even one. "
- C. Matthew 6:31-33, 31: "Do not worry then, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear for clothing?' 32: "For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. 33: "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."
- D. Hebrews 11:6, "And without faith it is impossible to please *Him*, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and *that* He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.

One might ask based on these verses, “Doesn’t that prove that faith starts with us?”

But then we have,

- E. John 14:6, “Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.”
- F. John 6:44, "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day.”
- G. John 6:63-65, 63: "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life. 64: "But there are some of you who do not believe." For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who it was that would betray Him. 65: And He was saying, "For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted him from the Father."
- H. Romans 10:1-4, 16-17, 1: “Brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is for *their* salvation. 2: For I testify about them that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge. 3: For not knowing about God's righteousness and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God. 4: For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. 16: However, they did not all heed the good

news; for Isaiah says, "LORD, WHO HAS BELIEVED OUR REPORT?" 17: So faith *comes* from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ."

- I. Romans 12:3, "For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith."

We will continue next time. I have been given some very good questions in writing and I invite you to submit any questions at all either in writing or through e-mail.

LESSON VI

In our last session we used a boat, an anchor and a rock to illustrate true “faith”. The boat is our salvation in which we rest in peace. The rock is Christ who holds our boat firmly by an anchor and a rope (faith) securely and permanently. Our boat faces the rock and not the shore (world) and as the winds and waves rise, our boat is lifted above them and soon settles down safely. In contrast, religion is like one constantly casting an anchor into the water and dragging the sandy bottom hoping to find a firm hold while rejecting a rock because being tied to a rock would interfere with the direction one wishes to face. So the boat faces the shore (the world) and when the wind and waves rise up, the boat is swamped from the stern and either sinks or is driven onto the shore where it breaks up and sinks taking its occupants with it.

We Have An Anchor

Wm. J. Kirkpatrick

Stanza 1. “Will your anchor hold in the storms of life, when the clouds unfold their wings of strife? When the strong tides lift, and the cables strain, will your anchor drift or firm remain?”

Stanza 2. “It is safely moored, ‘twill the storms withstand, for ‘tis well secured by the Savior’s hand, and the cables, passed from His heart to mine, can defy the blast, through strength divine.”

Chorus: “We have an anchor that keeps the soul steadfast and sure while the billows roll, fastened to the Rock which cannot move, grounded firm and deep in the Savior’s love.”

Now, we have heard terms defining faith such as “confidence”, “trust”, and “dependency” and assume that these are virtues we generate in our relationship with God which sustain that relationship.

But in our boat illustration, it is the rock that is holding the boat secure which in turn gives us “confidence”, “trust” and “dependency” or faith in God. It is not us holding onto the rock, it is the rock holding onto us. Hebrews 11:1, “Now faith is the assurance of *things* hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.”

By contrast, there are so called Christian ministries that teach the opposite. Now some pastors do not like to criticize other ministries but will make an exception when it comes to those teachings that are filled with distortions and lies, the intent of which is to deceive God’s people. In nearly all his letters, the Apostle Paul, as well as John, James, Peter and the author of Hebrews spend time pointing out and correcting heresy. I am going to do the same.

One of the most popular movements today, filling Christian television stations is the “Word of Faith” movement. It has been around for at least thirty or forty years now, maybe longer. Its primary message is that it is our obedience to the law, or to some principle that causes God to bless and prosper us. It is our disobedience to their teaching that finds us in a cursed or with a problematic life. The solution usually focuses around sending in our money to them to achieve a reversal of negative circumstances. If only these preachers had been around when Jesus was being led to the cross, then maybe Mary could have sent in a quick donation to stave off the crucifixion.³

³ Sarcasm intentional

Proponents of this definition of “faith” include or have included:

“Kenneth Hagin, Kenneth Copeland, Paul Crouch, John Avanzini, Robert Tilton, Fred Price, and Benny Hinn (who at the time of this writing has authored the number one best selling Christian book in America, "Good Morning, Holy Spirit") are just a few who, according to Richard J. Vincent, “spew out this theological vomit.” (Richard J. Vincent – “Deception in the Church”)

Other proponents include: John Bevere, Markus Bishop, Morris Cerullo, Kim Clement, Creflo Dollar, Jesse Duplantis, Marilyn Hickey, Rodney Howard Browne, T.D. Jakes, Bishop Eddie L. Long, Joyce Meyer, Miles Munroe, Steve Munsey, Mike Murdock, Joel Osteen, Rod Parsley, Oral Roberts, Charles Capps, Robert Schuller, Karl Strader, Bob Coy, Marshall Davis, to name a very few. Nearly all the preachers on TBN, Daystar and Word T.V. ascribe to this movement.

These teachers not only fail to grasp the truth of the Word of God, but make incredible heretical pronouncements about it and themselves (see: Hanegraaff, web sites). For example, Benny Hinn once stated that the Holy Spirit revealed to him that women were originally designed to give birth out of their sides. Fred Price, John Avanzini, Robert Tilton, Jerry Savelle and others teach that Jesus was really wealthy and thus so we should be. Let’s not mention that Paul tells us in 2Co 8:9, “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor.” So send in you dollars to them to guarantee the blessing of prosperity. The reason for this they say, is that God demands your tithes and offerings (from Malachi) and to not send the money in is to disobey God negating His blessings and bringing upon yourself a curse.

They use the Old Covenant almost exclusively in their teaching, place themselves in the position of the Levitical priesthood, and some, like Paul Cho and Morris Cerullo even claim to be the presence of God on earth. They use the Law because it does what it is designed to do, bring condemnation to the heart of the innocent and motivate them out of guilt and fear to enrich these preachers. Fred Price stated that the reason he drives a Rolls Royce is that he is following in Jesus’ footsteps.¹

Peter’s words are ignored, “For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps”. I never heard someone driving a Rolls Royce claim he was suffering for Jesus. Often the emphasis is on either you cough up the dough as God commands in Malachi, and other places or you will be cursed. The curse reveals itself in all the hardships you are facing now. If you have problems, or God doesn’t seem to be answering your prayer, or you don’t have enough money to meet your needs, it is evidence that you have not acted in faith toward the command of God and He has placed you under His curse until you get your financial house in order. You do that of course, by sending in your money to these preachers and ministries. This accomplishes three things. 1) You will, they say, receive the blessing of God a hundred fold they promise, and if you don’t it is because you are still not right with God, 2) You will relieve some of the guilt these preachers have cleverly heaped upon you, and, 3) you will have discovered that God is manipulated by money.

In his book “How The Irish Saved civilization”, Thomas Cahill writes,

“It seems that at some point in the development of every human culture, human sacrifice becomes unthinkable and animals are from then on substituted for human victims. The Irish had not reached this point and were still sacrificing human beings when Patrick began his mission (5th Century

¹ See Hank Hanegraaff, “What’s Wrong With the Faith Movement”, 1994, Christian Research Institute

A.D.) They sacrificed prisoners of war to the war gods and newborns to the harvest gods. Why do human beings do these things? The psychological mechanism is not far to find, since there is probably not a reader-even the most convinced atheist-who has not offered from time to time an old fashioned quid pro quo prayer: if you let me pass this exam, I will return to church; if you make sure my wife doesn't learn of my infidelity, I will give my next bonus to charity. The theology-the view of god-that lies behind these petitions is of an arbitrary trickster, a bad parent who can be coaxed, flattered and manipulated.²

² Thomas Cahill, "How The Irish Saved Civilization", Doubleday, 1995, pgs. 136-137

LESSON VII

We are taking a close look at “faith”, what it is and what it isn’t. We have found from the scripture that “faith” is defined in terms of a living relationship between two dissimilar entities, us as human, physical beings and God who is a spiritual, non physical being. In order to tie the two together in a bond, an intermediate, mysterious, non physical link exists called “faith”. We have illustrated this in three ways:

1. “True faith” is an alive, intimate personal relationship with God in Christ and based in Him and in truth because He is the “Way the Truth and the Life”. John 14:6. it is a living reality, a living thing. Remember the words of Jesus in Matthew 7:21-23, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven *will enter*. "Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.' “

So one can see from this one statement by our Lord that “faith” is far more than mental ascent or belief in something or even works based on that mental ascent or belief. Faith involves an intimate relationship with God in Christ. Ultimately, it’s a family relationship. That’s why people must be “born again” in order to enter the kingdom of God.

2. Faith is a spiritual reality/relationship, not a tangible, mental or physical reality/relationship. We used the idea of an umbilical cord to illustrate faith. There is no direct connection between the two entities of mother and child yet there is a two-way flow through the umbilical cord that keeps 1. Brings oxygen and nourishment to the child while allowing the child’s waste products to flow back to the mother for disposal. A good analogy.

3. Faith is a spiritual, unseen “bond”, a “connection” or “secure hold” between a human being in this physical universe or dimension and a spiritual being in another universe or dimension. The bond is maintained by the spiritual being (God) and not by the human being (man). We used a boat, anchor and rock as an illustration, the boat picturing our salvation in which we rest, with the rope between the anchor and the boat as the simile for faith.

Now, we have heard terms defining faith such as “confidence”, “trust”, and “dependency” and assume that these are virtues we generate in our relationship with God which sustain that relationship. But in our boat illustration, it is the rock, anchor and rope we cannot see nor onto which we grip with our strength that is holding the boat secure - which in turn gives us “confidence”, “trust” and “dependency” or “faith” in God. It is not us holding onto the rock, it is the rock holding onto us. This gives us a clearer understanding of Hebrews 11:1, “Now faith is the assurance of *things* hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.”

A multitude of “Christian Ministries” have degenerated to understanding faith in God as our actions, works, and words employed to get God to do what we want. Last week we examined ministries subscribing to “The Word of Faith” movement and named a few of these teachers who regularly appear on TBN, Daystar and Word T.V. programs. Their message in one form or another places the power and success, prosperity and achievement for our Christian lives upon placing faith in certain methods or actions we ourselves perform. Not having power, success, prosperity or

achievements demonstrates a faulty relationship with God.

Often, the unscrupulous, using the Old Testament passages regarding tithing tell their followers that the misery or failure or poverty experienced in their lives is due to God's curses upon them for not being obedient in their giving. Thus, to turn that all into blessing and personal prosperity, they must become obedient in their giving and when they send in their obedient offerings to them, God will bless a hundredfold or some such promise. Some call it the "if...then" theology. If we do this, then God will do that. (See: previous lesson)

In the second and final part of this expose', we will look at the "confessing and claiming" methods used to seduce God's people into bondage.

This method involves making pronouncements "In the Name of Jesus", pronouncements Jesus never made himself or intended us to make. His goals for His children do not involve most of what the teachers of this method want us to "confess" and "claim". I have heard people claim in "Jesus Name" all sorts of stuff from: achieving financial prosperity to healings, to overcoming evil by "binding Satan" and more. All of it is nonsense and here is why.

Confessing and claiming:

- 1) Financial prosperity. Where do you find this in what the apostles or Jesus taught as the goal of the Christian? If you think about it, what Christ wants his children (or brethren) to set as a goal has to do with loving each other; building each other up; avoiding offending a weaker brother; studying the scriptures to make sure they as believers are on truthful ground; controlling evil impulses in themselves; growing in grace and truth; sharing with the poor; proclaiming the gospel of: truth and peace, salvation and hope, love and grace, etc; living above reproach; giving no cause for offense; establishing a loving and unified family; being a witness of God's love and grace in Christ to the world; keeping unruly brethren under proper scrutiny; living a moral and godly life and dozens more. When it comes to money, we are not to be anxious, God knows what we need before we ask, He will supply according to His will. But if we refuse to work we won't eat. I've never head one of these preachers teach on any one of these Christian virtues or duties. Their teaching is normally on achieving power, wealth or some other personal "gain". This, of course, appeals to many who are looking for these very things in their lives.

By the way, nearly every time the idea of gaining wealth of any kind comes up in Scripture, it comes up in a very negative way because of man's propensity to substitute what money can buy for God Himself. Money is a measure of man's works and man's works cannot buy what only God's grace can provide. So why on earth do we include "claiming" or "confessing" financial prosperity when the very act is an offense to God who will supply it at His discretion not at ours? (I Timothy 6:10, see also: I Timothy 3:3; Hebrews 13:5; Matthew 6:24)

1Timothy 6:9-10, "But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction. 10: For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs."

Anything wrong with having financial security? No, because the issue is never the circumstances, but the heart.

In 3:3-5 of the same letter Paul tells Timothy that church leaders must, “be free from the love of money. 4: *He must be* one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity 5: (but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?),

Hebrews 13:5 *Make sure that* your character is free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, "I WILL NEVER DESERT YOU, NOR WILL I EVER FORSAKE YOU,"

Matthew 6:24 "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.

Jesus also said in Luke 12:15, "Beware, and be on your guard against every form of greed; for not *even* when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions."

If one's life does not consist in the abundance of possessions, then why is it taught the evidence of one's faith or relationship with God or obedience to God consists in that abundance? When Jesus said in John 10:10, "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have *it* abundantly", these teachers distort this out of context and make it a justification for material wealth, rather than spiritual wealth thus robbing their hearers of hope of ever having spiritual wealth. (Note: Revelation 3:17-20)

- 2) Healings. “Confessing” or “claiming” healings. God does heal, in spite of whatever people believe or don't believe, do or don't do but God doesn't necessarily heal on the basis of the theology in much of what you see on T.V. or in crusades. Why? Simple, I mentioned this before. We confess and give praise for what God has done, not for what we try to manipulate Him by “confessing or claiming” something to be so when it isn't. Never once do you find this in Scripture. I have never read of someone in the Bible claiming “I am healed” when he wasn't, - as an act of “expecting faith”.

Any example you may hear someone preach about, such as the woman with the hemorrhage, must be looked at carefully. In every case you might find where the preacher teaches that the faith was exhibited by the “confession” will try to get his hearers to do the confessing --- --instead of the faith!!!! Faith is in the Lord, not in the method. Faith is displayed in God initiating a word or action and us responding, not the other way around. The other way around was what Satan tried to get Jesus to listen to and Jesus rebuked Him. True faith transcends and never uses “methods” for methods do not necessarily come from the heart!!! They are more often than not works of the flesh and they have no life.

Here's why their teachings are wrong. Every religion, cult, heathen practice including witchcraft, Satanism and everything you can name including some Christian practices include a “mantra” or “liturgy” or “system” that is supposed to please, motivate or influence God into forgiving, blessing, or providing some earthly service or other – like bringing rain to the crops. Some religions go as far as animal or human sacrifice. Some Christians mutter over beads to get God to forgive them – an act already completed on the cross.

Finally, all these methods ignore what God has already promised and provided in Christ through real faith in Him and trust in Him, whether He provides them in the way we think and expect and pray - or not. Can't we see that every one of these "methods" takes one's eyes and faith AWAY from God and places it upon the method instead? These are all a form of idolatry.

I had a friend, Adrian, who was a talented pianist and was faithful each Sunday to lead the worship service and musical numbers. He was married to a wonderful lady who had a lovely voice. He wore glasses for his eyesight was poor. This was in the late seventies and early eighties. He began to watch one of these T.V. preachers and decided that the name it and claim it method of faith was the truth. So in an act of "faith" one day he threw away his glasses as his statement of faith that he trusted God to heal his eyesight. He drove without them and as the days passed by without healing, he became even more intense about doing something to please God so he would be healed. He fasted, prayed, let his hair and beard grow long and gradually became so distraught that he could no longer function either at work or at church.

His appearance became so unkempt he looked like a homeless man. His eyes glazed over and he went into this self-righteous "holier than thou" mode of relating to others. Soon his wife became desperate and asked for prayer for him. She began to think he was demon possessed. He gave all their money away to these ministries and persisted in trying to do something to get God to heal him. He felt that if he sacrificed enough God would honor his efforts. Faith is honoring God's efforts in Christ, not the other way around. When you are healed then you throw away your glasses. It wasn't until after Jesus healed people that they took up their beds and went home, or were able to see etc. Finally, he became a madman, losing it mentally and had to be sedated and committed to an institution. His wife was devastated and felt forced to divorce him just to survive. Their children were badly damaged. Ultimately I lost touch with them.

Faith and prayer isn't a system or a mantra, or going "oommm" in some "lotus position" or anything like this and most of what is taught about prayer in the churches, including the claiming and confessing game is just another form of heathen, man made nonsense God doesn't hear. As far as achieving power, wealth or some other personal "gain" let's note: James 4:1-3: "What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? 2: You lust and do not have; *so* you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; *so* you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask. 3: You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend *it* on your pleasures." The best example of a beginning prayer God heard in contrast to one God did not hear is found in Luke 18:9-14.)

These people base their evil on selected scripture passages (by which methods you can prove almost anything) and then persuasively foist it upon the very precious sheep God has given them to properly and truthfully Shepherd. Meanwhile, they line their pockets and then have the gall to tell everyone they can also be rich if they, 1) "do what I am telling you", and 2) "Make sure you fill the offering plate with you tithes and offerings or God will not bless you in your confession"... What happened to the real goals Christ has for His church relating to getting the world saved from damnation and living a godly life? The things I

mentioned above? Where is the content of preaching God commands His church and preachers to preach? Instead we hear stuff that is not there!!!

- 3) "Binding Satan" and all the rest. Please. First, the yelling and screaming I hear from preachers "binding Satan in Jesus' name" is pure foolishness. Why? Well, several reasons.
 - A) Whoever is doing this "binding" is not accomplishing much if one looks around at the world. I see an increasing problem with evil, not a decreasing one. The reason for this is simple. They misinterpret the scripture.
 - B) This binding is not in accordance with Biblical teaching. Note Peter's statement in I Peter 5:8, "Be of sober *spirit*, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour." Note Paul's words in Ephesians 4:25-27, "Therefore, laying aside falsehood, **SPEAK TRUTH EACH ONE of you WITH HIS NEIGHBOR**, for we are members of one another. **BE ANGRY, AND yet DO NOT SIN**; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not give the devil an opportunity." And in Ephesians 6:11, "Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil." Then in Revelation 2:10 Jesus Himself says, "Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, so that you will be tested, and you will have tribulation for ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life."

If Satan can be bound, why does the Scripture here (and in many other places) make it clear that he has unbindable power except where Jesus Himself (or heaven) has bound him? Because the binding of Satan in the plan of God is different than what these people are teaching. He is already bound, but in a specific way that is not the way preachers yell and scream about. End of lesson in class.

Additional material:

Note Jesus' teachings in the following regarding "binding and loosing":

Matthew 12:24-32, "But when the Pharisees heard *this*, they said, "This man casts out demons only by Beelzebul the ruler of the demons." Mat 12:25, "And knowing their thoughts Jesus said to them, "Any kingdom divided against itself is laid waste; and any city or house divided against itself will not stand. "If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself; how then will his kingdom stand? "If I by Beelzebul cast out demons, by whom do your sons cast *them* out? For this reason they will be your judges. "But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. "Or how can anyone enter the strong man's house and carry off his property, unless he first binds the strong *man*? And then he will plunder his house."

Luke adds a few nuances that might help in 11:21,

"When a strong *man*, fully armed, guards his own house, his possessions are undisturbed. "But when someone stronger than he attacks him and overpowers him, he takes away from him all his armor on which he had relied and distributes his

plunder. "He who is not with Me is against Me; and he who does not gather with Me, scatters. "When the unclean spirit goes out of a man, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, and not finding any, it says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.' "And when it comes, it finds it swept and put in order. "Then it goes and takes *along* seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they go in and live there; and the last state of that man becomes worse than the first."

Jesus has cleaned out the house. He has plundered the strong man (Satan). What should be done next and who is to do it and how?

Now the "binders and loosers" often use the following passages to justify their words that they assume have the power to do what ever they say. They "bind poverty and loose riches", "bind illness and loose health", etc. etc. . According to the following passages, what is to be bound or loosed is whatever has already been bound or loosed in Heaven, nothing else, and what does it mean to bind or loose? Does it mean what we have been taught it means? Has anyone ever gone back to these people later on to see if it worked? Does the "binding and loosing" also come with the admonition to tithe and sacrifice? Here are the passages:

Matthew 16:19 "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven."

Matthew 18:18 "Truly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven."

4. Wouldn't it be a good idea to, 1) look at the entire context wherein these passages are found, and 2) understand what, in the context of Jewish thinking, these words actually meant?

Because something isn't right here in the way these concepts are employed today don't you think? Shouldn't we know exactly the intent of these teachings rather than assume we can do whatever we want with them? And when they don't seem to be effective in the lives of those over whom they are pronounced, those same poor souls are blamed for not having enough faith.

Sometimes these emotional drives and inspiration cause division and discouragement over time because one can only be saturated so much and in the meantime the real life and work God wants us to do goes by the wayside in favor of this substitute for responsible Christian living. This substitute becomes the object of our faith and energy rather than God and His truth. When this happens, it is another subtle form of idolatry, works, and paganism. Satan is not only not bound, he can sit back and relax while millions of people go down the path of doing everything except what God has said must be done. You see, faith is not doing or saying something so that God will respond. Again, this is the method of the Devil. Faith is displayed when God is doing or saying something and we respond. Note the proof of this below:

Matthew 4:1-11, "Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And after He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He then became hungry. And the tempter came and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread." But He answered and said, "It is written, 'MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE, BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD.'" Then the devil took Him

into the holy city and had Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down; for it is written, 'HE WILL COMMAND HIS ANGELS CONCERNING YOU'; and 'ON *their* HANDS THEY WILL BEAR YOU UP, SO THAT YOU WILL NOT STRIKE YOUR FOOT AGAINST A STONE.'" Jesus said to him, "On the other hand, it is written, 'YOU SHALL NOT PUT THE LORD YOUR GOD TO THE TEST.'" Again, the devil took Him to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory; and he said to Him, "All these things I will give You, if You fall down and worship me." Then Jesus said to him, "Go, Satan! For it is written, 'YOU SHALL WORSHIP THE LORD YOUR GOD, AND SERVE HIM ONLY.'" Then the devil *left Him; and behold, angels came and *began* to minister to Him."

Some churches do not realize that they so easily slip from true faith into succumbing to the methods of the devil himself to motivate God and people. They even use the Scripture, as Satan did, to buttress their case. It all sounds so convincing and so good and so easy. It allows Christians to avoid the real work of living in obedience to God in their jobs, their homes and their communities. Marriages fail, children go into destruction and all the rest. Serious problems in marriages, the divorce rate is as rampant in the church as in the world because everyone is looking for a substitute for actually being obedient to God in these areas, which is real faith.

5. "Reaping and sowing"

The passage in Galatians 6:7, "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap", is so distorted that the "Word of Faith" preachers apply it to money. Coupled with Luke 6:38a, "Give, and it will be given to you. They will pour into your lap a good measure--pressed down, shaken together, *and* running over", a seemingly convincing argument is made for giving to God (their ministries of course, let's not let the needs of the poor or missionaries stand in the way).

But the context and intent of these passages has nothing to do with money or "giving in order to gain".

Let's look at Galatians in its immediate context.

2: Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ. 3: For if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. 4: But each one must examine his own work, and then he will have *reason for* boasting in regard to himself alone, and not in regard to another. 5: For each one will bear his own load. 6: The one who is taught the word is to share all good things with the one who teaches *him*. 7: Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap.

*(following Italics mine)*8: For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. 9: Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary. 10: So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.

Perhaps I am not seeing it clearly, but it appears at first glance that what is sown is goodness and kindness toward others and not money given in a "spiritual investment" with the goal to reap a hundredfold for oneself. The definition of verses 7 and 8 is found clearly in 2, 6,9 and 10. It also

appears in verses 3 and 4 that seeking one's own benefit or glory is not appreciated by the apostle at all. So teachers using this passage as a "principle" for attaining God's blessings of prosperity for oneself use it in a fashion directly opposite of what it is saying. Didn't Satan do stuff like that?

How about Luke. I'd guess that we will find the same thing.

Luke 6:27-46, "But I say to you who hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, 28: bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. 29: "Whoever hits you on the cheek, offer him the other also; and whoever takes away your coat, do not withhold your shirt from him either. 30: "Give to everyone who asks of you, and whoever takes away what is yours, do not demand it back. 31: "Treat others the same way you want them to treat you. 32: "If you love those who love you, what credit is *that* to you? For even sinners love those who love them. 33: "If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is *that* to you? For even sinners do the same. 34: "If you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is *that* to you? Even sinners lend to sinners in order to receive back the same *amount*. 35: "But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil *men*. 36: "Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. 37: "Do not judge, and you will not be judged; and do not condemn, and you will not be condemned; pardon, and you will be pardoned. 38: "Give, and it will be given to you. They will pour into your lap a good measure--pressed down, shaken together, *and* running over. For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return." 39: And He also spoke a parable to them: "A blind man cannot guide a blind man, can he? Will they not both fall into a pit? 40: "A pupil is not above his teacher; but everyone, after he has been fully trained, will be like his teacher. 41: "Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? 42: "Or how can you say to your brother, 'Brother, let me take out the speck that is in your eye,' when you yourself do not see the log that is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take out the speck that is in your brother's eye. 43: "For there is no good tree which produces bad fruit, nor, on the other hand, a bad tree which produces good fruit. 44: "For each tree is known by its own fruit. For men do not gather figs from thorns, nor do they pick grapes from a briar bush. 45: "The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth what is good; and the evil *man* out of the evil *treasure* brings forth what is evil; for his mouth speaks from that which fills his heart. 46: "Why do you call Me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?"

It looks to me that, at first glance, Jesus is talking (like Paul) about how "you" are to treat others, even "your" enemies. "Be merciful, giving, treating others as you wish to be treated, do good, love, *lend expecting nothing in return*", etc. seems to be the general theme, and it is upon these acts, and the heart God wishes us to have, that we will receive these same things in return.

Quite different from what is generally taught, as is most of what these teachers proclaim.