

FAITH PLEASES

GOD

VOLUME 1

JOSEPH A. CORTES

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Fear not, I will help thee

The theme of the chapter to begin this book concerns a challenge that I face regularly. However, I am sure many of you will relate to this message as well. In the Spiritual Warfare Series, I taught on the wiles of the devil. These wiles, for which we can use the Greek word *methodia*, relate to the schemes and the deceitfulness of the devil and his demons assigned to us. One of the different methods that the devil uses to attack us includes fear in the guise of anxieties, conflicts, intense suffering, and physical or mental pain. So how does God's word deal with fear?

In the Old Testament, the first three words in Isaiah 41:10 read, "***Fear thou not.***" I realize that day-in and day-out this is a difficult principle to follow. However, you are looking at someone who has the same experiences, trials, and tribulations as you do. I know that when those trials and tribulations happen to me, fear creeps in. Sometimes it seems as though those trials are testing me every minute, every hour, and every day. Fear slips through my defenses.

However, remember God is not the author of fear. God has not given us the spirit of fear. Fear is not from God. Fear is not something that God created in us. Fear is one of the Devil's methods to tear us down to see if we will slip, stumble, and eventually fall away. In Paul's letter to Timothy in 1:7 it says, "***God has not given us the spirit of fear.***" So, whenever I read Isaiah 41:10, I keep reminding myself, "***Fear thou not***" and I hope that you will do the same.

"Fear thou not!" is not too difficult to remember, but I assure you, Satan and his demons will try to make us all forget what God is telling us to do. "***Fear thou not!***" Why should we not be afraid? God tells us, "***For I am with thee.***" Sometimes I question God. I ask the Lord, "Where in the heck are you?" When I have been in my dark valley or surrounding circumstances for what seems a long time, I doubt whether God is there, but however surprising, He is. He is there with me, and He is there with you. He is there with all of us. That is the promise that Jesus gave us. He will never leave us or forsake us (Duet. 31:6). Even though, sometimes, we just feel like He is not there, because we slip out of faith and into escalating fear. We start looking at the events of time, at what is in front of us for instance, not recognizing that He is there with us. I find it perplexing that we focus on how the devil and his demons are always attacking us, while forgetting that Jesus is also there with us. He will never leave us nor will He forsake us! Remember, Jesus did not give us the spirit of fear! "***Fear thou not!***"

Verse 10 also tells us, "***Be not dismayed.***" A better translation is "***Be not bewildered.***" That interpretation may surprise you. This is the Old Testament and I know that Isaiah 41 was written to the Children of Israel. However, I want all of us to personalize this verse so that it is relevant to our day and age. Claim it. Personalize it to meet your needs.

Personalize its promise to provide you with hope. This is what I claim! I take Isaiah 41:10 and a few other verses and make them my promises. I make them my resolutions in the New Year as well.

“Fear thou not, for I am with thee. Be not dismayed.” If we can remember and act in faith on these two promises, we will have the devil and his demons on the run. The God we serve is more than powerful enough to overcome the devil’s attacks and more than powerful enough to overcome our trials. We know what God tells us about fear in the Book of Isaiah in the Old Testament, so what does the New Testament tell us about fear?

The New Testament book, I Peter, is written to the Saints telling them not be ashamed or puzzled about what they are going through. I Peter 4:12 reads, ***“Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you.”*** This means you are not going through just any trial. You are going through a fiery trial, which is a test of faith that eventually will prove that we are worth more than gold. The word “trial” in the Greek is ***“perismos,”*** a fiery trial designed to prove us and demonstrate to Satan, and the rest of the world under his control, that God has someone who will take His word and trust in Him. God allows us to go through fiery trials to be proven and to see if we will place our trust in Him and hang in there with faith in His word. These trials come to prove us.

“Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you.” It would be easy to read this verse and not catch its meaning. Peter is asking, “Why are you surprised? Weren't you expecting the fiery trials?” We must remind ourselves to expect the trials on a daily basis and we have to have faith, daily, through the trials. Think about it. What if our Lord came today? I would not want Him catching any of us faithless. That is why Peter warns us by asking, “Why do you think it's strange that this is happening to you?” It is so important to him he states it twice! Trials are going to happen. I must admit, sometimes when trials happen to me, I say, “Why in the world is this happening?” I am guilty of doubt, and I am sure that many of you are as guilty as I am.

Compare the verses in Isaiah to the verses in Peter. ***“Think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you [or prove you], as though some strange thing happened unto you.”*** Isaiah 41:10 where God is speaking, ***“Fear thou not, for I am with thee. Be not dismayed.”*** Back to first Peter 4:12, ***“Think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to prove you.”*** The message is the same, whether from the Old or New Testament. If we can apply these simple instructions, then we will know that our faith is growing. Remember that the purpose of our existence here on earth is to prepare us for eternity.

In the Bible, there are many different names for God. One name for God is used 2,500 times in the Old Testament, which is second only to the covenant name of “Jehovah.” That name is “Elohim,” and is how “God” should be read as in verse 10. ***“For I am thy Elohim.”*** If you go to the different sources available, you will find that each definition of Elohim is slightly different depending on what the singular or plural name of Elohim means. However, the one factor that stands out repeatedly in the description of this name

is the powerful name of God. He is a powerful God. All definitions declare God to be supreme, eternal, almighty, the creator of the universe. If you cannot remember all the definitions and attributes of Elohim, then remember what Elohim means. He is a powerful God. Another description of Elohim is 'one who puts forth power.' He is the being to whom all powers belong. It applies to limitless, unqualified energy, a powerful God, and that is our promise.

What excites me is that we are not alone in our trials. Man will fail us, but we have a powerful God who is on our side. ***"Fear thou not, for I am with thee. Be not dismayed, for I am thy Elohim,"*** the creator of the universe with supreme power over everything. If you and I truly believe that, then we will have fewer fears. You and I will be less dismayed. We will not think it is strange when negative things happen to us. ***"Fear thou not, for I am with thee. Be not dismayed, for I am thy Elohim."*** I am your powerful God. What an ally to have on our side! He is more than a trusted ally. He is our father, our creator, and our reason for being. What a significant force to have fighting for us! With our Elohim, we will be less dismayed. We will not think that the fiery trials are strange, because we will have this almighty, powerful Elohim supporting us. This is the promise, and this should be your hope and your promise as well. Verse 10 in Isaiah continues, ***"I [Elohim] will strengthen thee."*** The Hebrew says this more clearly. Not, ***"I will"***, as that is the future tense, but rather, ***"I have strengthened thee,"*** it has already been done for us. In this verse, God, Elohim, is questioning why we are depressed and miserable. Why are we dismayed? He asks, 'Haven't I strengthened thee?' If we live a life of faith and trust in His word, we will not doubt what God has promised.

"For I am thy Elohim. I have strengthened thee; [or The Lord is my strength. The Lord is my powerful God] ***Yea, I will help thee."*** Not only has He strengthened us, but also He is going to help us. What a wonderful and powerful message. If you remember only one detail, remember this. What a glorious promise that we have a powerful God who will strengthen us and help us. If only all of us could remember that more frequently, then Satan would have no chance of manipulating us with his methods, his deceitfulness, his schemes, and the fears he tries to plant in our minds.

That is not all He promises. God also promises in verse 10, ***"I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness."*** By faith in His Word and through His righteousness, we are strengthened, to have fewer fears, to be less dismayed. This is not by our works, but through faith, through God, and His word. I pray daily that God will impute into me faith through His righteousness. No, the enemy is not going to like it, but whom do you serve? Do you serve the enemy, or your Lord and Savior? Whom do you serve? The devil, his demons, the evil in the air, or your Lord Jesus Christ? Too often I hear, "Oh I don't want to engage in a faith fight today." Do not think troubles are strange. Expect them, and once you do that, then you will be able to move further along in your faith walk with Christ. You will be able to have that righteousness imputed into your life and your spirit through faith. That is what this verse is saying here. ***"I will uphold thee, with the right hand of my righteousness."*** Verse 13 continues this promise with, ***"For I the Lord thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not; I will help thee."*** When God repeats Himself, we need to pay attention. He has repeated Himself in verse

13 for our benefit. ***“Fear not; I will help thee.”*** I can only imagine, the Elohim, and now also the Lord Savior Jesus Christ, holding my right hand. Just imagine Him holding your right hand and saying, “I will help thee!” Picture it in your mind. Have faith that God’s Word is real! He is holding your right hand.

Am I suggesting that when we are going through problems like business failure, a marriage that is about to fall apart, a physical or emotional illness, that He is holding our right hand? Yes, I am. He is not only holding our right hand; He is also telling us that He is going to help each of us. This book is to give you hope for what is to come. To give encouragement to all of us, myself included, who are facing the fiery trials more often than we would like. To let you know that it is not strange that these things are happening to you or any of us. To let you know that fears do not have to take over your life, because God is strengthening you. He is upholding you with his right hand of righteousness. He is helping you.

I suspect you are thinking, “That’s the Old Testament. How does that apply to me now?” I understand that, so we will look at some verses in the New Testament. Matthew 14 is the well-known story where Jesus walked on the water. Volumes of books have been written about it and this story applies to our topic. As the story begins, the Apostles were on a ship in the midst of the sea tossed around by a storm. Fear was creeping in. Matthew 14:25 continues the story, ***“And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear.”***

Do you see how easily and quickly fear creeps in? Fear shifts your focus away from the Lord. These apostles had previously seen miracles, but still they could not trust Jesus to be their Savior and God Almighty. They were all aware of the Old Testament stories how Moses parted the Red Sea, Elijah’s feats, and David’s victories. They were aware that miracles happened, but they did not genuinely truly believe in them. Even when God was walking in the flesh with the apostles, they did not believe. When fear creeps in, we are on a fast-downward road to confusion, anxiety, and conflict. Everything that is not faith in God will enter your spirit and utterly destroy you. However, in verse 27, Jesus comforts them, ***“But straight away Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; It is I; be not afraid. And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if thou be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water. And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus.”***

If Peter kept his eyes on Jesus, he was not going to sink. It is the same for us. If we keep our eyes on Jesus, we will not lose our focus or faith in Him. But when Peter saw the wind, he was afraid. As soon as he turned his eyes off Jesus and began looking at the surrounding situation, fear crept back in. Verse 30 tells us that as Peter began to sink, he cried out, saying ***“Lord save me.”***

This is where I want you to make the connection. Bring Isaiah 41:10 into Mathew 14 in the New Testament. As Peter was sinking and crying out for help from the Lord, verse 31 records, ***“And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and he caught him.”*** In the

Old Testament, in Isaiah 41:13, we are told, ***“For I the Lord thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not; I will help thee.”*** The Lord is saying it in the Old Testament, and He is saying it in the New Testament. He wants to take hold of our hand, our right hand, and help us through whatever we are going through, to calm our fears. He wants to take our hand, so we are not dismayed, so we do not think it strange that we are going through the fiery trial. He wants to take our hand with the sole purpose of helping us. He promises us, ***“I will help thee.”***

“For I the Lord thy God [Elohim, powerful God] will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not; I will help thee.” If only we could remember to put our trust and faith in God. He who is willing to take our right hand, holds us up, and plants His righteousness in us. All we need to do is to have faith in His Word, act on it, and carry it through. We have a powerful God who goes before us. We have a Lord and Savior who is reaching out His hand to catch us when we fall. He knows our fears. He knows our temptations. He knows our anxieties. He knows our doubts and He knows our conflicts. However, He is there to help, because his promise declares, ***“Fear not, I will help thee.”*** Remember Isaiah when you feel like you are slipping, when you feel like you have let fear enter your life. Fear does not come from God, as Paul wrote to Timothy, ***“God has not given us the spirit of fear.”*** Put yourself back into faith and faith in His Word. Do not forget who your powerful God is. When those fiery trials bring you down and you feel overwhelmed, do not forget that God is with you. Do not forget Him when those fears overwhelm you, He is your Elohim. He will give you strength. He will help you. He will uphold you with his right hand of righteousness.

Jesus reached out with His hand to catch Peter. Remember that He will also catch you. We have promises and something to hope for and to faith on whenever we find ourselves in situations where it feels as though fear will overwhelm us. Call out to God Elohim. Call out to the Lord Savior Jesus Christ. They will catch you. Remember to read this when you have those low moments in your life to be lifted up in faith, to move on, to slap the enemy in the face and say, ***“With a God like mine, what chance do you think you have against me? Get behind me Satan! Because that’s where you belong! Behind me!”***

The Old and New Testaments help you understand that once you recognize God is all-powerful, you will understand that He is here to help you. He wants to catch you, as He saved Peter from sinking. You will gain confidence and faith by living by his word. You gain confidence and faith by knowing what His word says. You gain confidence by practicing faith. Then you will be able to use that confidence in a respectful, humble way, knowing that He is the creator, the One in charge, regardless of whether or not you like the way He works. Whether or not you like the roads He takes you on, God is in charge. He is the creator, the all-powerful God, the Elohim. As we place our trust in his son, Jesus Christ, we know that He who created us can sustain us.

This wonderful truth, when fully understood, will help you overcome all fears and anxieties in your everyday life. Remember these promises. Go to Isaiah 41:10. Humbly come to your Elohim. Claim the promises saying, ***“My Lord you will help me, you will sustain me, you will uphold me with your right hand. Lord, what I bring to you is my***

total faith and trust in your word and promises.

I freely admit that I have had my own doubts. Occasionally, I have even thought I was not going to make it, and I am certain that I will face similar thoughts again. But I reflect on the promises of God. We all must live with the faith that God's Word is true. Do not lose your grip. Claim it for yourself. You can make it, because we have a God, who is holding our right hand, who is helping us.

I am repeating myself, so these promises become implanted in your brain and mine.
"Fear not I will help thee."

He will help us. Hang onto that promise and that faith, throughout your life.
Remember, faith pleases God.

Job

How many times have we questioned why things happen to us? We could believe that we are living in God's will, doing what God wants us to do, living our lives for God, full of faith, then here comes the problem, like a steamroller, right in your path, bearing down on you. The next thing you know, you are pressed down. The steamroller is squashing the life out of you and you find yourself asking, "Why?" Even worse, you begin listening to the devil and the thoughts he puts into your mind, thoughts that cause you to think that you must have done something wrong and now God is punishing you for your past and present sins.

With that introduction, this chapter will focus on the trials and tribulations of Job and offer some understanding about why they happened to him. When those times occur, try to think back to the parallels we can draw from Job's life. Then, when trouble comes to you and your faith is tested, you can reflect upon and apply the lessons of Job. This will give you a firmer foundation of God's Word.

Although the point of this chapter is not to try to prove when Job lived, there is a lot of controversy over when Job's story was written and there is even more controversy over when Job actually lived. I believe this book was written sometime around the Patriarchs' timeline after the flood, probably after the existence of Abraham, but before the Mosaic Law was introduced, because Job does not refer to Mosaic Law. Because of that, I believe Job was alive some time after Abraham, but before Moses.

The story of Job begins in the Book of Job, Chapter 1. ***"There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed [or departed from] evil."*** Here, "perfect" is not a good translation. The actual word is "complete," by which I mean, "not wanting in any respect at all." This verse is telling us that Job was complete and needing nothing. God had provided for him and blessed him with everything. Using "perfect" here gives the false impression that he had no sins, but as this chapter unfolds, we will see that Job was not perfect. Even though he followed close to God and tried to practice God's ways, he was not perfect. And even though God had protected him, he still did not lead a life of perfection. He had sins just as we all have sins. Only one did not have sin and that was Jesus, which is why we thank God for his grace and forgiveness.

To return to the story of Job, however, he was a man who was perfect; complete, not wanting in any respect, upright, the man who feared God. That is how Job lived his life of faith. Of course, he did not have Jesus to look to as an example. Nor was there the written word of God as we have it today. Therefore, this man feared God and departed from evil in every way he knew how. That was how Job applied faith to his life.

Reading on to verse 2, Job's story continues, ***"And there were born unto him seven sons and three daughters."*** Verse 3 also records that Job had 7000 sheep, 3000 camels, 500 oxen, and 500 she asses. So not only was he complete, he was also very wealthy. Many of

you may be thinking to yourself that if you had Job's wealth in addition to being complete, not wanting in any respect, that you could fear God and depart from evil. If only God would just give you the chance to show Him that you could be as strong as Job. My studies of this verse have led me to believe that Job feared God and departed from evil before he became wealthy; before he gained his great household. Because of his frame of mind, God blessed Job and made him wealthy. Do not be like some Christians who complain that God does not bless them like Job. They should stop comparing themselves to Job. God deals with each saint individually. He knows your heart and He knows what you need. He knows where you are in your faith walk and where others are in their faith walk. It is not for you to judge, be jealous of others, or declare that your lot in life is unfair. If you truly want to be a Christian, your only concern should be following God and pleasing Him. The most important wealth that you will ever receive is faith, because faith will lead to imputed righteousness, and there is no greater wealth than that. Stop looking at the seen things and start living the life of the unseen things. Until you can achieve that frame of mind daily, you will never grow in faith in God's Word. You will still be concerned about the material distractions of this world. Yes, Job had the material things, but they did not matter to him. His substance grew because he feared God and departed from evil.

Continuing on to verse 4, ***“And his sons went and feasted in their houses, every one his day. . .”*** Most scholars believe that what is described here is simply a birthday party for one of his sons. I have read many commentaries, some trying to make more out of this verse than there is, so we will move on to verse five.

In verse five, Job presents burnt offerings to the Lord, on behalf of his sons, because Job was troubled that his sons may have sinned or cursed God in their hearts. Job was concerned that God should be the priority in all things, even those things to do with his family. ***“And it was so, when the days of their feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all: for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually.”***

Now Job could have done nothing and said, “I am wealthy. I have powerful friends. I am an influential man.” That is what we read in verse three, ***“. . .so that this man was the greatest of all the men of the east.”*** Job could have not been concerned about his sons' actions or even about his own walk of faith. He knew that he was the greatest of all the men of the east. He could have easily had spiritual pride and forgotten God. It is very easy to become complacent when things are going well in your life. However, when things go badly, how many of you start blaming God? Thank God, that He is a God of grace and that He is there to help. You must grow in Christ and faith and realize that when times of trouble come to you, you should press closer to the Lord.

In David's earlier Psalms, he spent much time moaning and groaning about his situation. However, as David's faith in God matured, he began going to his helper and comforter more quickly. He went to the Lord. As you go through life, learn from David and the great men of God whose stories are in the Bible. As each of the men matured in faith, each learned to put their faith back on God more quickly. Each relied on God and trusted in

Him. Unlike us, Job did not have Jesus Christ as a mediator. Jesus Christ is sitting at God's right hand, mediating for us daily, throughout our various situations and trials. He promised never to leave or forsake us.

Now we see what Satan begins to do about Job in verse 6, ***“Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them.”*** Notice, that even though Satan was thrown out of heaven, he still had a certain amount of access to the Throne of God. God, for some reason, allowed him this access. After all, He allowed the devil to rule and reign here on earth, in the unseen dimension that not only controls destinies, but also lives affecting humanity. Satan still had that access to the Throne of God and when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, Satan went too. I cannot help but think that maybe God has placed certain conditions on Satan, that while he has free reign down here, God still wants Satan to admit what he is doing and what he is planning to do, even though God already knows. God wanted Satan to present himself, to submit himself to his creator, to make Satan acknowledge his evil.

At verse seven, the Lord asked Satan, ***“Whence comest thou? Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, from going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it.”*** Of course, God knew where Satan was. God already knew what Satan was doing, just as he knows what we are doing. Satan is as a roaring lion, looking for those he can devour. He is watching the situation. He is looking for lives to destroy. He scans the world, so he can present accusations, as an accuser of the brethren, at God's Throne. Satan enjoys telling God, “I told you so.” He looked forward to Job's failures, as he looks forward to our failures. Then he can present our failures; use them to accuse us, to say, “I told you so. They do not believe in your Holy Word. They have no concern for it. They just want to follow their own way, living their lives, finding themselves.” Satan is the accuser of the brethren. He was then and still is now. The big difference between Job and us is that we have Jesus Christ to tell Satan to stop; your access has been restricted by my blood. In his time, Job did not have our mediator. We do. How more blessed are we, than Job was. How much wealthier are we, than Job was; that is why I dislike Christians who complain. The walk of faith is tough. Take your eyes off your condition. Stop trying to figure out what you did wrong. Just put your eyes back on God. Put your eyes back on Jesus. All life's problems happen for a purpose, just as in Job's life.

God has a purpose. If you follow Jesus, prepare yourself. The war has begun, and it is going to get tough. It is going to get hard. It is not going to be easy. Be sure to count the cost before you build your tower or go to war. Make sure you have enough to complete the building, and to finish the war. Too many Christians think they are going to war prepared for battle, but they have not put on their spiritual armor. Then, as soon as they see their enemy, before they even engage, they cower down in defeat. They are not prepared. As soon as Satan sees that you have turned your life over to Christ, he comes and hits you hard, steamrolling over you repeatedly to prevent you from getting up. Often pastors preach that if you come to Jesus, everything will be fine. I am telling you, let Jesus change your life and watch all hell break loose around you. Nevertheless, it is worth it! How much more-effective Christians would be against the devil if only their pastors present God's

Word in the correct manner preparing you for the good fight of faith against your enemy. You must be ready.

Job was no exception, so let us look at how Job reacted when God removed his spiritual, protective fence and Satan was permitted to attack Job, his family, his servants, and his livestock. Watch how Job came through his trials, so we can apply his lessons to our lives when we are tested.

As the Book of Job begins, everyone and everything that was precious to Job. His family, his servants, his household, everything was protected. Satan could not touch any of it. It almost makes me envious of Job. If I could just have the protective fence that Job had, if only Satan and his demons knew I was off limits. Then in verse 8, Satan and the Lord begin discussing Job; ***“And the Lord said unto the Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, escheweth evil? Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, Doth Job fear God for naught? Hast thou not made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side?”***

Now Satan is trying to convince God that the reason Job worships Him and fears Him is the blessings he has received, because of the hedge that God had put around him. Satan challenges the Lord to take the hedge away and see what happens. It was evident that Satan was challenging the motive behind Job’s worship and service to God. Satan wanted to show that Job worshipped only because God had blessed him, but this was not the case. Job served the Lord from his heart.

Here, Satan has the audacity to try to convince God to do something that he, Satan, wants done. You will read this in verse eleven, ***“But put forth thy hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face.”*** Satan is not saying to remove the protective hedge. He wants God to do his evil for him, but God did not fall for Satan’s tricks. The Lord replies in verse 12, ***“Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the Lord.”*** In other words, God said to Satan, “I am not going to take the fall for your deceitfulness. However, I am going to allow it to happen so that I can prove Job’s trust in me. Satan, you do your own dirty work, because you are the evil one. You are the vicious one. You are the one who is out to destroy humanity. You are the one who is out to destroy any hope of humanity putting its faith and trust in me.”

It is in verse 13 where Satan begins to act. ***“And there was a day when his sons and his daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother’s house: And there came a messenger unto Job, and said, The oxen were plowing, and the asses feeding beside them: And the Sabeans fell upon them, and took them away; yea, they have slain the servants with the edge of the sword; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.”*** Job’s protection was gone and now other tribes in the area were taking their livestock away. Part of Job’s wealth was stolen, and his servants were killed. Satan allowed one servant to escape, but only to be the bearer of the bad news, to tell Job of the terrible events that had happened. I am sure you have all had bearers of bad news in your life.

You might have some right now, but remember they are only instruments that Satan uses to inundate us with bad news. If you do find yourself constantly barraged with bad news, you can assure yourself that Satan is trying to make you lose faith and hope.

By the end of this chapter, I am going to tell you why you should not lose hope, but in the meantime, let us continue with verse 16. ***“While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, The fire of God is fallen from heaven, and hath burned up the sheep and the servants, and consumed them; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.”*** Yet, another bearer of bad news arrived, and this one was blaming God for fire from heaven that burned the sheep and consumed the servants, only he had escaped. Even though it was not God sending fire from heaven, how could the servant know that? Satan allowed the servant to survive to use him as his agent, to give Job more bad news. Satan had his own purpose for this person, just as he had for the other bearer of bad news in the previous verse.

Verse 17 brings yet more bad news. ***“While he was yet speaking, there came another, and said, The Chaldeans made out three bands, and fell upon the camels, and have carried them away, yea, and slain the servants with the edge of the sword; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.”***

If that was not bad enough, we come to verse 18. ***“While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, Thy sons and thy daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother’s house: And, behold, there came a great wind from the wilderness, and smote the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young men, and they are dead; and I only escaped alone to tell thee.”*** Loss of wealth is nothing compared to the loss that verse 18 describes. Material possessions of this world come and go, but what Job lost in verse 18 was irreplaceable. How would you have felt? Death came to all of his sons and daughters, and with those deaths went any hope of future generations coming forth from that family. It would have devastated me, and I am sure it would devastate you. How would those of you with children react if all your children were suddenly gone?

Now you understand why Satan was trying to convince God to do his dirty work. Not only is Satan the accuser of the brethren, but he also wants to be able to accuse God of all wrongdoing and evil that happens to us here on earth.

So how did Job react? What did he do? Verse 20 tells us Job’s reaction. ***“Then Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshiped.”*** That was what he did. He worshipped God. Despite all the trials and tribulations visited upon him so far, Job had not lost his faith in God. Job did not blame God for his situation or complain that it was unfair or unjust. He had lost everything. His children, his servants, his wealth all were gone. Nevertheless, he fell down to the ground and worshipped, not Satan, he worshipped God. I only pray that through my trials, and through yours, that we all reach the same point that Job was at that time. I can only pray that when my trials come, that I stop and remember to worship the Lord. That I stop and remember how great an honor it is to be a servant of His and to worship Him. That I

thank Him for His grace, that I thank Him for His son. That I thank Him for the blood He spilled for my life. That I fall on the ground, worship, and praise Him.

Up to this point, Job had kept his eyes on the Lord. I do not know how I would react under all of this pressure. Perhaps you could ask yourself how you would react if you were under the same pressure. When you read the verses in Job, it sounds as though one bad event happens after another. And they did, but there was a time interval between each of these terrible events. There was enough time for Job to develop a bitter and angry attitude toward God but there is no record of that up to this point. I know that if those of you who are parents had to see your children suffering with a disease or illness, you would wish it could be you, not them, that you would take their place in an instant. But Job, even when the worst possible thing happened to him, he still kept his faith. He fell to the ground and he worshipped and said in verse 21, ***“Naked came I out of my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord. In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly.”*** Not an easy accomplishment. Few of us could do the same without complaining. Now, I have read many books on Job and half of them spend time criticizing him, yet these same authors could not even walk a mile in his footsteps. How quickly they put Job down when he shows some weakening of his Faith and begins to question the events that have transpired.

Let us continue to Chapter 2:1, ***“Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves to the Lord, and Satan came also among them to present himself before the Lord.”*** After all of the events that took place, Satan had still not been successful at getting Job, to backslide and fall away from God. But he does not give up, as we see in verse two, ***“And the Lord said unto Satan, From whence comest thou? And Satan answered the Lord, and said, From going to and fro from the earth, and from walking up and down in it. And the Lord said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and that escheweth evil? and still he holdeth fast his integrity, although thou movedst me against him, to destroy him without cause.”***

So many things happen in life that causes us to question what we did to deserve it. Satan does not care, because his main purpose is to destroy our faith in God. He does not need a reason. He does things without cause and for one reason only, to break our faith connection and separate us from our Lord. Verse 4 shows us this when Satan responds. ***“And Satan answered the Lord, and said, skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life. But put forth thy hand, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face. And the Lord said unto Satan, Behold, he is in thy hand; but save his life.”*** God is telling Satan that he can do what he wants with Job now, but that he cannot take his life. Satan took his sons’ lives, his daughters’ lives, his servants’ lives but he cannot take Job’s life. Why would God allow this to happen?

To begin to answer that question, we go to verse 7, ***“So went Satan forth from the presence of the Lord, and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown.”*** Verse 8 describes Job scraping himself with the pieces of broken pots, because

of the disease and pain he was suffering from. In that same verse, Job sits down among the ashes, in despair. How many times in your life have you despaired? Crying in your own sorrow, when I guarantee that it is unlikely you have been through what Job had been through here. Of course, that does not change, the problems that you are enduring, especially if what you are going through seems like there is no hope of deliverance. Satan tries to make you question where God is. Every malicious thought comes into your mind to curse God.

Verse 9 continues, ***“Then said his wife unto him, Doest thou still retain they integrity? curse God, and die.”*** There is no joy in marriage to someone who thinks that following God is too hard. When life starts getting tough you are accused of doing something wrong and you are both paying the price. I trust that you will not attach yourself to someone with that attitude. Unfortunately, Job did. Instead of being a source of strength for Job, his wife did the worse thing possible. She tried to get Job to first curse God, and then die. If you think that Satan did not have control over her mouth, then you do not understand spiritual warfare. Satan used his wife as a tool in Job’s time of need. What a thing for a wife to say, ***“Curse God and die.”*** But Job was wise enough and he kept his focus on God. In verse ten Job replies, ***“Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? In all of this did not Job sin with his lips.”*** Put flesh and blood in this story. Job had lost his children, his servants, all of his wealth. His body was attacked so that he was not even recognizable to his friends. He had boils from head to toe; sores scraped by pieces of pots. I cannot even imagine the pain associated with that! The afflictions he must have suffered from head to toe. He was one open sore and exposed to excruciating pain. However, even his wife could not change the way he trusted his Lord.

In verse eleven, along come three friends to sit with him for seven days. Sadly, these friends were simply more instruments of Satan, sent to try to confuse and misdirect Job’s thoughts. How many people throughout your lifetime have come to you and tried to reason with you, make sense of your trials, and tried to put the blame on you as Job’s friends did, saying, “Well you must have sinned. So therefore, because you sinned, you must pay the price.”

Condemnation upon condemnation was given to Job as a theory for his problems and suffering. Stop trying to figure out why things that bring you pain have happened. Things happen to you because we are fighting a spiritual war. We are fighting against beings we cannot see or feel. And they have the power to influence the people around us. Beginning in Job 2:11, we see Satan using Job’s three friends to mislead and discourage him. However, the bearers of bad news could not destroy Job; the boils and sores could not destroy Job; his wife could not destroy him. Now he has these friends, and they were not ordinary friends. They were influential men of Job’s time. They came from different places. They were his peers, people with wisdom and advice that others would stop and listen to. These people were as close to Job as anyone could be.

I believe, teaching the way I do about spiritual warfare, that they were instruments of the devil. They would be mouthpieces for the devil and their role was to try to turn Job away

from God. It is amazing to me how Job was able to keep his focus on God under the many influences that tried to break him down.

How does Job react to all the tragedy and pressure? This is where God came to Job's rescue because, through it all, Job still wanted to find his God. Chapter 23:3 tells us, "***Oh that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat!***" Verse 6 continues, "***Will he plead against me with his great power? No; but he would put strength in me.***" Even though Job becomes argumentative, he still has trust in God. Job realized that if he could be face-to-face with God, God would strengthen him. Right or wrong, Job held on with enough faith to believe that if he could find his God; if he knew where He was, he knew that God would strengthen him. How much more fortunate we are. Jesus will never leave or forsake us. Job did not have that promise.

Job becomes desperate, and in verse 8 decides, "***Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him: On the left hand, where he doth work, but I cannot behold him: he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him.***" Finally, verse ten reveals the all-important explanation of why God came to Job's rescue. God had had enough of the nonsense that was going on with Job's friends. God became even more tired of the nonsense and the evilness that Satan was accomplishing. Even though God had to realign Job's thinking, He still was waiting for one important thing to happen. It is in verse ten, that Job states, "***But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.***" Job now realizes that God knows where he is. Job might be lost, but God is not.

I am convinced that if Job had not come to that understanding, confessing with his own lips, God would not have delivered him. Regarding us, God is also waiting to see how we react when our trust in Him is tested. Just as this book states, it takes faith! What is the definition of faith? As my mentor used to say, "Action, based on belief, and sustained by confidence." I would like to add to that definition: Because you trust in God's character, He knows what is best for you; you trust in His word, because He said it and He will do it; and you trust in His timing, because no matter how long it takes, He does come through.

Just as Job 23:10 states, "***But He knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.***" I Peter 1:7 echoes this. Prior to verse 7, Peter discusses the many and various temptations. Then verse 7 tells us, "***That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ . . . Receiving the end*** [or, result of] ***your faith, even the salvation of your souls*** [or, your eternal life]." These verses are telling us that faith tried in the fire, the fiery furnace of life and circumstance, results in faith that praises and honors God, and is more precious than gold. It is the same in the Old and New Testaments. Moreover, this is why, after reading all of the chapters about Job's life, God came to his rescue. It also gives us a glimpse of hope. Job recognized that God knew where he was, what was happening to him. When tried by God in the fire, to see what he was made of, Job came forth as gold. Just the same, God wants to see what we are made of.

So now, to the end of the story. God intervened and came to Job's rescue, because He had enough of Job's friends. After God's rescue of Job, in Job 42:2, he went to the Lord and says, ***"I know that thou canst do every thing, and that no thought can be withholden from thee."*** In other words, Job was saying, "You are the almighty powerful God. How dare I question You?" How many times have I or you questioned God? There is no room for that in the faith walk in Christ. Sure, doubts try to slip in, just as I said in the spiritual warfare messages. Doubt is one of the methods Satan uses to make us question God.

Verse five is Job's reply to his own question. ***"I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee."*** Meaning, Job heard God's voice. As it says in Romans 10:17, ***"Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."*** What a record we have. Even though we have not seen Christ, we understand what He did for us. Verse six continues Job's thoughts, ***"Wherefore I abhorre myself, and repent."*** Job turned himself around. He stopped listening to outside influences and started listening to God, and God saw a true, sincere, repenting heart.

Well thank God for our mediator, Jesus Christ, who sits in for us. Let us remember to keep our eyes focused on Jesus Christ, because he is the way, and he is the life. In addition, do not fall into the same trap as Job did with outside influences. Let us forever keep our eyes focused on Christ. Keep hearing the words of faith. Keep applying the words of faith. Keep recognizing that you are a sinner saved by grace. We are not going to be perfect, but we are working towards the completion. Even though the trials and circumstances come our way, we will not take our sight off Him. He is the author and finisher of faith. He went before us, so He could take the keys of death and hell away from Satan. So, He could shut the mouth of the accuser for us. Do not listen to those preachers, family or friends who condemn you or beat you down when things start going wrong in your life. They are misleading, even if you have done something wrong. They forget that Christ covered our sins with His precious blood. All you have to do is focus your eyes back on Him.

We now return to question of why the righteous, or faithing ones, suffer. Why did Job suffer? As one author writes,

"The pressing question about Job is, will the righteous [or faithing ones] praise God even in tough times? Will the righteous worship God in the midst of adversity? The answer is: The righteous suffer because God, according to his infinite wisdom, chooses us to suffer" to test our faith, to see if it is more precious than gold. Initially, ***"it might appear . . . unjust. But in the book of Job, the reader is allowed to go behind the scenes and see the higher purposes of God behind Job's suffering. Although Job lost a great deal through his soul-crushing experience, he gained far more than he lost (Job 42:12-16).*** [After this experience, Job had seven more sons and three more daughters.] ***Through this fiery trial, he perseveres and becomes an even stronger, more mature believer (Job 42:5)"*** in God's word than before his attack by Satan. Always bear in mind that we are pitted between the kingdoms of life and death. We are in the

“battlefield for the invisible war between the two unseen worlds. Satan is always pressing to destroy God’s plans by attacking the human race, especially the righteous . . .” ones faithing in God’s word. *“Honor is given to God when the righteous [us] “endure suffering . . .”* because of the faith we have in His word and in His son.

Remember what God is doing when we go through our trials and come out more precious than gold. God is telling Satan, “You were hoping that they would fail and turn on me, but you and your evil ways failed. They did not fail because they trusted in Me and my word.”

As I grow and mature as a faithing Christian, my one hope is that I will learn to trust God more day by day. We are in a spiritual war, but we have the tools to become victorious. We just must use them and trust in God’s word. Let us keep on faithing in His word and come forth as gold. Remember faith pleases God.

Enduring Faith

This chapter will begin in Romans 5:1, where Paul states, ***“Therefore being justified by faith,”*** however a more accurate translation of the word “justified” would be “righteousified.” I know this is not a word in the English language, but it is a better translation of the word. My mentor brought the translation of this word to my attention while teaching from the Book of Romans, but you may wonder where this word came from?

To answer that question, we need to go back to Romans 4:3. This is where Abraham received God’s righteousness by believing in Him, and because of that, ***“it was counted unto him for righteousness.”*** In other words, because he faithed (as a verb), God counted it for him as righteousness. Therefore, Abraham was “righteousified” by faith, not by praying, or by speaking in tongues. Not by a holy dance, or testimonies, or by anything else, although I understand there is a time and place for those acts of worship. However, by being “righteousified” by faith in Jesus Christ, you become righteous. You do not receive God’s imputed righteousness except through faith. I must remind myself of that every day, and some days a little bit more. When I have my spirit right, I realize that I must keep on trusting in God’s word, because I am being “righteousified.” I realize life’s situations are an opportunity to faith, to get that righteousness that only God can impute into my being or into yours. Instead of dreading what might be a tough day, I should say “Thank you Lord!” Through tribulation, or whatever you are facing, you are going to have to continue to trust in His word, trust in His character, that He knows what is best for you.

Life’s circumstances are an opportunity. I know that, unfortunately, those opportunities usually mean hardships you have to go through, and if you are anything like me, you do not want to have those hardships on a continuous basis. Even though, no matter what the case is, that situation is an opportunity to trust in God’s Word. At the same time, the result of this faith act is the wonderful gift of salvation and imputed righteousness from God. Keep in mind, Romans 4:20 tells us about Abraham, ***“He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God.”***

Abraham was strong in faith and it was counted to him as righteousness. I once said that if I depart and go to the Lord before the rapture, I wanted my tombstone to read, “He was not ashamed to be called my God, because I was strong in the faith.” It takes faith to please God, and if I am strong in the faith, He will never be ashamed to be called My God because of the faith I had in Him. ***“Abraham staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief.”*** One of the reasons why this verse is so important to me is because I lost my mentor in 2005. After 30 years of teaching, he went to be with the Lord. This verse is where he left off in his teachings on the book of Romans, so I decided to use this verse to base this ministry on, to give it vision and hope. We would not stagger fighting the good fight of faith, but be strong in the faith, giving glory to God.

Verse 21 continues, ***“And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform.”*** This is what trust in His word means. He promised it and we are faithing that He will perform it. No matter what the circumstances look like, God will perform, if we stay true to his word by trusting in Him.

Chapter 4:22 reads, ***“And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness,”*** because of Abraham’s strong faith. So, when you go to Romans Chapter 5:1, we now know that “righteousified,” is a much better translation rather than “justified.” Our faith will give us peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, which is what I must remind myself daily. We live in tough times. We live in the last days of prophecy. Satan and his demon army are on a rampage to destroy every true believer that lives his or her life, faithing in God, being strong in the faith, imputed for righteousness. Do you want to make the devil mad? Let him know that you are imputed with righteousness from God. He is already angry that you have received grace, that free gift that only can be given through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now you know because you are acting in faith, believing what God Has promised, you are being imputed with righteousness. Something Satan and his demons cannot obtain. That’s why we’re in a spiritual battle. The devil does not want to see any of us trusting and having faith in God’s word. That is why Paul said at the end of his life, ***“I have fought the good fight”*** of faith (2 Tim. 4:7). Paul knew how important the life of faith was and still is to a Christian, but the message of faith will do you no good unless you start acting on it. You must start understanding what God wants from you, which is worship and faith. He wants you to recognize who He is, and what He said, and realize that He is serious. We must continue through our circumstances. Too many individuals go on the seen instead of the unseen. They do not live by faith. They live by what is seen, and since they cannot see God, they cannot really believe or trust in Him.

My answer to that is, if the resurrection does not prove to you that God is real then there is not much hope for you. You may ask why I would say such a thing. You do not hear many other Christian preachers saying that, but many are called few are chosen. Jesus spoke in parables so not everyone could understand him, and I am speaking to the ones that do understand. Life’s circumstances, life’s struggles, at times bring you down, but there is hope and an abundance of inspiration in God’s word that can get you through those difficult times. To get through those times though, you must first understand that you only get righteousness through faith, we are “righteousified” by faith, which means that we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. In other words, you get to the place where you come to understand that through your faith in Jesus, you are not alone in this fight of faith.

With that understanding, read what Roman 5:3 and 4 tells us. ***“And not only so, but we glory in tribulation also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope.”*** The words “tribulation,” “patience,” and “experience” are key to these two verses. If you learn and memorize these three words in the Greek, you will have a better understanding of what Paul was trying to communicate

here so when you are going through circumstances, trials, and tribulations, they will help you and they help me.

Verse 3 begins by telling us, ***“And not only so, but we glory in tribulations. . .”*** The Greek word for tribulations is ***thlipsis***. Tribulation, or ***thlipsis***, is used in the King James Version 45 times. Some of the words translated for ***thlipsis*** in King James Version were anguish, burden, affliction, persecution, tribulation, and trouble, and to be afflicted. However, what does the word mean? ***“Thlipsis”*** means “a pressing together.” Just imagine being in a vice, and the vice is just pressing in on both sides. In other words, you are in a tight squeeze that is getting tighter. Put your circumstance in that position. Your circumstance is in that vice with you. It is not getting easier and it is starting to create pain in your life by closing in on you and squeezing the life out of you. That is an illustration of what the word means in the Greek. These circumstances press together for one purpose and one purpose only, to see how you can handle the pressure. Remember this word when you are going through ***thlipsis***, or tribulation.

Now, let us look at the word “patience.” Patience in the Greek is ***hupomone***. This is a word you need to use daily. Pray to God that your ***hupomone*** ever increases in you for His glory. ***Hupomone*** is used 32 times in the King James Version of the Bible. Unfortunately, it was translated as “enduring” only once and “patience” 29 times, which is a huge mistake when the Greek was translated. The word means steadfastness, or endurance. Almost every time you see the word “patience” in the Bible, the Greek word is ***hupomone***, or endurance. ***Hupomone*** in the New Testament is the characteristic of a man who does not change direction from his purpose and is loyal to the faith, even though he is going through his greatest trials and sufferings. So, to read verse 3 with those Greek words, it should say, ***“And not only so, but we glory in thlipsis also: knowing that the pressures worketh hupomone (endurance).”*** You will have situations that bring you under pressure, squeezed on all sides, but those pressures are going to work endurance for a reason. I love the word ***hupomone***. It means continuing, no matter what. It is important that you remember that.

This is what Thomas Tewell says about ***hupomone***:

“Endurance is the quality of a marathon runner when he or she gets to the wall after about 16 miles, and it feels that it is not possible to go any further. Hupomone is the quality that keeps going no matter what.”

I have been in that place! I ran a marathon once. It was the Long Beach Marathon in the 1980’s in California. I hit “the wall” at 16 miles. My right knee started to hurt. In fact, it was hurting so much that the first-aid medics that are placed throughout the course notice that I was limping. I did not know if I would finish, but I did, even though I did not have a record time.

Although that was just a race, the spiritual race that we run every day, has bigger implications. I could have quit running in the Long Beach Marathon, but we must continue the spiritual race that we are running, no matter what. That is what ***hupomone***

means. You have to endure no matter what. Endurance is the wonderful Greek word *hupomone*. I love that word. It means hanging in there no matter what. I want you to remember that.

Hupomone does not mean just to be patient and wait for things to pass by. It does not mean to wait for your trials to go away, miserably waiting for the end. You cannot develop the attitude that you are going to stay where you are and hope your problems will just go away. No, that is not what the *hupomone* means at all. It means that we as individuals should start relying on our source, Jesus Christ. There are times, myself included, where I cannot wait to go to sleep at night to forget about all my problems. That is not *hupomone*, the stoic endurance of waiting for night, when sleep will block everything out, putting your back to the wind. *Hupomone* is turning around and walking into the wind. That is why I believe the best word for *hupomone* is endurance. The word is not patience, but *hupomone*, enduring no matter what.

With that understanding, read verse 3 again. “***And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh in hupomone.***” We could also say, “We glory in the **pressures**, also knowing that the **pressures** worketh **endurance**. That is the purpose of *hupomone*. That is why you must trust in God’s word, because you will not get through the tribulations without trusting in Him. You are faced with all kinds of pressures and struggles, but they are different when you are a Christian. You have an enemy that does not sleep, always planning your demise. When you start living a life of faith in Christ, your struggles, and how you deal with them, will not be the same. Yes, everyone has struggles whether your Christian or not, but the intensity is different. The mind tricks and the methods the devil uses against you is something you have to be aware of and be on guard against with your spiritual weapons as described in Ephesians 6. There will be times he will make you fail. However, all God wants from you is for you to get back up and go in the right direction again. You do that by trusting in Him and getting yourself focused back on His word, so He can impute righteousness through faith back into your life. It is not complicated, but it is tough and that is why you need to understand the meaning of *hupomone*. Remember we are to glory in the pressures and vices we are in, knowing that those pressures worketh *hupomone*, endurance.

The next important word in verse four is experience, or *dokime* in the Greek. This word is only used seven times in the King James Version. One of its meanings is, “proving a trial or a proof of tried worth.” In other words, *hupomone* and *dokime* when used together means “a person that has gone through a trial with endurance and is worth something that is precious to God.” The pressures of life and the endurance they create through your trials create a proven individual who remains faithful to God and His word. As a result, you will have that hope at the end of verse 4. Because you went through all this, you have demonstrated your faith in God and now he gives you that other gift of imputed righteousness. God does not just leave us there without any available help. The help is there. We just must learn where to go for it, which obviously is God’s word.

How do these verses relate to the world? Do you think a marathon runner starts running 26 miles without any training? When I ran a marathon, I started with a few miles a day,

months ahead of time. Then I went ran 5 miles, then 7 miles. It was three weeks prior to the marathon that I ran 16 miles. Runners must increase gradually the distance run every week until they get to the point where they know they can finish the race. Well, apply that same principle to those pressures in your life. I know some of you do not like to hear this, but the more *thlipsis*, or pressures, you go through, the more *hupomone*, or endurance you will have. In addition, if you keep focusing on God's word, the more certain you become that God will always be there with you and He will see you through. That is *dokime*. You have been through the trial, and God saw you do it, with endurance, and because you remain faithful to His word, He gives you hope. That is the hope that He will see you through, so you can obtain His righteousness given to you by the Lord Jesus Christ through Faith.

This chapter will conclude in Hebrews 12:1. ***“Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.”*** The same Greek word for patience, *hupomone*, endurance not patience, is used in this verse. The race that is set before us, the race of life struggles, whether you like it or not, is to be run with *hupomone*, endurance. Some races are more difficult than others are, but they will still be there. You cannot escape them as a Christian. You must have the endurance and the knowledge of God's word that will help you through your race.

Read on to Hebrews 12:2 ***“Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of faith.”*** The word “our,” in italics, is not in the original translation and should not be in this verse. The translators added it. Christ was the first to make it all the way through in faith without failing, and we have the promise that if we keep our eyes on Him, if we keep faithing in Him, He will also see us through. However, must run the race. I would love to sit here and tell you your life will be easy with no problems, but I will not. I am telling you the race is like a vice squeezing in on you. However, we have the promise that Jesus will never leave us or forsake us. If we run that race set before us with *hupomone*, Jesus will be there with us every step of the way. We just must remember to keep focused on God's word. Learn and practice what Gods word says and start basing your whole life on it.

Remember these three Greek words, *thlipsis*, *hupomone*, and *dokime* the next time you are tempted to quit the race because it is too tough. Remember these wonderful Greek words. All you must do is live your life in faith in God's word and keep your eyes on Jesus. It is not easy, but it is necessary to have eternal life with Him. Remember, if you are strong in the faith, it gives Him glory. Keep Faithing in His word. Remember, faith pleases God.

Tested, Tried, and Refined

The trials we face daily are nothing more than a ‘refining process’ to bring us closer to God. In this chapter we will take a Hebrew word, *‘tsaraph,’* and explore how its uses in other areas of the Old Testament. We will also go through the lives of Joseph and Gideon, two heroes of faith, and see how this word is used in connection with them; where it came from, the time, and how God tested them to see if they would be obedient to His word by faith before using them for His purposes.

To begin, Psalm 105:17 says, *“He sent a man before them, even Joseph, who was sold for a servant: Whose feet they hurt with fetters: he was laid in iron.”* If you know the story of Joseph, you know he was Jacob’s favorite son. Jacob gave Joseph a coat of many colors, which made his other brothers very jealous of the relationship and love their father had for Joseph. Also, Joseph had dreams, which showed his brothers, and even his own father, bowing down to him, showing that he would be put in a capacity of leadership where they would have to take his words as law, as commandment, and obey them. Of course, the brothers did not want to be part of that, and given the opportunity, they sought to kill him. But God had a hand in protecting Joseph from being killed, although He did allow him to be bound, sold as a slave, and sent to Egypt where he served faithfully under his master, Potiphar. Unfortunately, Potiphar’s wicked wife had other plans for Joseph. She lied about Joseph and he was imprisoned.

What a story; Joseph was sent by God but wound up in slavery! Although Psalm 105:18 says, *“He was laid in iron,”* a better translation of that phrase is *“his soul came into iron.”* Joseph’s very being became iron, because he kept his faith and trust in God’s Word. God knew exactly when Joseph’s soul came into iron, just as He knew exactly when to start the process of arranging to send Joseph to a foreign land to be ruler. God’s plan allowed not only Egypt, but also the nations surrounding Egypt in the then-known world to survive through the horrible famine, which would have wiped out all of Abraham’s seed if He had not sent a man.

Eventually, Joseph was freed from prison and Psalm 105:19-21 tells us, *“Until the time that his word came: the word of the Lord tried him. The king sent and loosed him; even the ruler of the people, and let him go free. He made him lord of his house, and ruler of all his substance.”* God made Joseph second only to Pharaoh. Only Pharaoh had a higher position in Egypt. Joseph could do whatever he wanted, to whomever he wanted, and no one could say a word. But that did not happen overnight. The iron had to first enter into Joseph’s soul when the Word of the Lord “tried” him. *‘Tsaraph’* is the Hebrew word used here, which indicates ‘to test’ or ‘to refine’ as silver is refined.

Do you know how is silver refined? First, the silver is separated from the other matter with it. The ore is heated, and when it is at the correct temperature, the lead dissolves and the silver is removed. The heat of the furnace is what separates the silver from the ore or lead. *‘Tsaraph’* is the Hebrew Word that describes this process. It was the Word of the Lord, *‘tsaraph,’* that tested and refined Joseph. Even though God had sent him, Joseph

still had the opportunity to turn against God if only Satan could change his mind to focus on the circumstances. Satan knew what was taking place, and his goal, his mode of operation, was to break Joseph so God's promise would not be fulfilled. Fortunately, Satan was not successful.

Through his circumstances, the iron entered into Joseph's soul and he was tested, he was *'tsaraph,'* he was refined, and he was proven. When the set time came, Joseph was released from prison to interpret Pharaoh's dream about the upcoming famine that was to devastate all the kingdoms in the surrounding area. Only Egypt was not affected, because of God and how he had Joseph interpret those dreams. It was not Joseph's own doing, he just became an instrument, a willing vessel to be tested and proved by God, *'tsaraph.'* Other Old and New Testament heroes of faith also went through the same testing and refining by God. God allowed them to be tested to see what they were made of, to see if they were going to fail or if they would press closer to God, and by faith, move forward, trusting that God had everything under control. Their decisions were not only for themselves as individuals, but as in the case of Joseph and Gideon, for the whole nation of Israel.

Throughout the book of Judges, the children of Israel would return to worshipping false idols and doing evil in the sight of the Lord repeatedly. Then, they would plead, cry, and beg God to enter in and take care of their enemies, and God would do it. For a time, they would then stay faithful, but would eventually fall back in the same old trap and become evil in the sight of the Lord, repeating this cycle repeatedly. You can read of this in Judges 6:1-6, ***“And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord: and the Lord delivered them into the hand of Midian seven years. And the hand of Midian prevailed against Israel: and because of the Midianites the children of Israel made them the dens which are in the mountains, and caves, and strong holds. And so it was, when Israel had sown, that the Midianites came up, and the Amalekites, and the children of the east, even they came up against them; And they encamped against them, and destroyed the increase of the earth, till thou come unto Gaza, and left no sustenance for Israel, neither sheep, nor ox, nor ass. For they came up with their cattle and their tents, and they came as grasshoppers for multitude; for both they and their camels were without number: and they entered into the land to destroy it. And Israel was greatly impoverished because of the Midianites; and the children of Israel cried unto the Lord.”***

The children of Israel were running for their lives rather than living peacefully. They could not set up camp or their households because they knew their enemies would come in periodically destroying everything they had established. Added to that, they were fearful for their own lives. As a result, they lived in dens in the mountains, and in caves, and strongholds. When the Israelites tried to plant or harvest, the Midianites, Amalekites, and the children of the East came and took everything from the children of Israel. Some scholars think this happened once a year, but these enemies came with their own cattle and their own tents to stay while they depleted the ground used for planting. There were so many of them, they were a multitude of grasshoppers, harvesting, destroying, and taking everything, they could from the children of Israel until there was no sustenance in

the land. They took their animals, livestock, sheep, ox, and ass, and left the children of Israel with nothing. The only thing the Israelites had to go back to, year in and year out, for seven years, was the caves and the dens, in fear for their very existence.

After seven years of this, Israel cried unto the Lord. Judges 6:7, ***“And it came to pass, when the children of Israel cried unto the LORD because of the Midianites, That the LORD sent a prophet unto the children of Israel, which said unto them, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, I brought you up from Egypt, and brought you forth out of the house of bondage; And I delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of all that oppressed you, and drove them out from before you, and gave you their land; And I said unto you, I am the LORD your God; fear not the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but ye have not obeyed my voice.”***

The Israelites could have cried the first year and I think the Lord would have responded, but it took seven years before they realized their ways and recognized that their only source of hope and salvation was the Lord. God would send a deliverer, and He tells them not to fear the gods of the Amorites, those make-believe, fake, made-up gods. They are not the Elohim God, the mighty God, who is the creator of all things. Those were just pretenders. He is the true God. The prophet said this, not Gideon. In most cases in the Old Testament He sends a prophet to deliver His message prior to deliverance. In any case, God allowed these nations to be there to prove Israel, to see if they would obey or disobey Him, and they chose not to obey Him. This you can see in Judges 3:1-2, ***“Now these are the nations which the LORD left, to prove Israel by them, even as many of Israel as had not known all the wars of Canaan; Only that the generations of the children of Israel might know, to teach them war, at the least such as before knew nothing thereof.”***

Here is Judges 6:11 we find Gideon, another hero of faith. ***“And there came an angel of the LORD, and sat under an oak which was in Ophrah, that pertained unto Joash the Abiezrite: and his son Gideon threshed wheat by the winepress, to hide it from the Midianites.”*** Gideon was threshing wheat by the winepress to hide it from the Midianites, working in fear, just trying to squeeze out another meal to survive.

Judges 6:12 continues the story of Gideon, ***“And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him, and said unto him, The LORD is with thee, thou mighty man of valour.”*** Gideon is not the one ‘mighty in valor.’ He was just the opposite; he was scared spit less. He was not demonstrating any valor; he was just trying to prepare a meal to survive another day. It is the Lord himself who is “mighty in valor,” or as the Hebrew states, “the one that is mighty in strength.” Valor in this verse should be ‘strength.’ Gideon did not demonstrate any strength or valor, rather just the opposite.

At this point, we begin to see Gideon’s “vocabulary of doubt,” as my mentor used to say. There are a lot of “what ifs” here in Judges 6:13. Read them for yourself. ***“And Gideon said unto him, Oh my Lord, if the LORD be with us, why then is all this befallen us? and where be all his miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt? but now the LORD hath forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites. And the LORD looked upon him, and said, Go in this thy***

might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have not I sent thee? [Here the Lord asks, “Am I not going before you to fight the battle for you?] And he said unto him, Oh my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? behold, my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house. [Gideon gave every excuse why he could not do what the Lord was asking, but the Lord did not listen.] And the LORD said unto him, Surely I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man. And he said unto him, If now I have found grace in thy sight, then show me a sign that thou talkest with me.”

I would not want to be in Gideon’s shoes, and most of you, if you are really honest with yourself, would not want to be in his shoes either. This was a tall task to ask anyone to perform, and Gideon was asking, “What does this mean Lord? ‘You shall smite the Midianites as one man?’” Gideon wants to be sure who is talking. If this was an angel of the Lord, he might have changed the Lord’s message. Gideon was hoping that truly the Lord was not expecting him to fight this battle as one man against a horde. These Midianites were people looked upon as grasshoppers because there were so many. Gideon was questioning how he was going to go against so many, as a man, outnumbered the way even the children of Israel were. Later in the story, when they gathered an army of soldiers against the Midianites and Amalekites, the enemies of God’s people, they were still outnumbered by a considerable number of enemy soldiers. I would have asked for a sign too. I do not know about you, but I have not yet come to the point in my life where, where if presented with the same set of circumstances, I would not doubt that this was really a message from the Lord. It might be a message from the devil to try to end my life or to try to lead me astray to do something that was stupid. It does not make any sense to Gideon that the Lord would deliver in that particular manner. Put flesh and blood on it, get into the story, and put yourself in Gideon’s shoes.

In verses 18 through 21, we see that the angel was patient, and waited until Gideon brought Him a present, which was actually an offering, and set it before Him. The sign given by the angel was to turn those unleavened cakes over and set them on fire, consuming the offering of unleavened cakes. Verse 21 ends, *“Then the angel of the Lord departed from his sight.”*

After that, Judges 6:22 continues, *“And when Gideon perceived that he was an angel of the LORD, Gideon said, Alas, O LORD God! for because I have seen an angel of the LORD face to face. And the LORD said unto him, Peace be unto thee; fear not: thou shalt not die . . . And it came to pass the same night, that the Lord said unto him, Take thy father's young bullock, even the second bullock of seven years old, and throw down the altar of Baal that thy father hath, and cut down the grove that is by it.”*

Well, give credit to Gideon! That sign of the unleavened bread was all it took to do what God was asking him to do, which was to destroy the altars of Baal. Remember, God had told Gideon he would not die, but destroying the altars of Baal was no simple task. Gideon did it by night because he was scared people would catch him doing it by day. Even though, everyone knew he had done it and the people were very angry. Judges 6:30 describes this. *“Then the men of the city said unto Joash, Bring out thy son, that he*

may die: because he hath cast down the altar of Baal, and because he hath cut down the grove that was by it. And Joash said unto all that stood against him, Will ye plead for Baal? will ye save him? he that will plead for him, let him be put to death whilst it is yet morning: if he be a god, let him plead for himself, because one hath cast down his altar. Therefore on that day he called him Jerubbaal, saying, Let Baal plead against him, because he hath thrown down his altar.”

For seven years the children of Israel had no hope. Then God had a prophet in Judges 6:8 proclaim to the children of Israel, **“Have I not brought you out of Egypt?”** The prophet reminded them of all the great things the Lord had done for them in the past. Is God not the same God in Gideon’s time? He had told them not to fear the gods of the Amorites, but they had not been obedient, they had not listened to His voice. They were following the wrong gods, the pretenders, and now they were at their mercy. They did not follow the true God, the God of Israel.

It is easy to follow a pretender. It is a lot harder to keep your eyes focused on Christ, especially in today’s environment where you have many voices steering you in the wrong direction. This is the problem with denominations. Jesus did not say, “You’ve got to be a Baptist.” Jesus did not say, “You’ve got to be a Methodist.” Jesus did not say, “You’ve got to be a Presbyterian.” There are numerous people claiming to have the only message Christ delivered. This is incorrect. There is only one true God; and there is only one Jesus Christ. There is only one way you can be saved, and that is through the blood of Jesus Christ. There is only one person you are supposed to have faith in, and that is our true God and Father and His son Jesus Christ. There is only one Word we can claim and hang on to, and that is the Word of God as revealed from Genesis to Revelation. I might read other interesting religious material, but if it does not verify the Word of God, it is useless. The Bible is the one thing I know that never changes, and I know man without the inspiration of God through the ages could never have written it. We are still exploring its riches. No one has ever finished exploring everything in this Book, the Bible. There are things coming clear today that we have never understood before, and it amazes me. I ask the question all the time, “How come I didn’t see this before?” However, there are right times and set times for everything.

So, give credit to Gideon. He did what God asked him to do, even though he was so fearful, he did it by night. He destroyed the altars of Baal, and yes, the men of the city wanted to kill him, but there was no way God was going to allow that to happen, as it would have meant God going back on His word. He had told Gideon, “Just be obedient. You will not die. Just be the first in this nation, at this time, to be obedient and see what doesn’t come after that!” It is amazing that once you get one person headed in the right direction, others follow. You do not have to go out and preach to everybody on the corner; just let your life be an example. Others will see it. You hear it said so often, “Let your light shine!” Well, yes, let it shine. Let the light be the Word of God working in your life, and others will see it. The Holy Spirit will not dwell in secret; He will not keep you hidden in a closet. He wants to be in your life, and that will show forth as you walk your daily life of faith in Him.

In Judges 6:32, Gideon's father, Joash, gives Gideon a new name, Jerubbaal, meaning "Let Baal contend," and by now Gideon has gathered a following. In Judges 6:33, ***"Then all the Midianites and the Amalekites and the children of the east were gathered together, and went over, and pitched in the valley of Jezreel. But the Spirit of the LORD came upon Gideon, and he blew a trumpet; and Abiezer was gathered after him. And he sent messengers throughout all Manasseh; who also was gathered after him: and he sent messengers unto Asher, and unto Zebulun, and unto Naphtali; and they came up to meet them. And Gideon said unto God, If thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as thou hast said, Behold, I will put a fleece of wool in the floor; and if the dew be on the fleece only, and it be dry upon all the earth beside, then shall I know that thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as thou hast said."***

Here Gideon is asking God for another sign that he is indeed on the right track and is doing what God wants. This was no small task ahead of him and you would probably ask for a sign too, if you were him. It is one thing to destroy an altar of Baal at night, and quite another to come against the Midianites, the Amalekites, and the children of the east. The enemy had numerous soldiers who only had one intention, total annihilation of the children of Israel. Gideon asked for a sign and God was gracious and compassionate enough to give him one, which showed that God was going to be there with him, that Gideon would lead the Israelites into battle, and not die. This is seen in verse 39, ***"And Gideon said unto God, Let not thine anger be hot against me, and I will speak but this once: let me prove, I pray thee, but this once with the fleece; let it now be dry only upon the fleece, and upon all the ground let there be dew. And God did so that night: for it was dry upon the fleece only, and there was dew on all the ground."***

Gideon's story continues in Judges 7:1, ***"Then Jerubbaal, who is Gideon, and all the people that were with him, rose up early, and pitched beside the well of Harod: so that the host of the Midianites were on the north side of them, by the hill of Moreh, in the valley. And the LORD said unto Gideon, The people that are with thee are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel vaunt themselves against me, saying, Mine own hand hath saved me."***

By this time, Gideon had a group of people, an army gathered. It was a small army compared to the Midianites, the Amalekites, and the children of the east, nevertheless, it was an army, which consisted of 32,000 people. However, God did not want the Israelites to vaunt themselves, or in the Hebrew 'boast,' about the victory that was just around the corner and claim the credit for themselves. God did not want the children of Israel to declare, after they had achieved the victory, that maybe God really was not behind them at all. That maybe the children of Israel had outsmarted the enemy. God did not want them to boast. That is why in Judges 7:3 God told Gideon, ***"Now therefore go to, proclaim in the ears of the people, saying, Whosoever is fearful and afraid, let him return and depart early from mount Gilead. And there returned of the people twenty and two thousand; and there remained ten thousand."***

This was the Old Testament law on how to wage war, as written in Deuteronomy 20:8,

“And the officers shall speak further unto the people, and they shall say, What man is there that is fearful and fainthearted? let him go and return unto his house, lest his brethren's heart faint as well as his heart.” When Gideon told them their choice, 10,000 soldiers remained out of the original 32,000 and 22,000 left the scene in fear. God gave a way out to the ones who were fearful and fainthearted because he did not want those individuals who would not trust in Him, to poison the rest who remained who were heroes of faith. God put a solution in place so the fearful and fainthearted, who were not truly trusting in Him, would have a way of to depart, and He allowed them to go. Thus, they could not poison and contaminate the other true heroes of faith through their fears. If I were Gideon I might have asked, “What? You are asking me to tell the ones who are afraid, to go back home, not be a part of what we are about to do here fighting against our enemies? Send these people home?” In other words, God is saying to Gideon, “Just as I said back in Deuteronomy, I am telling you to do it again. Send the ones that are fainthearted and fearful home. Do not give them the opportunity to poison the ones that are left.” They only had 32,000 soldiers at that time, and that was less than 25% of the enemy force. Now, 22,000 had gone home because they were fearful and afraid, and there remained 10,000 soldiers. God is still in control and can do more with 10,000 than we could probably do with 32,000. If God goes before us, victory is at hand because we are the Lord God’s, and He is in control of all things.

But, God was not done yet. In Judges 7:4, He then tells Gideon, ***“And the LORD said unto Gideon, The people are yet too many; bring them down unto the water, and I will try them for thee there: and it shall be, that of whom I say unto thee, This shall go with thee, the same shall go with thee; and of whomsoever I say unto thee, This shall not go with thee, the same shall not go.”***

Now, I do not know about you, but I would definitely be scratching my head at this point and saying, “That sounds unreasonable!” However, the Lord said to Gideon, “The people are yet too many. The 10,000 Israeli soldiers are too many! So, bring them down to the water.” To get the soldiers God was pleased with, the ones who would trust and obey not only Him but also the leadership of Gideon, He told Gideon, “. . . ***and I will try them for thee there.***” The Hebrew word for “try” used there is ***‘tsaraph,’*** to test and to prove, to be refined. God was telling Gideon, “Take them down to the water, because at the water I will try them, I will test them. From that point on, I will know they are refined enough to follow me in whatever direction I take them and be obedient to my Word.” More importantly, because they are following Gideon, and because he was the one communicating with the Lord, they will follow his word. God puts us in positions, whether you are a leader or a follower, to test you, to try you, to prove you, and to refine you. God is bringing these 10,000 Israeli soldiers down to the water to test them, to see who would make the final cut. That is written about in Judges 7:5, ***“So he brought down the people unto the water: and the LORD said unto Gideon, Every one that lappeth of the water with his tongue, as a dog lappeth, him shalt thou set by himself; likewise every one that boweth down upon his knees to drink.”***

God separated the children of Israel into two groups, based on how they drank the water. When you are ‘lapping’ from your hands, you are on ready alert, but when you are down on all fours, just diving in, you have no concern about what is going on around you. God was not looking for individuals who were more concerned about sucking it all in instead of being on guard, being alert, being ready for battle in a second if need be. He wanted Israeli soldiers who took their calling seriously. He had Gideon separate these individuals, the one that lapped the water like a dog, from the one that bowed down on his knees and just dove in and started sucking up the water without any concern of his surroundings. Just imagine what Gideon was thinking when very few people were lapping! Imagine what was going through his mind! There was one “that lapped,” but here are ten or twenty who did not. Just imagine what was going through Gideon’s mind, “How come there are less lapping the water, and how come there are more of them bowing down?” They bowed down on all fours upon their knees to drink the water. Almost as a sign of bowing down to Baal, once again doing what had brought God to the point of disgust because they never followed His ways. They so easily and quickly followed the enemy’s ways. The enemy’s ways seemed more attractive, and for some reason, Baal worshipping and following false Gods always seemed more attractive, maybe because it catered to their flesh. Serving God does not cater to your flesh as much as serving false gods. In fact, serving God never caters to your flesh, but false gods always cater to your flesh.

That was how God separated the ones that He knew He could trust, from the ones that He knew would fail at the last minute when things started getting rough. Those who would probably say, “You know what, I was in it this far with you Gideon, but this is too close for comfort now. I think I want to head back to the safety of the mountains, and the caves, and the dens.” God sorted them out for Gideon. He separated out the 300 that would be faithful and obedient to him and his leadership.

We read that in Judges 7:6, ***“And the number of them that lapped, putting their hands to their mouth, were three hundred men: but all the rest of the people bowed down upon their knees to drink water. And the LORD said unto Gideon, By the three hundred men that lapped will I save you, and deliver the Midianites into thine hand: and let all the other people go every man unto his place.”***

Gideon was now left with 300 people! I have done the statistics on this, and 300 is less than a quarter of one percent when compared to how many of their enemies were lurking ready to attack. In other words, there were 400 Midianites and Amalekites for every one Israeli soldier. They were outnumbered 400:1. What if I said to you tonight, “We are going to war, and it’s going to be hand-to-hand combat, and also, it is going to be one person against 400.” You would think that I had lost my mind! That is why God had to separate them, because He knew He was asking them to believe in the impossible. What fathers those 300 soldiers were. To keep marching on, knowing they were outnumbered 400:1. It so staggers me I can hardly imagine it, 400:1. The enemy was arrayed in the valley, ready to attack, and all Gideon had was 300 soldiers. But what a 300! Three

hundred soldiers who were sorted out by God because God had tried them, God had tested them, and God had proved what was really in their hearts. They would be obedient and faithful when their backs were up against a wall and outnumbered. They were tried, ***‘tsaraph.’***

What are you facing today? God’s Word is still true today. He will ***‘tsaraph’*** you, He will test you, He will prove you to see if you will be obedient and still hang on to everything He has said and promised in this Book. Not so “you could be a better you,” as some say, but to see how much of His word you trust, how much faith you have in His Son who went before you to give you hope, salvation, and grace. To allow you to be reconciled back to the Father and to once again have that wonderful relationship. He sent His spirit, His Holy Spirit, to be with us, to comfort us in whatever we are facing today, whatever we will be facing this week. God looks upon the heart and He sorts you out. He was looking for 300 people in Gideon’s time He could trust, and God is still looking for people He can trust today.

It is amazing to me that Gideon had not asked for a sign at this point. He had asked for a sign when he first met the angel. He had asked for a sign with the fleece as he was preparing for battle; but at least he knew he had 32,000 at that time. Now, he has only 300 and he does not even ask for a sign. It was this faith that touched God’s heart, I believe, seeing how Gideon had progressed in faith and trust in Him. If I were Gideon, I would probably be asking for two or three signs by now. From 32,000 soldiers to 10,000 soldiers to 300 soldiers. I would be wondering is God was in control. They were losing soldiers and had not even begun fighting yet. I would be wanting a very definite sign by now, because what I see was not very encouraging. Fortunately, Gideon had progressed in his faith toward God, and I believe God was so pleased by Gideon’s faith, that He had compassion on him. He realized that Gideon was beginning to trust in Him totally and unconditionally.

At this point, Gideon has 300 men and Judges 7:8 says, ***“So the people took victuals in their hand, and their trumpets: and he sent all the rest of Israel every man unto his tent, and retained those three hundred men: and the host of Midian was beneath him in the valley. And it came to pass the same night, that the LORD said unto him, Arise, get thee down unto the host; for I have delivered it into thine hand.”***

Now, this is a commandment from the Lord to Gideon. ***“Arise, get thee down unto the host.”*** He is not saying to Gideon, “Well, if you like you can go down there.” He is saying, ***“Arise, get thee down to the host for I have delivered them unto thy hand.”*** This is where God’s compassion is so wonderful. He allowed Gideon to take his servant, Phurah, with him because Gideon was afraid.

We read that beginning in Judges 7:10, ***“But if thou fear to go down, go thou with Phurah thy servant down to the host: And thou shalt hear what they say; and afterward***

shall thine hands be strengthened to go down unto the host. Then went he down with Phurah his servant unto the outside of the armed men that were in the host. And the Midianites and the Amalekites and all the children of the east lay along in the valley like grasshoppers for multitude; and their camels were without number, as the sand by the sea side for multitude. And when Gideon was come, behold, there was a man that told a dream unto his fellow, and said, Behold, I dreamed a dream, and, lo, a cake of barley bread tumbled into the host of Midian, and came unto a tent, and smote it that it fell, and overturned it, that the tent lay along. And his fellow answered and said, This is nothing else save the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel: for into his hand hath God delivered Midian, and all the host. And it was so, when Gideon heard the telling of the dream, and the interpretation thereof, that he worshipped, and returned into the host of Israel, and said, Arise; for the LORD hath delivered into your hand the host of Midian.”

In the dream, the man saw barley, which always represents the least and lowest, and was a classic symbol of the low-class sustenance of the Israeli food. This dream indicated someone of low stature was tumbling *“into the host of Midian, and came unto a tent, and smote it that it fell, and overturned it, that the tent lay along.”* In addition to the dream, there was an interpretation as well, and though Gideon had not asked for a sign, this dream was given as a sign of hope.

Judges 7:16 begins describing the Israelite’s battle plan. *“And he divided the three hundred men into three companies, and he put a trumpet in every man's hand, with empty pitchers, and lamps within the pitchers.”*

You may wonder why each soldier was to get a trumpet, an empty pitcher, and a lamp or torch within the pitcher. The torch or lamp fueled with enough fuel, so torch would not burn out inside the pitcher, but could be covered so nobody else saw the light until the right time. They also had a trumpet in one hand as well as the pitcher with a torch in the other. There is no mention of any other weapon, because the children of Israel had no other weapons. The Midianites, Amalekites, and children of the east tormented them and took everything from them, including their weapons, their swords, and their knives. The Israelites were not allowed to keep any weapons, so they would not be a threat when the enemy came periodically to rape and plunder the land of the harvest and claim their livestock as their own. Therefore, the only things the Israelites had with them were the torch, pitcher, and trumpet. That does not sound like much of an arsenal to go against an enemy with. In addition to that, there were only 300 soldiers to overcome approximately 135,000 enemy soldiers. They had nothing except the pitcher, a lamp, and a trumpet, not one sword or even a dagger.

Judges 7:17 continues, *“And he said unto them, Look on me, and do likewise: and, behold, when I come to the outside of the camp, it shall be that, as I do, so shall ye do. When I blow with a trumpet, I and all that are with me, then blow ye the trumpets also on every side of all the camp, and say, The sword of the LORD, and of Gideon.”* The

word ‘sword’ in this verse is printed in italics and indicates it was not in the original Bible version. The verse should read here, *“and say, ‘Of the LORD, and of Gideon.’”*

Here in Judges 7:19, the attack begins. *“So Gideon, and the hundred men that were with him, came unto the outside of the camp in the beginning of the middle watch; and they had but newly set the watch: and they blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers that were in their hands. And the three companies blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers, and held the lamps in their left hands, and the trumpets in their right hands to blow withal: and they cried, The sword of the LORD, and of Gideon.”* The Israelites went up to the hilltops, surrounded their enemies, and all 300 blew their trumpets simultaneously. Imagine the echoing that was going on in that valley in the middle of the night. It would not have sounded like only 300 men. Just imagine what the Amalekites and Midianites were thinking when hearing the trumpets, when they thought at the very most, were 32,000 men fighting them. I am not sure if the Amalekites and Midianites knew that the Israelites had been reduced to 300 men, but I would not be surprised if they knew, since they probably had spies in the camp. They probably believed this would be an easy battle. But that is not what happened. Here 300 trumpets were all simultaneously blowing. I just imagine God adding His echoing voice to it so that the 300 sounded like 3000 trumpets. Even if it did not sound like 3000 trumpets, in war at that time, one trumpet sound meant one company of men. So, imagine what 300 trumpets would have meant to the Midianites below in the valley. If one trumpet meant a company of men, what could 300 trumpets mean to the enemy? The enemy was in a state of confusion by God’s master plan. God had Gideon use everyday household items as weapons of war, a pitcher, a torch, and a trumpet. However, with God on their side, the Israelites did not need any weapons to have the victory.

In verse 20, the ‘sword of the LORD’ becomes important, *‘The sword of the LORD and of Gideon.’* Here is Gideon with 300 trumpeters, each with 300 lamps, surrounding the enemy camp causing confusion because, obviously, their enemies thought they were now the ones outnumbered; there were a lot more Israeli soldiers than was expected by the enemy. The next two verses describe the enemy’s reaction. Judges 7:21 says, *“And they stood every man in his place round about the camp; and all the host ran, and cried, and fled. And the three hundred blew the trumpets, and the LORD set every man's sword against his fellow, even throughout all the host.”* At this point, the Israelites did not even have to do anything, because the enemy turned on themselves. The Amalekites, the Midianites, and the children of the east all battled among themselves, killing themselves off because of the confusion. They did not know who was on their side, there were too many of them, like grasshoppers. God confused them. The enemy thought they were outnumbered and turned on each other. God is wonderful in His deliverance!

In the beginning, God had a plan for His creation, but the devil interrupted that plan by introducing sin and temptation into Adam and Eve’s life. Just when the devil thought he had God’s creation doomed because of Adam’s sin, God, in His mercy, sent forth His Son, in His set time, to steal the keys of death and the grave from Satan and give us

eternal life. God sent Joseph to be tested and tried, to see if he would be obedient and carry out His purposes. God needed someone He could trust; someone who would not be influenced by the riches and lifestyle of the Egyptian culture, and who would not fall in love with the high position he had but understood and realized that he had been put there by God to serve His ultimate purposes. God had to *'tsaraph,'* put the iron into Joseph's soul to test him, prove him, refine him, and separate him out like silver is separated from ore and lead through the heated furnace of the fire. Gideon and the 300 also had to be tested, proved, and refined to see if they would be obedient even when they realized that there were only 300 in the army to fight. They had to come to the point where trusting God would be enough to overcome any enemy they were facing.

The hindrances we face in our daily lives today may be put there by Satan to see if we will fall away from following God. How many of you are willing to join the Gideon camp and say, "The sword of the Lord?" What does "The sword of the Lord" mean to us today? God's Holy Word, the Bible, is "The sword of the Lord." In Ephesians 6, one of the weapons we must fight against our enemy is the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. The Bible is "The sword of the Lord." God is looking for people today who will take up the sword of the Lord and say, "The sword of the Lord and of- you can add your name here." I am claiming it for myself tonight, "The sword of the Lord and of Joseph." Claim it for yourself tonight. Be obedient and faithful, even though it looks like you have been outnumbered. With Jesus Christ on our side, the enemy does not stand a chance. He is already defeated. Jesus Christ made sure of that on the cross. Now we must be faithful and obedient servants who will follow His ways and not be tempted and led astray by the false gods the prophet proclaimed back in Judges 6:8-9. Whom are we going to follow, the ways of the world or the ways of the Lord? Whom are we going to follow, the Christian pretenders or the ways of God? Can you proclaim, "The sword of the Lord and of you?" Personalize it. I am personalizing it for myself, "The sword of the Lord and of Joseph." We will be victorious as long as we keep our sights and our focus on Him and His word, declaring that we will trust and be obedient, declaring that we will not lose our focus, but stay faithful to the calling He has in our lives, in whatever capacity He has called us to follow Him.

God will test you. As Peter said, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial you will go through. God will test you just as He tested Gideon. Maybe not in the exact same circumstances or way, but He will test you to see what you are made of. Whether you will trust Him or not, whether you will be obedient to Him or not, and whether you will be faithful to your calling or not. He is looking for servants who will proclaim, "The sword of the Lord and of- you! As I said before, personalize what they said and put your name on it. Say, "I am going to be faithful to His calling, and whatever our enemy throws at me. I will be faithful until that day."

Understand that *'tsaraph'* must take place in your life, so He can separate you just like silver is separated from lead. He will refine you, as silver is refined, because He wants to separate you out for whatever purpose He has in your life for the cause of Christ. That is

what *'taking up your cross'* is all about. Taking up your cross is not about struggling with your own personal sufferings. 'Taking up the cross,' is about what you are put through in your life for the cause of Christ. There are plenty of other scriptures about how God is present in your sufferings and how He will comfort you through them, but you must deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow Christ. When you take up your cross for the cause of Christ, you are declaring that you are going to be an instrument to get the Word out to others. This is what the enemy hates to see happen. In the spiritual sense, our enemy is far more ferocious than the Midianites or Amalekites, and he is out to destroy you if you support a ministry that is doing things the Lord's way.

I pray for you daily, that you remain faithful and able to stand. Personalize it for your pastors and teachers daily and say, "The sword of the Lord and of- your pastor's name." Also, personalize it for yourself and say, "The sword of the Lord and of- your name." God is looking for faithfulness to Him and His Word. He has not changed since Gideon's day and He is still looking for it today. You get imputed righteousness through faith and not by anything you can do for yourself. Because of your faith, He imputes you with righteousness. Righteousness is one of the gifts of the Spirit. Righteousness is given only by faith. God was looking for faith in Gideon's day. That is why He was compassionate to Gideon by showing him the last and final sign, the dream and the interpretation of the dream, even though Gideon did not ask for any sign.

The Lord was looking closely; He had his microscope focused on Gideon and those 300. He was just looking for one unfaithful servant. Imagine the pressure on those 300. Imagine the pressure the 300 were under once God had separated them, tested them, tried them, and refined them. No more signs were needed, though God gave Gideon one more. That is how wonderful our Lord is. We do not need signs any longer, because we have the ultimate sign of Jesus Christ and what He did for us. No matter what Satan does to us now, we know we have the gift of Salvation, through faith, forever. That is the only sign we need. To stay in faith, you must live a life of faith; you must focus on His Word and be faithful to it. Then, you too can say, "The sword of the Lord and of – you." I am claiming it for myself, "The sword of the Lord and of Joseph." Our enemies will have to watch out, because with the Lord on our side, who can be against us? Who can be successful against His purposes? When you remain faithful to His word, the enemy does not stand a chance and is no match. Claim His promises knowing that Jesus Christ will never leave us nor forsake us. We just must go out there in faith and say, "The sword of the Lord." We can claim that because we are on the Lord's side, and He is on ours. Keep on Faithing soldiers of Jesus Christ!

When you are down, There is an Answer

This chapter begins in the Old Testament book of Numbers, Chapter 10:11. ***“And it came to pass on the twentieth day of the second month, in the second year, that the cloud was taken up from off the tabernacle of the testimony. And the children of Israel took their journeys out of the wilderness of Sinai: and the cloud rested in the wilderness of Paran. And they first took their journey according to the commandment of the Lord by the hand of Moses.”***

The children of Israel came to a place in Sinai where they stopped and camped for about a year, and throughout that year, the Lord spoke to Moses nearly sixty times. There was a lot of communication going on between God and Moses to provide the children of Israel with a vision and a plan to move forward to the land of promise. During this period, Moses also suffered some setbacks and hardships with that unruly bunch of Israelites. However, what an amazing experience Moses must have had to be that close to the glory of the Lord and to be instructed by Him. During this time, God was laying out a plan to give hope and vision to his chosen people. However, the time came when they received enough instruction and had to move forward to the Promise Land. Sure, there would be battles ahead, but they had their God, Elohim, on their side to lead and guide them to their destination and to protect them from all their enemies. Moses was their shepherd under God to lead them into the land of milk and honey. Even though, this was not an easy group of people to manage. They were unruly, extremely hardheaded, and rebellious, and definitely did not demonstrate any faith in their God and His promises. Nevertheless, it was time for them to move on, even with all their problems.

Number 10:33 continues the story. ***“And they departed from the mount of the Lord three days’ journey: and the ark of the covenant of the Lord went before them in the three days’ journey, to search out a resting place for them. And the cloud of the Lord was upon them by day, when they went out of the camp. And it came to pass, when the ark set forward, that Moses said, Rise up, Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered; and let them that hate thee flee before thee. And when it rested, he said, Return, O Lord, unto the many thousands of Israel.”*** What confidence and excitement Moses was demonstrating to the children of Israel. Moses was excited about the future after instruction by God. He was full of faith, full of hope, full of “can’t-wait-to-fulfill-this-destiny for my God and this nation.” I want you to imagine with me what a beautiful scene this was. Moses filled with excitement, joy, and enthusiasm. However, this was a rebellious bunch and the joy would all too quickly end. God was behind them as Moses led them, but, for this rebellious bunch, that was not good enough.

Moses was a man full of hope, vision, and direction. God had given him a plan and a promise that no matter what, God would go before Israel, just as that is God’s promise even today for us. However, they were only three days along in their journey out of the wilderness of Sinai and that faithless bunch of Israelites could not keep their sight on God

and His promises. It only took three days for them to forget God's promises, no longer trust their Lord, or even follow their leader Moses, who God used to demonstrate His power through parting the Red Sea. It is not easy to stay in faith, and it is easy to lose faith. It is very easy to let Satan in when you put your eyes and focus on circumstances and off Jesus. It becomes easier to forget God and His promises, His power, and His wonderful Word.

Numbers, Chapter 11:1 goes on to say, ***“And when the people complained, it displeased the Lord: and the Lord heard it; and his anger was kindled; and the fire of the Lord burnt among them, and consumed them that were in the uttermost parts of the camp. And the people cried unto Moses; and when Moses prayed unto the Lord, the fire was quenched.”*** Again, the Lord listened to Moses, and He quenched the fire, but there comes a time when you can push God too far. As sinners, we complain on occasion, but if we are constantly complaining, God will do something to stop it. I complain; so do you, and you are lying to yourself and to your Lord if you deny it. Just face it, we all sin and complain more than we like to admit. How did God deal with the children of Israel? He sent fire on them, and Moses, once again, had to intervene on their behalf to quench those fires. By verse 11, Moses does some complaining also to the Lord about the children of Israel, but not about the Lord, as the children of Israel did. There is a big difference. One is evil; the other is desperate.

Because of this event, in verse 3 Moses names the place. ***“And he called the name of the place Taberah: because the fire of the Lord burnt among them. And the mixt multitude that was among them fell a lusting: and the children of Israel also wept again, and said, Who shall give us flesh to eat?”*** It is verse four that explains who the group that complained was; who were the troublemakers in the camp. ***“And the mixt multitude,”*** rebels or foreigners, not Israelites, but seen as one of them. They came out of Egypt with Israel, but since they were not Hebrews, they had no personal attachment to God. It did not take much for them to cause trouble with the rest of the camp, displease the Lord, and eventually cause the death of many of them. This ***“mixed multitude”*** stirred the camp with their complaining, displeasing, and lusting, only three days after continuing their journey to the Promise Land.

Verse 5 describes their complaints. ***“We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick.”*** Remember, this all happens to them only three days into their journey towards the Promise Land. They were not starving; they were fed manna, which I expect was very nutritious, as it was sent from God. Nonetheless, these Israelites complained often, and therefore none of them made it to the Promised Land. Their constant attitude was, “Woe is me!” They had nothing to complain about; they had God and His chosen leader guiding the way and providing for them. However, the constant complaining of this evil bunch of Israelites was taking a toll on Moses. Regardless what God did for them, they were bitter, always complaining, and if you constantly listen to complainers, they will drag and beat you down.

Verse 6 continues with their complaints. ***“But now our soul is dried away: there is nothing at all, beside this manna, before our eyes. And the manna was as coriander seed, and the color thereof as the color of bdellium. And the people went about, and gathered it, and ground it in mills, or beat it in a mortar, and baked it in pans, and made cakes of it: and the taste of it was as the taste of fresh oil. And when the dew fell upon the camp in the night, the manna fell upon it.”*** What a gift from God. What did they have to complain about? All they could remember were the tasty foods they had eaten in Egypt, instead of the manna God miraculously provided.

The Book of Exodus 1:11, tells us of their lives in Egypt. ***“Therefore they did set over them taskmasters to afflict them with their burdens. And they built for Pharaoh treasure cities, Pithom and Raamses.”*** They were afflicted, not provided comfort, or fed three meals a day. The Egyptians only kept them working hard and afflicted. Verse 13 continues, ***“And the Egyptians made the children of Israel to serve with rigor.”*** That is hard labor, as slaves. Do not forget, they were in bondage, but the Israelites quickly forgot the pit they were rescued from. Let us never forget the pit from which Jesus rescued us. Thank God for His grace. While in bondage, the Egyptians made their lives bitter. Verse 11 tells us they were afflicting them. Verse 14 tells us the hard work, labor, and all their service was with rigor. How quickly they forgot the wonderful way of escape God provided them. If I were Moses, I would be completely depressed too. I would be asking the Lord to take me away. They were a rebellious group who would not keep their focus on God and remember the things that the Lord had done for them.

In addition, the hard work was not all that happened to the Israelites in Egypt. Exodus 1:22 says, ***“And Pharaoh charged all his people, saying, Every son that is born ye shall cast into the river, and every daughter ye shall save alive.”*** The Pharaoh was demanding the murder of all the young baby boys. If slavery and hard, rigorous work was not enough, now they had to watch their sons thrown into a river and drowned. How could they forget and entertain any thoughts of going back? How could they forget all the miracles and events that led up to their deliverance? I cannot even imagine what satisfaction Satan was probably experiencing watching the chosen people complain about their God and their Gods chosen leader. They forgot the promises of God. They forgot what a powerful, wonderful God He was, and what He had done for them.

With that background, return to Book of Numbers 11:9, ***“And when the dew fell upon the camp in the night, the manna fell upon it. Then Moses heard the people weep throughout their families, every man in the door of his tent: and the anger of the Lord was kindled greatly; Moses also was displeased.”*** Just imagine Moses walking around the camp. He knew that God would soon have enough of the complaining. However, up and down the aisles of the camp Moses heard the people weep; mothers, fathers, and children. They were in a miserable frame of mind and condition. I know I would probably be depressed too and say, “Why me Lord? Why did you put me in this position? These are your people.” I dislike self-righteous religious groups who say if you are a Christian, everything will be fine, because if you become a Christian, all hell will be release on you. You will face similar situations in your life that will bring you to the breaking point, so I want you to imagine what Moses must have felt like with all the

weeping. ***“And the anger of the Lord was kindled greatly.”*** The Lord was not just a little angry, he was very angry, and Moses became deeply depressed.

But Moses says to the Lord in verse 11 and 12, ***“Wherefore hast thou afflicted thy servant? and wherefore have I not found favor in thy sight, that thou layest the burden of all this people upon me? Have I conceived all this people? have I begotten them, that thou shouldest say unto me, Carry them in thy bosom, as a nursing father beareth the sucking child, unto the land which thou swarest unto their fathers? Whence should I have flesh to give unto all this people? for they weep unto me, saying, Give us flesh, that we may eat.” I am not able to bear all this people alone, because it is too heavy for me.*** How many of you have said in times of distress, “I cannot bear it alone.” I know I have. God never asked Moses to bear it alone. God spent over a year in the desert training and preparing Moses before they continued on their journey. However, when you are constantly beaten down by your circumstances, it does not take long to forget all the training God has given you and slip out of faith when your eyes are not focusing on His word. Moses said, “I cannot do this alone; it is too heavy for me.” If you go back a few chapters, you see that he was not bearing everything by himself. He had Joshua, his father in law, elders, and officers to help him. What Moses could not bear was all the spiritual consequences. It was just too much for him. Moses knew that their lusting for meat, just three days into the journey, was really a deep spiritual disease they had demonstrated, so Moses reacted by saying to the Lord in verse 15, ***“kill me, I pray thee.”*** He is now down in the deepest, darkest hole he could find himself. The situation was totally out of control. This hero of faith hit bottom because of rebellious, faithless, self-center people. They showed no respect for God or His appointed leader.

Obedience to the faith is much more important in God’s word than sacrifice. Throughout God’s word, obedience has always been the problem. For us today, if you do not follow this ministry and me, then follow someone who you can respect who is used by God to lead the sheep in the direction that God wants. Obedience has always been the problem, because we live in a world where nobody is going to tell us what to do. Even in Ephesians 4:11 and 12 Paul says, ***“And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints.”*** A more accurate translation for perfecting is “completion of the saints.” God’s chosen leaders are to complete the saints, not the other way around with the saints completing the leader. There is order and leadership that needs to be followed in God’s word. Obedience to the faith is a lost scriptural truth in today’s world. I hope you can find someone you can trust and follow them for your completion. Otherwise, you are nothing more than the ***“mixt multitude,”*** causing problems if you think you can follow God without any appointed leadership.

Let us return to this story of Moses in Numbers 11:15. ***“And if thou deal thus with me, kill me, I pray thee, out of hand, if I have found favor in thy sight; and let me not see my wretchedness. And the Lord said unto Moses, Gather unto me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom thou knowest to be the elders of the people, and officers over them; and bring them unto the tabernacle of the congregation, that they may stand there with thee. And I will come down and talk with thee there: and I will take of the***

spirit which is upon thee, and will put it upon them; and they shall bear the burden of the people with thee, that thou bear it not thyself alone.” The Lord had heard enough and immediately had a solution to Moses’ plea. God supplied for Moses needs in his time of trouble just as He does for us in our time of need. God was not through with Moses yet, He is not through with you, and we have so much more than Moses had. He will help us with our burdens, but it takes trust and faith in His word. It does not come easily. You need endurance, and the willingness to be an example, to prove to the world that what God said through Jesus Christ is true. God supplied Moses with the answer that Moses needed. God came down to Moses’ level and rescued him.

But God has more, and in verse 18 He commands, *“And say thou unto the people, Sanctify yourselves against to morrow, and ye shall eat flesh: for ye have wept in the ears of the Lord, saying, Who shall give us flesh to eat? for it was well with us in Egypt: therefore the Lord will give you flesh, and ye shall eat. Ye shall not eat one day, nor two days, nor five days, neither ten days, nor twenty days; But even a whole month, until it come out at your nostrils, and it be loathsome unto you: because that ye have despised the Lord which is among you, and have wept before him, saying, Why came we forth out of Egypt?”* In other words, God asks, “You are going to complain about not having any meat you faithless, evil, miserable bunch? You would rather have meat to fill your belly and desire not the bread of life that I have given you!” The children of Israel were going to eat so much flesh, until it made them very ill, and some even died.

Moses doubts what God says, and in verse 21 responds, *“And Moses said, The people, among whom I am, are six hundred thousand footmen; and thou hast said, I will give them flesh, that they may eat a whole month. Shall the flocks and the herds be slain for them, to suffice them? or shall all the fish of the sea be gathered together for them, to suffice them? And the Lord said unto Moses, Is the Lord’s hand waxed short? thou shalt see now whether my word shall come to pass unto thee or not.”* Moses was questioning how God was going to complete this miracle without slaying all the animals they had. At this point God must have been saying to Himself, “They doubted me, Moses. Don’t you do the same thing. Snap out of it Moses! Wake up! Don’t fall in the same pit they fell into. You’ve been faithful. They haven’t, and because of their faithlessness, they’re dragging you down. Don’t forget how strong my arm is. Don’t forget I can do wonders and miracles.”

Moses does obey the Lord though and in verse 24, *“And Moses went out, and told the people the words of the Lord, and gathered the seventy men of the elders of the people, and set them round about the tabernacle. And the Lord came down in a cloud, and spake unto him, and took of the spirit that was upon him, and gave it unto the seventy elders: and it came to pass, that, when the spirit rested upon them, they prophesied, and did not cease.”* I do not believe it was ever in God’s plan to have these seventy elders, who had no impact in the future of Israel. These seventy men were there just to encourage Moses and get him back on track with God. The last four words in verse 25, *“and did not cease,”* could easily translate *“and did not repeat.”* This was a one-time event just to get Moses through this difficult time.

It is in verse 30 that the Lord begins to act on His promise, ***“And Moses gat him into the camp, he and the elders of Israel. And there went forth a wind from the Lord, and brought quails from the sea, and let them fall by the camp. . . as it were 2 cubits high upon the face of the earth.”*** Not only are there so many dead quail, but they were piling up all around them. Once again, only God can do something like that. I cannot even imagine how much quail that would be. The people stayed up all that day and the next day too gathering the quails. How can anyone eat that much quail? I get sick of leftovers the next day. Verse 33 tells what happens when you complain about the Lord, ***“The wrath of the Lord was kindled against the people, and the Lord smote the people with a very great plague.”*** God met Moses’ needs and he brought judgment to the people, so be careful. A plague is coming if you complain about God too often. The difference is if you complain to God, He will help you as He helped Moses, but He will plague you, as He plagued Israel, if you complain about Him. Take your concerns to Him.

After that, God called that place where he spread the plague on them ***“Kibrothhattaavah: because there they buried the people that lusted (Num. 11:34).”*** They could have been spared, but they were glutinous evil people, and never trusted God to be the supply for their needs. Is he your supply? Even though it was rough for Moses, he put his focus back on God. God gave him a solution and it did get Moses through those tough times. Like Moses, we tend to forget God’s plan for us because of our trials and tribulations, but God is always thinking about what is best for us. You have to understand that you have to trust in his word. You must continue with faith in His word and let him control your destiny. The hardest thing about the walk of faith is trusting in his timing. We are a generation of impatience; we never want it tomorrow, we want it today, but continue on in faith. Your weakness will become your strength if you endure in faith. He is imputing you with righteousness through faith that will make you stronger and closer to Him. God will never leave you or forsake you. With that promise, keep on in faith, and never let go. Trust in Jesus, because He will never leave us or forsake us. That is a promise from Him.

Remember, faith pleases God.

Facing Your Giants

The next time you are feeling down, I want you to remember this message. When you do not know where to turn to, remember you can always turn to God's Word. From the very beginning to the very end of the Bible, God's Word has more faith building and encouragement than any other material you can read. The Bible is life's manual.

You may come across times when you feel like giving up, and you do not know how you are going to proceed forward with your life because of the giants, or the circumstances. Your circumstances could be anything. They could be health issues, financial issues, marital problems, employment problems, school problems, or even problems in your church. No matter what you are facing, whatever giants are oppressing you, remember this message. In the end, I hope that this message will encourage you as it has encouraged me.

This chapter will focus on several different chapters in Deuteronomy, beginning at Chapter 31. Here, Moses has come to the twilight, or near the end, of his mission of leading the children of Israel. He reminds the children of Israel, and Joshua, of the way they had come over the last forty years. They had an opportunity earlier to enter the Promised Land, but because of their rebellious attitude, they failed and did not enter. Even after witnessing all the miracles and the deliverances, the signs and the wonders, the parting of the Red Sea, God supplying quail to eat, and water from a rock to drink, they did not have faith in Him. Even watching, and experiencing, the plagues before their exodus from Egypt, and watching firstborn Egyptians die, and their own firstborn protected by God was never enough. Therefore, Moses reminds the children of Israel and Joshua of all the way they had come.

Deuteronomy 31:1-2 tells us, ***“And Moses went and spake these words unto all Israel. And he said unto them, I am an hundred and twenty years old this day; I can no more go out and come in: also the Lord had said unto me, Thou shalt not go over this Jordan.”*** God had told Moses he would not go over Jordan into the Promised Land. Not because Moses was feeble, the Scripture says his eyes were not dim and there was no problem with his health. There was no problem with Moses at all. He was an amazing 120-year-old whom God had kept throughout his life, especially the last 40 years. He was Israel's leader, and he could still lead the children of Israel into the Promised Land. However, because the children of Israel had brought Moses to the breaking point, Moses disobeyed God. As a result, both Moses and Aaron would not enter the Promised Land. Aaron had died just a few chapters earlier, and now Moses was gathering the people of Israel together to prepare them for their entrance into the Promised Land under a new leader. However, let me repeat, not because he was old and feeble. He was neither. It was because of disobedience.

However, before we go any further, let us look what brought Moses to the breaking point. In the book prior to Deuteronomy, Numbers 20:1-2 describes one particular incident.

“Then came the children of Israel, even the whole congregation, into the desert of Zin

in the first month: and the people abode in Kadesh; and Miriam died there, and was buried there. And there was no water for the congregation: and they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron.” In other words, they formed a mob. The children of Israel experienced so many miracles, signs, and wonders, yet they would not trust their leader. Worse than that, they would not trust God. Their attitude was one of, “That was then, but what are you doing to do for me now, God? Are you still there?”

Verse 3 continues, ***“And the people chode with Moses, and spake, saying, Would God that we had died when our brethren died before the LORD! And why have ye brought up the congregation of the LORD into this wilderness, that we and our cattle should die there? And wherefore have ye made us to come up out of Egypt, to bring us in unto this evil place? It is no place of seed, or of figs, or of vines, or of pomegranates; neither is there any water to drink.”*** They questioned Moses’ leadership capabilities and his wisdom. As a result, by questioning Moses, they questioned God. They were declaring, whether they realized it or not, that they did not trust Moses, who was God’s chosen representative to lead them through the wilderness. Complain, complain, and complain; they never wanted to get under the mercy of the Lord. They never wanted to take their problems to the Lord. They had no problem gathering themselves against Moses and Aaron. However, you never see a record of them gathering themselves to take their petition to the Lord and ask for mercy in their present condition. They never humbly recognized all God had done for them in the past, and had no faith to believe that He would still watch over them, if they only kept the path of faith. All they did was complain constantly with bitterness against their leaders for bringing them out of Egypt. All they remembered were the leeks and garlic of Egypt that filled their stomachs, but forgot about their bondage as slaves under hard labor, driven by slave masters.

What a miserable condition to live your life, and unfortunately, most people today would do the same thing. Many people are not happy unless they are complaining or bitter about something. I have to admit, there are times I have questions about what God is doing in my life, but hopefully, as I mature as a Christian in my faith in Christ, I stop those insane moments quicker than the last time and recognize that is all they are, insane moments. Those moments give the devil the opportunity to destroy our faith in God and His Holy Word. We cannot forget that God is constantly listening to us. God sees our heart, and He definitely sees our attitude, not only towards Him, but also toward those who lead us. Instead of living a life of faith, the Hebrews led a life opposite of faith. They had no faith at all. They only had faith in what they could see and what they could eat. They only thought about their stomachs, instead of acknowledging God as their provider. They only saw the provisions, never the provider.

What did Moses and Aaron do because of the children of Israel? They went to the source that could help them. They fell on their faces and the glory of the Lord appeared unto them in Numbers 20:6. ***“And Moses and Aaron went from the presence of the assembly unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and they fell upon their faces: and the glory of the LORD appeared unto them. And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Take the rod, and gather thou the assembly together, thou, and Aaron thy brother, and***

Speak ye unto the rock before their eyes; and it shall give forth his water, and thou shalt bring forth to them water out of the rock: so thou shalt give the congregation and their beasts drink.” In this verse, the Hebrew makes the word ‘speak’ very clear. The Hebrew translates, “Speak with a commanding voice unto the rock before their eyes.” In a previous incident, when they were complaining about not having any water, Moses was to strike the rock and the water would flow. This time Moses was only to speak to the rock in a commanding voice, and the water would flow. This shows that God, even as they complained, had compassion on the children of Israel.

Numbers 20:9 tells us what happened next. ***“And Moses took the rod from before the LORD, as he commanded him.”*** So far, Moses is doing what God said. However, something happens in verse 10. It is my opinion that between the moment God spoke to Moses and commanded him to speak to the rock so water flowed forth, to the time Moses presented himself in front of the congregation and before the rock; there was a lot more complaining and bitterness coming from the congregation, which broke Moses down. I am sure if Moses could look back, he would never have done what he did in verse 10. I do not believe Moses broke down because they were complaining about him. I think he broke because they were constantly complaining about God, who Moses served and communicated with.

Read what happens, beginning in Numbers 20:10. ***“And Moses and Aaron gathered the congregation together before the rock, and he said unto them, Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock? And Moses lifted up his hand, and with his rod he smote the rock twice: and the water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their beasts also.”***

I am sure Moses was quite eloquent in his description of this evil congregation, by calling them “rebels,” but the King James translators made the language sound nicer. However, in verse 10, Moses hit the rock twice. We can just imagine his frustration, slamming his rod twice against the rock, but in verse 8, God had told him to ‘speak’ to the rock. Moses was to only ‘speak to it in a commanding voice,’ for water to gush forth from the rock. However, Moses lifted up his hand with the rod and smote the rock twice, not just once, but twice, and still the water came out abundantly. God was faithful, even though Moses now was the one being disobedient to God’s commands, and the congregation drank, and their beasts also.

As a result, because of Moses’ disobedience, Numbers 20:12 tell us, ***“And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron, Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them.”*** Moses was disobedient to God’s command in verse 8. He was supposed to ‘speak’ to the rock, yet Moses struck it twice instead. By striking it twice, he failed to sanctify and revere God. This is why Moses could not go over into Jordan, into the Promised Land. It was not because he was not able to physically, but because he was disobedient. He could not go any further; he could not bring the children of Israel over the Jordan River into the Promised Land. Here, Moses represents the Law. No matter how much we try; no matter how much the Pharisees tried; no matter how

much we try to abide in the Ten Commandments, and the rest of the Law, you cannot cross Jordan with it. Moses, the Lawgiver, could not cross Jordan. However, Joshua, as a type of Christ, was able to cross Jordan and obtain the Promised Land.

Jesus Christ obtained salvation for us through the cross and reconciled us back to the Father. Christ's Jordan was the cross, and we can never cross the Jordan living the Law. No one can, other than Christ, because He broke the bondage that we were under by fulfilling the Law. For us now, the only law we have to fulfill is faith in Him along with the other commandment Jesus gave us to follow, 'Love one another' (John 13:34). Christ's greatest passion, as seen in the Gospel of John, is to 'feed the sheep.' Christ commanded if you love me (Christ), then love feeding the sheep with your whole heart, whether you preach it, or whether you support it. That is all Christ demands from us now, to live a life of faith so we become imputed with righteousness. To love with the 'Agape-type' love, having no restrictions, and willing to die, if necessary, to get the Good News out to the world. Only Christ could cross our Jordan, because He fulfilled the Law. Moses could not cross Jordan, because he did not follow the Law.

We learn later in the book of Deuteronomy, that God chooses Moses' successor, Joshua. Moses does pray for a successor that could lead the children of Israel, but he does not dare suggest who it could be, and God chose a successor that would lead them to the Promised Land, to the land flowing with milk and honey. In addition, He promises to exterminate all who get in their way and impede their progress, and through Moses reminds the children of Israel that He would go before them. All they had to do was be obedient to the Lord and the leadership the Lord chose.

In Deuteronomy 31:3, Moses tells them, ***"The LORD thy God, he will go over before thee, and he will destroy these nations from before thee, and thou shalt possess them: and Joshua, he shall go over before thee, as the LORD hath said. And the LORD shall do unto them as he did to Sihon and to Og, kings of the Amorites, and unto the land of them, whom he destroyed."*** The Hebrew makes verse 3 very clear; God will 'exterminate' the nations they were going to face.

Also in Deuteronomy 31, Moses reminds the Israelites here of what happened earlier in Deuteronomy 2:24, when God told them, ***"Rise ye up, take your journey, and pass over the river Arnon: behold, I have given into thine hand Sihon the Amorite, king of Heshbon, and his land: begin to possess it, and contend with him in battle. This day will I begin to put the dread of thee and the fear of thee upon the nations that are under the whole heaven, who shall hear report of thee, and shall tremble, and be in anguish because of thee."*** If it was important for Moses to remind them of it, maybe we can learn something from it to help us when we face our enemies, our circumstances, or when we face what we think is going to annihilate or exterminate us. God is doing all this. All the children of Israel had to do was be obedient, and God is still saying the same things today to us. Either you are going to have a rebellious heart, as the children of Israel did, and not trust Him, or you are going to trust in His Word, knowing that He is not a man to lie, and that what He says will come true.

This history that Moses is referring to continues in Deuteronomy 2:26-30 with Moses saying, *“And I sent messengers out of the wilderness of Kedemoth unto Sihon king of Heshbon with words of peace, saying, “Let me pass through thy land: I will go along by the high way, I will neither turn unto the right hand nor to the left. Thou shalt sell me meat for money, that I may eat; and give me water for money, that I may drink: only I will pass through on my feet; (as the children of Esau which dwell in Seir, and the Moabites which dwell in Ar, did unto me;) until I shall pass over Jordan into the land which the LORD our God giveth us. But Sihon king of Heshbon would not let us pass by him: for the LORD thy God hardened his spirit, and made his heart obstinate, that he might deliver him into thy hand, as appeareth this day. And the LORD said unto me, Behold, I have begun to give Sihon and his land before thee: begin to possess, that thou mayest inherit his land. Then Sihon came out against us, he and all his people, to fight at Jahaz. And the LORD our God delivered him before us; and we smote him, and his sons, and all his people. And we took all his cities at that time, and utterly destroyed the men, and the women, and the little ones, of every city, we left none to remain: only the cattle we took for a prey unto ourselves, and the spoil of the cities which we took.”*”

The Lord knew king Sihon would not let them pass through. Even though, Moses had to go through the motions of presenting a peaceful solution if they were to pass through the land, everything in Sihon was destroyed when they were denied passage. That sounds like a tough God, but I would rather be on God’s side than not. When God hardens your heart, there is no hope for you. Just the same, Christ came to die for all humanity and to choose whom He wanted out of that group. It is not our decision. Yes, you could pray for the salvation of someone, but in the end, only Christ and the Father make the final decision of whom He chooses and whom He does not choose. My job, and your job, is to keep getting the Word out and let Christ do the choosing of whom He wants to choose.

It is also in Deuteronomy 31:4 Moses reminds the children of Israel not only of this particular battle with Sihon, the Amorite king, but he also reminds them of Og, king of the Bashan. That great battle with the king of Og happened in Deuteronomy 3, when the Lord went before them and they won the victory over the evil inhabitants of the land at that time. Deuteronomy 3:1-11 records this event. *“Then we turned, and went up the way to Bashan: and Og the king of Bashan came out against us, he and all his people, to battle at Edrei. And the LORD said unto me, Fear him not: for I will deliver him, and all his people, and his land, into thy hand; and thou shalt do unto him as thou didst unto Sihon king of the Amorites, which dwelt at Heshbon. So the LORD our God delivered into our hands Og also, the king of Bashan, and all his people: and we smote him until none was left to him remaining. And we took all his cities at that time, there was not a city which we took not from them, threescore cities, all the region of Argob, the kingdom of Og in Bashan. All these cities were fenced with high walls, gates, and bars; beside unwallled towns a great many. And we utterly destroyed them, as we did unto Sihon king of Heshbon, utterly destroying the men, women, and children, of every city. But all the cattle, and the spoil of the cities, we took for a prey to ourselves. And we took at that time out of the hand of the two kings of the Amorites the land that was on this side Jordan, from the river of Arnon unto Mount Hermon. . . . For only Og*

king of Bashan remained of the remnant of the giants; behold, his bedstead was a bedstead of iron; is it not in Rabbath of the children of Ammon? nine cubits was the length thereof, and four cubits the breadth of it, after the cubit of a man.”

If you remember, Og, king of Bashan, was a giant. Deuteronomy 3 happened about forty years earlier when Israel had failed, turned on Moses, and turned on God because they were afraid of the giants. At that time, ten spies came back and described the giants as being a mighty people they could not defeat. All the spies, except for Caleb and Joshua, reported that they were just grasshoppers in comparison to those giants in that day. Here in verse 4, Moses is reminding them of the time when they took “threescore cities,” or sixty cities, from Og, even though the bedstead of Og was about 13 ½ feet tall by 6 feet wide, as recorded in verse 11. Some think his coffin is described here, but whether it is a bed or a coffin, it was built for a giant.

We can see here in Deuteronomy 31 that Moses reminds the children of Israel of how God led them, went before them, and gave them victory over evil people, nations, and giants that they were so afraid of 38 years prior. Moses reminds them in Deuteronomy 31:4 that God had brought them through those times and had exterminated their enemies. Moses reminds them that God did it; they were just the vessels that He used to accomplish His goal. In the end, the Lord made a promise to the children of Israel in Deuteronomy 31:5 regarding their giants. ***“And the LORD shall give them up before your face, that ye may do unto them according unto all the commandments which I have commanded you.”***

A lot of you are facing giants in your life. Whatever your giant is: it could be finances; it could be employment; it could be relationship problems, whatever, you put your own face on it. You could sit back, complain, and be bitter about it, or you can do what God tells you to do, what God is expecting you to do, and what God wants you to do. God wants us to trust, obey, and faith in His word. Then He will fulfill His promises, and give you the victory over whatever giants you are facing. I guarantee that throughout your whole life, at one time or another, you are going to be facing giants. I face them all the time, but I remind myself of the five principles, which I am going to lay out to you in this chapter. These principles applied in the Old Testament, and still apply in the New Testament when it comes to this specific subject. What are those principles?

Deuteronomy 31:6 tells us, ***“Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them: for the LORD thy God, he it is that doth go with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.”*** God’s Word puts it beautifully together. You just have to remember these five principles the next time you are facing your giants.

1. Be strong.
2. Just have courage.
3. Fear not.
4. Nor be afraid.
5. Neither be dismayed.

First, be strong! I could reflect back to the teachings I did in the Spiritual Warfare series, where that series began with Ephesians 6:10, ***“Be strong in the Lord.”*** Just as it says, be strong. We are told in Ephesians 6 to, ***“be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.”*** Mean it is not our own strength. We are to be strong in the Lord and in His power, and the dynamic explosive nature of God will be released, if we just trust in him. In addition, by His power the victory is just around the corner. Sometimes it takes longer to see it or even obtain it, but the command is still there to ***“be strong.”*** We have the luxury of looking back to the New Testament. However, Deuteronomy 31 was not available to the children of Israel, because Christ had not yet come. If we are to be strong in the power of His might, you are part of the dynamic explosiveness of God’s nature by faithing that the Holy Spirit, the comforter, knows what you need in whatever circumstances you are facing at that time. So, ***“Be strong in the Lord”*** and in the power of His dynamic explosive nature to handle your situation.

Second, be courageous! You need courage to face your giants. You need to have courage, and you need to have the right type of courage that is trusting in God and His Word, even though the giants are still in front of you. It is one thing to be strong, but it takes courage to face your giants and have faith God is there with you. I cannot make it any simpler than that. It takes guts to keep on faithing that God’s Word is true. I want to use “believing,” but “faithing” is a better word. I have seen so many Christians throughout my lifetime, especially in my early years. People become converted and they love the experience. However, as soon as hard times come upon them, they are gone and fall by the wayside. The devil plants the thought, “No way, God loves me; God would not want anything bad to happen to me,” but how else is God going to train and refine you? How else is He going to complete you unless you have some tribulation? Trials and tribulations will do one of two things; you will be distancing yourselves away from God, or you will be drawing closer to Him and His Word. There is no middle ground. You either run as far as you can away from God’s Word or you press closer, faithing that He is not a man to lie, and that He will take care of you because that is His promise that He will never leave you nor forsake you. It takes guts to have courage.

Third, do not be fearful. ***“Fear not, I will help thee”*** (Isaiah 41:10). That is the cornerstone message of this ministry. If you do not have a copy of the message “Fear Not”, request it and we will send it to you. Then, once you read it, apply the message here. Do not be afraid. Be strong, be of good courage, and fear not. Do not be fearful.

Fourth, do not be afraid. The Hebrew makes it very clear, “Do not tremble. Do not become terrified.” Whatever you are experiencing, whatever giant faces you, do not let it make you tremble, do not let it bring you to a point where you are terrified and you quit.

Be strong, be courageous, fear not, nor be afraid of them. Your problem might be a giant to you, but to God it is nothing more than an insignificant ant, a pissant, that God will exterminate, because He has my benefit constantly on His mind. If I keep faithing, if I keep strong, and if I have the courage to believe God’s Word is true, then I will not fear any giant that is facing me. I will not tremble, or be terrified in their presence. Like I said, you put the name of the giant that is facing you tonight and apply these principles to

that circumstance.

Fifth, do not be dismayed. In the Hebrew this is, “do not let your heart be shattered or broken.” I wrote that down in my Bible because that is closer to what the Hebrew words mean there. Do not let your heart be shattered or broken. There might be a time when the giants seem like they have you running and thinking they may win, but do not let your heart become shattered or broken because God will turn the battle to your favor.

Deuteronomy 31:6 tells us, ***“Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them: for the LORD thy God, he it is that doth go with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.”*** Does that sound familiar? Jesus also said He would never leave us nor forsake us in Hebrews 13:5. In addition, the word “fail” in this verse is best translated in the Hebrew as “He will not let you sink.” Remember that, He will not let you sink! Also, the best translation from the Hebrew for the word “forsake” is “He will not let you go.”

In the New Testament, if you recall the story of Peter walking on water, as long as he kept his eyes on Jesus, he was not going to sink. However, as soon as he put his eye on the circumstances around him, the roaring seas, the high winds, and questioning, he broke faith in Jesus. His doubt broke the trust that he had in his Lord that the Lord would make sure he would not sink if he just kept focusing on him. Just look what happened when he started placing his eyes on the circumstances and took his eyes off Jesus. He sank, and he sank quickly. After Peter cried out, what did Jesus do? The Lord stretched out His arm to grab hold of Peter so he would not sink, and Christ would not let go of Peter until he was safe. It was then that Peter once again relied on Christ only to see him through the circumstance that Peter put himself in. He was fine while he was walking on the water, with eyes focused on Christ, but as soon as he put his eyes on the circumstances around him, he sunk. That principle is in the Old Testament and the New Testament as well. He will not let you sink or he will not leave thee, but a better translation in the Hebrew is, ‘He will not let you go.’ Just as He did not let Peter go until he was safely back on that boat. He will not let us go!

We have to remind ourselves of these five principles from Deuteronomy 31. I showed you the events that Moses was reminding the children of Israel of as they were heading toward the Promised Land with their battles far from over. The children of Israel would have to continue conquering the land and overturning the nations established there and claim back what God had promised to Abraham and his descendants.

Moses reminded them to be strong, be of good courage, and fear not. Do not be afraid, or tremble, or be terrified, and do not be dismayed. Do not let your heart be shattered or broken. It is going to take faith to apply all five principles that God is expecting from us. When we apply those principles with faith in His Word, He will make sure that we will not sink, and He will not let us go, because His promise is that He will never leave us nor forsake us. By the way, we have a lot more promises than the children of Israel had then. Go to Hebrews 13 and remind yourself once again ***“He will never leave us nor forsake us.”*** Paul also says in Hebrews 13:8, ***“Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.”***

When we focus our faith on Christ, and in God's Word, doing what He has commanded us to do, when we face those giants, our promise is He will never let us sink; He will not let us fail; He will never forsake us; He will never let go of us; and He will never leave us. That is what I am claiming as I face the giants, and as this ministry faces the giants. Let us face the giants together knowing that God's Word is true and Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

You just have to be faithful and stay focused in the faith. However, if you do drift, reach out to God, and start all over again. I guarantee you it is going to happen to you, but start all over again and remind yourself that you have to be strong, not in our own might but in **His** might. I am going to have the courage to live out my life of faith, trusting in His Word, and I will not fear the giants. Those giants will shrink. Years ago, there was a movie, "Honey, I Shrunk the Kids." In that movie, normal human beings were shrunk to the size of ants when rays from the shrinking machine hit them. When shrunk, everything of normal size seemed giant-like to them. I feel that way sometimes. Everything around me seems so large, so overwhelming, things that can make me fearful, things that could make one tremble and be terrified. Well, that is not what God wants. He wants us to be strong; be of good courage; fear not; nor be afraid; and be not dismayed. Do not let your heart be shattered. Once you put your eyes back on Christ, you will realize that He will not let you sink, and He will not let you go until you are back on safe terrain.

I am claiming these promises: He will not allow me to sink; He will not let go of me; and He will not leave me. Put your own name in it, whoever you are. Be strong, be courageous, and fear not. Do not be afraid, or as it says in the Hebrew, do not be terrified or tremble, and do not be dismayed. Do not let your heart be shattered or broken. Whatever giants you face in your life, whether you have a giant you are facing now or one in the future, apply these five principles and I guarantee you will stay in the faith.

As you go through life facing your giants, face your giants with the five principles in this chapter. Claim the two promises that God has given us in His Word that are not just in the Old Testament, but also in the New Testament. Remember, Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever. That is why I am hanging on to His Word, and that is what I am claiming. I hope that you will do the same.

Keep On Faithing

It is in Matthew 10:16 where Jesus tells the disciples, ***“Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves. But beware of men: for they will deliver up the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues ...”*** In other words, He is telling them to expect persecution.

Just imagine these disciples sitting at Jesus' feet, and He is telling them that they are going to be sent and they are going to be like sheep in the midst of wolves. Unless there is a shepherd, sheep do not survive for long surrounded by wolves, otherwise they are torn apart, destroyed, and consumed, and here Jesus is telling His disciples to expect this to happen to them. I wish I could have seen their faces as He described what they should expect in the future. I can only imagine what I would have looked like and how I would have reacted. ***“Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves ...”*** Thank God, we have a chief Shepherd who watches over us while we are in the midst of wolves. Now we might not ever experience anything like the disciples would eventually have to experience, but the promise is still the same, He is our chief Shepherd and He is watching over us while we are in the midst of the wolves, and there are plenty of wolves out there.

Then Jesus tells them the next piece, ***“Be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves. But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues. . .”*** These disciples were eventually going to preach about Jesus Christ and salvation through His death and resurrection, and be scourged in the synagogues for it by the church world of their time. Preachers can be over-dramatic about the woes that we face from our religious brethren. However, what we face today is nothing compared to what these disciples went through. Remember, Jesus was killed because He said that He was the Messiah. All of the disciples, except for one, were put to death because they preached that Jesus was the Messiah who would deliver us from the sins of this world and give us eternal hope to be with Him forever. Yes, they were scourged, but if somebody in the religious world disagrees with me, do I think that that is scourging? Of course not, I am not going to get that disturbed because fellow brethren do not agree with me. If you believe in the message that you are preaching, no matter who you are, then stand up and preach it. Do not dwell on what the ramifications might be.

In verse 18, Jesus continues speaking to the disciples, telling them that no matter what, some will hate them because they preach the true gospel of Jesus Christ. ***“And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles . . . And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father his child: and the children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name’s sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved.”***

Before commenting on this verse, I want to share with you an excerpt from an article by Mike Phelps. I felt it is appropriate to insert this article in this message. The excerpt is from an article written by Mike Phelps, which is compiled from a diary written by Bartolome de las Casas about Christopher Columbus' first voyage to America. The diary is an interesting account of the journey of the Nina, the Pinta, and the Santa-Maria from Spain to what Christopher Columbus thought to be the Indies. Columbus never imagined that he was sailing towards the Americas. Instead, he thought he could sail from Spain to the Indies without any landmass in between. I do not need to review the whole story because most of you learned about it in school as you were growing up. However, it is still an interesting account. The first entry of his journal was on the day of his departure, Friday, August 3, 1492. You may wonder what this has to do with Matthew 10:22, just wait, you will see the connection.

As you read about the first three days, you will notice it is very mundane information, however, on the fourth day, August 6, something happens:

“Friday, 3 August 1492. Set sail from the bar of Saltes at 8 o'clock, and proceeded with a strong breeze till sunset, sixty miles or fifteen leagues south, afterwards southwest and south by west, which is the direction of the Canaries.

Saturday, August 4. They went west by south.

Sunday August 5. They went on their way in between day and night went on their way and made more than 40 leagues.”

Monday, August 6th. The rudder of the Pinta broke and the men began to toil and argue.”

This is just like so many Christians, as soon as things do not go their way, they start to argue and quarrel amongst themselves and to God. They do not expect all the hardships, but if you are denying yourself, taking up your cross, and following Jesus, you had better expect all hell to break loose around you. You had better decide whether you want to follow God or go back to the damnable way you were heading. There is no nice way of putting it. You have two choices. Follow the way of the world to eternal damnation, or follow the way of Christ with all its hardships and problems. Yes, you are going to have problems in this world. The Bible says the rain falls on the just and unjust alike, but you need the Holy Spirit and the Lord Jesus Christ to see you through the tough times. Sure, you might get through on your own strength and power, but then you will not receive the promise of imputed righteousness for the Faith that you had demonstrated in his Word. Make your choice, your way or God's way. You have the choice, just as Adam and Eve did, but for now, we will read more about Columbus' journey.

“Monday, August 6. The rudder of the Pinta broke and the men began to toil and argue. Finally, they made between day and night 29 leagues.

Tuesday, August 7. The rudder again lost its fastenings, but this time we traveled 25 leagues.

Wednesday, August 8. We would have liked to go to Gran Canaria to leave the badly damaged Pinta because she leaked badly and had a damaged rudder. We were not able to reach it that day.

Thursday, August 9. We reached the Grand Canary and fixed this ship.’’

So we find that despite the circumstances and repeated quarrels, they sailed on. I want you to remember those three words, “They sailed on.” Write them down in your margin next to Mathew 10:22.

This diary continues,

“September 7. All of Friday and on Saturday, until the third hour of the night, we were in very light winds, not much happening.

Saturday September 8th. At the third hour of the night on Saturday, it commenced to blow from the northeast and we took course to the west. We took much water over the bow, which hindered our way, and we made that day and night only nine leagues.’’

They were in rough and stormy seas, and they took a lot of water over the bow, which hindered their progress. Over the course of that day and night, they covered only nine leagues. But on that day, “They sailed on.” Remember that.

“Thursday September 13. That day and night going on their course, which was west, they made 33 leagues. The currents were against them, but on this day, we sailed on.

Saturday September 15. They sailed that day and night 27 leagues and a few more on their route west. On this night, at the beginning of it, they saw a marvelous branch of fire fall from the sky. This is from them four or five leagues.

Monday September 17. He sailed on his route west and made day and night somewhat more than 50 leagues. The current was helping them.

Friday September 21. That day was mostly calm. They made between day and night no more than 13 leagues, some of it on the course, and some of it not. But this day, we sailed on.

Wednesday September 26. They thought they saw land and spent the entire day sailing towards it only to discover it was sky. But this day they sailed on.’’

I have skipped some dates because what interests me most is that, no matter what the day brought, at the end of practically every entry was, “And this day we sailed on.” Some days, nothing happened. There were uneventful, probably boring and mundane days, but no matter what, they sailed on. In fact, there were many days when the only entry was, “and we sailed westward on our course today.” Some days, the crew argued with each other and questioned the legitimacy of the mission, but at the end of the day it was still written, “This day we sailed on.” Some days, the sea was calm and peaceful and on these days, they “sailed on.” Some days, the seas rose from storms and they took water on board, but still, “they sailed on.”

Some of you reading this are already ahead of me, and you know where I am going with this message. Obviously, Christopher Columbus was possessed with a vision of what could be, with a sense of purpose. Whatever it was, it drove him on in the face of adversity, boredom, difficulty, fighting amongst his crew, and disappointments. It meant that at the end of each day, Bartolome de las Casas could sum up his day by saying, “and this day, we sailed on.” It was not easy, but we sailed on. We suffered setbacks, but we sailed on. We did not get as far as we wanted today, but we sailed on. We took on water today, but we sailed on. We got off course, but we sailed on. We chased after land that was not there, but we sailed on. At the end of the day he wrote, “This day we sailed on.”

How many of you, through all your adversities, your difficulties, your disappointments can say at the end of the day, “and this day I kept faithing on in God’s Word.” I do not know if Christopher Columbus was a faithing man in God’s Word, but I know he had perseverance. He had tenacity. He had the endurance to keep on sailing westward until he reached his destination. Through all the setbacks, through all the crew problems, through all of his ships’ problems, he kept sailing on. For myself, no matter what my difficulties are, I just have to keep Faithing on in God’s Word. I must remember that God is the captain of my ship. He knows the direction it is going, and He knows how to get me there. All I must do is trust in Him and His Word.

Now I would like you to go to Genesis 45. In this chapter, Joseph’s brothers came to Egypt looking for food during the famine. Joseph was the governor of Egypt and had total control over the distribution of food and other necessities. Joseph’s brothers did not know he was still alive and did not recognize him when they finally presented themselves to him. Joseph told his brothers that God had sent him to Egypt to prepare the way for the survival of the people of promise through the famine. All through his struggles and hardships, God was in control of Joseph’s life, and Joseph remained faithful and kept faithing on. He kept faithing on when his brothers threw him into a pit. He kept faithing on when he was sold into slavery. He kept faithing on while serving as a slave to his master. He kept faithing on through the temptations and lies of an unfaithful woman, lies that would eventually land him, undeservedly, in prison. After many years in prison, God puts Joseph in a position where he had control over events in Egypt as well as the surrounding known world. People came from as far away as Greece and beyond, searching for food. God had sent a man to Egypt. God took care of the situation and He ensured the survival of Israel assuring Jacob’s lineage. He brought the Israelites down to Egypt and He would someday take them out.

Now after Joseph revealed himself to his brothers, he sent them back to their father. Joseph gave raiment, or clothes, and gifts, and equipped them with wagons loaded with food. However, I find it interesting that when Joseph gave his brothers instructions for the journey, he did not tell them to be careful with the riches or the food. He only mentioned in Genesis 45:24, “***See that ye fall not out by the way.***” The raiment, gifts, and food would be useless if the brothers became distracted and did not make it back to Israel, and these things would come to no harm, as long as Joseph’s brothers delivered

them to Jacob. Therefore, the most important part of the mission was for Joseph's brothers to get to where they were supposed to, without being distracted. Just imagine the reaction from Joseph's brothers when he finally revealed to them who he was. These were the same brothers who previously wanted to kill Joseph, but instead sold him into slavery, and now they were kneeling at Joseph's feet. I can guarantee you his brothers were trembling and shaking in their sandals. They probably remembered all the evil they had done to their brother, and now he was second only to the Pharaoh. They were probably very worried that Joseph would want to take revenge.

Eventually, in Genesis 45:22, Joseph sends all of his brothers back with new raiment, gifts, and food, but he also sends Benjamin back with 300 pieces of silver and five changes of raiment. Genesis 45:23 tells us Joseph sent for his father, ***“ten asses laden with the good things of Egypt, and ten she asses laden with corn and bread and meat.”*** Joseph knew his brothers were disloyal and not trustworthy. He knew they were capable of betrayal. He knew that deep down they were scoundrels, so Joseph told them in verse 24, ***“See that ye fall not out by the way.”*** He wanted the food and gifts to get back to Jacob. He was planning to bring Jacob, as well as the rest of the children of Israel under Jacob's care, to Egypt, so it was vital for Joseph to counsel his brothers with this warning, ***“See that ye fall not out by the way.”***

To understand what Joseph was really trying to tell his brothers, I studied some of the words in this verse. In Hebrew, the word “out” is ***“ragaz.”*** It means to shake with a violent emotion, with fears and anxieties. So Joseph said to his brothers, “As you go back home, see that you fall not by the way with violent emotions, violent shakings, with fears and anxieties.” They have fears and anxieties, because now they had to go back and tell Jacob, their father, that Joseph was alive. Moreover, they probably had to tell him what had happened to Joseph, years earlier. Talk about being in a difficult situation. It took many years, but those lying, treacherous, scoundrels were eventually caught in their evil ways. Because of their treachery, they were caught lying to their father. I think I would be very afraid also if I was one of those scoundrels, and Joseph knew they would be frightened, so that is why he tells them, ***“See that ye fall not out by the way.”*** Joseph is telling his brothers that they should keep faithing on and trust in God, not dwell on their past sins, all is forgiven. Keep faithing on and trust in God. That was the past. You made your mistakes. Now there is a new way, a new direction.

That is what repentance is all about. Let God now control your path and life. We will never let God control our lives if we do not trust and have faith in His Word. We are going to stumble, we are going to fall, but we are going to get back up again as long as we trust in God's Word. Jesus will never leave us or forsake us, that is our promise. So as you start following Jesus, do not fall out of the way, stay on course, and keep faithing on in God's Word. We were given the gift of grace. We have our new raiment and our wagons are loaded with food, the food of God's Word. All we have to do is keep faithing on in Him.

The most important thing to remember about this Bible lesson is that Joseph's brothers reached their destination without getting distracted. I am sure they encountered sandstorms, but they pressed on. I am sure they encountered resistance, but they pressed on. I am sure they got tired and wanted to settle down along the way, but they pressed on. I am sure they fought, but still they pressed on. I am sure they looked at all that Joseph had given them and were tempted to say, "Why do we want to make the effort to return to Jacob, when we have what we need right here? We have silver, gold, clothing, and food enough to last us a long time. Let's just settle here and enjoy the gifts." Nonetheless, somehow, they made it back. Too many Christians enjoy the gift of grace and salvation, but then sit back and let somebody else do what they should be doing to press this ministry on. This ministry is going to be faithing on in His Word, and I hope that you are with us as we make that trip. Do not be a distant onlooker; get involved.

Read what happened when Joseph's brothers returned to Canaan in Genesis 45:27 and 28. ***"And they told him all the words of Joseph, which he had said unto them: and when he saw the wagons which Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of Jacob their father revived: And Israel said, It is enough; Joseph my son is yet alive: I will go and see him before I die."***

The wagons and the gifts had arrived for Jacob. Joseph's brothers had finally decided that, no matter what happened, they would not fall out by the way. They had been miserable for most of their lives. They had not lived a life of faith, but then they were finally obedient to the faith. Even though, earlier in their lives, they had been faithless and jealous of Joseph's dreams from God, now they were obedient and faithful to His command. Satan and his demons had tried to destroy Joseph but God's hand had been constantly on him and he had remained faithful. Now many preachers like to maintain that Joseph's faithfulness was not believable. I am sure he had his doubts and wondered about what was going on in his life. After all, all he had done was to dream dreams and receive a coat of many colors. Then suddenly he was thrown into a pit and sold into slavery. Joseph would have had doubts. However, he focused on being faithful to God rather than dwelling on and believing his doubts. Some of you probably like to dwell on your miseries and your problems, thinking that God will never deliver you from them, but that is just Satan whispering in your ear. God said there were going to be problems, but you have a choice of living your life in faith and trusting that God will see you through your problems or you can choose to sit in your misery letting Satan destroy you and break down the faith connection that you have with your Lord and Savior. You have to make the choice.

The raiment, gifts, and food from Joseph were transported by ordinary people who, quite simply, were determined that no matter what happened they would not fall out by the way. Make the commitment right now; no matter what comes against you, you will keep faithing on in God's Word. What God is looking for, more than anything else in us is obedience, commitment and perseverance to see if we will trust in His Word. The instructions to the church today are the same instructions that Joseph gave to his brothers.

That is, “I have given you gifts; I have given you raiment, and I have given you food and caravans to take to a world that does not even believe I am even alive. My only instruction to you is, ‘See that you fall not out by the way.’”

You will encounter persecution, but keep faithing on in His Word. You will encounter problems, but keep faithing on in His Word. You will encounter criticism from your own brothers and sisters, but keep faithing on in His Word. Some days will be laborious, but keep faithing on in His Word. Some days will be perilous, but keep faithing on in his Word. See that you fall not out by the way. See that you do not apply the Hebrew word **“ragaz.”** See that you do not let your violent emotions create extreme fears and anxieties that keep you away from faith in God’s Word. I guarantee that if that you trust in His Word, you will not fall out by the way. However, remember that it is a continuous faith walk, not one done occasionally. You just cannot have faith when you feel like it. Living a life of faith is a full time commitment. Yes, there are times when it is easier. However, you have to develop the mind frame that you are ready to do battle at any time. You have to accept the concept that if you do not, you will fall out by the way, instead of keeping on the path of faith. The devil and his demons do not rest. They are constantly attacking. Once you become a faithing Christian, their whole goal is to destroy you. They will not be satisfied and they will not let up until it is accomplished. Your weapons are listed in Ephesians 6, and you must wear those weapons, use those weapons, and never let them out of your sight, especially that Shield of Faith used to quench those flaming arrows coming at you constantly. Use those weapons. They are there to protect you. They are there so you do not fall out by the way.

As an example, Paul’s life ended, not with a spotless record and not as a man who had never made a mistake, but with a record of faith. In II Timothy 4:7, Paul writes, **“I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that loved his appearing.”** Paul is saying, “I have made my mistakes, but I kept faithing on in His Word. I was beaten, but I kept faithing on in His Word. I was persecuted, but I kept faithing on in His Word. I was shipwrecked, but I kept faithing on in His Word. The time of my departure is at hand and my testimony is this, I did not fall out by the way. **‘At my first answer no man stood with me’** (II Timothy 4:16), but I kept faithing on in His Word.” Many times, Paul must have been tempted to give up, but he finished the course. He did not fall out by the way. He kept faithing on in God’s Word.

Job 17:9 says, **“The righteous also shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger.”** God is looking for righteous people, and that righteousness is through the faith of people who just hold onto God’s way. Our strength is gained by just holding onto His way. Our way will always lead us in the wrong direction every time, but when you hold onto His way, He is directing your path, He is captain of your ship. God is looking for righteous people who will just hold onto His way. Our strength is gained by faith. Just keep faithing on and your strength and faith

will be increased. Our first reaction is always to complain when there are troubles, trials and tribulations because we do not want to go through all that, but that is the only way we are going to increase our faith in His Word. That is the only way you will gain strength from day to day. No matter what the course of life, no matter what you experience, God is looking for people who will just keep faithing on in His Word.

Timothy 3:11 says, “. . .*that in the last days perilous times shall come.*” In verse 14 of Timothy 3 it says, “*But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them.*” Some days the only entry in our spiritual journey is “and this day we kept faithing on in His Word.” We did not see any fire fall from the sky or discover any new land as Columbus did. We only kept faithing on in His Word. However, it is during those times that God is building character in us. It is during those times that God is strengthening our Faith in Him. It is in those times that God uses monotony to build perseverance in us. God wants people who will be faithful in the times of silence. If you are just about to give up, let me tell you what you need to do. You just need to keep faithing on one more day. I know that things are coming against you, but this day keep faithing on in His Word. I know that things are less than perfect in your life, but this day keep faithing on in His Word. I know that the temptation is to give up and turn back, but this day keep faithing on in His Word.

Revelations 2:10 encourages us with this, “*Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that they may be tried; and ye shall have tribulations ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.*” Just be faithful until the end, and the crown is yours. If you have been going through rough seas lately, then remember Matthew 10:22. Do not think it is strange when you come up against the world and they hate you for His name’s sake. Some of the people whom you get involved with do not even know they are agents of Satan, our enemy. They do not have to know, you just have to be aware of it because, as I said before, be aware of Satan, resist him and fight him. They do not know that they are your enemies because they are controlled by Satan to cause disturbances in your life so that you lose your grip and say, “I’ve had enough! Maybe God is not helping me after all.” I am telling you, Jesus told us to be ready for that. Jesus told His disciples to be ready for that. You are going to be a “*sheep in the midst of wolves.*”

Do not forget Matthew 10:22, “*And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved.*” The words ‘endureth’ and ‘end’ are important in this verse. The Greek definition for ‘endureth’ is, “to endure or sustain a load of miseries, adversities, persecutions, provocations in faith.” I found that interesting when I read this particular definition. The Greek does not say, “to endure or sustain a **few** miseries or adversities,” it says a **load**. There are going to be many miseries and adversities, and they are going to come at you constantly all through your life. You will never graduate from them, and remember that you will not endure any of this for His namesake if you are not in faith.

The Greek word for 'end' is *'telos,'* which means, "the goal reached the completion or conclusion at which anything arrives." It does not mean the termination with reference to time, rather it means the goal reached, the completion or conclusion at which anything arrives. Re-write this verse, because it should read, "***And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth, or sustains a load of miseries, adversities, persecutions, or provocations in faith to the completion of the goal shall be saved.***" That means our goal now is to have eternal life, not eternal damnation. To be forever with our Lord and Savior who died and shed His precious blood for us. We achieve that goal by faith in God and His Word.

This message is not difficult to understand, just hard to apply. Do not fool yourselves. If you are living a different type of Christian life from what I am preaching in this chapter, you are never going to apply it. Imagine what the disciples were thinking when they heard this message. Jesus was telling them that they were going to sustain a load of miseries, adversities, persecutions, and provocations. Some of you would probably have walked out, murmuring, "Well this is too tough. I'm not going to follow Jesus. There's not much promise in it." Yes, it can be tough now but ahead is the promise of eternal life in the joy of the Lord, praising Him forever. On the other hand, it can be easier now with the promise of eternal suffering and damnation later. There is either eternal life or eternal damnation. The devil wants to confuse you so you think there is another message that teaches it is going to be easier. That is wrong. There is not another message and it will not be easier. In Jesus' own words we are told in Matthew 10:22, "***And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved.***" Or, as I re-wrote this verse, "***And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth, or sustains a load of miseries, adversities, persecutions, or provocations in faith to the completion of the goal shall be saved.***"

That is why Paul said, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course." He completed his goal and now he was ready to be presented to his Lord and Master, to live and reign for eternity. That faith road is going to be rough and tough. I am not talking about those professing to be on the faith road, but the true faith that Jesus taught as He was trying to prepare His disciples as well as all generations to the end of time. You are going to come across rough seas. You are going to have leaks in your boats. You are going to drift off course and get lost on occasion. However, remember to put your focus back on Jesus and God's Word. Go through all the adversities in your life in faith. Then, like Paul, you will be able to say, "I have completed my course. I have achieved the goal that the Lord wanted me to achieve, and with that, I have the promise that I shall be saved for eternity, because I kept my ship on course and I kept faithing on in His Word through the perilous times. I have kept the faith, I have finished the course."

In addition, thank the Lord for the promise He gave at the end of verse 22, "Ye shall be saved." I am hanging on to it, and I trust you are too. If you are not, it is not too late to get on course, so stop complaining and wondering. If you are off-course because you have difficulties, adversities, and miseries, know they are there for a purpose, which is to

complete us in faith. That completion happens when God looks at us during these situations to see if we have faith in Him and His Word. It is never too late to change the course and the direction of your ship as you sail towards eternal life by living a life of faith. That is what this ministry is all about; living the life of faith and teaching you what this life of faith means. It is time for some of you to join with Jesus and start sailing with Him. In conclusion, remember the wonderful gift we receive, that imputed righteousness. Our goal should be to achieve anything that that God wants us to have and His promise to us imputed with righteousness is there through faith. Never let go of that promise and keep faithing on in His Word.

Remember faith pleases God. Keep living a life of Faith. God will be there with you. That is a promise from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Graduation Day

In this chapter, I want to paint a picture with the language that Paul uses to describe his departure from this world in II Timothy, chapter 4. This message comes about because I have been receiving messages concerning people who have gone on to their eternal reward. Even though the person may have died trusting and faithing in Jesus, some of those messages show confusion about what happens after death. As for myself, I have no doubt that they are now in His presence if they died trusting and faithing in Him.

Before going to the Scriptures, however, I want to read to you one author's view of what happens at death; our first experiences after death. According to this author, we are still in a state of consciousness, but we no longer have our body. We are in a different state, but it is still a state of consciousness. There are different states between death in the physical, mortal body we have now and the time we return with Christ to receive our glorified body. It is a state of consciousness, a state of rest, but most of all, it is a state of incompleteness. If you thought death would make you complete, there is only one problem with that; we are not yet in our final state because we are in a state of incompleteness until all is fulfilled in scripture. Most of us will have our lives come and go before all that is in the scriptures is completed and we receive a glorified body, however, we are not complete in spirit and fully satisfied. All tears and sorrow are gone, even though we do not receive our glorified bodies when we first experience death.

Here is what this author says about death:

“Did you ever stop to think what happens to the Righteous Soul during the first five minutes after death? Before the funeral has been held, and the body laid away in the cemetery, nay, before the undertaker has been sent for, or the neighbors and relatives notified, or the shades drawn, or the silent watchers at the bedside have realized that you are dead you have been FIVE MINUTES out of your body and have reached Paradise . . . Now what will be our experiences in those first five minutes?”

(1). Our first experience will be that death was so easy. That it was like falling asleep and waking in a beautiful world. That there was no ‘Valley of Death,’ with its . . . demons to traverse, no ‘dark river’ to cross, but that ‘Ministering Angels’ are waiting to [escort] us to Paradise as they carried Lazarus.(Luke 16:22) ”

Perhaps the time leading up to death involved some pain, but once death occurs, this author is saying that our first experience after death will be to realize it was so easy. This author refers to the story of Lazarus in Luke 16:22. I preached on this before in the Spiritual Warfare Series, where I covered the state of all saints prior to Christ's Resurrection. The Saints were not in the Third Heaven, as most believe. They were waiting for Christ's Resurrection and the time when that age would be completed, which we can read in Luke 16:22, ***“And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried.”***

Regarding death, this author continues,

“. . . that ‘Ministering Angels’ were waiting to [carry] us to Paradise as they carried Lazarus. . . What a delight it will be to meet our own ‘Guardian Angel,’ [the one who gets us there] and will not desert us in that supreme moment when we shall need a guide to conduct us to our Heavenly Home.

(2). Our second experience will be [awareness] that we have left behind our earthly body with all its weaknesses, sufferings, and limitations, and have a body that is absolutely well and fitted in every way for the spiritual realm in which it is to dwell.”

(3). Our third experience will be that we are being transported swiftly upward. . . toward a beautiful country whose radiance is brighter than the sun, and as we approach it see coming out to meet us and escort us home, groups of angels who sing- ‘Blessed are they that do His Commandments.’ [I believe the angels will be singing, “Blessed are they,” with the true meaning of the word, “blessed,” the ones that trust in Jesus Christ.]

(4). Our fourth experience will be that we are in a new environment whose atmosphere is LOVE. That there is no discord, or lack of harmony in our new home [our temporary home.]

(5). Our fifth experience will be the feeling that we are near Jesus. If we do not actually see Him, we shall have the consciousness of His nearness.

(6). Our sixth experience will be that of meeting with our loved ones. While the writer does not believe that our loved ones have any direct knowledge of what is going on on this earth, yet he believes our ‘Guardian Angel’ may communicate with our loved ones and inform them of our coming, and that they will be waiting to receive us.

(7). The seventh experience will be the meeting the saints who have preceded us to glory, such as the patriarchs, prophets, apostles and [spiritual] leaders of our own day. The experiences named may not all happen in the first five minutes after death, but doubtless will happen before our funeral service is over and our body laid to rest in the tomb.”

You may wonder if I believe most of what this author wrote. Yes, I absolutely do. After death, there are going to be many experiences that happen rapidly, but I do not believe there will be a sense of time as we have on Earth, because we live chronologically. We probably will not even be buried, before all these things as well as some other experiences will have happened. They will be happening quickly, while people here are mourning and still having a funeral service. I am tired of people who complain about those who cry at funerals, because it is a sad event, although there is joy knowing that they are going to meet the Lord Jesus Christ and go to their Heavenly home. I know there is a New Jerusalem spoken of in the Bible, but I do not think it is a permanent place. I know what Scripture says. Someday we will be with the rest of the saints waiting for our chronological time to be fulfilled so that we can move on to what is described in the Book of Revelation, the New Jerusalem. It is acceptable to cry at a funeral, because we will miss the person with whom we had a relationship. We will not be seeing them again for a while and that is sad. However, I know who can strengthen us. I know who can turn our sadness into joy, and He always does it through His Word. As I said in the beginning of this chapter, I want to paint that picture using Paul’s language in II Timothy

to describe his own departure. As a child, I had to attend Catholic funerals that were so gloomy and so final; they scared me and as a child made me wonder, what the afterlife would be like. I thought about it a lot. Although a funeral is a time of sadness, it is also a time of celebration. We are in a different state, so I call death “Graduation Day.” Remember, if it was not for Jesus, we would not be able to say that. Thank God for Jesus Christ.

In the Gospel of John, Peter denies His Lord in the previous chapter, and in John 14:1, Christ then says, **“Let not your heart be troubled,”** because Peter did not like the news that Christ would die or the news that he would deny Christ before Christ died on the Cross. That is why Christ has this message for Peter, but it is also for everyone, especially those who have just had someone pass on and are troubled by death. We are told, **“Let not your heart be troubled.”** Literally in the Greek, “troubled” means “let not your heart be agitated which leads to fear.” A troubled or agitated heart will lead you to fear. Verse 1 continues, **“Ye believe,” [pisteuo or ‘so be it’ faith] in God, believe [pisteuo] also in Me. In my Father’s house there are many mansions** [Literally, dwellings, not “mansions”]: **if this were not so, I would have told you.**” In other words, Christ is saying, “You faithed in God for certain things to happen, now faith in me. What I am about to do will give you the opportunity to again be with me.” There is going to be a dwelling with our name on it. It might be just a temporary dwelling until we move to that new city, New Jerusalem, nevertheless, where Jesus is going, there will be dwellings.

The end of verse 2 is understood more clearly, with some explanation. To begin, in the verse Christ says, **“I go to prepare a place for you.”** Most read right past this and do not understand what Jesus is saying here. Literally, Jesus is saying, “I am pursuing my journey upon which I have entered.” Jesus is pursuing his journey with a purpose, which will come with a trial. **“I go,”** literally means “to pursue the journey,” and **“to prepare,”** literally means, “to make the way passable.” Jesus tells the disciples, **‘In my Father’s house are many dwellings. . . I go to prepare a place for you . . . if it were not so I would have told you.’** In other words he is saying, “I am pursuing the journey I am on, the one that I have entered into willingly, for your sake with the trial of the Cross still ahead of me, in order to make the way passable for you.” Christ continues speaking in verse 3, telling the disciples, **“And if I go, [if I pursue the journey] and prepare [make the way passable] a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.”**

Christ is making it very clear in verse one, **“Let not your heart be agitated,”** meaning, “to fear.” In the following verses, Jesus is explaining that, “I have to go to make the unseen world passable, which will be seen by you at your death, so you can be where I am.” Christ will come again and receive us unto Him. Now, do I believe that after death we have ministering angels leading us to the place we are destined to go? Yes, I do, because scripture verifies this. I also believe when we get to that destination, Jesus will be there to greet us and say, “Come on in!” Otherwise, why would Jesus say that He would receive us unto Himself if He did not intend to do it? Do not forget, Christ said, **“if you believe [pisteuo] in God, believe [pisteuo] in me.”** The “so be it” faith, *pisteuo*, knowing the Lord said it and we have full confidence it will happen with no doubts. To

the disciples and to us, Jesus is saying, “If I pursue the journey to make the way passable for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself.” Additionally, Jesus is telling Peter, the disciples, and us today, that if we die before the rapture, we will make our journey to that heavenly home, and He will be waiting there to welcome us. It will not be St. Peter at the “Pearly Gates,” but Jesus Christ will receive us unto Himself. I do not know about anyone else, but I have many loved ones I want to see in Heaven. There will be a line of loved ones and Jesus Himself will be at the front of the line waiting to welcome me. The first person I want to meet is my Master, my Savior, my God, the Lord Jesus Christ. I am sure most everyone has the same desire. Where Jesus is, is where I want to be. Jesus had to make the way passable for us, and He did.

It is in II Timothy 4 where Paul is writing to Timothy. Paul is near death. His time on earth is nearly done. He has completed his course, and writes in verse 6, “***For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.***” The Greek word used for departure is “*analysis*,” which the English words “analyst” and “analyze” come, and it is in verse 7 and 8 that Paul does analyze. In this chapter, Paul is telling Timothy that he (Paul) is ready to be offered and the time of analyzing is going to happen to him next; it is at the door. I am surprised that more pastors do not prepare their saints for what happens between death (a conscious state) and the eternal realm of life (another conscious state). Perhaps these pastors and preachers assume most of us do not have any interest in that kind of teaching, but there is nothing wrong in teaching about it, because there is plenty of information in Scripture regarding this.

As I said earlier, those Catholic funerals I experienced as a child were so gloomy and so final, and those experiences made me question why so I searched for answers. I remember back in my early years as an intern struggling with questions about death. I tried to get some information from others in the ministry, but no one wanted to talk about it. There is nothing wrong about talking about death, because Scripture has given us a lot of information on how we can and should deal with death. To paraphrase Paul, he says, “The time of my departure, the time of analyzing what is going to happen next is here and I am going to tell you what to expect.” He was probably in prison at this time, where he had time to analyze what was going to happen next and since his death was so near, I am sure he thought about it. My point is, why did Paul use this particular language in verse 6, if he did not mean to say exactly what is said here? “***For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.***” The time for Paul to analyze his departure was at hand. Paul goes on in verse 7, “***I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.***”

Paul not only analyzed his departure in verse 7 and 8, he explained what is going to happen because he had kept the faith while he was fighting for the faith. He finished the course, therefore the reward that he will be receiving, amongst other rewards, was a crown of righteousness. He wanted Timothy to know these rewards were not just available to him, but also to others who would keep the course, and because of that, we should keep the course as well.

This Greek word “departure,” or “*anulusis*,” that Paul used here has several different meanings, but I will explain three in this chapter. First, the word was used in the shipping industry, to describe the hoisting of the anchor and loosening of the mooring ropes as the ship began its departure, sailing from one destination to another. What kept the ship from sailing were those ropes and that anchor, but once an anchor was hoisted and the ropes loosened there was no longer any hindrance. The ship was free now to set sail. In that context, Paul had been “anchored” just as we are anchored and tied down to this world. In death, the anchor and the ropes of this world are now loosed, and Paul is able to set sail for the greatest of all ports, Heaven itself. As for myself, I do not like sailing much because I get seasick. However, I guarantee you, when the time comes for me to go sailing to my next destination, when my anchor is hoisted, when my mooring ropes are loosed, I will not be experiencing seasickness any longer. In death, we will not be tied down or anchored to the world any longer. When we pass on, unless we go in the rapture and for many of those receiving this message that is a definite possibility, we will have to face this moment of the anchor hoisted and the mooring ropes loosened. We need not be afraid of this moment. In fact, it will be a weight lifted from us, because we no longer will be dragging the anchor of this world.

A second way in which this word is used describes military camps, especially the “breaking of the camp” when the mission is completed. “This world is not our home,” as that song goes, “I am only passing through.” That one song gets its message right. We are only passing through. We are just campers down here on a mission given to us by Christ. No one is excluded if called and chosen for His purposes. This world is just a temporary residence that comes with a mission. When sin entered into this world, everything became temporary. What God intended for this world, for Adam and Eve and their offspring to accomplish in this world, was interrupted and it has been interrupted for nearly 6,000 years. The time is approaching when that interruption will end, and if we make it to the Rapture, Glory to God, we will not experience the first death. This first death does not have to be scary if we understand what Scripture tells us about it. We can all die at any time, but we usually start thinking about this subject when we get older because we know our time is limited and coming to an end, so we start thinking more about this death experience. Fortunately, Scripture is full of information about how to approach the time of death, what to expect, and why it is not something to fear. Jesus has helped us through this lifetime, so the passage to the next will not be so difficult in comparison, I assure you.

To review, we have the word “departure” used to describe an anchor hoisted and the mooring ropes loosed; nothing holds us back any longer as we set sail on our journey. It also describes the breaking of camp as we leave this physical body to move on into the next eternal realm of the spirit world when we eventually receive a glorified body as recorded in the Gospels. For example, when the apostles saw Christ with Moses and Elijah on the Mt. of Transfiguration, they did not see a difference in their bodies. All three looked the same. In death, we may not have bodies exactly like Jesus, but we will have bodies like Moses and Elijah, there is no doubt about that, and that is good enough for me, because that body will not carry any pain with it.

Now the last definition for “departure” that I want to look at in this chapter is “*analisus*,” which means, “to be analyzed.” It describes the process of the unyoking of an animal from the burden of a cart or the plow, or from the millstone pulled to grind grain. In the same way, death will release Paul from the yoke and burden of labor and toil in this life, although, Paul did not consider his “labor and toil” a burden as he preached the message of grace and peace and instructed New Testament Christians in the Word of God. Nonetheless, death will release him from the labor and toil of life, or “*kakopattheo*,” the hardships and afflictions of life. We can see this in verse 5 of II Timothy when Paul writes, “***But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions. . .***” or “*kakopattheo*,” all hardships and sufferings. Paul is saying he would soon be released from that burden, not that preaching and teaching was a burden to Paul. To repeat, it was not a burden to him and it should not have been a burden. Preaching the Gospel of the Good News of Jesus Christ should never be a burden to anyone. However, the yoke that came with the preaching of the Gospel: the sufferings, the hardships, the afflictions, would be lifted. He would no longer have that yoke. He would be released from it, and from the experiences that came with bearing that yoke. It is in these verses, Paul is telling Timothy that the very near future would be his graduation day, the day when Paul would set sail. There would be nothing tying him down to this world any longer. Paul was going to break camp out of this world because his mission was completed. The yoke and the burden of labor and toil in this life, because of the hardships and afflictions that came with preaching the Good News of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which came with being a servant of God and of Christ, would no longer be present. He would be released from it as he entered into the next spiritual realm of his eternal life.

Paul’s graduation day was fast approaching as he wrote Timothy, and Paul nears the end of this letter in verse 7, “***I have fought a good fight.***” Literally, he is saying, “I have contended with the adversaries.” Paul did not fight against flesh and blood, because he knew the unseen spiritual realm of evil led by Satan controlled them. Paul fought, or contended with, the adversaries and put up a good fight. Paul continues verse 7 by writing, “***I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.***” Actually, Paul did not write, “my course.” Literally, in the Greek he wrote, “the course I have finished,” which implies that whoever reads this can also apply this verse to themselves, and say for themselves, “I have contended with the adversaries. I have put up a good fight. I have finished the course Christ set and chose for me.” This verse applies to everyone. Paul was not just referring to his own course. He was speaking of the course that Christ sets for everyone. “***I have kept the faith,***” literally says, “The faith I have kept” or “Not only did I finish the course, but the faith I have kept.” The word there for faith is “*pistis*.” Not only was Paul persuaded by the Word of God, he persuaded others, and this is why he fought against the adversaries. Satan knew how important Paul’s message would be in establishing the Church across Asia Minor and eventually out of Rome. That is why he said, “I have contended with the adversaries and put up a good fight. The course I have finished. The faith I have kept.” Do you know what the Syriac and Ethiopic Bibles read? In the Ethiopic it reads, “***I have been faithful to my trust as a good servant of the Mysteries of God.***” In the Syriac it reads, “***I have contended with the adversary. I have put up a***

good fight. The course I have finished. I have been faithful.”

There is not a single person who is not able to claim this for themselves, and this is especially true if our own departure is coming into view. You will want to stand someday before Jesus and say, “I have been faithful to my trust. This is the trust that I was given by Jesus Christ to accomplish.” This is part of the Great Commission, which is also our part as a good steward. He made us responsible for what He has given us. He made us stewards of the Mysteries of God. This is why Paul contended with the adversaries. This is why Paul put up a good fight. This is why he finished the course he had been given. Paul knew he was a steward of the Mysteries of God, just as you are, just as I am. We are all stewards of the Mysteries of God; no one is excluded from this. That is why the Scripture reads, “I have finished the course,” but this is a poor translation. A better translation would be, “The course I have finished.” Paul was telling Timothy, “I have finished the course whereon Jesus placed me, and you, Timothy, are on the same course, with the ***“kakopatheo”*** that comes along with it.”

The good news is when we come to the end of the course, we are loosened and set free from the bondage and sin of this world. We will set sail on our eternal journey on a new course. We will break camp from this world. We will no longer be yoked with the ***“kakopatheo”*** that comes along with preaching the Gospel of the Good News of Jesus Christ, even though we do it willingly and with joy.

There is a lot more to these verses than just what these English words convey. These verses are rich with information through the Greek language. Read verse 8, ***“Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.”*** Here, Paul is speaking of the day we leave this world and enter the next, waiting for the judgment seat of Christ to receive our rewards. Paul is saying, “My departure is at hand,” with all the analyzing, meanings, and definitions that go with that in order to be ready for the next course, the next journey. Paul is reminding Timothy what had been the focus of his own course, of being a good steward of the Mysteries of God. Knowing this, none of us have to fear death if we have been good stewards of the Mysteries of God, even if you are not a pastor or preacher. Christians do not have to be either of those to be a good steward of the Mysteries of God. A good steward of the Mysteries of God simply has a participating role in a ministry where that responsibility of the Great Commission is carried forward. It means being a willing servant supporting and participating in the ministry.

There are those who have told others about this ministry and they are now participating in this ministry. I received a wonderful note from a young man letting me know what this ministry has meant to him; telling me how the Word of God has rescued him. I did not rescue him, but the Word of God, as it should be preached to reach the minds and hearts rescued him. Then Christ can take over through His Word and start molding individuals for His purposes.

Finally, know there is nothing to fear about death if we have been faithful to the trust that Christ has placed in us, the trust to be a good steward of the Mysteries of God. Death is just a step. We simply close our eyes at death and wake up, still on a conscious level, but in a different spiritual realm until Christ fulfills all things. Death is nothing for us to fear if we are trusting in Jesus Christ. Yet I have known people who are terrorized by death. However, it is graduation day; it is nothing to fear. Know also, there is nothing wrong with analyzing your departure. Paul said to do it; that is what he told Timothy to do.

The day is coming when one way or the other, either through death or through the rapture, we are going to set sail. Nothing in this life will tie us down any longer. We will break camp. We will have no more of the yoke, or bondage of sin, no more of the *“kakopatheo”* to bring us down; it will all be lifted from us. We will sail throughout eternity from port to port. A wonderful time is coming, and we are living in the last days. The End is coming sooner than later, so no matter how we get there, do not be fearful. Be expecting, with a sense of joy and hope, that you will see your Maker, your Master, your Lord, Jesus Christ. I cannot wait for that day, but until then, I know He has me on a mission, and I know He has you on a mission also, which encompasses the Great Commission.

Say this every day from this day forward as I end this chapter:

“Lord, I want you to trust me to be a good steward of the Mysteries of God in all the ways I can support and declare it. Let me not fail. Let me keep on the course. Let me finish this, because I want to come to you one day and see you face to face and throughout Eternity, knowing that you will complete me and nothing will be left unfulfilled.”

That is our promise. We can claim that today. Stay on the course and be faithful. Let us be good stewards of Jesus Christ.

Remember, faith pleases God.

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