

THE Apostolic Faith

EARNESTLY CONTEND FOR THE FAITH

October – December 2020

A HERITAGE OF PRAYER

FINDING
CERTAINTY IN
UNCERTAIN
TIMES

FROM THE WORD

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4 REASONS
TO BE OF
GOOD
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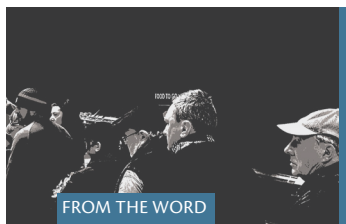
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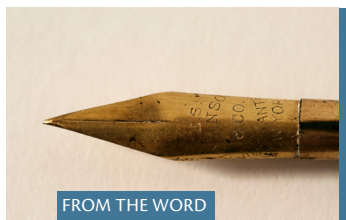
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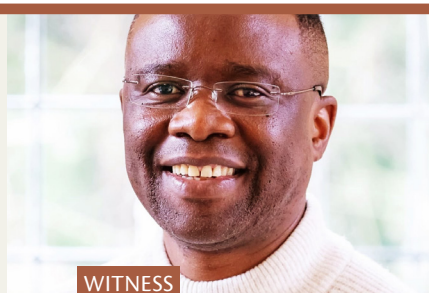
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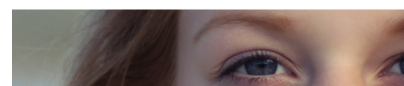
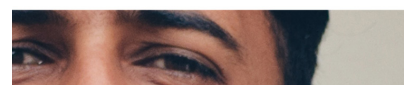
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By Darrel Lee, Superintendent General

AN INVESTMENT
IN OUR FAMILIES
WILL GIVE DIVIDENDS
FOR AN ENTIRE LIFETIME,
AND LONGER.



“

They all learned from their parents and instilled in their own children that the most important aspect of life is to be devoted to God.

The testimonies of Nick Segres Jr., and his wife, Sharron (see page 24), remind me that my brother Gary and Brother Nick's father were very good friends. You will read that Nick Sr. died in 1995 at just forty-nine years of age. Gary also died relatively young. It is most striking that before each passed, they instilled a faith in their children that has lasted beyond their own lives. We see the outcome of their family investment these many years later.

Though Nick Sr. grew up on the East Coast and Gary on the West Coast, there were some similarities in their backgrounds. Each came from strong families. Brother Nick was the son of a preacher and grew up in a home of faith. Though Gary's parents were not Christians, he grew up in a stable home. Each of them joined the military after high school and sowed seeds of sin for a few years. Brother Nick prayed through to salvation in our Kingstree, South Carolina, church, and Gary in our Murphysboro, Illinois, tabernacle. In fact, that is where the two met and became fast friends.

At that time, the Segres family was living in Winfield, Kansas, where we had a church. My brother moved his family to Arkansas after his discharge and attended our Fort Smith church. Each dad was very involved in the lives of his children. They made it a point to bring their families to our annual camp meetings and branch church special meetings whenever they could, and the two families would see each other at those events. They also took trips to visit one another's homes, each making the four-hour drive on different occasions. As a result, their children,

who were close in age, also became acquainted.

Gary's kids speak fondly of their time spent riding bikes with the Segreses all over Winfield, hiking the open spaces of Fort Smith together, football games among the boys, and their dads talking about God's Word and laughing late into the night. Today, the children of Brother Nick and Gary live on the East Coast and West Coast respectively. When Nick Jr. and Sharron attended Portland 2019 camp meeting, it was a pleasure to observe them reminiscing with my niece and nephew. Nick Jr. still describes his dad with great admiration, and Gary's kids esteem their father with the same high regard.

In their testimonies, Brother Nick Jr. and Sister Sharron describe their marriage, bringing up four children, and doing so during a time of a major health crisis. Through it all, they learned to impart to their children the same faith they had been taught. Gary's kids have also faced challenges while rearing families, but have used them as stepping-stones to higher spiritual ground. They all learned from their parents and instilled in their own children that the most important aspect of life is to be devoted to God.

If they were still alive, Brother Nick Sr. and Gary would have every right to be very proud of their descendants. Those two set a high standard, and their children and grandchildren are not only meeting it, but are determined to pass it along to the next generation as well. They illustrate the value of investing spiritually in the ones who are closest to us. We hear that "home is where the heart is," but home is also where faith often first springs forth and grows. As with the Nick Segres Sr. and Gary Lee homes, may we also be inspired to invest in our families in a way that will be evidenced long after we have gone to our rewards.

D Lee

From THE WORD

*For the word of God is quick, and powerful,
and sharper than any twoedged sword,
piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul
and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and
is a discerner of the thoughts and
intent of the heart. — Hebrews 4:12*

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FINDING CERTAINTY IN UNCERTAIN TIMES

LIKE THE PROPHET HABAKKUK WE CAN TRUST GOD AND REJOICE IN THE MIDST OF TROUBLING CIRCUMSTANCES.



By Darrel Lee

National crisis has been in the headlines and on all of our minds this year. In the Book of Habakkuk, the eighth of the twelve minor prophets, we find the prophet Habakkuk grieved and burdened during a time of national crisis in his nation of Judah. Habakkuk was faithful to God and had done his best to adhere to the teachings of his godly heritage, yet he was impacted by the crisis. He prayed, asking for divine intervention, but it seemed to him that God was indifferent or absent altogether. Powerful nations were threatening Judah's safety. The Assyrian empire was falling and the Chaldean empire of Babylon was rising. Disaster appeared to be imminent, and God was not responding.

In our day, many express apprehension about the powerful nations threatening our country—though we hear of Russia, China, Iran, or North Korea instead of the Assyrian or Babylonian Empires—so we can identify with Habakkuk's burden. The prophet had every reason to be concerned, because the external threat toward his nation was very real. The Northern Kingdom of Israel had been conquered by the Assyrians and its people carried away into captivity more than one hundred years earlier, and Assyria had threatened at that time to come farther south to Judah. More recently, the Babylonians had begun overtaking Assyria as the dominant world power, and now that empire threatened Judah.

The internal threat was real as well. Judah had departed from her spiritual heritage. The nation had been founded upon the precepts of the Ten Commandments, but over time, the people had fallen away from God and adopted practices that were in total conflict with His law. The final four kings of Judah were evil, and there was violence and chaos in Judah and its capital city of Jerusalem. As a result, judgment was coming.

HABAKKUK SEEKS AN ANSWER FROM GOD

The prophet was bewildered by God's seeming inaction toward the dire situation facing his land, so he prayed. In Habakkuk 1:2 we find his words, "O LORD, how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear! Even cry out unto thee of violence, and thou wilt not save!" He was pleading, "God, won't You settle this national crisis? Won't You address Judah's perilous state by punishing the wicked?"

The prophet knew that God could intervene and resolve the situation in a moment; He could simply speak the word, as He did at Creation, and it would be done. However, God chose otherwise. He responded to Habakkuk's complaint by saying, "I will work a work in your days, which ye will not believe, though it be told you. For, lo, I raise up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation, which shall march through the breadth of the land [Judah], to possess the dwelling places that are not theirs" (Habakkuk 1:5-6).

Clearly, God had a plan, but it was not a plan welcomed by the prophet. When God announced that He would use the Chaldeans to conquer and disperse the people of Judah in order to purge the nation of their sins, the prophet protested. In verse 13, we read a portion of his objection, “Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity: wherefore lookest thou upon them that deal treacherously, and holdest thy tongue when the wicked devoureth the man that is more righteous than he?” In essence, Habakkuk was saying, “Lord, it is true that we are in a bad state of affairs morally, but look at the Chaldeans! They are worse yet, but You intend to use them to accomplish Your justice? How can that be?”

Earlier, it had seemed fitting to the prophets when God used the Chaldeans to destroy the Assyrians who had ravaged the Northern Kingdom. At that time, the Chaldean armies were regarded as the instrument of God. But when those same forces threatened Judah, Habakkuk objected. He wanted answers from God, so he purposed, “I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he [the Lord] will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved” (Habakkuk 2:1).

Have you ever imagined a conversation in which someone says something to you and you respond, then they reply to your response, and you rebuff that? A mental dialog of that sort gains nothing, but that was what Habakkuk was doing. God did respond; in fact, Habakkuk did not have to wait long. In verse 2 we read, “And the LORD answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it.” God’s answer was to be so simple that even a person going by could read it while running.

The answer came in the form of five woes, which are outlined in chapter two. The first was, “Woe to him that increaseth that which is not his” (verse 6). Verse 9 asserts, “Woe to him that coveteth,” a reminder to Judah that the Law of God given to Moses on the tables of stone included the command not to covet. Verse 12, “Woe to him that buildeth a town with blood and stablisheth a city by iniquity.” In verse 15 we read, “Woe to him that giveth his neighbor drink”—to those who were promoting or facilitating drunkenness. Finally, we

find these words in verse 19: “Woe to him that saith to the wood, Awake . . . Behold, it is laid over with gold and silver, and there is no breath at all in the midst of it.” Here, God was warning idolators in Judah who treated inanimate objects as if they had life and intelligence. The prophet went on to suggest that instead, the people should approach God in His house with awe and reverence.

As we consider the exchange between Habakkuk and God recorded in this book, we see uncertainty; we see faith; and we see gratitude.



In the midst of uncertainty, be assured that God has a purpose and that purpose will work all things together for good.

UNCERTAINTY

Habakkuk was concerned about the uncertainty that existed during a time of national crisis, but God’s concern was about the behavior of corrupt people who needed correction. Habakkuk looked for a response from God against Judah’s enemies, but God’s attention was focused on what was happening in Judah itself. God’s response did not address the matter that the prophet felt was so urgent; instead He pronounced the five woes. In essence, those woes were saying “Woe unto you who live as if you will never give an account to your Maker.”

Uncertainty always exists. On any given Sunday, there likely are those in our sanctuary—and certainly among those around the world who are viewing our webcast—who are facing great uncertainty. This year, all of us experienced uncertainty at the same time due to the pandemic that impacted lives around the globe. That uncertainty occurred at different levels, because some were already experiencing challenges that were compounded by the effects of the pandemic, but it affected us all.

Life itself is uncertain for everyone, always. The Bible teaches that we have no guarantee of tomorrow. The Apostle James said, “What is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away” (James 4:14). We are

here today and gone tomorrow. We have no guarantee of another moment on this earth, so it behooves us to live for God so we can spend eternity with the Lord and with loved ones who have also made preparations to meet their Maker.

While we cannot always see or understand what God is doing, we can be sure that God is not absent. He is still on His throne and alert every moment of the day for each one of us. And while there is uncertainty in the world around us, there is also a degree of predictability. For example, the Apostle Paul stated in Romans 8:28, “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.” In the midst of uncertainty, be assured that God has a purpose and that purpose will work all things together for good.



Sin that is not repented of will always result in death, but a remedy for sin is available.

At another time, Paul said, “I have learned in whatever state I am, therewith to be content.” The Apostle had suffered greatly but He had also felt great joy. He had experienced times of poverty but also times of plenty. Through those varying circumstances, he had learned—and we all have an opportunity to learn—to be content in all situations, knowing that God was taking care of him.

There is never uncertainty regarding the results of disobedience to God. The predictable aspect of disobedience is that it will bring one down. The destructive nature of sin is more powerful than a virus and more deadly in its outcome. While we cannot know exactly where sin will take one or what damage it will leave in its wake, the ultimate outcome is certain: destruction. It is like driving a car down a long, steep hill with no brakes. That car will certainly crash at the bottom of the hill, even if the extent of the damage is unknown at the top.

There has been a concerted effort in scientific and medical circles to find a remedy for the virus that has impacted our whole world. However, even when this

virus is eradicated or a remedy is provided to minimize its effects, sin will still remain. Sin that is not repented of will always result in death, but a remedy for sin is available. And it is far more important that we take advantage of God’s provision—the remedy paid for by the Blood of Jesus when He suffered and died on the Cross—than that we acquire a provision to wipe out the pandemic that has spread around the globe. The Bible teaches that when we confess and forsake our sins, we receive forgiveness through the merits of the Blood of Jesus. Through Christ’s atonement, we can be delivered from eternal death.

FAITH

Though Habakkuk was in need of answers from God and actually wanted to dictate what those answers should be, he still was trusting in God. And God’s response was that “the just shall live by his faith” (Habakkuk 2:4). While the Lord took upon Himself the penalty for our sins and purchased the remedy through His own Blood, we must take action. We must avail ourselves of the remedy by asking that it be applied to our hearts by the grace of God, and then by embracing and adhering to it. From that point onward, we must learn, as the prophet did, that “the just shall live by his faith.” Faith is what assures us that God can be trusted even when we don’t see Him responding or feel Him near. That is faith, and that is how we must live. If we relied upon feelings rather than faith, we would be overcome by uncertainty and adversity. However, that is not the attitude of one whose faith is anchored in God. The just shall live by his faith.

This is such an important concept that these words are repeated three times in the New Testament. For example, Hebrews 10:38 speaks of the just living by faith. In the next chapter, the writer of Hebrews went on to name some who overcame great difficulties by faith—difficulties much greater than what we are experiencing today. By faith they triumphed, and that is how we will triumph as well. Nothing can defeat us if we have faith in God! We can rely upon Him. While uncertainty exists, the mark of our faith is not how we respond when conditions are favorable, but how we respond when the conditions are unfavorable.

Job is one individual in the Old Testament who possessed faith when everything around him seemed

unfavorable. After suffering the sudden loss of his family and material possessions, he asked, "Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" He also stated, "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away." Then he continued with those unforgettable words, "Blessed be the name of the LORD." We likely are not encountering what Job encountered, by any means. However, in all the adversity that came his way, he maintained his trust in God; we read, "In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly." We can do the same.

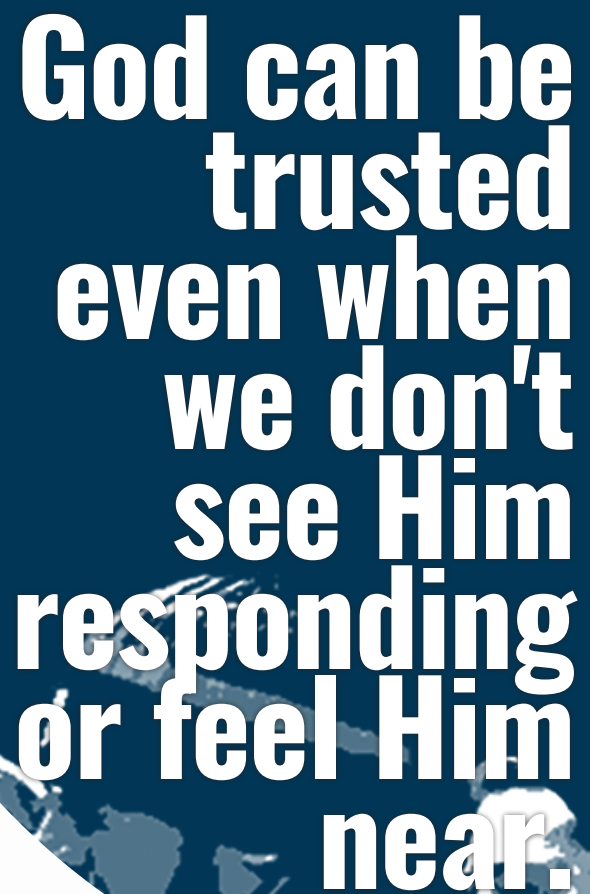
If anything, faith is strengthened by adversity, not weakened. When we sail along calmly, with nothing troubling the sea of life, we have little need to exercise faith. It is when life is uncertain and everything seems to be turning upside down that faith is required. Our faith grows and is strengthened in times of adversity.

GRATITUDE

Finally, we find gratitude in the Book of Habakkuk. Verses 17 and 18 of chapter 3 give the prophet's conclusion after he had poured out his heart to God: "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation." He had his salvation. When our gifts disappear, we still have the Giver on our side. If we have nothing but have God, we possess what is most important.

The secret to maintaining a spirit of gratitude is to focus upon God rather than circumstances or feelings. Our feelings are not reliable. Right now, many in our world are in distress, and understandably so if their faith is not anchored in God. They are wondering, worried, and anxious. If we focus on our concerns and let them dominate us, we will find ourselves in a worse state yet. If we focus upon God, we will have a sure footing, and that surely is a reason for gratitude.

Habakkuk knew this. He concluded his prayer with the affirmation, "The LORD God is my strength, and he will make my feet like hinds' feet, and he will make me to walk upon mine high places." Deer run across rough



God can be trusted even when we don't see Him responding or feel Him near.

and dangerous terrain and up steep places with sure feet, and that is what God promises to help us do during times of uncertainty. If we will hold onto our faith and use that faith to look to God with a grateful heart, we will overcome even in troubled times.

God can help us attain higher ground in our spiritual lives than we had when the trouble began. So in these times when the future is uncertain and situations around us cause dismay in the natural, remember the conclusion Habakkuk reached: that in spite of trouble, he would trust and rejoice in God. We can do the same, and we will thrive spiritually as we make that our purpose. ■

Darrel Lee is Superintendent General of the Apostolic Faith Church.

A GOD-GIVEN MISSION

YOUR MISSION WORK MAY NOT TAKE YOU ACROSS OCEANS. YOU MIGHT BE CALLED TO JUST GO NEXT DOOR!

By Bill McKibben



We can read about the task God has entrusted to us in 2 Corinthians 5:20, "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." We have been commissioned to proclaim the good news of salvation to the entire world.

That may seem like a daunting assignment, but God is big enough to accomplish what He intends in your life and in the lives of those around you. When Jesus gave the Great Commission, He bracketed the instructions by two important statements. The first was His declaration that all power in Heaven and earth had been given to Him. We read about this power in the Book of Hebrews, which states Jesus is "upholding all things by the word of his power" (Hebrews 1:3). It is not uncommon to feel a task God has called you to do is beyond your ability or the responsibility of spreading the Gospel is too big. In our own strength, we do not have what it takes to fulfill God's calling in our lives, but we can be assured that Jesus, who upholds all things by the word of His power, does.

The second bracketing statement was "And, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." The enemy may tempt you to feel that you are all alone and must rely on yourself. However, Jesus said, "I will be with you." One time I heard a preacher say, "If you are alone, you are alone with

After the Resurrection and before Jesus ascended to Heaven, He met with the eleven disciples on a mountain in Galilee and charged them with what is now known as the "Great Commission." He said, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen" (Matthew 28:18-20).

The Church has been given a mission by God, and if you are part of the Church, the mission is for you too. However, it is not *our* mission, but God's. A commission can be defined as "a command to perform prescribed acts, with the authority to act on behalf of another" or "a charge; being entrusted with a task, as an agent for another."

Jesus,” and that is always the case. Wherever God sends us, whatever He calls us to do, and whatever situation He places us in, we can know that we are not alone.

Jesus’ instructions on how we are to fulfill the Great Commission were given in a straightforward manner; He said to *go*, *teach*, and *baptize*. By reviewing each of these, we will see that it is possible for every Christian to answer God’s call to spread the Gospel.

GO

Jesus’ first instruction was to “Go.” The basic model given in the Bible for “going” is found in Acts, chapter 1, starting at verse 4, “And, [Jesus] being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. . . . But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth” (verses 4 and 8). In order for a person to go somewhere, he must start somewhere. That is what the disciples did. They were praying in Jerusalem when the power of the Holy Spirit fell, so that is where they started. Wherever you are living is where you must start. People get excited about Judea, Samaria, or the uttermost parts of the earth. And it is exciting to think that mission work could take you a great distance away, even across oceans to other lands. However, the place to start is right where you are. God may very well call you to speak to your neighbors across the street or to the person who sits at the desk next to yours or to the clerk in the grocery store.

Years ago, Harold Barrett, the founding missionary of our Korean work, came to me down at the altar one morning after a service and asked, “Do you want to be a missionary?” I was a young man, and my heart just jumped. Then he looked across that altar at me and said, “Have you talked to your neighbor?” He continued, “There is no ocean to cross there, no language barrier, no deprivation . . .” My head had been big for about



two seconds, and then it got really small, because I had not talked to my neighbor. When I got home, though, I *did* talk to my neighbor. I did not go preach at him, I just talked to him over the back fence. I still talk to my neighbors! Currently, a man named John is my neighbor on one side. Not only do I talk to John, but so did the pastor who lived in the parsonage before me, and the pastor before him. In fact, when John’s wife died, the pastor before that spent time walking around the neighborhood with him in his grief. That is how you start to obey the command to “Go.” You start by talking to the people around you.

The second model for “going” flows from the first. This is when a person is called to leave and minister to people elsewhere. In Acts 13:1, we learn the church at Antioch had an abundance of preachers—five are named. The Holy Spirit called for Paul and Barnabas to be set apart from the group and sent out as missionaries. God still calls missionaries today, but a person does not start at this second model. George Hughes, who was our first missionary to Africa, did not start his service by going to Africa; he started by being faithful at home. He consecrated his life to the Lord, and then began to pick up songbooks in the campground tabernacle, give violin lessons, and direct music. Likewise, Brother Harold did not start mission work by going to Korea. He was a painter, and on the jobsite, he talked about Jesus—a lot. For years, he did jobs around the campground. Eventually, he began hosting merchant mariners whose ships were docked in the Portland harbor. So mission work begins at home.

TEACH

The next instruction Jesus gave was “Teach all nations.” The word translated here as “teach”

FROM THE WORD

comes from the Greek word *matheteusate*, which literally means “make disciples.” In Jesus’ time, rabbis had followers who listened to their teachings and modeled their lives accordingly. It was much like an apprenticeship or internship today. We follow a similar model, training apprentices in the Gospel.

Several years ago, I was observing a remodeling project where one of the brothers in the church was the contractor. He had hired some employees, and one young man arrived on the jobsite toting all new gear. He was wearing a brand new carpenter’s apron and carrying a new hammer, level, and nail puller. He stood out as an apprentice, and I teased him that we needed to stomp on his apron a bit and put some holes in it so he would look like he knew what he was doing. However, he was on the right path. He had purposed to learn the carpentry trade, acquired the necessary tools, and was even making an apprentice’s wages. He mostly stood around on that job, because there was a lot to learn, but that is where one starts. Like the brother who was training him, we need to share what we know with others, so they too can start, and eventually go and teach.

BAPTIZE

After Jesus instructed to make disciples, He went on to say, “Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” When we have a water baptismal service, we follow these exact instructions. However, there is more to this command than just dipping people in water. One author, Dallas Willard, said this about water baptism: “Immerse them together in the presence of the Trinity—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Yes, baptize them in the Name, but, dear friends, that doesn’t just mean getting them wet while you say those Names. It means to immerse them in the Reality.”¹ The reality of a loving God, the Father, who has reached out from eternity to call humanity into a relationship with himself, with the guidance and the comfort of the Holy Spirit, and with the sacrificial love of Jesus the Savior. We want to share with others the reality of God, the fullness of God, in every part of our lives.

WHAT TO TEACH

Jesus expounded on the second instruction to “teach all nations” by saying, “Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.” This directive is not very complicated. We are to teach others to do what Jesus told us to do. At the Apostolic Faith, we teach Pentecostal holiness doctrine. We tell people they can be saved from



The Holy Ghost not only empowers us to be bold in words, but to boldly reflect in our lives this wonderful message of redemption that God has for the world.

their sins and live victoriously. Then they can be sanctified wholly and have their inner motives purified. Sanctified believers can be filled with the Holy Spirit—endued with power for service—evidenced by speaking in a language they never learned. These experiences are the foundation for what we teach, and find their basis in what Jesus taught and lived.

Before we can teach these things, however, we must experience them. Evangelism is not just some big task that we do; it flows out of who we are. Our lives have been transformed by Christ, and this is the most critical factor of effectively

sharing the Gospel. We are to proclaim the Good News, but more importantly, to embody the Good News in our lives and actions.

Receiving the baptism of the Holy Ghost will make us even more effective as witnesses.

Shortly after Jesus resurrected, He appeared to the disciples and said to them, "Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.

And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost" (John 20:21-22). The Holy Ghost not only empowers us to be bold in words, but to boldly reflect in our lives this wonderful message of redemption that God has for the world.

The testimony of my sister-in-law illustrates how simply sharing the Gospel while living it is a fulfillment of God's mission. She played clarinet in her high school band and sat next to a young lady who was a Christian. They began getting rides home together, and every day this girl shared a little bit about Jesus. At the same time, her life backed up what she was saying, and this had an impact on my sister-in-law. She prayed, gave her life to God, and several decades later, is

still serving the Lord. Her classmate fulfilled the Great Commission, not by going a long ways away or doing anything fancy. She simply started right where she was, and shared what she knew about Jesus, while living what she said. And that is what we all are to do.

TAKE PART

Through Jesus' death and resurrection, God has called all of humanity into His grand story of redemption, and He has called us to be a part of sharing His work.

It is true that if you live for God, some people will be offended and you may face persecution. However, not everyone will be offended. Some will be drawn to Jesus by the hope that is offered. In this ungodly and sinful world, we need the right perspective. Instead of thinking that this is an awful time in history because things are so bad in the world, we need to think that this is a wonderful time to share the Gospel, because people are desperate for hope.

God has a mission for the Church, and fulfilling it is possible with His help. We have been sent to the world, just as Jesus was sent by the Father to the world. The Great Commission is not complicated if we will simply follow the instructions Jesus gave. We can have a part in bringing hope to others if we will simply go and make disciples, immersing them in the reality of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, teaching them to do what Jesus said while living it ourselves. ■

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¹Dallas Willard, *Renovation of the Heart: Putting on the Character of Christ* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2002), 239.

DISCERNING, ACCEPTING, AND OBEYING GOD'S WILL



UNDERSTANDING AND
EMBRACING GOD'S PLAN FOR
YOUR LIFE.

By Mark Mfandarahwa

In 2011, my wife and I went through one of the most difficult times of our life when our young son passed away. He had first become ill in 2006. At that time, we took him to the hospital after one of his lungs collapsed, and while preparing to transfer him to a hospital for critically ill children, his heart stopped. God spared him at that time, though his health was up and down until his passing six years later. It was a deeply painful time, but God's comfort sustained us.

It was not easy to accept God's will in that situation. We did not want to lose our son, nor did we understand why God had allowed his death. However, with God's help we were able to surrender our desires to Him and trust that His plans are good even when we cannot understand them. We know God loved our son too, but sometimes He must allow painful events in order to accomplish His greater good. Through that

experience, my wife and I learned more of what it means to accept God's will.

When Jesus taught His disciples how to pray, the model prayer He gave them included the phrase, "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10). From this we can draw at least three truths: first, that there is such a thing as God's will for us—God in Heaven has a plan that He desires to see come to pass in our lives. Second, God's will for us is good; if it were not, Jesus would not have told us to pray for it to be done. Third, God's perfect will for us may not happen. If it were guaranteed, there would be no need to pray for it.

These three principles point to three responsibilities for us: to find out what God's will for us is, to accept that His will is best, and to do our part to ensure it is accomplished in our lives. Even in the difficulty of losing our son, my wife and I had to consider what God would have us do next, then decide whether we would accept that, and

then actually do it. In the end, we found that God is glorified in our lives when we embrace His will.

Let us now consider more closely these three responsibilities related to God's will.

DISCERNING GOD'S WILL

If we want to know God's will, the place to begin is in His Word. The entire Bible is a revelation from God of sound doctrines, teachings, and instruction, and it is His will for us to obey all of it.

God's will revealed in Bible promises. There are many universal promises in God's Word that we know are His will for everyone to receive. The starting point must be salvation, the experience which reconciles us to God. It is the beginning of our relationship with Him, and for those who are not yet saved, God would have them repent and be saved as soon as possible (see 2 Peter 3:9).

We can also see in Scripture that it is God's will for every saved individual to be sanctified wholly (1 Thessalonians 4:3). Salvation accomplishes the forgiveness of sins, enabling one to stand before God justified. Yet, the underlying condition of the heart that caused the individual to commit sin in the first place remains until he comes to God again—this time not confessing his sin, but consecrating his life. When he offers God his whole life, God will sanctify his soul, eradicating the sinful nature that led him to sin. The sanctified heart is holy, with pure desires and motives, and God wants every person to live in that state.

It is also God's will for everyone who has been saved and sanctified to be baptized with the Holy Ghost. When the disciples in the Upper Room first received this experience, the Spirit of God came down as a rushing mighty wind, and they spoke in other languages as the Spirit gave them utterance (see Acts 2). They were endued with power from on high so they could work for God more effectively, and God wants everyone to receive that experience (Acts 2:39).

Beyond these three fundamental Christian experiences, there are many other promises given to all: it is God's will for us to live with Him eternally in Heaven (John 14:2-3); to comfort us (John 14:18); to give us wisdom (James 1:5); and much more. When we find promises like these in



If we want to know God's will,
it is of utmost importance to read and
meditate upon Scripture.

the Bible, we can rejoice to know that it is God's will to fulfill them in our lives, and He *will* fulfill them when we live in obedience to Him.

God's will revealed in Bible instructions. God's Word is replete with instruction about how God wants us to conduct our lives. For example, the Book of Ephesians teaches that it is God's will for husbands to love their wives, children to obey their parents, and wives to submit to their husbands. We read in 1 Peter that believers are to be subject to each other, and in Romans 13 that all are to submit to the authority God has established. The only exception is when someone of authority tells us to do something contrary to God's Word. In that case, the Bible teaches that we should obey God rather than any person.

We could continue through the whole Bible finding more information about God's will for our conduct. So if we want to know God's will, it is of utmost importance to read and meditate upon Scripture, and to attend church services and Bible studies. We can also benefit from the many resources published by our church headquarters free of charge—curriculum series, testimonies, tracts, daily devotionals, sermons, and more.

Once we have learned a principle of the Bible, we must take God at His word. Ephesians 5:17 says, "Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is." We cannot expect that God will reconfirm each lesson apart from the revelation that is already given to us. For instance, there is no need to ask God if we should pay our tithes, because we already know that the requirement to do so is stated in His Word. Neither will we ask God if we should forgive those who offend us when Jesus made it clear that we are to forgive everyone (Matthew 6:14). If we truly want to understand God's will, we must be wise and take His Word seriously.

God's will revealed outside of Scripture. When we study Scripture, it is the Spirit of God who enlightens our hearts to understand the meaning, and can also speak to us in other ways too.

Consider the experience of salvation. Though the Bible explains that sin separates people from God and that sinners are condemned before God, many people never read that in the Bible before they are saved. Yet, the Spirit of God reveals it to their hearts in some way.

I came to the Gospel after observing the life of a faithful Christian woman, which convinced me that Christianity was real. Formerly, I had criticized people who talked to me about Christianity, and had not wanted to join any church. However, as I observed that godly woman's life, God impressed upon me that I was not living right, and that if I died, I would go to Hell. Though no one was preaching to me, God's Spirit revealed His will to me through another person's life and through my own conscience, letting me know that I needed to make a change. He led me to receive the experience of salvation described in His Word.

The same Spirit who convicted us of our sins and witnessed to our hearts when we were saved will continue to lead and guide us. He troubles our conscience if we have done something wrong or if we are headed down a dangerous path. Isaiah 30:21 says, "And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left." That voice is the Spirit of God, and He leads us in God's truth.

Sometimes when we are seeking to know God's will, it is helpful to ask a trusted Christian friend for advice in the matter. However, we must choose our advisors carefully because believers do not all have the same maturity and understanding. If we want to be led aright, we need to look to those whose lives indicate they are led by the Spirit, and He will help us through their godly insight.

In addition to speaking to us through Scripture, through other people, and through our conscience, God may reveal His will through Creation, a song, a dream, and many other ways. In every case, the message He speaks will be in harmony with His Word because God is One. The Father, the Son, and

the Holy Ghost are perfectly united as One. There is one way to Heaven and one will of God. We read in 1 Corinthians 14:33, "God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints." Through whatever means God speaks, there will not be confusion but peace, because God is One and His message is singular.

ACCEPTING GOD'S WILL

God orchestrates our lives in amazing ways. There are no accidents or missed details with Him. Sometimes we might think our parents, our peers, or our circumstances are the reason we are where we are today. However, if we look at the bigger picture, it is actually God who placed us into the families in which we were born, as well as all the other people in our circles. Such circumstances are beyond our control, but none are beyond God's control.

When our son passed, it was not what we wanted to happen, yet we did not wonder if it was God's will for him to go because that was made clear when God chose to take Him. All we could control was our response to the situation. Would we say God had failed? Would we turn away from God because we did not like His will? Those actions would not bring back our son. Instead, we looked to God to show us the response that was His will for us. In a time of suffering, it is always God's will for us to find comfort in Him. It is His will for us to trust in Him with all our hearts and lean not unto our own understanding (see Proverbs 3:5). It is His will for us to keep our faith in Him even when He takes away something precious to us.

As we walk with God, we will find that His will for us is good. It is a joy to serve God and He will take us from victory to victory until we reach Heaven. Because we know God loves us, if it is His will to allow us to suffer, we can pray what Christ did just prior to His crucifixion, "Not my will, but thine, be done" (Luke 22:42). God's plan is better than ours, even if we do not understand how that could be. We may never know in this lifetime, but we are confident that we will understand when we get to Heaven.

OBEYING GOD'S WILL

It is one thing to know God's will, it is another to accept that His will is best, and it is yet another to follow through in obedience to His will. The whole



Bible is available to us, as well as our many study tools—more resources than we could exhaust. The question is: Are we ready to do what we have learned is God’s will? It is our choice whether to follow God or go our own way, but on the authority of God’s Word, we know that our lives will be blessed if we follow after God. There will still be challenges, but when we have chosen God’s will, He will be by our side all the way.

Once, I had an issue at work with a former colleague. A project had gone wrong and I ended up inheriting a problem someone else had created. However, it was made to appear as though I was the cause of the problem, so my work in the matter was not seen as good. I knew the truth, and I also knew God would have me treat my co-workers with respect, even in this situation. That was a challenging time, but God helped me, and then in a way that I never would have imagined, God caused the person who was troubling me to leave the company. It was not that I took pleasure in seeing that individual removed; I wished him well then and I still pray for his salvation today. However, when I obeyed what God required of me, He was my Defender, and I have the hope that my testimony during that time helped point my colleague to God.

Another time, during the Portland camp meeting in 2017, the ministers from the United Kingdom gathered for a meeting and our district superintendent brought to our attention the need for ministerial support at the Birmingham church. He asked us all to pray about the situation, and as I prayed, I felt a heavy load settle on me. God’s Spirit impressed upon me that our family should leave Manchester and move to Birmingham. That burden did not lift until I told my district superintendent what I felt, and afterward I had such peace. When I spoke to my wife about it she said, “Well, we should be where God wants us to be.” Indeed, we have found that the easiest way in life is to be where God wants us to be and do what God wants us to do.

We chose to follow God in obedience, and He

arranged a miraculous transition for us from Manchester to Birmingham. He provided me a new position in my company with a promotion, helped us sell and buy a home at a difficult time in the housing market, and even found a good school for our daughter that she loved immediately. During our first week in Birmingham, a neighbor came to our house and shoveled the snow from our

God’s plan is better than ours, even if we do not understand how that could be. We may never know in this lifetime, but we are confident that we will understand when we get to Heaven.

pathway! When we followed God’s will, we found that He had many blessings in store for us, and He worked in ways we never expected.

PROVING WHAT IS THE PERFECT WILL OF GOD

Romans 12:1-2 says, “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.” There is a perfect will of God for our lives, and we can prove it by following Him wholeheartedly. When we are confronted with a choice and are not sure what to do, we should seek God’s will until He shows us what to do, then accept it, and choose to obey. Following God will certainly involve personal sacrifice, but our temporal losses will not matter in eternity and living to glorify God will matter. This life is short, but the one to come will last forever, and a crown awaits every Christian who follows God’s way. ■

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A LETTER TO THE THESSALONIANS

*Compiled by the Apostolic
Faith Editorial Team*

COMMENDATION,
COMFORT, AND
INSTRUCTION FROM
THE APOSTLE PAUL.

If the books of the New Testament were arranged according to their dates of composition, the book of 1 Thessalonians would come first. Paul the Apostle wrote the epistle in about A.D. 50 or 51, some twenty years after Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection, and likely before any of the Gospels were written. The epistle followed Paul's visit to Thessalonica, which is described in Acts 17.

Paul, who was known prior to his conversion as Saul of Tarsus, was a key figure in the expansion of the Gospel to the first-century Gentile world. A former persecutor turned evangelist, he made at least three missionary journeys around the Mediterranean region, founding several churches in Asia Minor and Europe. Since Paul was both a Jew and a Roman citizen,

he took advantage of his background to minister to both Jewish and Roman audiences on those trips. Later, he sent counsel and encouragement to the churches he had established and individuals in them; these epistles make up fourteen of the twenty-seven books of the New Testament.

Paul made his first missionary journey from A.D. 46 to 49, traveling with Barnabas through the Roman province of Galatia. Shortly after that trip, and perhaps ten or twelve years after his dramatic conversion on the road to Damascus, Paul set off on the second of his major outreach ventures. His travels on this occasion took him to several cities, including Thessalonica, which was a military and commercial port at the northwestern end of the Aegean Sea.

Thessalonica—originally named Therma after the many hot springs in the area—was located at the intersection of two Roman trade routes. One of Alexander the Great's generals, Cassander, laid the foundation for a new city near the original city of Therma in 315 B.C., naming it Thessalonica after his wife, who was Alexander the Great's half-sister. Thessalonica became a prominent city in the ancient world, and 146 years before the

birth of Christ, it was made the capital of one of the four Roman districts of Macedonia. At the time of Paul's visit, it was governed by a wicked and mercenary ruler.

Immediately prior to his visit to Thessalonica, Paul and his traveling companion, Silas, had been in the Macedonian city of Philippi. There, they were instrumental in the deliverance of a fortune-telling slave girl who was possessed of an evil spirit. After a riot broke out because of her conversion, the two men were brought before the magistrates, beaten, and thrust into an inner prison. However, God miraculously delivered them by an earthquake, and as a result, the Philippian jailor and his family were converted.

Considering the shameful treatment they had just endured in Philippi, boldly preaching the same message in Thessalonica took God-given courage. However, Paul and Silas once again fearlessly proclaimed that Jesus was the promised Messiah, asserting that the traditional Jewish way of approaching God had been fulfilled in Him. Acts 17:2 details some of Paul's activities in Thessalonica, noting that "Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them [the Jews], and three Sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures, opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ."

That message did not sit well with the unbelieving Jewish religious leaders, and opposition flared up almost immediately. The Bible says the dissenters were "moved by envy." Their accusation was "These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also" (Acts 17:6).

The opposition in Thessalonica quickly became so intense that the believers there persuaded Paul and Silas to flee the city under cover of darkness and go to Berea, some forty-five miles distant. However, when the dissenters heard that Paul was in Berea, they followed him there, so he went on to Athens where he stayed for a short time, and then traveled further west to Corinth.

Because of Paul's hurried departure from Thessalonica, the new believers there had received



QUESTION FOR YOU: There is a sense in which the charge leveled against Paul and Silas should be true of every follower of Christ. In what ways should we, as Christians, be "turning our world upside down"?

only minimal teaching in the Christian doctrine. The Apostle knew they needed a solid spiritual foundation in order to survive in such a hostile environment, and since he could not return to Thessalonica himself, he sent Timothy to find out how the group was faring. When Timothy rejoined Paul in Corinth, he brought back an excellent report, and perhaps also delivered a letter from the Thessalonian church. In response, Paul wrote this epistle that we know as 1 Thessalonians. These are the first written words of the Apostle preserved in Scripture. Overall, Paul's purpose in writing was to remind the Thessalonian believers of the truths that had been conveyed to them.

PAUL'S OPENING GREETINGS AND COMMENDATION

Paul opened with a petition for the bestowment of grace and peace from "God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ" upon the group at Thessalonica. This indicates that the deity of Jesus was not a later development of doctrine among the early Christians; rather, from the very beginning, believers regarded Jesus as the divine Son of God.

The Apostle went on to commend the saints in Thessalonica for a variety of reasons. Because it had been only a short time since they had turned from idols to serve the living God, Paul's words of affirmation are especially noteworthy. They reveal the rapid spiritual progress and flourishing condition of one of the earliest churches of the New Testament.

One commendation occurs in verse 8 of the first chapter, where the Apostle wrote, "From you sounded out the word of the Lord." The word translated as "sounded out" is unique and expressive, appearing nowhere else in the

New Testament. It could aptly describe the blast of a trumpet—a clear and ringing tone that was penetrating, melodious, and demanding of attention. What a positive testimony to the impact these new Christians were already having on the society around them!

Paul also praised the Thessalonians for being faithful to “wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus” (1 Thessalonians 1:10). The word *wait* in this verse comes from the Greek word *anameno*, which means more than just enduring. It portrays an attitude of assurance regarding Christ’s return and the complete fulfillment of the Messianic promises of the Old Testament.

Paul went on to list additional reasons for his praise, including the Thessalonians’ work of faith, their labors of love, their patient hope and steadfastness in “much affliction,” their joy in the Holy Ghost, and their example to believers throughout the region.



A THOUGHT TO PONDER:
If Paul were writing to us, would he be able to commend us for these behaviors? Both as a church body and as individuals, we want to exemplify the same faith, love, hope, steadfastness, and joy that were so evident in these new Thessalonian believers.

TOPICS IN THE EPISTLE

Paul alluded to several topics in the course of this epistle to the Thessalonians. First, he reviewed with these new believers the great doctrines he had taught them, and described the nature of his ministry among them. He went on to encourage them to stand fast in spite of the persecution they faced, explaining that the trials they endured because of their faith were not just chance happenings. On the contrary, suffering for the truth was to be expected, and they were not to be shaken by their afflictions. He could offer this

encouragement with authority because he too had suffered many afflictions, and so understood their tribulations and the forces they were contending against.

Next, the Apostle comforted the saints about Christians who had died, and reminded them of the hope of the Lord’s coming. Paul’s instruction on the topic of Christ’s return in this portion of the epistle is one of the most significant theological contributions of 1 Thessalonians.

At the conclusion of his letter, Paul gave a number of brief principles about Christian living. While believers waited for the coming of the Lord, he instructed them to live quiet, holy, and productive lives in all godliness and dignity. They were to encourage and help one another, to be subject to governing authorities, and to be patient and kind to everyone.

RESPONSE TO ACCUSATIONS

Along with good news concerning the Thessalonian converts, Timothy’s report to Paul included some disturbing accusations. Apparently both Paul’s integrity and his methods of ministry had come under fire by the Jewish religious leaders who wanted to discredit him and what he taught. In chapter 2, the Apostle carefully refuted these false accusations. Paul knew he had been following God in what he preached, so he stated firmly, “Our exhortation was not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile, but as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts” (1 Thessalonians 2:3-4).

Paul saw his responsibility of preaching as a great privilege; he was honored by the fact that God had entrusted him with this role. Thus, even when opposition came, his focus was to please God, not men. He knew he was accountable to God alone, so he could deal with the false accusations leveled against him in the right way, with a focus on protecting these new converts from having their faith shaken.

Verses 3-4 suggest that the accusations against Paul included that he was deluded about his



beliefs, that he had taught among the Thessalonians for his own selfish advantage, and had used flattering words and his position as an Apostle to obtain financial assistance from his hearers. It appears that Paul was also accused of indifference toward the church. His enemies pointed out that the Apostle had not returned to Thessalonica, using that fact to infer that he had no real care for his converts and no intention of visiting them again.

This was certainly a frontal attack upon Paul's ministry! However, the Apostle's response to these accusations demonstrated his integrity and character, and provide an example for believers of every era who are confronted with opposition for their faith. His reaction models what he meant when he urged the Thessalonians to "walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory" (1 Thessalonians 2:12). Later in the epistle, the Apostle went on to give many instructions regarding Christian conduct, but perhaps they all could be summed up by the admonition to "walk worthy." Paul himself lived justly and blamelessly, and because his own life and message were a consistent example, he could exhort these new followers of Christ to walk worthy of God.

In chapter 3, as a continuation of his rebuttal of the false accusations, Paul explained his reasons for sending Timothy back to Thessalonica. First, he wanted to establish the Thessalonians in the faith. The word *establish* means "to stabilize" or "to support an already existing structure." He also had a desire to comfort and encourage the believers. He wanted to make sure they were surviving the attempts of Satan to derail their faith, and that his work among them had not been in vain.

CHRIST'S RETURN

Paul's explanation of Christ's return is found in chapter 4, verses 13-18, and the first eleven verses of chapter 5. In his report to Paul, Timothy evidently had conveyed that confusion existed among some of the Thessalonians regarding this future event. While the little group believed that Jesus had risen from

LEARNING FROM PAUL: The following are actions and attitudes we can learn from Paul's example regarding how to respond to opposition and false accusation.

- **Defend the Gospel.** The attacks were not a personal issue for the Apostle. He was more concerned about protecting these new converts from being swayed from their faith than in vindicating himself.
- **Respond with facts, not emotions.** Paul met the accusation of false motives and greed by pointing to his conduct. He reminded the Thessalonians that when he was among them, he had not taken their money or been a financial burden to them. In fact, he "labored night and day" to make sure he was not imposing on them.
- **Speak the truth graciously.** Paul's tone was emphatic but not harsh. He established the truth, but was not hostile or accusatory toward those who opposed him.
- **Refrain from judging motives.** While Paul pointed out the error of his accusers (see 1 Thessalonians 2:15-16), he did not analyze *why* they opposed him.
- **Refuse to adopt a defeatist mentality.** Though Paul had been wronged by these false accusations, he knew that God could take any situation and use it for His glory. In many of his epistles, he indicated that Christ's followers can grow through trials.
- **Guard against retaliation.** Paul cautioned against seeking vengeance, instructing in 1 Thessalonians 5:15, "See that none render evil for evil unto any man."

the dead and would return to earth one day to summon His own, they evidently were troubled about what would happen to their loved ones who had already passed on, supposing they would not be present at the return of the Lord and thus would miss His rewards.

Paul responded to this concern by spelling out the exact sequence of events at the Rapture. He explained that those who died with faith in Christ will arise out of their graves first and join the Lord in the air. Then, believers who are still alive will rise to meet their loved ones and Christ in the air. Together they will go to be with the Lord forever.

It is not hard to imagine the comfort Paul's words must have been to these new converts. Grief over the passing of loved ones is something that individuals of every era and culture understand. However, Paul said those who are followers of Jesus do not sorrow as those who have no hope, because they know that one day they will be reunited with those who have gone before.



In the midst of a world of selfishness, Paul knew that the Gospel could knit together warring nationalities, hostile classes, and wide diversities of culture and position.

THE BELIEVER'S LIFE

In the closing portion of his epistle to this young church, Paul instructed the believers to “comfort yourselves together, and edify one another” (1 Thessalonians 5:11). In the original Greek, the word translated *edify* means “to build up and promote spiritual growth by teaching or example.” The verb tense of both *comfort* and *edify* implies that believers have a continuing obligation to build one another up.

Schisms and division were prevalent in the ancient world of Paul's time, and political ties only loosely held the various regions together. In the midst of a world of selfishness, Paul knew that the Gospel could knit together warring nationalities, hostile classes, and wide diversities of culture and

position. Though only a short time had elapsed since Paul's time with the Thessalonians, it was clear that love already bound these believers together, and all Paul had to do was encourage its strengthening.

The social environment in the Roman Empire was characterized by immorality, and the Thessalonians' culture was corrupt. Paul let the believers know that even in such a society, they needed to live holy lives. Verses 15 through 22 of the final chapter contain a series of brief, pointed instructions about Christian living. Paul counseled them to:

- Resist revenge. They were not to try to get even or retaliate for unkindness. (Verse 15)
- Maintain a cheerful outlook, avoiding gloom or negativity. (Verse 16)
- Keep a prayerful attitude at all times. (Verse 17)
- Be thankful, expressing gratitude to God for all He has done. (Verse 18)
- Be cautious not to grieve God's Spirit, but rather, honor Him in word and deed. (Verse 19)
- Respect both the efforts and message of those who preach and teach. (Verse 20)
- Be judicious, and choose what is right and true. (Verse 21)
- Keep away from evil, avoiding situations where they might be subject to temptation, and refraining from actions that might lead others astray. (Verse 22)

These instructions are as applicable today as they were for those early converts in Thessalonica—a testimony to the fact that it was God Himself who inspired the writing of this epistle.

A CLOSING EXHORTATION AND PETITION

In the final words of his letter, Paul expressed his fervent desire for holiness to be the hallmark of the little group of believers at Thessalonica, writing, “And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it” (1 Thessalonians 5:23-24). He closed with a personal request for prayer, a charge to read the epistle to “all the holy brethren,” and a petition that echoed his opening greeting for the “grace of our Lord Jesus Christ” to be with them. ■

WITNESS

*Come and hear, all ye that fear God,
and I will declare what he hath done
for my soul. – Psalm 66:16*

24 WE'RE BLESSED BEYOND MEASURE

28 A HERITAGE OF PRAYER

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33 EVIDENCE

WITNESS



NICK'S STORY

By Nick Jr. and Sharron Segres

WE'RE BLESSED BEYOND MEASURE

NICK AND SHARRON HAVE FOUND THAT THE BEST WAY TO LIVE IS BY PUTTING GOD FIRST.

When I was five years old, my family moved to Winfield, Kansas, so my dad could be the pastor of the Apostolic Faith Church in that city. Our whole family was involved at church all the time, and the Bible was an open Book in our home. I truly knew what the Gospel was about.

Around the time I graduated from high school, my parents moved to Aiken, South Carolina, and helped start a new branch church there. I stayed behind in Kansas because I was offered a football scholarship at the local community college, and that's when my life took a bad turn. I chose to hang out with the wrong type of friends, and started doing some of the things my dad had never let me do before. After two years, I transferred to South Carolina State University, and then my life went crazy. I did so poorly in school that I had to quit and move back home with my parents.

A couple of years later, a traumatic experience jolted me into thinking about the condition of my soul. In 1995, my dad suddenly went into cardiac arrest and passed away. He was only forty-nine years old. He was a man who had lived the best way I knew a person could live, and his passing made me wonder, *If God took him early, how much time do I have left?* I had always thought I had plenty of time to get saved, but I realized that God might not let me get old.

That summer, my mother and sister and I drove to the Apostolic Faith camp meeting in Century, Florida. Though I didn't get saved there, being around the


saints softened my heart toward God. From then on, I was under heavy conviction. It felt like I was far from God, but actually I was very close to salvation.

A few weeks later, my brother and I visited our mom who had moved to Kingstree, South Carolina, and the church there was holding special meetings. I was in the back of the sanctuary, too ashamed to go to the front, and some saints came and prayed with me. There I surrendered my life to God, and He saved me! He forgave my sins and showed me that I could be happy without the sinful things the world had to offer.

A GROWING FAMILY AND FAITH

At Century camp meeting I met a girl who had also recently gone through a personal tragedy and then was saved. We began to see that God was bringing us together, and Sharron and I were married the following year. We had our first child right away, and three more in the next four years. My wife and I were young in our faith and as parents, so we had a lot to learn. We found out that even for those who grow up in the Gospel, there are some lessons you just don't learn by hearing. You have to grow into them, and God helped us do that.

A big milestone in my walk with God was when He sanctified me. I had been saved for about ten years and realized I needed to consecrate my life more deeply to God. When I did that, He sanctified me, and it made such a difference. It totally changed my attitude—even more than what God had done



for me at salvation. Previously, I seemed to have a negative disposition; I would see the reasons something was bad, but never a silver lining. Though I was not a mean person, I was not always nice to be around. After sanctification, my outlook became positive, and that, coupled with my deeper commitment to God, turned my life in a whole different direction.

That same year, I began praying for the baptism of the Holy Ghost, but several months passed without my receiving it. I didn't understand what I was doing wrong. Then, during some special meetings at our church in Aiken, I couldn't sleep one night so I decided to get up and paint my floorboards. I figured if I wasn't going to sleep, I might as well work! While I painted, I was talking to God and asking Him what I needed to do. He said, "Praise Me." So I started praising Him, and the Holy Ghost came into that room in a powerful way! Later that day at church, God gave the witness that He had filled me. What a blessing!

LL As we became more serious spiritually, the Gospel only got better for us.

After God baptized me with His Spirit, He began teaching me even more, and revealing to me that I needed to be a better leader of my household. From that point on, everything in life became secondary to the spiritual health of my family—memory verses and Sunday school lessons became more important than learning ABCs and 1-2-3s. Our children needed to learn those things too, but the priority changed.

Our family had always enjoyed being with God's people, but as we became more serious spiritually, the Gospel only got better for us. It drew my wife and me closer to each other because we both knew the value of what we were trying to instill in our children. We became involved with Sunday school and then started going to the church once a week as a family to clean, and we would sing while we worked and have a good time. It brought us all closer together.

In time, I felt God calling me to preach, but I resisted His call until a series of trials changed my mind. Our family had three serious health problems in a row, all requiring surgery. At Christmastime that year my mom said to me, "Son, you need to do what the Lord tells you to do. Don't be like your dad; the Lord had to break your daddy's leg to make him

become a preacher." I did not take her comment too seriously, though it was true—my dad did become a preacher right after he broke his leg. After the next trial, however, I started taking those words more seriously. With that one, doctors found a mass growing in my jaw that needed to be removed. A fourth surgery! I finally realized that I could not afford to be resisting God's call when we so desperately needed His help.

Following that surgery, the doctor informed me that there had been complications and as a result, I would have some numbness in my lower lip for the rest of my life. Well, I preached my first sermon the following month. I wasn't supposed to have any feeling in my lip, but God did a miracle. I did not have any numbness then, and thank God, even today if I spill hot coffee on it, I feel it!

STAGE 4 CANCER

In 2012, I started having serious health concerns. My weight dropped from 215 pounds to 180 then 170 in a matter of months. I was also having headaches almost every day. Eventually I went to a doctor and was diagnosed with Stage 4 Hodgkin's Lymphoma. The cancer had spread to both sides of my neck, my chest, liver—it was all over my body.

For a time I wondered why this was happening to me, and almost became discouraged. But the Lord's work never stops, and I continued to preach even as we started making my treatment plan. I learned that even though I was going through a difficult time, others were also suffering, and God could use me to help them if I was still willing to answer His call. Being able to minister to others during that time became a blessing for them and me.

Right away, I called everybody I knew and asked for prayer. God's Word says when we are sick, we are to go to the elders of the church and have them lay hands on us and pray (James 5:14), and I did that. That was so important because prayer works! I could feel the support of those prayers!

As I started chemotherapy treatments, the doctor told me to expect side effects like hair loss, weight loss, nausea, and more. However, I experienced only minor side effects. Some days were harder than others, but I felt God's blessing in many ways. During that whole time, my kids stayed healthy. My wife didn't have to cook even one day because of friends

and family who brought us meals. My employer let me work only a half day when I needed to, and still paid me for the full day. At times when I was feeling low, someone would call and say, “How are you, Brother Nick? I was just calling to say I love you and I’m praying for you.” With just that brief conversation, God would lift me back up. I would get up and say, “Well, God is good! Somebody is praying for me!”

I was supposed to have chemo for six months, but one morning in the fourth month my wife said to me, “The Lord told me that on your next scan, there’s not going to be any more cancer.” I didn’t really believe it could be true. However, I had a scan that week, and when the doctor brought me the results, he was shocked as he told me the news: “We don’t see any cancer.” Just like that, the cancer was gone! That sent my faith into overdrive because I had seen for myself that God can do anything!

A NEW CHAPTER IN ATLANTA

In 2016, I was called to be the pastor of our church in Atlanta, Georgia. Moving to a new state felt like God was calling me to a whole new realm, but after all He had done for me, I did not doubt Him, and in Atlanta the blessings from God have just kept coming and coming. I’m so thankful God gave

me a wife who is always right by my side in serving Him, and that our children serve Him with us, too. The Bible says faith without works is dead; we have to put faith into action, and that is what I want to do every single day—I just want to be faithful.



SHARRON'S STORY

Growing up in the small, rural town of Kingstree, South Carolina, I was the youngest of four children. Our parents lived the Gospel

way. They taught us about the Bible and took us to church twice on Sundays and again during the week. However, in my younger years I never thought about salvation on a personal level. I lived a moral life, but felt I shouldn’t pray for salvation unless I was ready to seriously commit my life to God, which I assumed would happen someday. In retrospect, I see that waiting was a trick of the enemy that I fell for.

During my junior year of college, our family lost someone unexpectedly, and that traumatic experience caused me to seek God in a way I never had before. There was much pain and grief in my heart, and I started praying, seeking solace from God. One day as I prayed, I found myself repenting of my sin, and God saved me.

Even though I had been raised in a Christian home, I had to learn how to put God first and to rid myself of activities and people that would keep me from living the way I knew I should. That was a challenge in college; some of my friends were people I had known for years and it was not easy to separate from them. There were times when I was alone because of that, but God helped me and eventually I found new friends.

GOD MADE THE DIFFERENCE IN OUR HOME

The summer after I was saved, I attended Century camp meeting with my mom for the first time since I was a little girl. That was where I met my husband, Nick, and the following year we were married. At that point, I was twenty-one years old and still young as a Christian. I had sought God when I needed peace and comfort, but I had not depended on Him for much else. However, my husband and I had four children in the first five years of our marriage, and I quickly realized that I needed God for *everything*! I learned to seek God’s help constantly and to lean on Him.

We lived in Aiken, South Carolina, where my husband had family members. One of Nick’s uncles and his wife were well established in the Gospel, and they took us under their wings. They saw to it that our young family would make church an integral part of our lives, going out of their way to help lift any burdens that might have kept us from worshiping and serving God. When Nick was driving the Sunday school bus, they would send one of their older daughters over to help me get the babies ready for church. They also

helped us financially so we could attend special meetings at other branch churches, and gave us advice and encouragement to keep us going in the right direction. They helped so much, and I don't know how things would have gone otherwise.

That period of time with four little kids could have been tumultuous and chaotic for us—and certainly in some ways it was—but God kept us grounded. He made the difference in our home. It would have been easy to let church become a low priority, but we decided that our lives would be centered around church. Camp meeting became our annual family vacation; we only missed once after we met there in 1995, and that was because I had a baby that month! Our financial standing was not ideal in those early years and it was not always easy to go, but when we put God first, He provided the means to pay our bills. Despite the challenges, it seemed God just smiled on us. Not only that, but putting Him first is what has kept our family close to this day.

ESTABLISHED IN THE FAITH


As I continued growing spiritually, I became much more intentional about my relationship with God and in applying the teachings of the Bible to my life. When God would bring some shortcoming to my attention, I would take it seriously and ask Him to help me change so I could serve Him wholly. He showed me some activities that I needed to focus on less, and others that I should be more attentive to, like prayer. God also made me aware of some selfish tendencies I had, and helped me to become more thoughtful of others.

There was a relationship in my life that had caused me a lot of stress; it always seemed to be up and down, back and forth. God showed me the importance of making that relationship better, and also that I had been holding a grudge against the other person and needed to give it to Him. However, letting go of that grudge seemed impossible to do.

One evening as we stood to pray at the close of a church service, that relationship was heavy on my heart. I knew it needed mending but that was beyond my ability. From the depths of my soul I told God, "I can't fix this myself; only You can do it. I need *You*!" Just at that moment, God's Spirit came down and not only sanctified me entirely, but then also baptized me with the Holy Ghost! Receiving my deeper experiences was not even on

my mind at that moment, but as I brought my need to God, He answered by sanctifying and baptizing me.

Those experiences reaffirmed to me how real and how faithful God is. From then on, God put a deep settled peace in my heart and a love for others that is not contingent upon how I am treated but is based on God's love. It also became much easier from then on to recognize the leading of God's Spirit in my life. I could easily tell when He was letting me know that I needed to do something differently, and in challenging situations He would give me insight to see what path I should take. The difficult relationship that I had been praying about also completely turned around, which truly only God could have done.



I was terrified. I remember wondering, *What if he dies? How would I...*

SERVING GOD AS A FAMILY

God has continued to show Himself faithful in our lives, and gracious even with our children. As my husband became more dedicated to the Lord's work, we were all involved in it. God helped us show our kids the joy in serving Him, and they seem to be happy doing it. What a great blessing!

The hardest thing we went through was when my husband was diagnosed with Stage 4 cancer. The first night when we found out, I was truly terrified. I remember wondering, *What if he dies? How would I...* I couldn't wrap my mind around how life could go on without him. Yet, that fear did not last long because God came in and gave me such peace! He let me know that no matter what we would go through, everything was going to be okay in the end. Then one morning as I was getting ready for work, God clearly told me that the cancer was gone, and sure enough, the next scan was clear. Not only did God heal Nick, but He told me first, letting us know the miracle was done!

Our family has been blessed beyond measure, and I know it is because we put God first from the beginning. We have not always made perfect decisions, but we have tried to do what was right and chose to put our faith in God, and He has taken care of us. ■

Nick and Sharron Segres attend the Apostolic Faith Church in Atlanta, Georgia, where he serves as the pastor.

A HERITAGE OF PRAYER

By Del Barrett

A GODLY HERITAGE AND A CHILDHOOD CONVERSION WERE THE START FOR DEL'S LIFELONG WALK WITH GOD.

once again attended an Apostolic Faith camp meeting with his father, and after the service, at the altar of prayer, Dad gave his life to the Lord. A week later, my mother prayed too. From that day on, our home was different.

Following the camp meeting, there was a two-week break in the service schedule in Portland so we drove to Dallas, Oregon, to attend a meeting there. When we walked into that place, I felt an aura of holiness that I had never experienced before. It registered in my eight-year-old heart. There was joy written on the faces of the people in that church. When the meeting was over, we didn't go out and shake hands with the preacher. Instead, everybody went forward and knelt at an altar and they prayed—out loud! My dad was the last to leave the altar—something that was to become a very familiar thing to me. Though my father had never been one who prayed, from then on he made up for lost time.

Every morning at 5:30 while the oatmeal cooked, Dad would pray, and these were not quiet prayers. Even when my older brother and I moved to the opposite end of the house, we could still hear him pray. Then my grandfather moved in with us, and it was two of them praying. I felt the Spirit on those prayers. My dad named everyone he knew—everyone in his family and everyone at church who needed prayer. Lives were changed because of those prayers; sinners became righteous and



My birthplace was Portland, Oregon, and I had a beautiful mother and a handsome, hardworking father. We had a wonderful home. I never saw my parents drink alcohol or heard them fight, but I never heard them pray either.

My father had been brought up in the Apostolic Faith Church and taught to love the Lord, but the day came when he rebelled against his upbringing and chose to ignore God. When their children were born, Mom and Dad joined a neighborhood church. After each meeting, the pastor stood on the front steps and everyone shook his hand as they left the building. Then we all went home. That seemed to suit everyone just fine.

About that time, my grandmother joined with a group of women who were praying for their unsaved children. After she passed away, my dad

miserable people became happy. That had an effect on me.

Also, I was affected by observing the young men in the church and watching their lives. It wasn't long before I said, "This is what I want." Though I was only nine years of age, I prayed a simple prayer, and God made a wonderful change in my young heart. A thrill came over my soul, and I knew I was right with God. I also knew at that early age that it was necessary to be sanctified, and when I prayed and received it, I felt like my chest would explode as that cleansing flood went through me. Later, I experienced what it means to be baptized with the Holy Ghost and fire.

Throughout the years, Jesus has been all I have needed. He blessed me with a wonderful wife, and we raised our three children to know about Him. It is good to live for Jesus. It's a joy every day. Even in the midst of pain, it's joy. At the age of twenty-six, I was diagnosed with rheumatoid arthritis, and I wondered how I would be able to raise my little family. They depended on me, and I was in terrible pain. One night, with the little bit of faith that I had, I told God I was going to put my trust in Him. About noon the next day, I realized I didn't have any pain. God had undertaken, and He helped me so that I could continue to work.

Music has been a joy in my life. Songs have been my prayers, testimonies, and praises to God, and they have healed my heart when it was broken. In 2004, my ability to sing was greatly reduced due to cancer. Even so, there is still a song in my heart.

A couple years later my wife of forty-three years died from cancer. Her sickness and treatments were a long valley, but God was with us. After her

passing, I found a note she had written that said, "If what I am going through will make me a better person, I don't want to waste it." That has been my prayer as well.

A few years ago, I was in a serious car accident and ended up in the hospital with a fractured back and neck. The people of God stood by me during that time, and prayers were prayed for me by people from all over the world. I know what



I know what it is to lay without any sleep, but still be able to communicate with Jesus.

it is to lay without any sleep, but still be able to communicate with Jesus. I know what it is to lay in extreme pain and feel the presence of the Lord come right into the room and comfort me.

In 2013, God blessed me with another wife who also loves the Lord. As we face the challenges of aging, God is still with us. He has been there in the good times and has been even closer in the bad times, so we praise the Lord for those also. God has given me a wonderful life and a blessed assurance that I am His and He is mine. ■

Del Barrett is a member of the Apostolic Faith Church in Portland, Oregon

4 REASONS TO BE OF GOOD CHEER

By Linda Spinas

A CLOSER LOOK AT THE INSTANCES WHEN JESUS SPOKE THESE WORDS PROVES THAT WE TOO CAN REJOICE IN THE FACE OF CHALLENGES!

It could be easy to be discouraged by what we see happening in the world around us. News headlines are dominated by political fighting, disease, tragedies, natural disasters, and wars. In our personal lives as well, no doubt all of us have loved ones experiencing heartache or we are going through it ourselves. Even for those who are trusting in God's promises, at times it may be difficult to keep a positive outlook.

Recently, I studied the instances in the Bible when the Lord spoke the words "be of good cheer." It should not surprise us that He said them to people whose circumstances seemed to call for just the opposite attitude. For these individuals, an uplifting word would have been nice to hear from anyone, but these words were not coming from just anyone—they were from the Lord himself! He never uses words lightly. When He says something, He means it. What

assurance it must have brought to have Jesus tell these individuals that they had cause to be encouraged!

There are four occurrences of Jesus telling a person or a group to be of good cheer, and I found them to be relatable to many of the hardships we still face today. As I considered each situation, it became evident that we too have good reason to "be of good cheer."

"THY SINS BE FORGIVEN THEE"

Matthew 9:1-6 tells how a man sick of the palsy was brought before Jesus to be healed. Upon seeing the sick man, Jesus said: "Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee." Interestingly, the man was still sick when Jesus told him to be of good cheer. He couldn't walk and was in serious physical pain. Yet, Jesus saw his most important need: the condition of his soul. The man might have left happy if Jesus had healed him of palsy,

but by experiencing forgiveness of sins, he was a whole lot happier! The weight of his sin was gone, and his soul was free of the things that had troubled him before. He actually received a double blessing because Jesus healed the disease in his body, too. The Bible records that he returned to his house walking on his own, and everyone who saw it marveled and glorified God.

I can relate to this account because around the time that I was saved, I also had a physical problem. I didn't know exactly what was wrong with me, but I was feeling very weak. However, I remember lying in my bed one evening and being so thankful to be saved. There was such praise in my heart to know my peace was made with God and salvation was mine. The knowledge of sins forgiven is cause for joy! And that is how I felt, even though I was also experiencing weakness at the time. Then, as I lay there praising God for my salvation, He came down and touched me. It felt like electricity that started at my head and ran down through my whole body in an instant, and I was completely healed.

In the account in Matthew 9, some of the people who were present questioned if Jesus had the authority to forgive sins. The truth was, soon after that event Jesus would die on Calvary for that very man's sins. Does Jesus have authority to forgive a sinner? Does God have power to wash sins away? We know He does! Jesus has good authority—He paid for it with His precious Blood. He came to earth to destroy the works of the devil, to bring us victory over sin, and to give us power to live the way God wants us to live. This is a reason to be of good cheer, and the other blessings He gives are wonderful as well.

“IT IS I; BE NOT AFRAID”

Matthew 14 records an incident when Jesus had sent His disciples to travel by boat across the Sea of Galilee. While they sailed, the winds picked up and their boat began to be tossed in the waves. The storms that arise over that body of water can be life threatening, and the disciples must have



been fearful. Jesus was far away on the shore, but sometime between three and six o'clock in the morning, He decided to walk to them on the water. As He came near, at first they did not recognize

Him, but He said to them,

“Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid” (Matthew 14:27). When He

entered the ship, the wind ceased.

This account is interesting because the disciples had gone into the boat at Jesus' command—they were obedient to His will, yet they ran into a storm. This account is a reminder that even when we are doing God's will, we can expect challenges along the way. We can also note that even though Jesus wasn't visible to the disciples, He saw them and their dilemma. He sees what is going on in our lives as well, including when we experience times of fear, distress, sadness, and despair. But how wonderful it is when the Lord comes by! Doubts and fears vanish in His presence, and He ushers in peace, joy, and hope. We may not know how our situation will work out, but when Jesus steps on the scene, we have an assurance that all will be well because He is there.

Some years ago, I went through a difficult time when several of my family members were not coming to church. The situation weighed heavily on my heart and I was in real distress. I prayed about it and gave it to God, and then kept it before Him. After some time, as I was reading my Bible one day, certain verses seemed to light up to me, showing me exactly what I should do. At that moment, I could have cried because of the faithfulness and the goodness of God. He settled my concerns, and it brought such relief and gladness to my heart.

One of the most amazing experiences we can have is to get up from a time of prayer after Jesus has passed by. We could be in the midst of a trial and carrying a heavy load, yet when we reach out to the Lord in prayer and He responds, there is joy!

“I HAVE OVERCOME THE WORLD”

Shortly before His crucifixion, Jesus gave an exhortation to His disciples to prepare them for the difficult time that would soon take place. John 16:33 records His words, “In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.” Trouble was coming for the disciples in the form of persecution. However, God’s ways are not our ways. Sometimes what seems to be a victory for the enemy is actually a time to be of good cheer.

Some of us will face situations at work or even in our own families where we suffer for our beliefs. We should not be surprised when we face these types of challenges. Jesus did not say circumstances would be ideal every second of our lives; He said we would have tribulation in the world. At times we may wonder, How can I overcome this? The good news is that *we* do not have to overcome anything because our Savior overcame it all for us. After Jesus rose from the dead He said, “All power is given unto me in Heaven and in earth . . . and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.” (Matthew 28:18,20). We don’t serve a weak God. He is a mighty God, who has all power, and He has overcome the world! When our faith is being tested, we can remember these promises and take heart.

“SO MUST THOU BEAR WITNESS ALSO AT ROME”

The Apostle Paul was a missionary to the Gentile world, and he deeply desired to visit the believers in Rome. He told them as much in Romans 1:9-12, “Without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers; making request, if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you. For I long to see you . . . that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me.” However, despite his earnest desire, years passed and an opportunity did not open for Paul to go to Rome. Eventually he felt God leading him back to Jerusalem, though several believers warned him that bonds awaited him there. They begged him not to go, but Paul said he was ready not only to be in bonds but also to die for Christ.

About a week after arriving in Jerusalem, the Jewish religious leaders apprehended Paul and nearly killed him on the spot, but the chief captain of the Romans rescued him and detained him overnight. The next day he appeared before the council of Jewish leaders, and again they almost killed him. He was held overnight once more. Paul had already stated that he was willing to die in Jerusalem, and after two close calls, he must have known there was a very real chance it could happen. But that night, the Lord visited him and said, “Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome” (Acts 23:11).

This promise from the Lord must have brought great comfort to Paul. His future was in peril, and in that moment, the Lord’s presence alone would have encouraged him, but He also had good news to share: “You’re going to Rome, Paul!” It would be a while before the promise was fulfilled—more than two years passed before he even started the journey to Rome. Yet we do not read that Paul felt he was sitting on the sidelines during that time. He continued to serve God, and it was exciting. He was escorted by hundreds of soldiers to Caesarea, and there he had opportunities to witness to Felix, Festus, and King Agrippa. Then, in God’s time and way, Paul did arrive in Rome.

For most of us, God is not calling us to Rome, but He does have a plan for each of our lives and we can be sure that He will keep every promise He has made to us. Ultimately, we know what the final destination will be, and it is good news: “You’re going to Heaven, saints!” Until we are called home to Heaven, we can be cheerful about whatever plans God has for us. Though it may be tough at times, He has promised to be with us and give us victory.

Whatever we might be going through now, we need not be discouraged if we are trusting in the Lord. We can choose to take Jesus’ words to heart and be of good cheer, knowing that He has forgiven our sins. He will come to us in our time of need, He has overcome the world for us, and His plans for us are good. ■

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EVIDENCE

ELISHA'S STORY

Elisha and Nombulelo Shamba of Loughborough, Leicestershire, United Kingdom, tell how they came into the Gospel and about their experience of contracting COVID-19.



In 1959, while living in Salisbury, Rhodesia (now Harare, Zimbabwe), God led my parents to the light of salvation through the Apostolic Faith Church. The Lord convicted them of their sins and saved them, and they became prayer warriors who revered God and committed their entire lives to Him.

Despite being raised in the Gospel, I rebelled against my upbringing in my teen years. I graduated high school in 1988 and started working, and was soon imprisoned by sin. I led an extravagant, sinful life of debauchery—living in hotels, partying, associating with schemers, and hungry for power. I struggled with anger and would plot to bring down anyone who dared to criticize me.

Though lost in sin, I would whisper a prayer many times when I was in trouble, and the Lord would help me. However, I would quickly go back to my old ways. Still, the Spirit of God would often remind me, “Be sure your sin will find you out” (Numbers 32:23). In time, a yearning to place myself under the lordship and protection of Jesus grew.

On February 18, 1991, I was being held in legal custody after having been arrested. A brawl broke out between myself and other inmates, and I was left unconscious. As I regained my faculties, the Spirit of God spoke to my heart again, and I cried out, “Jesus save my soul; I am a sinner. Deliver me.” In a moment, peace, joy, and the love of God came into my heart, and the witness of the Spirit let me know that my sins had been forgiven! Jesus transformed my life, making me into a completely different person. When I told my father later that evening, he was thrilled and urged me to continue on with the Lord.

In the nearly thirty years since then, life has not always been easy but God has not failed me even in the darkest hours. He has proven Himself time and time again. Though I was not always faithful to God, He has been more than faithful and merciful to me, ever drawing me to Himself. Today, I thank God that my heart is full and that I have peace that passes all understanding. My father and mother have both passed on to Heaven and I have the hope to be reunited with them someday.

NOMBULELO'S STORY



My siblings and I grew up in a warm and loving home where we were taught the Word of God consistently. My parents were workers in the Gospel, and they took us to church regularly, and I loved being at Sunday school. My parents encouraged us to seek salvation early in life, and would often quote Matthew 6:33 to us, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

As I grew into my teenage years, I started thinking the Gospel was too strict and that the Christian life was boring. Though I never went deep into sin, I knew that in God's eyes there are no small or large sins, and I would not repent. Yet, when I had a need, I would look to God and He would answer my prayers. My parents did not give up on me; they prayed day and night for God to save my soul. Whenever I fell ill, my parents would lovingly pray for me and the Lord would faithfully heal me. I tried with all my strength to live a life that pleased them and God, but my sins weighed me down daily.

Every December, our family would attend the camp meeting in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe. People

would come from all over the world and I enjoyed the fellowship. However, I dreaded being asked, "Are you saved?" or, "Are you going to seek salvation?" Many received spiritual blessings and returned to their homes rejoicing, but not me. I put off praying every year, telling myself it was not the right time to commit my life to God.

Finally, at the 2005 camp meeting, God brought heavy conviction to my heart during a service. It was a simple message where the preacher asked the question, "Why are you complacent in your sinful state?" God dealt with my heart, and when I prayed after the service He saved my soul! I have never since regretted my choice to serve Him. Later He also sanctified me and baptized me with the Holy Ghost.

When it was time to marry, the Lord gave me a kind, caring, and loving Christian husband and we are serving God together. We have faced challenges, but we always look to God for deliverance and He has come through for us every time. God has been merciful to me and I would not trade Him for anything in this world. I have the greatest inheritance in the Gospel, and at the end of this life I want to make it to Heaven and see my Savior face to face.

ELISHA'S ACCOUNT OF SURVIVING COVID-19

Toward the end of March 2020, my wife and I started having concerns that we were experiencing minor symptoms of COVID-19. At that time, the virus had claimed 1,228 lives across the UK and more than 30,000 worldwide. Initially we told ourselves we were just being paranoid, but three weeks later, we had only grown worse. I was needing to take long, deep breaths at the end of sentences, and my nights were spent in fever-induced restlessness.

Soon, the symptoms became severe. One morning, I woke up shaking uncontrollably with a fever, and by the afternoon my breathing was

“We wept with joy and relief that the prayers of the saints had been heard.

extremely labored. I had heart palpitations, sharp pains in my chest and abdomen, and more. My wife and I were tested and both tests came back positive for COVID-19. We were sent home with medications and told to self-isolate.

We first shared the news with only a few close friends who were very caring and kindly brought us essentials and regularly checked on us. Then we decided to follow God’s instructions in James 5:13-15 and ask the ministry for prayer. I contacted our district superintendent, Isaac Adigun, and asked for prayer support from the saints. As the wonderful children of God sustained us in prayer, we could feel God holding us in the palm of His hand. Our faith increased that the shed Blood of Christ would avail for our healing.

Recovery was not an easy ride for either my wife or me. We were grateful not to be at the critical stage that many others had sadly reached, yet while some days saw improvement, on other days the illness would roar back, leaving me fearing for the worst. There were moments when I reached low points and became deeply discouraged. However, a turning point came when I started lifting my gaze beyond the disease and surrendered everything into God’s capable hands. All of a sudden, a hush descended and I was at peace, feeling grateful for the precious gift of life and for divine protection. God encouraged me, reminding me that I could persevere.

We continued to slowly improve and then on Monday morning, May 18, my wife and I received results that we had both tested negative for COVID-19. We wept with joy and relief that the prayers of the saints had been heard and answered by a God who is in control and who shows mercy. Throughout the ordeal, we knew that God was always with us.

Today, I feel I have been given a new lease on life. I have passed through many waters, climbed many mountains, and gone down valleys in my life, but God has been faithful. In trouble I cry to Him and He always answers. There is nothing that would ever make me leave this God who has done so much for me, and I want to remain faithful to the end. ■

WHAT I DO MUST BE TO BE SAVED?

ACKNOWLEDGE “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.” *Romans 3:23*
“God be merciful to me a sinner.” *Luke 18:13*

CONFESS “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” *1 John 1:9*

REPENT “I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.” *Luke 13:3*
“Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out.” *Acts 3:19*

FORSAKE “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him... for he will abundantly pardon.” *Isaiah 55:7*

BELIEVE “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” *John 3:16*

If you are a new Christian, contact us and request the tract entitled “Starting Out.”

WORLD REPORT

*And be not conformed to this world:
but be ye transformed by the renewing
of your mind, that ye may prove what
is that good, and acceptable, and
perfect, will of God. – Romans 12:2*

SHORT TAKES

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VISITING NEW CHURCHES

in malawi

LEADERS OF OUR MALAWI WORK WELCOME THE TWO NEWEST BRANCH CHURCHES IN THEIR COUNTRY.

Malawi District Superintendent Chris Nkhata reported that in early July, he and other representatives from the Malawi headquarters church had the opportunity to visit the two newest Malawi branch churches, located near the border with Mozambique in Nsanje and Maraka.

The first stop was on Saturday, July 4, at the Nsanje branch where Reverend Danken welcomed them. They held a church service with a sermon centered on “Jesus, the Light of the World,” using Scripture references from John 8:12 and 12:46, and 1 Peter 2:9-10. Though the congregation was small due to many working in the fields at that time of day, there was a spirit of revival present, and a fervent altar service followed.

After the prayer service, a meeting was held to formally welcome the congregation as part of the Apostolic Faith Church family. During this time, it was announced that special meetings would be held in September 2020, Lord willing, with the purpose of encouraging unity and revival among the branches. The saints were overjoyed to hear this news.

The next morning, Sunday, the team traveled by motorbike to the Maraka branch in Kembo Village. Their arrival was warmly welcomed by a group that included Reverend Madi as well as the village chief’s top representative.

After exchanging greetings, a church service began. The topic of the sermon was “Jesus’ Royal Bounty,” with text taken from 1 Kings 10:1-8, 13 and Matthew 12:42. The message brought out that One greater than King Solomon was in Kembo Village, who could answer any hard question a person might have. Also, God gives from His royal bounty such things as salvation, sanctification, the baptism of the Holy Ghost, and healing to those who repent, believe, and commit to doing His will.

The Spirit of the Lord was felt strongly throughout the service, and a wonderful prayer session followed. The chief’s representative was among the many who prayed at the altar and were anointed and prayed for. The next day, he called to say he had been healed instantly and wanted to know when the team could return to the village.

During the visit, it was formally announced that Pastor Madi had donated land for the purpose of building an Apostolic Faith Church in Maraka, and Reverend Nkhata accepted the gift on behalf of the Apostolic Faith Church of Portland, Oregon. This announcement was known ahead of time by the congregation, and they had already purchased twenty-six corrugated metal sheets and begun molding bricks for the structure. The team left the village with great joy in their hearts. ■

Members of the Nsanje, Malawi, congregation.

WORLD HEADQUARTERS CAMPGROUND ANNIVERSARY

10074



A group of pioneers of the Apostolic Faith work in the 1920s, including founder Florence Crawford (front row, left), Elsie Ott (front row, right), and Elsie's husband Alonzo (back row, right).

June 28 marked one hundred years since the first camp meeting service was held on the 52nd and Duke Street campground in Portland, Oregon. Though camp meeting could not be held this year due to health restrictions, the special occasion was commemorated with a service held in the tabernacle. A limited number of people were able to attend in person and many more joined through the webcast, collectively thanking God for one hundred years of past camp meeting blessings and more to come as Jesus tarries.

“

Sister Crawford had told them that they could each bring a rose bush and plant it, and we were a happy crowd.

The commemorative service began with a small orchestra playing “Surely the Presence.” Reverend Darrel Lee then welcomed the audience and read Psalm 150, which is the same text

Florence Crawford read in 1920 at the conclusion of her opening camp meeting sermon. The orchestra then continued with “Come, Thou Almighty King,” and the congregation sang “Lead On, O King Eternal” and “Revive Us Again.”

A trio sang “Moses, Take Your Shoes Off,” and then Jane Ewers shared memories recorded in the diary of her grandmother, Elsie Ott, about the first camp meeting on the current campground. She read, “The time came when it seemed harder and harder each year to find a suitable place for camp meeting to be held, and also

Over the last one hundred years, one can note the Roaring 20s, the Great Depression of the 30s, World War II in the 40s . . . times of upheaval and crisis in every decade—but also times of revival and individuals being saved all along the way.

such a task to get a new campground ready in time for camp meeting. In the summer of 1920, the Lord laid it on the heart of our brother Bill Paulson to buy the Woodstock grounds. We were all so happy over this. We fenced the grounds the first year, and I believe it was on Decoration Day [Memorial Day] that the

saints gathered together to plant roses around the fence and on the grounds. Sister Crawford had told them that they could each bring a rose bush and plant it, and we were a happy crowd with our rose bushes. God certainly has blessed us on this campground and it has been such a help to not have to hunt for a new place each year.” The diary recorded that the following year, the tabernacle was built on the property, and a few years after that, a children’s tabernacle was added.

Sister Jane commented that improvements have continued right up to the present day, and each year the facilities seem better than before.

Sister Jane also read an excerpt from the diary written in the fall of 1918, when the Spanish Flu epidemic swept through the United States. The diary stated that many of the saints became sick and the mission had to close for a period due to civic restrictions, but “the Lord was surely with us, and very few died.” How encouraging to realize that the God who helped the saints of 1918 is the same One who guides us today.

On a more personal note, Sister Jane related that she was born twenty-five years after the campground was purchased, and today she is deeply grateful that her grandparents and parents remained faithful to God and raised her in the Gospel, too. As a child, she prayed in the children’s tabernacle and was saved, and the Lord has kept her since then. She said she is thankful her spiritual heritage has extended to her children and grandchildren, some of whom were in the meeting with her.

Continuing the service, Reverend Dave Lambert read 1 Samuel 7:2-10, and for the message Reverend Lee began by reading verses 11-12 from the same chapter. He reminded the congregation that looking back over the last one hundred years, one can note the Roaring 20s, the Great Depression of the 30s, World War II in the 40s, the Korean War of the 50s, and Vietnam in the 60s—times of upheaval and crisis in every decade—but also times of revival and individuals being saved all along the way. Faithful saints of past generations experienced God’s help, and those who remain faithful today will be able to look back at 2020 and see how God has helped us as well. The service closed with the song “I Present You to Jesus” before a final prayer. ■



(Above) Jane Ewers speaks at the commemorative service. (Below) Jane's grandmother, Elsie Ott.


OUR CLASSICS

*The LORD is my shepherd;
I shall not want. – Psalm 23:1*

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ALL PEOPLE NEED THE LORD



WHATEVER OUR AGE, OUR NATIONALITY,
OR OUR POSITION IN LIFE,
WE HAVE ONE THING IN COMMON.

By Loyce Carver

*Originally published in the May 1993 edition of
this magazine.*



We are all needy people. Pick up a news magazine today, and you'll probably see an article about healthcare. But it's not just the sick who have needs—people who are well have needs also. You may read in your daily paper about a food crisis in some far-away place. But it's not just starving people who have needs—people who have plenty to eat are still needy. Scan a religious publication and you will find information about the need for evangelization of the world we live in. But it's not just the people outside of the church who need God's help—people who attend church do too.

Compare two Scriptures written by the same man on different occasions. Paul the Apostle paints a picture of the great contrast between living with dire spiritual needs, and living without condemnation. In reflecting on his pre-Damascus Road experience, he wrote in Romans 7:24, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" At that time, he certainly realized he had a need, didn't he? He

must have been despondent, even desperate, about his condition. He seemed to have been living in the very grip of Satan.

The same man wrote the passage in the next chapter which says, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit . . . For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God" (Romans 8:1, 13, 14). What a dramatic difference between the conditions described in these two chapters!

I have a cousin in Tennessee whose name is Elko. He called me recently, as he does from time to time, and during the conversation he told me about a happening in his own life. He said one of his best friends had committed suicide, and he was asked to be a pallbearer. During the course of the funeral the preacher asked, "Is there anyone here who feels

minister's appeal touched many hearts.

But sinners are not the only ones who need God. Let's ask God today to awaken us to the fact that we as Christians are a needy people as well. Excuses might deprive us of help that God is waiting to provide. Some need of yours might remain unmet forever if you postpone bringing it before God. You may be saying, "Yes, I know I ought to. Maybe I will sometime, somehow." Whatever your condition today, saved or unsaved, don't wait until some startling event or tragedy brings you to a

realization of what you lack. God wants us to do away with the excuses we have for not presenting our needs to Him. Let's say, "I'm needy and well I know it. Certainly I am

“Sinners are not the only ones who need God. Let's ask God today to awaken us to the fact that we as Christians are a needy people as well.”

a need for God's help? Raise your hand right now if you do." Elko said, "Here I was, sitting in the front row with the pallbearers. But I knew that if I ever needed God's help, I needed it then. My best friend was dead and life is so uncertain. We never know who might be next." So Elko raised his hand.

Then he said, "The preacher preached the rest of his sermon right at me. But I took it. I knew I needed it and that I was guilty. I needed to get back to God. And when I raised my hand, I had this feeling come over me, a warmth and assurance. God in mercy reached out right there and touched me—I knew He did." Then he added, "After the funeral I told someone that the preacher had preached his whole sermon right at me, and that person said, 'No, he didn't. A number of people behind you raised their hands too.'" Elko wasn't the only one present at that solemn occasion who recognized his need for God. The

going to confess the fact that I need God, and I need His help now."

If we have been saved for many years, perhaps we have a need for spiritual revival. It is possible for a person to be fervent in spirit, prayerful, one who seeks God and has the joy of the Lord showing in his life, but then lose that fervor. If we find ourselves in that condition, we must turn to God and say, "Revive my spirit, stir up my very being that I might hunger after righteousness." The Bible says, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled" (Matthew 5:6). The one who hungers and thirsts after righteousness will be filled, not somebody else. So if there is a need for that hunger, why not admit it? When we admit our needs, we take the first step toward having our needs met.

We need God to help us overcome spiritual lethargy, indifference, and carelessness. We won't



find what we need by attending a self-help seminar. Oh, we might feel better and learn some lessons there if we're looking for therapeutic answers. But spiritual vitality is far beyond anything that can be attained through education. In order to make any real spiritual progress, God must move us, and we must respond.

Spiritual stagnation is a terrible state.

Think for a moment about what stagnant water is like. It's been there for a long time.

Perhaps it's grown warm in the sunshine, and is filled with debris. There is nothing fresh about it. You don't want to drink that water or even wade through it barefooted. And so it is with the Christian experience. If it becomes old, lifeless, and filled with "debris," it is

not very appealing. But it is difficult for a person in that condition to stir himself to change; it's hard to admit that one needs a fresh dip or a revival, and human nature

often leads one to do whatever is easiest. But if we admit our needs and respond when God prods us, we'll find a new joy and vibrancy in our Christian experience. God will satisfy our innermost longing and help us to know Him in all His fullness. Then the joy of the Lord will be ours.

Perhaps you have a need for increased faith. Let the Lord settle that need for you! "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God," we read in Romans 10:17. Read His Word carefully and prayerfully, and ask Him to let that faith begin to grow in your heart. If you are honest in your desire, God will prove to you that His Word is alive and that He still does miracles today.

Do you need God's help in the small matters of day-to-day living? Perhaps you are dealing with a hard situation on the job. Maybe one of your children is causing problems in the home. Financial difficulties may be weighing you down. God cares about these details of your life, and He will help you. He will send His Spirit to teach you how to pray, put the right words in your mouth, bring things to remembrance that you need to remember, and help you forget what you ought to forget. But we must say, "I need Your help."

Sometimes God shows us our needs by putting His finger on some area of our lives. Perhaps we need to learn to listen more and talk less. Maybe we need to develop more patience. Maybe we need to discipline ourselves more carefully in how we spend our time. But God is not a God of condemnation only. Along with showing us a need, He gives us grace to overcome the problem. He provides measures by which we can receive His help. Paul said, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Philippians 4:13). So we're building on the sureties of God's Word when we ask God for His strength to meet our needs.

If you don't know what the need is in your life, say, "Lord, help me understand what I need. Show me where to improve." God will make it plain when you honestly seek Him. He will tell you the whole truth. No matter where you are, what church you belong to, what your Christian experience has been before—none of that matters. What matters is where you stand before God today. And if you ask Him to show you, He will do just that.

As long as you have your back turned to God, you'll find no lasting answers to the needs in your life. But when you turn your face toward Him, pray, and let Him have His way, you'll find He will meet those needs. You will have victory that you could never achieve through the best of your own efforts.

What are your needs today? God will meet them if you will just ask Him. ■

Rev. Loyce Carver was General Overseer of the Apostolic Faith organization from 1965 until 1993, and continued on the ministerial staff at the headquarters church in Portland, Oregon, until his death in 1996.



THE LONG JOURNEY HOME

CONLEY HAD MADE A PROMISE
TO HIS DYING MOTHER.
WOULD HE HONOR IT?

By Conley Stephens

Originally published in the May 1986 edition of this magazine.

My family was in the right place at the right time. It was in a little Arizona mining town in about 1914 that God came down and changed some lives that had been ruined by sin. A paper came from the Apostolic Faith Church in Portland, Oregon, that held a message of hope: that God could change trouble and despair to peace and victory.

My older sister read that paper, and God wonderfully saved her. Though just a child, she told my father, who was a drunken gambler, of what God had done for her. God touched his heart, and he fell on his face before Him and repented. When my father got to his feet, he was a changed man. Never again did he come home in a drunken condition.

Instead of our home ending in the divorce courts, my parents made a start for Heaven. In 1916, they moved their family to Portland where they could worship with the people of God, and two years later I was born into that home.

I was carried to the first camp meeting I attended. Through the years, being brought up in that Christian home, God worked on my

heart. One time when I was about six years old, I remember my mother trying to get me to pray. She said I couldn't go out to play until I had said my prayers. I prayed, but even then my little heart was hard. I said within myself, "She can't force me to get saved." I would pray just so I could go out to play.

My mother taught me from the Bible. We started at the very beginning of it. Of course, I had all kinds of reasons for wanting to busy myself with my own affairs instead, but Mother kept right at it. I told her, "Mother, I can't read it; the words are too hard." She said, "That's all right; you read what you can, and when you get to the hard words I will help you."

When we got over into the New Testament where Christ was put on the Cross, I remember how that story touched my heart. Tears rolled down my cheeks. I said, "Mother, why did Jesus have to die? Why did they do that to Him?" I felt real grief in my heart about that.

Just a short time later, Mother was taken from us to Heaven, but the truth had been planted in my heart, and I never really got away from it.

I'm sorry to say I took those truths for granted. When I was

Conley in
1920 at
eighteen
months.



just a teenager, I made my choice for the things of this world. I thought I would take a little “side journey” into sin, and then return to the Lord when it was a more convenient season. What a tragic mistake!

It became a long journey. The few sins that I started to try became habits, a routine that went on day after day, year after year. The shackles of sin clamped tightly onto my life. Soon bitterness was my portion, and I found no pleasure in sin. I squandered my youth and vitality in the haunts of the devil, and I was unable to change the way I was living.

From my outward appearance, you wouldn't have been able to see the misery I was in. By the age of twenty-nine, I had settled down and in some respects, had become a good citizen. I was married and had a little business of my own. One day my older brother was visiting my home and he said, “Con, you have everything to be thankful for.” But he couldn't see the misery that was down in my heart; he couldn't feel the darkness that was there.

God knew how to deal with me, however. During World War II, I was lying in the hospital dying of a hemorrhaging stomach ulcer. I had lost much blood, and nothing more could be done for me. However, God hears and answers prayer.

My sister stood by my bedside one night after the doctor had backed away, knowing he had done all he could. He went out into the hall and told my young wife, who was holding our seven-month-old daughter, that she probably wouldn't have a husband by the time the sun came up. My sister had been praying, and she didn't falter. She asked me if I wanted her to ask the Apostolic Faith people to pray for me, and when I nodded my head yes, she hurried right out to a telephone.

I desperately needed a transfusion that night.

They didn't have plasma in those days—a donor with the right blood type was needed. There wasn't time to find one, but God made it possible. The donor turned out to be an old boyhood friend of mine from the church. Even before the doctors could get that blood into me, God began to take away some of the pain.

People were praying for me, and something began to happen in my heart. I turned over in my bed, tears coming down my cheeks, and said, “Oh God, I haven't served You. I've been a sinner and have no right to ask any favors of You now. But if You would just somehow, somehow come down and heal my body, I'll serve You!”

God did it! He healed me. I didn't get saved that night, but I couldn't get away from the miracle

God had worked for me. I went back to the same old life, but it became even more sickening to me. I hated the tobacco habit that bound me, but I couldn't get away from it.

One winter I thought it was the Portland rain that was making me miserable, so I took my family to Los Angeles, California, for a two-month vacation.

We had plenty of money, and spent it taking in the sights as I tried to find happiness. One of the attractions was put on by a theater overlooking Hollywood Boulevard. It was a big panorama of world events from 1947. We went on New Year's Eve, and though we were supposed to be celebrating, something down inside me said, “If this is all there is to life, I've missed it all.” God just let His hand rest on my shoulder that night, pointing me to Calvary. I promised Him if He would bring me back to Portland safely, I would serve Him.

After returning home, I began looking into my mother's old Bible, and I thought about the promise I had made to her when she was on her deathbed, that I would meet her in Heaven. I thought of the many miracles I had seen in the

I thought about the promise I had made to her when she was on her deathbed, that I would meet her in Heaven. I thought of the many miracles I had seen in church, in our family, and in my own life.

church, in our family, and in my own life. I remembered the many times God had spared my soul from Hell when I could have been cut off in my sins. How thankful I am that God reasoned with me like that and held out the lifeline to me once more!

One night I went back to church, and I was there for business. I wanted God to do something for me. By now my heart was not tender; there were no tears on my cheeks. As I sat there, I felt cold inside and wondered if I would really get what I had come for or if I would go out into the night like I had come in. But the Spirit of God was pulling at my heart—pulling me toward honesty and action.

At the close of the service, I raised my hand for prayer—and everything seemed to change. My heart became tender. The tears rolled down my cheeks again. I made my way forward to an

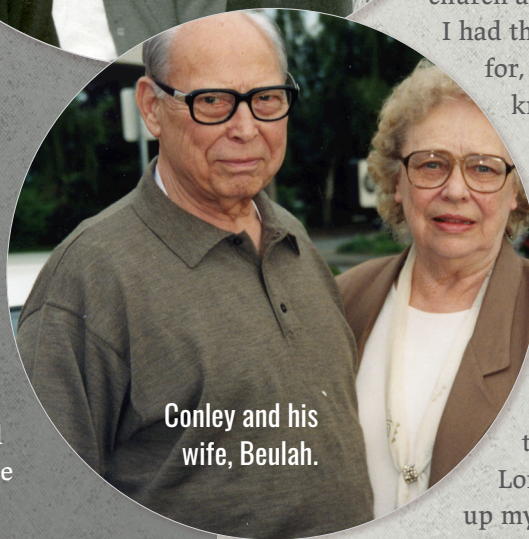
I shook hands with those around me, and walked out of that church a new creature in Christ Jesus.

altar of prayer. It seemed I couldn't get there fast enough! I wanted the people of God to pray for me. I wanted to give God my heart and life.

There at that altar, my sins passed before me just like a moving picture. I saw my rejection of God, I saw my guilt, and I was bitterly ashamed of it all. A sorrow came into my heart that just seemed to break it all to pieces. As I knelt there, people gathered around me and prayed. And, oh



Conley with his wife and two daughters.



Conley and his wife, Beulah.

what a miracle! God came down and applied the balm of His Blood. The darkness disappeared. The guilt was gone. I knew that I had a new start in life. At last I had found the satisfaction I had been looking for!

I shook hands with those around me, and walked out of that church a new creature in Christ Jesus. I had the peace my soul had longed for, the rest I had wanted to know. I was sure down in my heart that at last I was living the way God intended me to live. The following evening, my wife prayed and received salvation as well. It was wonderful!

I didn't waste any time before making the restitutions that the Lord showed me. I called up my drinking, card-playing friends and told them what had

happened. A weakling had been made strong, a captive had been freed by God's power, and I wanted them to know. There were items that I had stolen, restitutions that I needed to make to the government, and companies that I had defrauded—all of these things had to be taken care of. I remember sitting in an office building, scared to death, but writing those letters and confessing all, asking how I could pay it back. God helped me to make right those sinful things from my past.

The years have gone by, and I have had many opportunities to trust and prove the reality of the Gospel. God has never failed me. The peace and joy that He gave me that night on my knees is still in my soul. I thank the Lord for the hope He has given me of walking on those golden streets someday.

Conley Stephens was born in May of 1918 and was saved in 1948. He became a minister at the Apostolic Faith Church in Portland, Oregon, and faithfully served the Lord until his passing in 2002.

A STATEMENT OF BIBLE DOCTRINE

WE BELIEVE IN THE DIVINE INSPIRATION OF THE BIBLE, AND ENDORSE ALL THE TEACHINGS CONTAINED IN IT. FOLLOWING IS A SUMMARY OF OUR BASIC DOCTRINES.

THE DIVINE TRINITY consists of three Persons: God the Father, Jesus Christ the Son, and the Holy Ghost, perfectly united as one. *Matthew 3:16-17; 1 John 5:7.*

REPENTANCE is a godly sorrow for and a renouncing of all sin. *Isaiah 55:7; Matthew 4:17.*

JUSTIFICATION (or salvation) is the act of God's grace through which we receive forgiveness for sins and stand before God as though we had never sinned. *Romans 5:1; 2 Corinthians 5:17.*

ENTIRE SANCTIFICATION, the act of God's grace whereby we are made holy, is the second definite work and is subsequent to justification. *John 17:15-21; Hebrews 13:12.*

THE BAPTISM OF THE HOLY GHOST is the endowment of power upon the sanctified life, and is evidenced by speaking in tongues as the Spirit gives utterance. *John 14:16-17,26; Acts 1:5-8; 2:1-4.*

DIVINE HEALING of sickness is provided through the atonement. *James 5:14-16; 1 Peter 2:24.*

THE SECOND COMING OF JESUS will be as literal and visible as His going away (*Acts 1:9-11*) and will consist of two appearances. First, He comes to catch away His waiting Bride. *Matthew 24:40-44; 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17.* Second, He comes to execute judgment upon the ungodly. *2 Thessalonians 1:7-10; Jude 14-15.*

THE TRIBULATION will occur between Christ's coming for His Bride and His return in judgment. *Isaiah 26:20-21; Revelation 9 and 16.*

CHRIST'S MILLENNIAL REIGN is the 1000 years of peaceful reign by Jesus on earth. *Isaiah 11 and 35; Revelation 20:1-6.*

THE GREAT WHITE THRONE JUDGMENT is the final judgment when all the wicked dead will stand before God. *Revelation 20:11-15.*

THE NEW HEAVEN AND THE NEW EARTH will replace the present heaven and earth, which will be destroyed after the Great White Throne Judgment. *2 Peter 3:12-13; Revelation 21:1-3.*

ETERNAL HEAVEN AND ETERNAL HELL are literal places of final and eternal destiny. *Matthew 25:41-46; Luke 16:22-28.*

MARRIAGE is a covenant between one man and one woman that is binding before God for life. Neither person has a right to marry again while the first companion lives. *Mark 10:6-12; Romans 7:1-3.*

RESTITUTION is necessary, wherein wrongs against others are righted. *Ezekiel 33:15; Matthew 5:23-24.*

WATER BAPTISM is by one immersion "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." *Matthew 3:16; 28:19.*

THE LORD'S SUPPER is an institution ordained by Jesus so that we might remember His death until He returns. *Matthew 26:26-29; 1 Corinthians 11:23,26.*

FOOT WASHING is practiced according to the example and commandment Jesus gave. *John 13:14-15.*

You may obtain additional information about these doctrines and learn about our other publications in both English and foreign languages by writing to the Apostolic Faith Church at 5414 SE Duke Street, Portland, Oregon 97206, U.S.A. or visiting our website at www.apostolicfaith.org. Before these magazines are sent out, they are always prayed over for the healing of the sick and the salvation of souls.

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Jesus
THE LIGHT *of* THE WORLD