

## When faith came.

This chapter taken from the book *When Faith Came* by Franklin Whittenburg © 1998-2006

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***But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed (Galatians 3:22,23).***

I would like to explain what my idea of faith was for most of my “Christian” life. For years I believe I had the wrong idea about faith and the origin of faith. I always thought that faith was something that was generated by me. The Bible says that each believer is given a measure of faith, but the core of my testimony now is not about how I came to a saving faith, but about how saving faith came to me. The true saving faith didn’t come from me, but it is a gift of God. True faith is an act of God not man!

***And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how HE had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles (Acts 14:27).***

Growing up, I have heard many preachers and pastors speak on stepping out on faith. They would say that I must believe that the Bible is the inspired Word of God, which it is, and the promises it says I can have are guaranteed me if I just believe and stand on the Word. I have heard people preach what I call “name it and claim it”. This is where you pray for something and must believe that you will receive it. You have to step out in blind faith and claim it as an answered prayer, not excepting that you might not receive it. But the Bible says that exactly in the gospel of Mark:

***Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them. (Mark 11:24)***

What was I missing? I have tried this and in my experience, it might work great for everybody else, but it wouldn’t work at all for me. Am I the only one that God didn’t ever answer my prayers or are there others out there? In fact, when I would pray, I never received an answer or conformation that God even heard my prayer. I just had to have faith that He heard it. I thought that I just wasn’t generating enough faith and it was my lack of faith that was hindering my prayers. What I want to share next is some of my early “Christian” years before I actually met Jesus.

The reality of faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ would always stay just out of reach. I would liken it more to hope or “faith in faith” as I have heard one preacher describe faith. The definition of faith was supposed to be my complete conviction in the truth of the scripture that presented that faith. The concept of faith in the unseen was hard to grasp

and preachers would make it ten times harder by saying that Jesus was unexplainable, and omnipresent, and omnipotent, and incomprehensible in one breath, which He is, but turn around and tell you He can be your personal Savior and your closest friend in another breath. How do you grasp something like that? Sometimes I think that these pastors with their theology degrees make the Bible out to be so complex, because if they didn't, they wouldn't be needed. To make things worse they would add things like, "you can read the Bible a thousand times and you still will never comprehend it all because His thoughts are so much higher than our thoughts and His ways are so much higher than your ways". How do you get close to a God like that? But the Bible says exactly that in the book of Isaiah:

***For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts (Isaiah 55:9).***

The preachers and pastors were speaking biblically correct, but looking back now I wonder if some of them did not fully grasp it either and so they would make anything to do with the Lord so complex and vague that nobody else could grasp it either. I suppose that if it were as simple that a child could grasp it, you wouldn't need their PhD's in Theology. Paul also warned of these.

***But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ (2 Corinthians 11:3).***

***At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes (Matthew 11:25).***

When I was under constant condemnation and dying in my sin I would search the Bible constantly to try to find something that was substance that I could grasp hold of to validate to me the scriptures in this world other than standing on my faith. How could I generate enough faith to turn faith into reality in my mind? When I would read the Bible I would pray to the Lord for wisdom and understanding. I have always heard that it was my responsibility to stand on the promises of God and I just had to yield to His leading. This was very hard to do when I didn't have the Holy Spirit leading as Peter explained while talking about Paul's spiritual understanding.

***And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction (2 Peter 3:15,16).***

The Bible is so big and there are so many promises of God listed. So where do I start? I tried, like probably everybody else, by starting from the book of Genesis and reading to somewhere around chapter 20 or 30 and getting lost in all the names and genealogies and receiving no peace or consolation in the scriptures and abandoning hope of understanding it. But the Lord would not leave me alone, and He continued to call me. So I attempted to

start in the book of Matthew and would read to about chapter 24 where it speaks about end time events, and then jump straight to the book of Revelation to see how things turn out in the end and I would get totally mixed up. I tried some of the “how to“ books written by pastors, teachers, and theologians which would almost always start with, or end up with (you must yield, you must be obedient, or we have to learn how to, or we need to step out on faith) or some other sort of personal pronoun that would put the responsibility of making the Christian life work squarely on your shoulders. What ever happened to Matthew 11:28-30?

***Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light ( Matthew 11:28-30).***

In the Old Testament, it was only God’s chosen and sanctified priest that could bear the burden of the law on their shoulders; anybody else that tried to carry it was struck dead. That is why our High Priest Jesus Christ bore the burden of the law for the Christian! Yet there are “Christian” pastors that are standing in the pulpits every Saturday and Sunday that are still trying to get the congregation to carry the very same Old Testament law on their shoulders also! What yoke are you wearing on your shoulders?

***But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses. And the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter. And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up, and said unto them, Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe. And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us; And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers NOR WE were able to bear? But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they. (Acts 15:5-11).***

***And he said, Woe unto you also, ye lawyers! for ye lade men with burdens grievous to be borne, and ye yourselves touch not the burdens with one of your fingers. (Luke 11:46)***

Please understand this one point, it is not our responsibility to make Christianity work. I see many pastors trying to carry a load that they were not required to carry, so they get “burned out”. Christianity is Jesus Christ’s ministry to the earth. Many pastors keep forgetting we are just a part of His ministry, not the power of His ministry! The angels declared the purpose of the ministry at Christ birth, “Peace on earth, good will toward men”.

***And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men (Luke 2:13,14).***

**Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: (Romans 5:1).**

The Bible calls it the ministry of reconciliation where mankind, not just the Jews, is reconciled back to God.

**Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:17-19).**

When I was in religion, I would pick up the Bible and read about what Christians should act like, and so I thought that by imitating the things that the people in the Bible would do, that was true Christianity. This was the whole foundation of the WWJD (What Would Jesus Do) movement. I know now that the Bible was actually just describing what people do when the Holy Spirit is at work in their life. Please read the chapter “Law or Grace?”. Obedience was simply the works that followed their faith (James 2:18). I believe that the reason that I hadn’t entered into the “rest” wasn’t because of the preaching, but the problem was in my faith like the Bible says in the book of Hebrews.

**Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it. For we which have believed do enter into rest, as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world (Hebrews 4:1-3).**

I could always find an answer why the Lord was not answering my prayers or “moving” in my life. I can pick up most Christian books today and they are almost all written about how to apply biblical principles or imitate biblical people to somehow force God’s hand to “move” in our life. The line of thought is this, if I imitate Joseph, David, Jabez, Ruth, Esther, etc., God will have to react to me in the same way or give me the same blessing as He gave them. Each pastor would have a different angle or list of steps to follow to produce a fruitful Christian life. Today many pastors have turned into nothing more than motivational speakers. I would hear some pastors say that we must learn to love and forgive one another, or we must watch what we say, or we need to set aside a special time for prayer, and another would say we must choose to be obedient to God’s word to receive His blessing, you need to sow your seed, or we just have to believe and stand on faith. What would happen if you seemed to come up short sometimes? What if you couldn’t always be obedient? The answer of course would always be “nobody’s perfect”. Please read the chapter “Perfecting of the Saints”.

Somehow I was missing something. What was I doing wrong? Why was my faith not as good as someone else’s faith? I had asked Jesus to come into my heart and save me. I

could always confess Jesus before men. I could also claim “Jesus is my Lord”. I was baptized with full immersion in water like others. I would stay confessed up before God in sins. I would repent and ask forgiveness also. I would try to be obedient. Why could I never find true peace? Why was I constantly under condemnation of sin? I would always hear people say that as long as you are in the natural body, you will always sin. You just have to confess it and repent and ask forgiveness and try to do better next time. Other Christians would say, “the only difference between us and the unsaved is, we are forgiven”. I believe that many problems in the church today echo that same mentality. By now you can see a pattern starting to develop. As you can tell by all the “I’s” and “we have to’s” that something was missing. Where was Jesus in all this? To explain how I finally found Jesus (he actually found me) I need to go back to the beginning. This may help the “God chasers” out there. I want to now explain now is how I messed up the sinner’s prayer.



