

The Substance of Faith

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

There is nothing in the world like the Bible. When heaven and earth pass away, the Word of God will remain forever (Matthew 24:35).

Why do marriages, families, and friendships have difficulties? It is because they do not know, understand, receive, or appropriate the words of this Book. They may have a faith that is very religious, a faith that is very sincere. Sincerity, however, does not define a person's character. Sincerity relates to a person's disposition. Unfortunately, people can make a profession of faith and truly be born again but ignore the principles of 2 Timothy 3:16: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness."

In this pilgrim journey, led by the Word of God, we will face steep inclines, sharp curves, and dangerous precipices. But the Bible provides an answer for every sharp curve, steep in-

cline, and danger we will encounter living as God's children in Satan's world.

I hope that by reading this booklet your spirit will be quickened to hear from God and to abide in the substance of faith. Let the living Word of God produce in you a living faith that will give you a living expectation and absolute liberation in Christ.

Chapter One

THE IMMUTABLE WORD OF GOD

The Bible has three tremendous qualities: excellence, relevance, and permanence.

Its excellence is revealed by the hundreds of specific prophecies about the life of Christ, beginning in the book of Genesis, that were precisely fulfilled.*

Also, the Bible is relevant. No matter what man needs, whether he is fearful or failing, lonely or sick, if he will go to the Word of God, he will find precisely what he needs.

Next, the Word of God is permanent. "Thy word is [forever] settled in heaven" (Psalm 119:89). When heaven and earth pass away, the Word of God abides forever.

The Word of God is indisputable. The Word of God is ethical, in that it has virtue in its moral meaning. The Word of God is historically correct. You cannot mention a single thing in the Word of God and find it to be incorrect histori-

cally. In spite of all the doubts of men, the Bible has been used throughout history as an accurate account of events that have taken place throughout time. I love the following poem:

This Book I would rather own
than all the golden gems
From off the monarch's coffers shown
and all his diadems.
Yea, if the sea were of crystal light
and the earth a golden ball,
And diamonds for the stars each night,
This Book is worth them all.

For Doctrine, Reproof, Correction, Instruction

“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16).

“All” means “in its entirety.” That it came “by inspiration” says that the words of the Bible came to us through men inspired by God’s divine absolute dogmatic authority. The fact that it is “profitable” means it is useful, offering the reader a great advantage. Therefore, the entire Bible is profitable, instructing us in how to think with the mind of Christ in every situation.

“Doctrine” represents the highway of truth in every detail of life. The Bible is also good for “reproof,” which speaks of God’s red lights. In the Bible, when we see or hear warnings or commandments not to do certain things, they mean, “Stop, do not go through the red light.” “Correction” means that if we have gone through one of the red lights, we may turn around and get back on the right road again.

Then the Word of God gives us “instruction in righteousness.” That simply means it gives us God’s divine viewpoint as it orders our steps in a precise way. Every man or woman of God may be thoroughly furnished and equipped unto every good work just by being a faithful steward of God’s Word.

Unparalleled, the Bible is a remarkable and unusual Book.

The Old Testament prepares us for what the New Testament unfolds: Emmanuel, God with us (Matthew 1:23). The book of Acts reveals the propagation of the Gospel, taking the Word into Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the uttermost parts of the world.

The epistles are an explanation of the Living Word and how a believer can appropriate it. The book of Revelation gives us the culmination. It

tells how everything in life will end in personal victory for God's people who will pay the price of taking up His Cross until it becomes their own.

Be Ready to Hear

"For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it" (Hebrews 4:2).

"(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;)

"Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;

"And having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled" (2 Corinthians 10:4-6).

"By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name" (Romans 1:5).

"Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your soul" (James 1:21).

The word “receive” in James 1:21 is the Greek word *dechomai*, which means being available to hear the Word of God with deliberation, purpose, and obedience, redeeming the time. That is why a Christian ought to attend church services three times a week—not because the preacher said so, but because the Bible says that our attendance is recorded in a book of remembrance (Malachi 3:16; Hebrews 10:25).

Dechomai means that we should receive the Word of God in such a way that it forms in us an attitude of integrity toward the Promises, a confession of faith against the atmosphere, and honesty in our behavior. It means to lay aside all superfluity of naughtiness and receive the Word of God with meekness (which is God-consciousness without distractions, James 1:21), unlike the people Jesus referred to in Matthew 13:13. Hearing, they did not hear; seeing, they did not see. A person who receives the Word of God without distractions, in the soil of meekness hears properly and receives the substance of faith.

*For a comprehensive study of the faithful testimony of God’s Word, read the following booklets by Pastor Carl H. Stevens: *Fulfilled Prophecies from the Bible*, (Grace Publications, 2000), *This Book* (Grace Publications, 2000), and *The Price of the Gospel* (Grace Publications, 1996).

Chapter Two

OBEDIENCE THAT PRODUCES AN EVERLASTING CONSEQUENCE

“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1).

Everything in our lives now and in eternity depends on how we hear the Word of God, how often we hear it, and what we do with it after we hear it. Hebrews 4:2 tells us to mix faith with what we hear so that we will have faith rest. But there is something else that is so crucial: Faith, the substance of things hoped for.

“Substance” in the Greek is *hupostasis*. *Hupo* means “under” and *stasis* means to have absolute truth as a stand. “Substance,” then, is where I stand, under the absolute truth. By faith, I stand in the Lord in the power of His might (Ephesians 6:10). I also stand against the wiles of

Satan (Ephesians 6:11).

Now if faith is the substance of things hoped for, that means in every circumstance that comes my way—whether it be failure, temptation, heartache, or success—then faith remains my substance. I am standing in an absolute truth in the grace of God (Romans 5:2). But it does not stop with substance.

The Evidence of Faith Obedience

So much that we call faith is not substantial. The Word of God says it is the evidence of things not yet seen. “Evidence” means absolute proof of an absolute faith without an absolute present solution. It means that a person is not double-minded (James 1:8), and he does not have a divided heart (Hosea 10:2).

Let me illustrate to you what faith is. I received a call this week from a pastor in Europe. Once again, I saw what kind of a man of God he is when he said, “Pastor, I am very serious about this. I am willing to come home and just stay and work at home base if that is God’s will. I’ll be there in an instant.”

I became very broken, because this man has a tremendous ministry in Europe and he is certainly needed there. But he said, “If I were to

come home, I would do anything that needs to be done. When I'm there, I see the tremendous need you have for co-laborers, for people just to help you. One word from you, and I am on that plane."

That is called faith obedience. As he spoke, tears were running down my eyes because of his heart.

Our obedience to faith releases all that God is and reveals what God has done in us. Faith obedience releases the energy of God's love, the character of God's grace, the mercy of God's lovingkindness, and the compassion of God's plan into the person who is God's child.

The Doctrine of Reciprocity

Reciprocity, in our relationship with God, simply means hearing from God and then responding to Him. A believer who practices reciprocity is someone who has integrity in the soil of his heart. He has an honest heart, and when he hears the Word of God, it is the most sacred thing in the world.

The Word of the living God produces an everlasting consequence in every believer: To think about it is to love it; to talk about it is to desire it. To reveal the Word is the greatest reve-

lation in our lives, as the apostle Paul said in Galatians 1:16. The more we receive it, the more we are conformed to Christ's image.

Obedience Releases Faith

I want you to see what faith obedience does. A woman was going to get a divorce five years ago, but when she prayed, God told her not to get the divorce. She began to treat her immoral husband extremely well. She was quiet and did not share her problems with others. One day, he had a very serious accident. And, who do you think was the first one he called? He called someone who had wept in front of him three times in the past two months—someone who told him that she loved him, without one single indictment. Today, they are completely reconciled.

What happened? She entered into Galatians 3:2, receiving the Spirit by hearing properly. She received a spirit of faith. Not just faith, but the spirit of faith. This is not wishful thinking or religion. She expressed what she believes with all of her heart. Her faith was not in a man but in God.

In another case, a five-year-old boy saw his daddy lay unconscious for several weeks, due to

a serious illness. He kept saying to his daddy, "Daddy, don't die. Daddy, don't die."

Supernaturally, the father returned to consciousness three months later. He says that over and over again, he heard these words in his unconscious state: "Daddy, don't die, Daddy don't die."

On the other hand, a thirteen-year-old girl with leukemia did not get healed, yet she was a most incredible young lady in terms of contentment. She showed us the substance and evidence of her faith during her short life. The substance of her faith was contentment, and the evidence was perfect peace when God took her to heaven at the age of thirteen.

Hearing with Meekness

One of the greatest secrets of experiencing Jesus Christ is to hear in meekness and to mix faith with what you hear. It produces a faith that obeys God by grace through love in the intimacy of knowing who God is. To know God is to love Him. To love God is to think with Christ. To think with Christ is to speak His words. And to speak His words is to show His character.

Some people are motivated by self. If we are motivated by self-interest, self-absorption, or

self-deception, we will withdraw when things do not go well. We will cry easily. We won't want to be with the people who love us, and we will start acting strange because we don't have a faith that serves by love.

Obedient faith serves everyone by God's love (Galatians 5:6), a love that does not fail (1 Corinthians 13:8a). The Bible says that no one can please God without faith. And when you come to God, you must believe that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him (Hebrews 11:6).

Chapter Threë

THE COVERING OF GOD'S FAITH

"For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect?" (Romans 3:3).

"Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ..." (Galatians 2:16a).

"I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Galatians 2:20).

Consider what it means to have the covering of God's faith.

For thirteen years, Abraham was out of fellowship with God. Still, it was the faith of God the Father, the faith of God the Son, and the work of the Holy Spirit that kept him alive. On his own, Abraham didn't have any faith.

In Genesis 17:1 God said, "Abraham, walk

before me.” He went through the situation of sinning with Hagar (influenced by his wife, Sarah), which resulted in the birth of a wild man. But at last, the faith of God the Father and the faith of Jesus Christ was imparted to him, and it became Abraham’s faith. Now, he is called the father of our faith (Romans 4:11-16). But during the thirteen years when he withdrew from God, Abraham was covered by God’s faith.

God forbid that we fail. But most Christians do not know the Finished Work absolutes of God’s faith as it applies to their failure. God wants us to receive something very fresh out of this principle:

The faith of God and the faith of Christ in His perfect plan in the Finished Work covers us until we can be restored by our own faith in Him. God’s covering is explained by Proverbs 17:9: Those who cover transgressions seek love; but those who repeat a matter separate even friends.

Accountability to God

Jacob was covered for twenty years by the faith of God and the faith of Christ. In Genesis 28:16, God initiated to Jacob who responded, “God was in this place, and I did not know it.”

Later, in Genesis 32, Jacob was traveling between Peniel and Bethel when he had an all-night wrestling match with the Lord. Jacob was left with a limp to remind him that though he had prevailed, God won.

If we refuse to be accountable to God, then we will experience a life without substantial faith that overcomes. But when we come to the end of ourselves, as the prodigal did in Luke 15:17, faith comes inside, and we can say, "I am going back home to God." We begin to experience faith in love, and we desire to serve the One who truly loves us.

Moses spent forty years backslidden in the desert until his encounter with the presence of God in the burning bush, in Exodus 3:1-3. For Peter, it was only a few weeks before he was restored, after returning to his job as a fisherman. Though he had no faith in the Cross or in the blood of Christ, all the time that Peter was backslidden, the faith of the Father and the faith of the Son covered him.

When Thomas did not have faith, Jesus said, "That's all right, I'll let you walk by sight." So Jesus came to him and said, "Here I am, Thomas. You missed Me last Sunday. Go ahead now and put your hands in the nail prints and in my

side" (see John 20:27). By sight, Thomas received faith through the faith of God and the faith of Christ.

Motivated by Resting in His Love

God is resting in the work of His Son and not in our works. This is why Zephaniah 3:17 makes it crystal clear that He rests in His own love and rejoices over us with singing.

Many people are motivated by guilt. Sometimes it is bona fide guilt and sometimes it is not. Other people are motivated by shame. Some are motivated by jealousy, by sight, and by envy. More are motivated by bitterness, and some are motivated by pride.

But thank God for the Christians who are motivated by the love of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:14).

Jesus said, "I call My own by name, and I go before them and they follow Me." We follow Him into all the world to bring the Gospel of faith and the gospel of forgiveness.

"And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation;

"To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their tres-

passes unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.

“Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God” (2 Corinthians 5:18-20).

Verse 18 tells us to have a ministry of reconciliation. Verse 19 refers to words of reconciliation. Verse 20 commands us to be reconciled to God.

Instead of withdrawing when we feel hurt, we ought to minister to others with the reconciliation of the love of the Cross (see Colossians 1:20). Now our faith is living because the soil of our soul is filled with God-consciousness, and that is meekness. With an honest heart, we begin to speak words of faith.

Chapter Four

FINISHED WORK FAITH

After creating the universe, God rested on the seventh day (Genesis 2:2). Once a day for six days, Israel marched around the walls of Jericho. On the seventh day, they marched around the wall seven times (Joshua 6:15-16). In 2 Kings 4:32-36, Elisha was in a place where a child died. When he put his lips on the child's lips, his hands on the child's hands, his body on the child's body, the child sneezed seven times and opened his eyes. In 2 Kings 5:14, Naaman, who had leprosy, was told to go down to the dirty Jordan River and to go into the river seven times.

Seven is God's number for resting in everything He says and does. Finished Work faith brought down the walls of Jericho so that Jericho was defeated by God's people. The Finished Work faith of Elisha raised up the dead child. Finished Work faith also healed Naaman. In each situation, someone responded in faith.

There is a rest for the people of God. And as we rest, He wants us to enter into a living faith that rests in everything. If we have God's faith, then we can rest in His love.

Made Whole by Faith

"My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment.

"Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little.

"And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven."

"And they that sat at meat with him began to say within themselves, Who is this that forgiveth sins also?

"And he said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace" (Luke 7:46-50).

In Luke 7, Jesus addressed a prostitute. At the end of their encounter, He said to this prostitute who was now saved, "By the way, I want to speak something inside your heart. Your faith has made you whole." By speaking words of life, He spoke faith into her soul.

The woman who had the issue of blood (Luke 8) touched Jesus, and virtue went out of

Him. Jesus looked at her and she was very afraid because she was not supposed to be out around people. Because of her blood disease, she was divorced from her husband, excommunicated from the religious community, and ostracized by her neighbors. But when she heard that this man named Jesus was coming near, she went out anyway and touched the hem of His garment.

Jesus said to her, "I want to speak something into you. Your faith has healed you and saved you." Her faith came from His word; it saved her and healed her. He spoke healing into her soul, but He did more than that. He spoke healing into her physical body. He did that also for blind Bartimaeus (Mark 10:51-52) when He stood still and He said, "Your faith has made you whole."

Speaking Faith to Others

Jesus spoke the character of a living faith into the souls and bodies of people, and that is not understood today. Most people do not understand that instead of gossiping about somebody who is failing, we are to cover them with faith motivated by love and not relative righteousness. We should not say a word about them.

We cover them and go to them alone in meekness (Matthew 18:15).

It is so crucial that Christians enter into a living, precious, sacred faith in the power of the Holy Spirit and in the power of God's energy. This faith is activated by obedience; it is activated by confession. This is why Paul said (2 Corinthians 4:13), "I believed, and therefore have I spoken." We believe and therefore we are going to speak.

This is what a person does in witnessing, because faith goes into all the world when believers are obedient (Romans 16:26, Romans 1:5). That is why we have worked in nearly 200 countries. The gates of hell cannot prevail against a work of God. God is on the side of grace and love and obedience to His Great Commission.

"Greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world" (1 John 4:4). "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith" (1 John 5:4).

A lady in my earlier ministry was eighty-eight years old, and she had every problem that you could think of—arthritis throughout her body, a heart disease, and then cancer. She was a very faithful, loving, precious woman of God. Her skin was wrinkled, and her hands trembled

every time I saw her. And yet, every day she imparted faith to me through the things she said. She spoke faith into my soul, and that has affected my life to this day.

Her testimony, often communicated in tears, was this: "How God has ever treated me by grace for eighty-eight years, I will never know. He is the most amazing, the most beautiful God. I just can't wait to go home to be with Him, in His time."

She said, "For eighty-eight years He had a plan for my life, and right now, this is the plan. I thank God for your ministry and for every single person who has been so gracious to me."

The reality of it all was that she had been gracious to all of us. That woman's faith had substance. That is our desire. We need to have a faith that lives without wishful thinking, without presumption, and without a religious subjective attitude. It is time we realize that faith has energy. As we grow in our meditation with Jesus Christ, reflecting His life, thinking with His thoughts, and communicating His heart, we will experience the substance of His faith.

CONCLUSION

Scientists tell us that we encounter billions of natural vibrations per second. We can taste, hear, and think because of these vibrations that pass through the central nervous system.

Either God or Satan can invade these vibrations, and when we are filled with faith, miracles happen. Paul, in Acts 14:9-10, saw faith energized in a crippled man when the apostle said to him, "Though you haven't walked since you were a baby, Get up! I see faith in you." Paul saw the energy that was available to heal this man.

When the woman touched the hem of Jesus' garment, He said, "Virtue went out of Me." He was speaking of the energy of faith.

When our faith rests in God's Word and God's faith through right hearing, commitment, and obedience, we have the substance of faith.