

A photograph of a beach at sunset. The sun is low on the horizon, casting a warm orange glow across the sky and reflecting on the wet sand. Waves are breaking in the distance. In the foreground, a series of footprints leads from the bottom of the frame towards the water. The title 'Finding God in the Impossible' is overlaid in white text.

Finding God in the Impossible

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Introduction

An impossible situation is one in which you do not have what you need -- AND -- you have no way of getting it. There is nothing you can do to help yourself. There is no outside resource upon which you can call. Except for God. But that is why God will either allow, or lead us, into an impossible situation. He is using it to show us the Truth about ourselves – but more importantly – the Truth about His faithfulness in Jesus Christ.

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Chapter 1

The Purpose of God

An impossible situation is one in which you do not have what you need -- AND -- you have no way of getting it. There is nothing you can do to help yourself. There is no outside resource upon which you can call. That means that an impossible situation is a hopeless situation.

Now, that sounds terrible. And it would be terrible if we were left to fend for ourselves in an impossible situation. But that is never the case for a person who belongs to Jesus Christ.

You will note that I did NOT say that a person who belongs to Christ would never face an impossible situation. No. I said they would never be left to fend for themselves WITHIN an impossible situation. Indeed, if a believer wants to follow Jesus Christ, it is a guarantee that they will eventually find themselves in an impossible situation. God Himself will see to it. It is just a matter of time. This is necessary if God is to have His purpose in His people.

But what IS the purpose of God? We would be getting ahead of ourselves unless we paused to establish a foundation by answering that question. We cannot understand much about the necessity of an impossible situation in our lives unless we grasp the purpose that God intends to accomplish through it.

Ultimately, God has ONE purpose. Paul stated that purpose in Galatians 4:19:

***My little children, of whom I travail in birth
again until Christ be formed in you. (Gal.
4:19)***

The word, "formed," in this verse, from the NT Greek, means, "to inwardly realize or express." The purpose of God in His people for this age is that believers be brought into an inward realization of Jesus Christ. It is upon the revelation of Christ in the believer that all else is built. He is The Rock.

Paul also said, "Christ in you, the hope of glory." (Col. 1:27) A Christian is one in whom Christ dwells – a Christian is, "a Christ-one." This is perhaps the best definition of a Christian – the best definition in one sentence -- of Christianity that we find in the Bible. Christianity is, "Christ IN you."

It is upon the reality of CHRIST IN US that the entire purpose of God is built. If Christ dwells in a person, then that person is obviously saved. But salvation is only the beginning of God's purpose. God has saved people unto eternal purposes – purposes that God begins in the here and now – purposes that are worked out in trials of faith and impossible situations.

Another way to state this purpose is this: Christ already dwells in each believer. But God wants to bring those in whom Christ dwells into a discovery of Christ. In other words, He wants us to KNOW Him. In Galatians 4:19, Paul describes it as God bringing us into an inward realization of Christ.

The purpose of God in His people for this age is that we might come into an inward realization of

Jesus Christ, and in doing so, might manifest Christ and become His witnesses – for the sake of others – and become those who glorify Him as Lord of all.

This is obviously only a summary of God's purpose. But as we are going to see, for God to accomplish this purpose it often requires an impossible situation. If we want to find God, indeed, know Jesus Christ, we will most often have to do it IN an impossible situation.

Chapter 2

The Work of the Cross

Usually when we think about the impossible we think about circumstances or dilemmas for which we can find no solution. A believer of Jesus Christ is going to encounter many of these kinds of situations. But despite the very real external problems of life, there is an even greater impossible situation with which we must deal: Our inward faith life.

Unbelievers are not concerned about faith in God. They are not concerned about being brought into an inward realization of Christ. Rather, they are mostly concerned about the outward – because unbelievers are earthly minded. But for believers, this should not be the case. When we encounter trials in life, the outward is certainly something with which we must deal. But because Christ is our life, our priority must not be to merely find a solution to the outward. We need to FIND GOD HIMSELF in the impossible – we need to allow God to bring us into the fullness of Christ.

Now this brings us face to face with a big problem, indeed, it brings us face to face with the most impossible situation of all: US. Our earthly nature. Our earthly nature is utterly contrary to God. And even though Christ dwells within us, we continue to carry along this impossible earthly nature.

United With Christ

When we were saved, Jesus Christ united us with Himself through the spirit of God. This spiritual union with Christ – “Christ in us” – is HOW Christ

comes to dwell within us – we are made one with Him in spirit:

He that is joined to the Lord and is made one spirit with Him. (I Cor. 6:17)

But you will note that we are NOT joined to the Lord physically. Neither is our natural man – or as the Greek sometimes calls it, “our soul man” – joined to Him. No. We are joined to Christ only in spirit – but the body and soul remain OUTSIDE of this spiritual union. Thus, when we are joined to the Lord in spirit, there is a separation created in each believer between what is joined to the Lord – in spirit – and what is NOT joined to Him – the natural. This is the separation of soul and spirit – and the flesh continually wars against the spirit of God.

Herein we see the Christian journey – and what God must accomplish to bring us into the fullness of Christ. Each one of us BEGINS thoroughly governed by the earthly nature. God wants to bring us to where we are governed by Jesus Christ within us. Can we see that this is an IMPOSSIBLE situation? And yet through Christ is not only possible, but certain, if we will give ourselves to Him by faith.

The Personal Cross

The way in which God sets us free from the governing control of the old nature is NEVER by fixing or repairing that old nature. No. Rather, the old nature must come under the work of the Cross – and as He does we must become governed by Christ within.

The key passage on this matter is found in Matthew 16:

Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. (Matt. 16:24-25)

If we want to FIND true life in Christ – which is to say – if we want to FIND Jesus Christ as our life (Col. 3:4) – then we must LOSE our lives to Him. This is FREEDOM. It is what it means for God to lead us into all Truth. It is essential if God is to have His purpose in us.

How do we LOSE our lives to Christ? We can begin by simply asking God, “to do whatever it takes,” to set us free from the old nature and to bring us into the fullness of Jesus Christ. Then, as God does do whatever it takes, we pick up that cross and follow Him. This will mean death to the control of the old earthly nature. But it will mean a greater release of the life of Christ within. We will grow to experience and KNOW HIM to a greater degree.

Can we see that this is what it means to FIND GOD in the impossible? That in the midst of a great trial of faith, that if we will give ourselves to God unconditionally, that we will FIND true life in Christ? That we will come into a greater realization of Him?

The impossible situation – the trial of our faith – is any situation in which we are given the opportunity to lose ourselves to Jesus Christ. If

we do this BY FAITH, there will come a greater realization of Jesus Christ, and because of that, a greater freedom from the control of the earthly nature. The control of the earthly nature will give way to the Lordship of Jesus Christ because this is exactly what the redemption made possible – and which God wants to work out through trials of faith.

Jesus Christ IS the solution for the impossible – the solution for the impossibilities of our own nature. If we FIND HIM through the impossible we will have realized God's purpose.

Jesus is Our Way of Escape

As stated, in this age the purpose of God is to bring His people into an inward realization of Jesus Christ. God wants to reveal IN US His Son – for it is that inward revelation of Jesus Christ that is the Rock and foundation upon which everything else God wants to do must be built – not only for now, but for the eternal ages.

But you will note that if we are to find God IN the impossible situation, we are actually going to have to be IN the impossible. Sure. If every time we encountered trouble God gave us an, "escape route," we would never grow to know Christ. We would never have occasion to LOSE our lives so that we could FIND CHRIST. Therefore, it is often the definite will of God that you and I are IN an impossible situation – with no way OUT of it whatsoever.

No way out -- that is -- except through the knowledge of Jesus Christ. God may not change our circumstances, but God does want us to

escape the control of those circumstances, and the control of our earthly nature – even if we remain IN those circumstances. In short, God wants to bring us into a knowledge of Jesus Christ that will enable us to bear and abide IN the impossible situation, even though the circumstances may not change.

If we lose ourselves completely under the work of the Cross to Jesus Christ – even while in an impossible situation – we will find HIM. That may not change our circumstances or deliver us out of them. But it will deliver the circumstances out of US -- to be found in Christ will raise me ABOVE the circumstances so that IN HIM I will have victory over them – even if I am still in them.

There is a passage in the Bible to which many of us like to refer when we find ourselves in a trial. For many, this passage seems to suggest that if we are in a trial of faith, that God has provided a secret way of escape. Many grow frustrated crying out for that way of escape, or because they are trying to figure it out. But a closer look at the passage sheds another light upon this issue:

There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it. (I Cor. 10:13)

Note the final sentence in this passage: The way of escape is so that we might be able to BEAR the trial. Does that sound like God is promising a way OUT of the trial? No. He is promising a

revelation of Christ that will enable us – beyond our own strength – to be able to endure the trial unto God's purpose. In short, Jesus Christ is THE way of escape.

Is this not VICTORY in Jesus Christ? Is it not victory in Jesus Christ for a believer to face contradiction to faith and the lies of the enemy, and yet to stand firm in faith? – while still IN the trial? Absolutely.

God desires to bring us to the END of ourselves – so that we might LOSE ourselves to Jesus Christ. It is the only way in which we can truly FIND God; find Jesus Christ as our life. This is God's purpose in His people: That we might know Jesus Christ and live from out of Him. God will use the impossible situation to accomplish this purpose in His people.

Chapter 3 Into the Impossible

There are many Truths of God illustrated in the OT in type and shadow. Of course, these agree completely with what is directly taught in the New Testament. Such is the case regarding God's purpose of revealing Christ in the believer. The working out of this purpose was wonderfully illustrated in type and shadow when God led Israel into an impossible situation at the Red Sea.

But in order to clearly understand what is going on in that impossible situation at the Red Sea, let's begin a few days earlier. Let's read God's instructions to Israel as to how He would deliver them from Egypt through the blood of the Passover Lamb.

God had commanded Israel to kill a lamb for each household, and to smear the blood on the doorposts of their dwelling places. They were then to enter into those houses that night – by faith in the blood of the lamb -- as death passed over them.

The blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt. (Ex. 12:13)

And it came to pass, that at midnight the LORD smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sat on his throne unto the firstborn of the captive that was in the dungeon; and all the firstborn of cattle. (see Ex. 12:29-33)

Note that on that first Passover night, death came to every house in Egypt. It came not only to the houses of the Egyptians, but also to the houses of the Israelites. The firstborn of every family in Egypt died.

You will also note that the firstborn of Israel were also subject to death that night. Death made no distinction between Egyptian and Israelite. But God had given Israel instructions as to how to escape this plague of death. He told them they must come under the blood of the Lamb.

Faith in God – faith that the Blood, and the Blood alone, would save Israel – the Blood of the Lamb was their deliverance. They came under the Blood of the Lamb – they died in the Lamb – that Passover night. They were delivered from Egypt through death. Pharaoh finally let them go.

Herein we see, pictured in these events, the great Truth that, “in Adam all die.” (I Cor. 15:22) But among those in Adam who, by faith, come under the blood of the Lamb of God, there is deliverance – not from death – but from OUT of death. The Lamb of God is the substitute for those who come under His blood. He dies in their stead – but so that they might die in Him and then be raised to newness of life.

The fact that we must die in Christ – be united with Him in His death is shown in the fact that the Israelites were to EAT the Passover Lamb. They were to, “let nothing of it remain until the morning.” (Ex. 12:10) This pictures the necessity that we must INTERNALIZE all that Jesus is in His death. Or, to put it another way,

our faith in Him as our substitute must lead us to become one with Him in His death. Only then can we be raised in Him.

This is a Truth that is not only pictured in type and shadow in the Old Testament, but that is taught directly all through the New Testament. Jesus Christ did die FOR us as our substitute, but He did so to make it possible for us to DIE IN HIM.

Paul emphasized this continually:

Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin. (Rom. 6:3-7)

If we are saved, we are joined to the Lord and made ONE SPIRIT with Him. (I Cor. 6:17) This is the means by which Christ dwells IN US, and it is the means by which we are baptized INTO Him – made one with Him in His death and resurrection. Thus, Jesus Christ did indeed die FOR us. But He died for us so that, by faith, we can take our place in His Cross and die IN HIM; be, “crucified WITH Christ.” (Gal. 2:20)

Can we see that if we die in Christ that we have died to sin? That this is the only means by which we can be truly free:? "He that has died is freed from sin." To be baptized, i.e., made one with Christ in His death, is our deliverance from, "our Egypt." Death is the only means of deliverance from the old man in Adam – unto a resurrection as a new creation.

Freedom

God had finally delivered Israel from Egypt. It was almost like a dream. Their deliverance had not come easy. It had been necessary for God to bring plague after plague upon Egypt. But now they were finally free. They were on their way to the Promised Land.

The route that Israel took from out of Egypt to the Promised Land was not haphazard. Neither was it one that THEY had determined. Rather, God Himself gave Israel specific instructions as to their first step on this journey:

***And the LORD spoke unto Moses, saying,
"Speak to the children of Israel, that they
turn and encamp before Pihahiroth, between
Migdol and the sea, over against
Baalzephon: before it shall ye encamp by the
sea. For Pharaoh will say of the children of
Israel, 'They are entangled in the land, the
wilderness hath shut them in.' And I will
harden Pharaoh's heart, that he shall follow
after them; and I will be honored upon
Pharaoh, and upon all his host; that the
Egyptians may know that I am the LORD.
And they did so. (Exodus 14:1-4)***

Israel did EXACTLY what God told them to do: They encamped by the Red Sea at the precise location He commanded. And Pharaoh did EXACTLY what God said he would do: He pursued Israel.

And it was told the king of Egypt that the people fled...he made ready his chariot, and took his people with him...and he pursued after the children of Israel...and when Pharaoh drew nigh, the children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and, behold, the Egyptians marched after them; and they were sore afraid: and the children of Israel cried out unto the LORD. (Ex. 14:5-10)

Israel had been rejoicing in their new freedom. They had obeyed God in every detail. But when these events unfolded, Israel found themselves – not free and clear as they expected – but they found themselves in great danger. Indeed, they found themselves trapped in what we could call, “an impossible situation.” They had no way out. They were hemmed in on all sides -- and Pharaoh was bearing down on them.

Now ask: How did Israel get into this impossible situation? Well, they got into it by OBEYING GOD! Do you see that? God had told them what to do and they obeyed Him. Yet it resulted in an impossible situation -- one that God Himself had predicted. Indeed, it was an impossible situation that God Himself had orchestrated.

In this should be great hope. It shows us that if we are in a terrible trial -- an impossible trial -- that we may be there only because we OBEYED God. The entire trial, rather than the result of

missing the will of God, may actually BE the will of God. We are right where God wants us!

Not As Expected

Israel found themselves in an impossible situation. It exacted trauma and suffering from them. This was not what they expected to experience in their newly found freedom. Indeed, all of the saints of the Bible, in both the OT and NT – even if they were in will of God – suffered. Some were even killed. Why? Why does He allow His people – even those who are trusting Him and obeying Him – to encounter trials and suffering?

Many Christian people stumble over this issue. Many live under the same delusion as did Job. Job was a good and upright man – God Himself said so – but Job believed that if you obeyed God it would result in blessings, and if you disobeyed Him, it would result in curses. Then despite Job's OBEDIENCE, all manner of curses came upon him. This plunged Job into a great trial of his faith. The same happens to God's people all the time.

But why would God allow sufferings and trials in the life of someone who is believing and obeying Him? Because Jesus Christ is infinite. Therefore, regardless of our faithfulness to God, there is always more to God than our present experience of Him. Trials are therefore God's method of bringing us on into the fullness of His Son.

It is also important to point out the obvious: That we are all capable of getting OURSELVES into problems and trials. But even if we are to blame, or partly to blame, for our impossible situation, we can nevertheless surrender

ourselves to God in that trial. Regardless of HOW or WHY we got into our situation, the goal of God through it is still the same: The fullness of Christ.

God has never told us to surrender to a trial or to a situation. Rather, He has told us to surrender to HIM. We are to lose our lives to HIM so that we may find HIM. As it says in Hebrews, "Keeping our eyes upon Jesus...."

Chapter 4

The Separation of Soul from Spirit

We have seen that the purpose of God in any trial or impossible situation is to set us free from the earthly nature into the freedom of knowing Him through His Son. Jesus described it as LOSING our life so that we might FIND Him as our life. This is not salvation all over again. Rather, it is the working out of all that is within salvation in Christ.

This Truth is illustrated through the experience of Israel at the Red Sea. But let's leave Israel at the Red Sea and pause for a moment. For in order to truly grasp the Truth of God's purpose, we must have an understanding of the nature of things – we need to understand the makeup of a saved person. Only then will the way in which God works His purpose make sense. More specifically, we need to understand what is called, "the separation of soul from spirit," in each believer.

Joined to the Lord

When we are saved, we are joined to the Lord and become one spirit with Him. (I Cor. 6:17), This spiritual union begins the restoration of what God originally intended between Himself and humanity. But note: Despite being, "joined to the Lord and made one spirit with Him" we are NOT made one body or one soul with Him. Indeed, our body and soul remain earthly as to nature. Indeed, they are contrary to Jesus Christ. Therein is the conflict and the warfare.

If we could draw a circle around our spiritual union with Christ, all that is within that circle would be of God through Christ – i.e., the new creation, the new man, the inner man. All that is within that circle would be eternal – it is the seat of salvation. But all that is outside of that union; outside of that circle – our body and soul – these would remain natural and earthly.

You will note that the soul and body are NOT eradicated. They are not gone. Rather, they remain just as before. What has changed is that at salvation we are joined to the Lord in spirit. And from that point, it is God's will – indeed, it is His purpose – that we be progressively set free from the natural and come to be governed by Jesus Christ through His Spirit.

The way in which believers come to live in victory from out of Christ, over and against the earthly, is through the work of the Cross. It is the losing of our lives to Jesus Christ. We have to unconditionally relinquish our life to Him – or to put it more directly – we must ask Him to do whatever it takes to bring us into His fullness. Only then will the earthly be brought into experiential contact with the Cross and the power of the earthly be broken. This will, in turn, result in a greater release of the life of Christ with Whom we are joined in spirit.

Now, what this really means, as it pertains to the separation between soul and spirit, is that our union with Christ must come to govern us rather than our body and soul. The soul and body are not dead. Rather, through Christ we are dead to the soul and body – in the sense of those having no power over us. But this is only potential until

through the work of the Cross God brings us into the Truth of it.

This is not something WE can do through human effort. God must do it – and we must yield to Him. The most common tool that God uses is the trial of faith; the impossible situation.

If you examine what is going on in any trial of faith it comes down to relinquishing myself to God. It comes down to abandoning myself to Him. I ask Him to do whatever it takes to have His way with me. I lose my self-ownership to Him. And then when He does do whatever it takes, I pick up that Cross and follow Him.

God wants to bring His people into an inward realization of His Son so that we might no longer walk according to the flesh; no longer be controlled by body and soul – but rather, walk with Christ in Truth to His glory. This is much of what He seeks to accomplish in the impossible situation.

Treasure in Earthen Vessels

In II Corinthians 4, Paul gives a wonderful description of how God works to set us free from the old nature so that we can walk in the freedom of Jesus Christ. He begins with exactly the same Truth that we have seen is the definition of Christianity: Christ in us. But he uses a picture to describe it. He says, "We have this treasure in earthen vessels."

He writes:

***But we have this treasure in earthen vessels,
that the excellency of the power may be of***

God, and not of us. We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. (II Cor. 4:7-11)

Jesus Christ is The Treasure. We are the earthen vessels. Christ dwells IN US. But notice: The Treasure, even while remaining IN the earthen vessel remains distinct. The Treasure never becomes the earthen vessel and the earthen vessel never becomes The Treasure. This is a fact despite the fact that we are joined to Him in spirit.

Now, what this means – and this passage proves it – is that a Christian is not a person who is supposed to grow, “to look like Jesus.” No. We are never to become little Xerox copies of Jesus Christ. Again – the earthen vessel never becomes a little treasure – not even one that, “looks like,” the big Treasure, Jesus Christ. No. Rather, the earthen vessel is to be broken – through the work of the Cross – so that Jesus Christ, The Treasure, might be seen.

Paul clearly states that God wants us to, “Always bear about in the body – bear in the earthly nature that is NOT united with Christ – the dying of the Lord Jesus.” But why must we do so? “So that the life of the Lord Jesus – to whom we are

joined in spirit -- might be made manifest in our body." So we see that our earthen vessel, rather than come to LOOK LIKE Jesus, must bear His death – be broken as to control – so that Christ Himself might be seen IN US and THROUGH us.

To go back to the Truth of separation between soul and spirit in each believer, this means that all of the earthly that is outside of our spiritual union with Christ must come under the work of the Cross. The result will be that the Christ who dwells in the believer might be made manifest in the believer, and ultimately, through the believer.

Note that Paul mentions various trials and tribulations – impossible situations – as the means by which he bore in his body the dying of the Lord Jesus. Thus, we see that the impossible trial of faith is what God will use to bring us into an inward realization of His Son, and what God will use to manifest His Son in and through His people.

Losing Our Life for His Sake

As we saw earlier, if we were to gather up the purpose of God in these trials of faith and impossible situations, it was best summarized by Christ Himself:

Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. (Matt. 16:24-25)

God wants us to LOSE our lives to Christ, so that we may find Christ as our life. This is exactly the same Truth taught by Paul using his picture of The Treasure in earthen vessels. We lose our lives to Jesus by, "bearing His death in our earthen vessel." We then find Christ as our life – "the life of Jesus is manifest," TO us, and IN us, and THROUGH us. Indeed, when Paul stated, "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me" (Gal. 2:20), he was referring to the same Truth.

But what does it mean to LOSE your life to Christ? To be crucified with Christ? It means to relinquish your self-ownership. Self-ownership is a lie. We think we are protecting ourselves. But in fact self-ownership keeps us IN slavery to the very life we are told to LOSE.

And so herein we see the purpose of God in any impossible situation: He wants to bring us into an inward realization of Jesus Christ – and in doing so – set us free from believing, or being controlled by, all other forces. He wants to break the bondage of self-ownership so that we might belong only to Him. That is freedom. And it is the purpose of God.

Chapter 5

God's Strength Through Our Weakness

We left Israel trapped at the Red Sea. In review, God gave Israel specific instructions as to where to camp:

And the LORD spoke unto Moses, saying, "Speak to the children of Israel, that they turn and encamp before Pihahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, over against Baalzephon: before it shall ye encamp by the sea. For Pharaoh will say of the children of Israel, 'They are entangled in the land, the wilderness hath shut them in.' And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, that he shall follow after them; and I will be honored upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host; that the Egyptians may know that I am the LORD. And they did so. (Exodus 14:1-4)

Israel did EXACTLY what God told them to do: They encamped by the Red Sea at the precise location He commanded. And Pharaoh did EXACTLY what God said he would do: He came after Israel. Israel was now trapped in on all sides -- and Pharaoh was bearing down on them.

We asked: How did Israel get themselves into this impossible situation? And we answered: By OBEYING GOD. Now that we have seen the greater purpose of God in this age for His people, it ought to be clearer that God allows or orchestrates the impossible situation to accomplish His purpose.

Faith and Obedience

It is a fact that most of us judge our past choices based on the present outcome. If we make choices that we were sure were based in faith and obedience, and those choices result in disaster, we usually assume that we either misunderstood God, or that there is some sin in our life that has caused this disaster. And if our choices result in what we would call, "blessing," we assume that it is because we have believed and obeyed God. But this is natural thinking. The Bible reveals that we might be completely within the will of God – having believed and obeyed Him – and yet the outward result may still be disaster. Indeed, God may orchestrate circumstances unto that end.

There are many who, despite clear Biblical teaching to the contrary, continue to think that if they believe and obey God that this will ensure that they avoid trials and have a problem free life. There are those who teach that following a list of supposedly righteous principles will guarantee a God-ordained success in life. But when things do not turn out the way such people expect their faith is shattered. This is always what happens when people's faith is in their religious system instead of Jesus Christ.

There are some other folks who think of life in Christ as something that either, "works," or, "doesn't work." By that they mean believing and obeying God either produces the expected results or it doesn't. And if tragedy happens in their life, or they encounter a great trial, they conclude that the Christian life, "doesn't work," and feel betrayed by God. Some get bitter and refuse to consider that there could be a far greater picture.

Others seem to believe that if God were truly faithful, He would prevent them from making mistakes. People get deceived, and when they finally see the Truth, instead of thanking God for showing them the Truth, they blame Him because they were deceived to begin with. They refuse to trust Him again.

Most believers continue to operate with God on the basis of the temporal life. But God deals with us according to Christ, with eternal issues in mind. No wonder we fail to understand Him when we encounter trials.

Have we yet learned that God will sacrifice the temporal and material in favor of the eternal? Would we want Him to do otherwise? The time will come when we will praise God that He did so – and we will marvel at His faithfulness despite our ignorance.

The Truth Exposed

Israel obeyed God. But because of it, they found themselves in a mess. They had no way out. They did not have what they needed AND they had no way of getting it.

That is a pretty good description of spiritual poverty. It is a good description of weakness. But this was the Truth about Israel. It is the Truth about us. God brings us into these situations to expose this Truth.

Note that God doesn't have to MAKE us weak. No. He simply has to allow situations to expose

the TRUTH about us: We have always been weak. But now, through the situation, WE are seeing it.

As Christians, we might see this Truth and confess it: We are weak. But even then we often continue to miss the point – we often think that God wants to make us STRONG. But this is error. God will never make us strong. Rather, He will show us our weakness so that we might – in our weakness – put our faith and dependence upon Jesus Christ.

But doesn't God wants us to be, "strong in the Lord?" Yes. But what does that mean? That we might become a, "super-Christian." A "super-Christian." is one who has unwavering faith no matter what happens. They obey God better than most people, although they are always talking about their imperfections. "A super-Christian," is never confused or discouraged. They are always in a good mood. They never react in an emotionally negative fashion. They always feel like praising the Lord. They have, in effect, "arrived" -- spiritually. They are past the problems which most other Christians face on a daily basis. They are pillars in the temple of God.

There are actually two types of people who aspire to be this, "super-Christian." One type thinks they ARE a super-Christian. They say they have great faith in Christ – but they really have, "faith in their faith," or faith in their works. They have never seen or confessed their need -- although they talk about it --since they know that a super-Christian is also supposed to act humble. This type is the New Testament equivalent of a Pharisee.

The other type of person who aspires to be a, "super-Christian," is the much larger group. This group sets up the, "super-Christian," as the standard and goal that they suppose God wants them to reach. But they are never able to achieve it. Instead of being blinded by the notion that they are a super-Christian, this type of person is constantly frustrated and defeated by the realization that they are NOT. These folks are under the law – the law of the super-Christian – and always defeated. They constantly live under the weight of fear, condemnation, and false guilt. They never seem to get free.

Both groups are guilty of the same unbelief -- and are really trying to accomplish the same thing. Here we are calling the goal, "super-Christian." But the Bible has another way of describing it. Paul called it "trying to establish our own righteousness." Both of these types of Christians are completely occupied with themselves and their spiritual condition. They are both blind to Christ.

God deliberately orchestrates the impossible situation for the purpose of – not making us strong – but for the purpose of showing us how weak we really are. He uses it to show us how utterly spiritually bankrupt we are without Christ. But all of this is unto the end that we might lose ourselves to Christ by faith.

The Faithfulness of God

Israel believed and obeyed God. They did so expecting it to result in FREEDOM. But they did not realize what true freedom really meant. It meant, yes, they needed to be delivered out of

Egypt. But more importantly, it also meant that God needed to take the Egypt out of THEM. Only then would they be truly free – truly free to walk with God in Truth.

The first thing that happened when Israel obeyed God and camped where He told them to camp was that they found themselves -- through obedience to God – in an impossible situation. And this impossible situation exposed them for exactly what they were: Weak and powerless. They never suspected that this was GOOD. It was good because it was the first and necessary step so that they could begin putting their faith in God. It was actually the first step to true freedom.

Can we see that Israel was in a situation that provided them with the opportunity to lose themselves to God? It was an impossible situation wherein they could unconditionally relinquish themselves to God. They could confess the Truth that they were helpless and put their faith in Him. Thus, rather than a betrayal by God, this impossible situation was actually His faithfulness in action. So it is for believers today.

Chapter 6

Faith While in the Impossible

Israel was trapped at the Red Sea. They were in an impossible situation. They had no way out. And they had gotten into that mess by obeying God. Their experience is a type and a shadow of how God achieves His purpose in His people.

God was not taken by surprise when Israel became trapped. He had, in fact, ordained it. But He did not forsake them. Indeed, He had a solution for Israel. And the solution He gave them stands today as His solution for us in any impossible situation.

God's Four-Fold Solution

God gave Israel a four-fold solution to their impossible situation. His words to them apply to OUR trials and impossible situations.

And Moses said unto the people, Fear not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which He will show to you to day. For the Egyptians whom you have seen today, ye shall see them again no more forever. The LORD shall fight for you, and you shall hold your peace. And the LORD said unto Moses, "Why do you cry unto Me? Speak to the children of Israel, that they go forward. But lift up your rod, and stretch out your hand over the sea, and divide it. And the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea." (Exodus 14:13-16)

Now it is vital that we keep this in mind: God is not giving us a solution as to how to get OUT of

an impossible situation. No. Rather, He is telling us what we need to do IN it. He is, as we have seen, describing how to find Jesus Christ in and through the impossible situation.

The Four-Fold Solution

Note the four-fold solution God gave to Moses:

**Fear Not
Stand Still
See Salvation
Move Forward**

This four-fold solution in the impossible situation is how a believer FINDS GOD through it. It is nothing more than a description of surrender to God BY FAITH. It is what we will do in any trial if we believe and trust God.

We saw earlier that Jesus Christ is THE WAY – He is our, “way of escape.” If we will lose our lives to Jesus Christ then God will bring us into a greater realization of His Son – it will simply result in that. And that greater realization of Jesus Christ will be our way of escape – perhaps not OUT of the situation – but it will take the situation out of us. We will have an inward realization of Jesus Christ that will set us free to live in victory in Him DESPITE the situation all around us.

It is knowing the Truth – and Truth is a Person – that sets us free. We might get free of a situation or out of circumstances. But if we do not know Jesus Christ we will be in just as much bondage as every before. But if God reveals Christ in us, then whether we are in difficult

circumstances or not, we will be able to live in victory IN HIM. It is this freedom for which God allows trials in our lives. It is so that we might lose ourselves to Him and find life and Truth in Christ.

Not a Formula

These words of God to Israel were not a, "formula." They were descriptive of a relationship with God by faith. If you and I want to know Jesus Christ – if we want to find God in the impossible – we need to take these words to heart.

Is your impossible situation some sin you cannot overcome? Is it an inability to find God? Is it some outward circumstance that is causing you great suffering, turmoil, or defeat? Is your trial the LACK of something you think you need? Do you feel hemmed in on all sides with the enemy attacking you? Read God's instructions as to how to find Him; as to how to believe Him.

I do want to repeat something I said earlier: If we obey God and heed His words, we may NOT necessarily see a deliverance from OUT of an outward situation. That is up to God. But if we believe God, we WILL see deliverance from INWARD hindrances to our walk with Him. We will be delivered from our inward errors of unbelief, self-possession, fear, condemnation, and ignorance. We will be delivered from the control of the earthly nature. Most of all, we will be delivered from UNBELIEF into an inward realization of Jesus Christ. And then it is up to God as to what happens in the outward – for once

we are governed by Jesus, we are safe for any outward situation God may want to change.

I emphasize these points over and over because there is something about our thinking that tries to turn even the admonition to surrender to God into a self-serving formula. It is almost as if we are thinking that IF we surrender to God THEN He will do what we want Him to do. But if you want to do on with God you are going to discover that this is not only contrary to the Truth, and to faith, but that God is simply not going to cooperate with your program.

Losing yourself to Jesus Christ by faith is not a legalistic duty. It is not something we do so that God will act on our behalf. Rather, it is the outcome of seeing and rejoicing in the Truth. We rejoice in the fact that we do not have what we need and have no way of getting it – because it is an opportunity to see and know Jesus Christ. We voluntarily relinquish ourselves to Jesus Christ because the impossible situation has exposed us as being reprobate without Christ -- and we know that only in Him is there life. We gladly run to the Cross because we want Jesus Christ. It is through the impossible situation that God accomplishes the impossible IN US – He wants to bring us to where we rejoice in our sufferings because we have come to know Him through them.

This miracle is the result of obeying this four-fold solution in the impossible. It is the result of faith in Jesus Christ: Fear not, stand still, and you will see the salvation of the Lord. And then move forward. It is not a formula. It is faith in action.

Chapter 7

Fear Not

The first of God's four-part solution to the impossible is, "fear not." This is a negative command. Thus, we need to ask: What is the positive side to, "fear not?" The answer is, "believe." Indeed, Jesus once said to His disciples, "Fear not. Only believe." He also said, "Let not your heart be troubled. Believe in God; believe in Me." (John 14:1)

So often in the Bible, when God approaches a person, or begins a work in them, He says, "Fear not," or "be not afraid." Then He points them to the Truth: "Believe. Have faith."

The opposite of fear is faith. It is a faith that is based on the Truth: That God loves us; that because God loves us He is always faithful.

Good Fear and Bad Fear

Fear is a not merely an emotion. Fear is a SPIRIT. Now, of course, we react to the spirit of fear emotionally. But at the core, fear is a spirit – it is a spirit that finds place in us if we lack faith in God.

Israel was in great fear at the Red Sea. It should not be surprising that God would expose us to situations that are likely to incite fear in us. Sure. For that is the only way we can overcome fear – we have to face fear and find God despite it. We have to overcome fear by faith in God.

Many of us do fear situations. For believers, fear of situations is based on doubt that God is really

in charge, or that God really cares. But many of us are also afraid of God Himself. It is here that we need to see the distinction between the good, "fear of the Lord," and the bad, "being afraid of God."

There is a good fear of the Lord, which is really REVERENCE. Reverence is based on seeing the TRUTH about God. To revere God is to ascribe to Him great worth. It is to respect Him as the holy, righteous, just God that He is. It is to value Him to the point where I do not want to violate my relationship with Him. All of that kind of, "fear," is good -- and it is the fear of the Lord spoken of in the Bible.

But there is also a wrong kind of fear of God— which really amounts to being AFRAID of God. Being afraid of God is based on lies about Him. Indeed, all of the wrong kind of fear of God goes back to somewhere I have embraced a lie about Him.

Get that. Being afraid of God always goes back to somewhere I have embraced a lie about Him. If I know the TRUTH about God I cannot be afraid of Him. I can't be afraid of Him because there is nothing IN Him to be afraid of.

Two scriptures point this out more than any others:

***For God hath not given us the spirit of fear;
but of power, and of love, and of a sound
mind. (II Tim. 1:7)***

***God is love....there is no fear in love; but
perfect love casts out fear: because fear***

hath torment. He that fears is not made perfect in love. (I Jn. 4:16, 18)

Here we see that God has NOT given us the spirit of fear. Thus, if we are afraid, where did we get this spirit of fear? Not from God. We got it from ourselves, or from the enemy.

Secondly, we see that the antithesis of fear is LOVE. And that God IS love—that is—is the very personification of it. Therefore, there is nothing in God to incite fear in us. If we are afraid of God, it is not because HE made us to feel that way.

Put the two scriptures together: God is perfect love, and perfect love casts out fear. Therefore, God casts out fear. This means that the wrong fear of God is never OF God. He will, in fact, seek to cast it OUT of us. He will never incite it in us.

The bottom line is this: The proper reverence of God makes us want to draw near to Him in faith. The wrong kind of fear of God, however, makes us want to run and hide from Him.

A Chance to Overcome Fear

So now we see why God puts us in a situation that will incite fear, only to turn around and tell us to “fear not.” He is saying, “I know you are afraid. I know all about your fears. They are all coming to the surface through this trial. But do not fear. Rather, put your fear aside and BELIEVE Me in spite of it.”

We cannot overcome fear by fighting fear – in the sense of trying to make it go away. No. We

overcome fear by believing God; by believing God loves us. We might still FEEL afraid, but we will not believe our feelings. We will believe God.

I would imagine that it would be impossible to not FEEL AFRAID if you were at the Red Sea in that terrible predicament of Israel. But God said, "Fear not." We can FEAR NOT by choosing to believe – even if we feel afraid. Feelings are NOT Truth. Jesus Christ is the Truth.

True Freedom

We've all heard the expression, "Let a sleeping dog lie." The idea is that as long as you don't address a problem, it can't hurt you. But if you disturb it, then you will have to contend with it, and possibly be hurt by it. So let it alone.

God doesn't work that way. Indeed, rather than, "let a sleeping dog lie," He walks up to the dog and kicks it in the teeth. And if we will simply go through these things with Him, we will be set free from the dog!

Why continually step over a "sleeping dog?" Why should we go around him, and continually arrange our entire lives so as to not disturb him? Would it not be better for him to be gone altogether?

Thus it is with fear. God sees to it that fear is exposed in our lives so that we can be set free from the power of it's grip forever. He uses trials and impossible situations to accomplish this work. Through them, we do see our complete inability to overcome and prevail. But we see that the victory over Christ is already finished, and that God knew it all the time!

Much fear is the result of thinking that we are on our own; that we are left to fend for ourselves. Without directly saying it, we are saying that we doubt that God will be faithful to us. We realize our weakness and see that the problem is beyond us. And so we are afraid. Well, it is a fact that we are weak and that our problems are beyond our ability to deal with them. But it is precisely because this is the Truth that we must turn to Christ. That will not only kick the, "sleeping dog," out of the way, but will bring us into true freedom.

The impossible situation is geared to exposing our complete weakness so that we will no longer trust in ourselves or our righteousness, but put our faith in Christ. We will be privileged to see the glory of God.

Chapter 8

Stand Still

The first thing which God said to the children of Israel was "Fear not." He said this to them in the midst of a terrible crisis which HE Himself had created. He wanted them to get their eyes off of Pharaoh, and to make the choice to BELIEVE HIM. Then, and only then, were they—and we—able to go to the next step. That next step is STAND STILL.

The ability to "stand still" is the direct result of "fearing not." You cannot "stand still" if you are afraid—in the spiritual sense. Instead, you will be fragmented, on the wrong basis, and operating from the irrational. "Standing still" means to BELIEVE, and to refuse to move from that faith—despite all that would come against it.

Note again the words of the Lord to Israel in Exodus 14:

And Moses said unto the people, Fear not, STAND STILL, and see the salvation of the LORD, which He will show to you to day. For the Egyptians whom you have seen today, ye shall see them again no more forever. The LORD shall fight for you, and you shall hold your peace.

Now ask: How much did God require Israel to do to save themselves? Zero. Israel was not required to turn and fight Pharaoh. In fact, Israel was not even told to make a deliverance for themselves away from Pharaoh. All God said to Israel was,

"Stand still....the Lord shall fight for you and you shall hold your peace."

God is, in type, showing us something here. We see it more clearly once we remember that Pharaoh is a "type" of our flesh; of our "old man in Adam." And this Truth fits perfectly into all of the New Testament teaching on the subject. That Truth is this: We ARE dead to sin. Period. But now we must BELIEVE—and then live out our obedience through works and overcoming.

Pharaoh is Coming

The command to "fear not" was a command to believe. The command to "stand still" is a command to STAND in that same faith against all that would come against it—and try to get us to move away from faith. Pharaoh was coming against the faith of Israel. And we have our own personal Pharaohs; our own personal aspects of the old man. "He" comes against our faith.

Herein we see the battle. It is not to win the victory. No. Egypt and Pharaoh are defeated. We ARE delivered. The battle is to BELIEVE and STAND in our faith against what seems to be a contradiction to that. Pharaoh is coming. God is letting him. In fact, God saw to it. Who will we believe—God, or what our eyes, ears, and emotions, and fears tell us?

Overcoming is never accomplished by turning and fighting an enemy which God tells us is already defeated. No. It is done by standing in His victory and refusing to move. And that will take plenty of warfare. But again—it is not a battle to TAKE territory. Rather, it is a battle to HOLD territory,

and to expand our actual possession of it by experience.

Note again: The victory IS won. It IS finished. But now we must, by faith, stand still IN that victory.

This is typified all through this story of Israel's deliverance. Israel, if we remember, was actually delivered from Egypt on Passover night, followed by the next morning. That deliverance was finished. There were as free as free could be.

Israel's deliverance from Egypt through Passover and the next morning corresponds to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. On that first Passover, all the first born of Egypt were slain. Thus, all of the "generations" of Egypt were totally cut-off. Not one first born, to which all inheritance would have been passed, survived. This is clearly typical of the fact that through the death of the old Adamic creation IN Jesus Christ, the old creation's power over us was cut-off forever.

Now note: That first Passover night, Israel was delivered. They actually walked out of Egypt into a new life of freedom the next morning—it was a very real resurrection unto newness of life. At THAT point their deliverance was a finished reality. They could not have been more free. God said so. And it did not matter what Pharaoh thought about it, or intended to do. It mattered only what God said.

There was, however, still a problem. Israel was completely delivered out of Egypt. But unfortunately, Egypt was still IN Israel. In other words, Israel still had a lot to learn as to what it

meant to be free. They still had a lot to learn about God.

The same goes for us. We are totally delivered from the realm of sin and darkness by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It IS finished. But we do NOT really understand what this new life of freedom is all about. Why? Because we have never lived it before. It is new territory. All we know is the OLD—with the patterns of slavery and bondage. Thus, we barely get around the corner in our new walk—and what happens? Pharaoh comes after us! The old man in Adam tries to re-capture us. He tries to exercise his prior authority over us and bring us back into slavery.

Now note something vital to see in this. We MUST see this or we will miss the point. We ARE delivered from Egypt. Pharaoh has NO power over us. NONE. In Jesus Christ, the power of the old man of sin is broken. BUT—and this is the point—sometimes it won't seem like it. "Our Pharaoh" will seem to pursue us. He will, as it were, continue to ACT as if he has power over us. Our flesh, our emotions, and our intellect, will LIE to us—and try to get us to fall back into a position of slavery.

We have to get it settled: Flesh won't behave. And God never tells us that the flesh is dead. NO. He says that we are dead to the flesh. In other words, the flesh is capable of doing what it has always done. But we no longer have to obey it. Because of Christ, we are free. But if we don't believe this, or worse, don't want to be free of the flesh, then our freedom won't do us much

good. We might as well BE a slave if we are going to continue acting like one.

Standing by Faith

“Standing by faith” is a spiritual position which is found all through the Bible. Men and women of God were given a promise or a Word of the Lord, and they chose to believe it. Then came the opposition and the contradiction to what God had said. It is at that point that they—and of course, US—must STAND STILL by faith on the Word of God.

Embodied in this idea of STAND STILL is endurance. It is the place that, having believed, our faith is tried, and if we stand, is made strong.

Here again we see that opposition results in overcoming. God puts us in a fearful situation and tells us to “fear not.” Then once we “fear not,” He tells us to STAND STILL. But then what? Then comes all kinds of things to get us to MOVE! It is when we STAND STILL against all that would seek to move us that we are made strong. It is through our standing that God is able to do a great work in us. We see this need to stand most profoundly stated in Paul’s letter to the Ephesians:

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to STAND against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole

armour of God, that ye may be able to withSTAND in the evil day, and having done all, to STAND. STAND therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness, and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.
(Eph. 6:10-18)

The picture here is one of possessing a FINISHED VICTORY, and STANDING in it. It is NOT one of trying to win a victory. Even the “wrestling” that Paul mentions here is not a wrestling to win ground from the enemy. It is wrestling to HOLD ground. It is just another way of STANDING and refusing to give away what God has given us in Christ Jesus.

The command to STAND STILL is reflective of the fact that there is a finished victory in Jesus Christ. Otherwise, what would there be to stand IN? Nothing. You cannot stand and withstand unless you are defending—unless there is a position from which to defend. This shows that the believers position is not one of trying to attack the enemy, or one of trying to fight our way into the victory of Jesus Christ. No. We already possess the victory. We must believe that, and then STAND in it against all that would come and try to get us to move.

When will we finally believe that IT IS FINISHED? Sometimes it seems that no matter how many ways God tells us that the victory is finished, that we still don't get it. We continue to try to finish it, whether it be through our works, or through some attack we try to launch upon the enemy. But no. The victory is finished. There is no victory which Jesus Christ left for US to win. There is only the victory—His victory—we are told to BELIEVE.

This tells us something about the nature of all spiritual warfare. It tells us where the real battle is fought. The fight of faith is not to WIN the victory. THAT is finished. The fight of faith is to STAND IN the finished victory.

If we don't understand anything else about faith we must get this. We are not called to win the victory by faith. We are not. We are called to stand by faith IN the finished victory already won by Jesus Christ. THAT is the battle: To STAND STILL, by faith, and refuse to be moved, from what Jesus Christ has done. If we do, then we shall SEE salvation. But if we don't—then sadly—we won't.

Chapter 9

See Salvation

So often, those things in our Christian walk, which we think surely must be oversights by God—which cannot be His will—end up being exactly that. We end up finding that God not only had things fully under His control, but it was actually God who saw to it that we were in the impossible situation in the first place. God not only knew we would have no way out of our trial, but He also knew our old man would pursue us.

Why would God allow such a thing? Aren't we delivered? Aren't we set free from the power of the flesh by the Blood of Christ? Yes, totally free. But we aren't set free from the PRESENCE of the flesh. We still live in a body which is subject to all of our old patterns and habits—those we learned from birth, in our Egypt. Therefore, God creates situations where we are forced to face them! Why? For the purpose of overcoming them.

What good is freedom if we never believe we are free? What good is freedom if we never act like we are free? What good is freedom from sin if we continue acting like sin has power over us?

Not much good at all. Therefore, we must EXPERIENCE our freedom and begin walking in it. And the only way this can come to pass is if God creates situations wherein we might learn to face the flesh and overcome it through Christ. Then our freedom will be real and experienced, not just so "far off" fact that never seems real.

So God brings us to the Red Sea. He sees to it that we come to the place where we face the impossible. We come to where we KNOW we cannot deliver ourselves. We come to the place where the flesh is bearing down on us and there seems to be no escape. Perhaps our attitudes, our actions, our emotions, and our thinking, all seem so empty and unholy. We cannot find deliverance, and maybe we cannot even seem to find God.

What would God say to us? Exactly what He said to Israel. He would say, "Fear not and stand still. And you will see the salvation of the Lord." In other words, BELIEVE and stand still IN the faith of Jesus Christ. And if you do, you will SEE the salvation God has given you brought to pass in your experience. You will SEE Pharaoh and all of his hosts brought down. You will SEE with your eyes what God has told you is already true: You are free.

When God said, "And you will SEE the salvation of the Lord," He was not saying that He was about to GIVE them salvation. No. He gave them that already, on Passover night. Rather, they were about to SEE the salvation that they already had! It was about to be made manifest.

The fact is, when we SEE JESUS – when we come to know Him – we are seeing salvation. The Psalmist says:

***The LORD [is] my light and my salvation;
whom shall I fear? the LORD [is] the
strength of my life; of whom shall I be
afraid? (Ps. 27:1)***

Of course, this needs to be practical. Seeing the Lord – coming into a knowledge of Him – will result in our experiencing Him as our life.

So we see that the impossible situation is really God's way of making articulate and real that which is already ours by faith. When God is in the process of doing this, things can be scary. But if we will obey God—fear not and stand still—we shall SEE. We shall not only SEE it “out there” in our lives, but we shall SEE it within.

Strength In Weakness

Of course, it would be easy to assume at this point that what God wants is to somehow make us strong enough to overcome the flesh. Most of us are so used to trying to overcome the flesh through the power of the flesh that somehow we cannot shake the notion that God's way is totally different. The fact is, God has not put us in the impossible situation so that we will become spiritual giants, able to defeat Pharaoh. No. He has put us there so that we will be reduced and depleted, and come to see that we have NO strength at all. It would seem to be the only way that we will finally throw up our hands and embrace the finished victory. It would seem to be the only way we will stand still and see the salvation of the Lord—rather than keep on trying to do for ourselves what Christ has already done.

The impossible situation is geared to putting ME to death—so that the life of Christ may come forth. And God will use Pharaoh or anything else He chooses to push us to this point. God has not brought us to the Red Sea for nothing. We are

going to have to pass through it—and be “buried.” That will mean the end of something in us.

We can never even get to this point, however, unless we STAND STILL. We must stand in faith against all that would make us scatter. Otherwise, we will not be in the moral position to make our way to the other side when God parts the Red Sea.

Practicalities

Many of the spiritual problems—problems with our faith—that we have in our Christian walk go back to one problem: We have not seen, or we will not believe, that IT IS FINISHED. Thus, we are still trying to finish it. Or, we are still trying to get God to finish what He has already finished. The result is confusion at best, but usually defeat. After all, if we don’t believe it is finished, then how can we ever come to walk in the victory?

But wait. Let’s step back a moment. Let’s ask: WHAT is finished? If we are to “stand still,” WHAT are we to “stand still” IN? Some of us don’t even understand that.

What is finished through the victory of Christ is everything that is necessary for your salvation. That is the beginning, to be sure. But most of us make the mistake of thinking that once we get salvation out of the way that the “rules” change. In other words, sure, God saves us by His grace because Christ won that victory over death. But once saved, we forget what saved us, and grace is out the window. We then proceed to try to develop a relationship with God on a works basis. This is, of course, a recipe for disaster.

The fact is, if you are saved by grace, you are living IN grace. You are in the process of experiencing salvation. Salvation is not merely some “classification” God pastes on us. It is a new birth with a new life. Thus, the Christian walk is a walk IN salvation, in grace, and in the love of God.

What this means is that you do not enter into salvation through the total forgiveness of God, only to pop in and out of forgiveness once you are saved. If you are a Christian, you ARE forgiven forever. Nothing you do can change that—although you certainly must believe it or it will do you little good.

Likewise, if you are in Jesus Christ, there is NO condemnation for you. This isn’t the case only if you obey God. It is the case EVEN when you sin. And if there is NO condemnation, then there is no unforgiveness. The two always go together.

Also, there is absolutely nothing between Christians and God. God has, in Christ, reconciled us back to Himself. We enter into this reconciliation at salvation and nothing can change it. Our works do not chase God away.

All of these things are finished through Christ. God is essentially DONE working on them. There is nothing to add to them, and nothing can subtract from them. Not our works and not our sin.

They are eternally in place—and will remain so even if not a single person ever believes or receives them. BUT—and this is the whole point—

we will not benefit from them or experience them unless we BELIEVE. And then, having believed, we must STAND in them by that same faith.

Chapter 10

Moving Forward

We now come back to a question asked earlier: Move forward? Move forward to where?

Move forward to Jesus Christ. Or, in type and shadow, move forward to the Promised Land. But before that could happen, Israel had to move forward to DEATH. To surrender and abandonment to God. To perhaps a place in faith you've never been. But move forward to resurrection. To a new freedom from Pharaoh and his armies. To being able to walk in the forgiveness of your sins and the freedom Christ has provided in a greater way.

Actually, this entire life of ours in Jesus Christ is a journey out of Egypt to the promised land, and then on to glorifying Jesus Christ. Thus, we are always moving forward. Always on a journey to a destination in the purposes and will of God.

The fact that God told Israel to "move forward" BEFORE He opened to them the way holds great significance for us. It tells us that God isn't going to tell us much ahead of time as to where He is leading us, or as to how He will lead us. He simply says, "move forward." It is only AS we do, that the way opens.

Note that. We don't normally see the way BEFORE we "move forward." We usually see it AS we move forward. God opens it up perhaps only one step ahead of us. Consequently, it is correct to say that many times we will not know where God is

leading, and we will not even know OUR next step until God opens it up.

The Way God Leads

This is a Truth verified all through the Bible. But before we look at that, let's ask a more basic question: WHY does God lead us like that? WHY doesn't He simply tell us ahead of time what He is going to do? Or what He wants US to do? Why the big secret?

First of all, it is a fact that if God told us ahead of time what He wanted to do, we'd mess it up. We might not think we would, but we would.

Think about it. If God has a certain destination in mind for me in His will, I am NOT YET there. I'm not there physically, or in my circumstances. But more importantly, I'm not there yet spiritually. In order to get to the destination God intends, I must pass through the experience of the journey. Indeed, in spiritual matters, it is most often the JOURNEY that is more important than the destination.

What I BECOME during that journey—in Jesus Christ—prepares me and makes me spiritually fit to be able to live in the place of destination. But if God told me all about the destination ahead of time, before I take the journey, I will not have gained the experience of that journey. I will not be spiritually equipped with those things that I must have to understand the destination the way God intends me to understand it. Thus, it will only be natural for me to begin to rush ahead of God, or to resist Him. I will naturally begin to try to

control the situation—all in the name of wanting to do God's will.

Kids and young adults do this all the time. They do know much about some of the responsibilities they will face as adults. Some of them try to rush ahead and take them on too early. As a result, they often create problems. They are trying to grasp a situation for which they have no capacity. They must first grow up. They must first benefit from the journey of growth before they reach the destination of maturity. If they try to skip the journey, problems will result.

Again, it is the JOURNEY God is after—just as much as the destination. Indeed, without the journey we cannot live in the destination. We will not be equipped for it.

So what we see here is that in God's leadings and purpose in our lives, what we need is NOT information. We need GROWTH and maturity.

You cannot teach a child how to hold a job by giving them the facts about how to hold a job. He cannot do it merely because he has the info. Rather, he must grow into it. Then what he will have BECOME what the facts suggested.

Likewise, we must grow as we JOURNEY to our destination in God's will, so that when we get there we will be fit for it. And God knows that this means that He cannot tell us much ahead of time. He has to take us one step at a time.

Walking By Faith

There is a second reason why God does not tell us ahead of time where He is leading us, or what He wants us to do. It also has to do with the fact that the JOURNEY is as important as the destination in God's will. Indeed, it speaks to what happens to us during the journey. It is during the journey that we build faith. And it is this faith that enables us to embrace and live in the destination.

If God told us everything ahead of time, we might believe Him, and even obey Him, and we might call that "faith." And it is faith, since there is a measure of trust wrapped up in our believing God.

But God wants much more than that kind of elementary faith. He wants the kind of faith that will stand the test of eternity. And this eternal faith can only be built by practice. We have to trust God WITHOUT knowing and without seeing—if we want to be able to carry eternal faith with us to the ultimate destination God has for us in the eternal ages.

There is a verse which speaks to this point in the Bible, but which isn't usually thought of in quite that way.

For we walk by faith, not by sight. (II Cor. 5:7)

The context in which Paul writes this verse is that while we are in this body, living this life, we are not present with God—not in the way we will be when we pass on. So, in that sense, we must walk by faith, for we do not yet SEE all that we will

see. In other words, faith carries with it the idea that I cannot now see God, but do believe that God sees ME. And I trust that He is leading.

Now, if God told us everything ahead of time, it is true that we could still claim we don't yet see it. And that we need faith. But we would nevertheless have a certain amount of "sight"—in that we would know where we were going and how we would get there. But if we had not even that knowledge, but had to walk with God WITHOUT knowing, then that would be an entirely new level of faith.

Here's the point. The above verse is talking about walking with God. BOTH "walking by faith" and "walking by sight" are talking about walking with God. This verse has no reference to NOT walking with God. Thus, it is proper to say that there is a level of walking with God that we can call "walking by sight." And there is also a level which we can call, "walking by faith." BOTH are good and legitimate. But they are not the same.

What is the difference? Well, "walking by sight" is when I can SEE God, and SEE where He is leading us. It is where we KNOW what we are supposed to be doing. But "walking by faith" is when we DON'T see God, and DON'T see where He is leading us. It is when we DON'T know what we are supposed to do. BUT—and this is the bottom line—we walk ANYWAYS. We don't know much about where we are being led, but we trust the One leading.

Now remember what Paul said. He said, "For we walk with God by faith, and NOT by sight." In other words, the usual way God leads His people

is by expecting us to walk WITHOUT knowing or seeing. THAT is the norm, rather than God telling us very much ahead of time.

But why? So that we might build faith. It is a universal principle: The way to build faith is by walking by faith. Faith MUST be chosen, and then tested. It is only as we STAND in faith against all that would contradict it that we build faith.

What we see here is once again the JOURNEY. We build faith and it becomes a part of us, not when we reach our destination in the will of God—but on the JOURNEY getting there.

Faith is Eternal

Now, if all there was to life was building faith, only to have it all sort of “erased” upon death, then all of this would be quite futile. But that’s not what the Bible says happens. The Bible reveals that the faith we build now is an ETERNAL quality. In other words, we take it with us when we die.

Do not, however, make the mistake of thinking that when we meet Jesus Christ face to face that we are still going to need to exercise faith. No. Faith is only needed if you cannot see. THEN we WILL see and know. We won’t need to walk by faith, but will have the ultimate sight and knowledge of Christ.

This does not mean our faith was meaningless. Indeed, on the JOURNEY we built this faith for a reason. It is this faith that God built in us on our journey that enables us to fellowship with Christ

when we reach our destination. The one makes the other possible.

What we rightly call “faith” in this life, is MORE than what we can know or grasp. It is really like a seed NOW, which has contained within it a great plant or tree. In the eternal ages, the potential of that “seed” will be released. It cannot be released now, but will be released then to it’s fullness—like a seed which finally breaks forth and grows to maturity.

Thus, the faith which God builds in us during this life’s journey is MORE than we think. It carries in it eternal potentiality.

That is why God seeks to build faith in us now. That is why God puts us through all of these tests and trials. That is why He won’t tell us what we think we want to know, and requires that we walk without seeing. He is building in us something eternal—a faith which could NOT be built if God told us everything, and made it easy for us to see where we were going.

God’s Norm

God’s normal way of leading is to NOT tell us too much, or let us see too much ahead of time. We see this in our example of Israel at the Red Sea, and we see in many other places in the Bible.

But your eyes shall see your teachers. And your ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when you turn to the right hand, and when you turn to the left. (Is. 30:20-21)

Picture yourself walking along, not quite sure where you are going. A voice BEHIND you shows you the way—not in front of you. In this we see that God often opens our eyes AFTER we take a step—and we find that He WAS leading after all.

Trust in the LORD with all your heart; and lean not upon your own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct your paths. Be not wise in your own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil. (Prov. 3:5-7)

Here we see that we must walk without trusting our own understanding of that walk, and that if we do, God will “direct our paths.” Contrast this to God directing US. God will often direct the path to us, rather than us to the path, so that we might grow in faith.

That ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy. A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world. And you now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you. And in that day you shall ask me nothing. (John 16:20-23)

Jesus is speaking of the fact that when we are in a trial, we have our focus on the PAIN. We cannot yet see the purposes of God; cannot yet see the destination—because we aren’t there yet. But

once a birth comes forth from our pain, then we KNOW. Thus, we once again see that it is during the JOURNEY that we don't know or see—but must walk by faith—so that when we get to the purpose and DESTINATION we might be able to rejoice and live in the purpose of God.

We can also see the principle of walking by faith through many of the instances recorded in the book of Acts, as well as through the Old Testament, including the book of Psalms. How often do those who wrote the Psalms cry out to God, "Where are you, Lord?" And then, later, they rejoice when they see that God was there all the time, taking them on a journey to a destination.

Forward to Death and Resurrection

Israel "moved forward" on a journey through death and resurrection, as typified by the Red Sea. And because they did obey God, they left Egypt behind. They really did "see the Egyptians no more."

God was taking Israel on a JOURNEY. The destination was to be the promised land. But it was the JOURNEY that prepared them for this DESTINATION—including the unfortunate forty year journey in the wilderness.

God also has us on a journey. It starts with when He deliberately gets us into an "impossible situation." He says, "Fear not, only believe." Then He says, "Now, stand still in your faith. Don't be moved by what you are seeing and experiencing around you." He says that if we will obey Him, that we will then begin to SEE SALVATION. But only AS we "move forward."

Yet to where do we “move forward?” Into the purpose of God behind getting us into the impossible to begin with. And that is death and resurrection. WE go through that in order that we might be set free—to a greater degree—from Egypt.

Note that it is not the situation God is after. Yes, that is the JOURNEY. But it is what He does in us THROUGH the situation and ON the journey that God is after. THAT makes us fit for our final destination, which is eternal fellowship with Christ.

We are on that journey now. But we are also, in a parallel sense, entering into the destination as well. Yet not in it's fullness. That is yet to come. And it is accomplished through the impossible situation. For it is in the impossible that we not only find God, but that God finds US.

Chapter 11

The Continuing Journey

The journey of the Christian for this age is to come into an inward realization of Jesus Christ, and in doing so, have our minds renewed, and become expressions and extensions of Christ. But all of this is unto the next age.

We have seen that in order to accomplish this purpose God will expose His people to many trials – in much suffering – we will find ourselves in one impossible situation after another. But the outward situation isn't the issue. It is the inward struggle of faith that is where the real victory is won or lost.

God had brought Israel out of Egypt through a series of great miracles – through an impossible situation. But immediately they found themselves in a vast wilderness. A wilderness provides NO resources for living. This meant that Israel had no way of fending for themselves. Do we think this was an accident? No. It was of God. God wanted Israel to have no hope except in HIM. Thus, Israel once again found themselves in what for them was an impossible situation.

You would think that after witnessing the miracle at the Red Sea that Israel would have easily believed that God would provide for them in the wilderness. But they did not. This is a lesson for all of us. Miracles cannot change us. The excitement fades and we will once again be faced with our inability – and the necessity of faith.

So, God planned to bring Israel into a condition where once again they had no way of providing

for themselves. And yet once He did they immediately faced NEED. They were hungry. They were thirsty. BUT -- God was NOT responding.

Now note this: God draws them out into the wilderness wherein they must solely rely upon Him – but He lets them suffer need? He seems nowhere to be found. Doesn't that sound familiar? Sure. It is the nature of most trials of faith. God promises, God leads, we believe – and it all comes to nothing, or leads us into another disaster. And God seems to disappear.

As difficult as these trials are they are necessary if we are to discover Jesus Christ. They are necessary if we are to be set free from occupation with ourselves and from being governed by our natural man. These works of the Cross are intended to break the back of our self-occupation and to bring us into a realization of Jesus Christ so that we can then believe HIM.

Purpose of the Wilderness

If we turn to Deut. 8 we actually read God's explanation of as to why God brought Israel out into the wilderness. He tells Israel WHY He allowed such conditions to prevail, despite His promises to provide for them:

And thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou would keep his commandments, or no. And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not,

neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live. (Deut. 8:2-3)

God said that he allowed Israel to hunger – to humble them and prove them. To purify their motives. Why? So that they could enter into His greater purpose. Through this He was actually preparing them to be able to enter the Promised Land by faith.

God knows that most of us come to Him for what we can get from Him. We come to God because it pays us to. This is usually all we know to do. Therefore, God must take the initiative to draw us to Himself in deeper ways. If I have come to God only for what I can get from Him, what will I do when I don't get it? In fact, what will I do when, instead of it paying me to believe God, my faith in God COSTS me greatly? This is the proving of faith – the exposing of the Truth about my faith.

When God allows these conditions to persist, some of us accuse God. Or maybe we try to develop a religious pattern that we think will get God moving – maybe we try to prove to God we are righteous and worthy. But none of that works. God will create a situation where we have no hope but HIM – we really never had any other hope; God is simply showing us the Truth. This may take quite some time. But will we continue to seek God? If we do, we will find Him.

You and I are going to be exposed as the religious frauds we are. We need to get that settled. But the good news is that God does this

all unto a redemptive end. He wants to bring us to repentance so that we might have a real need for Him and to establish us in real faith in Christ.

The wilderness does this. God puts us in a place where WE cannot help ourselves, but neither does He seem to want to help us. Faith will seem like a mistake. But it isn't a mistake. We are now in God's purpose.

This ought to explain much. It explains why God sometimes seems so indifferent to us in our suffering. It explains why God doesn't seem to do much when people cry out to Him. He is doing plenty – but it is not what we think, or often what we want. Yet He is faithful to do what is best for us in the eternal sense. We have to come to terms with this. It is what God is doing. And it is best.

Human Reaction

Israel was barely out of Egypt when they began to encounter contradiction to the promises of God -- contradiction to their faith in God. They faced hunger and thirst almost immediately – by God's own leading -- despite God's promises to provide for them. It was at that point for them, as it is for us when we face a similar contradiction, that it might seem as if our faith in God was a big mistake.

Below we read of four times in God's early dealings with Israel where they faced situations that made it seem as if their faith in God was a mistake. Note the similar reaction in each case:

And they said unto Moses, Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us

away to die in the wilderness? wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt? Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness. (Ex. 14:11-12)

So Moses brought Israel from the Red sea, and they went out into the wilderness of Shur; and they went three days in the wilderness, and found no water. And when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter: therefore the name of it was called Marah. And the people murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink? (Ex. 15:22-24)

And the children of Israel said unto them, "Would to God we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots, and when we did eat bread to the full; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger!" (Ex. 16:3)

And the people thirsted there for water; and the people murmured against Moses, and said, "Wherefore is this that thou hast brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst?" (Ex. 17:3)

Note what is going on in every one of these situations. Israel, as far as they could, had believed and trusted God to protect and provide for them. And as I noted, they were RIGHT to do

this – God WANTED them to do this. But then, despite their faith, they faced GOD ORDAINED conditions wherein God did NOT seem to keep His promise – at least not immediately. He had promised to protect them – but Egypt was pursuing them. He had promised to provide for them – but they hungered and thirsted. And what was their reaction? Each time they suggested that it was a MISTAKE for them to trust God. They said, "We were better off in Egypt. We burnt our bridges and abandoned ourselves to God. But we were fools to do so. All it has accomplished is to bring us out into the wilderness – our faith is going to result in death. We have made a horrible mistake to trust God."

Have you ever faced a similar situation? Perhaps you made certain choices to believe and trust God – choices that meant burning bridges and setting your life on a certain course. You have rightly believed that God would provide all that you need – both materially and spiritually. But it has not happened – as far as you can tell. You have been led into a wilderness where you cannot provide for yourself – and yet God isn't providing for you as He promised. Was your faith a mistake? Have you miscalculated? Have you missed the boat?

Note especially this one statement: By faith you have come into a situation where you cannot provide for yourself. But God isn't providing for you. We saw earlier that this was exactly how Israel ended up hemmed in at the Red Sea. Isn't this the kind of situation wherein we are tempted to say, "Has God led me into this situation simply to leave me? All this time when I believed God was with me, was I deceived? I was better off before I believed God. Did I make a terrible

mistake in believing that God would take care of me and guide me into His will?

When faith in God does not make things better – indeed, when things get WORSE instead of better – it is so easy to believe that we have miscalculated. We trusted in the Lord and everything is as if He was never there to begin with. Unbelievers have it better. How can this be the outcome of faith?

It can be the outcome of faith. Why? Because when we believe God we are surrendering to Him – haven't we learned that? And so all of these conditions are geared to making that surrender real. We gave ourselves to God, and He is taking us. We said we wanted to lose our lives into His hands, and so He is taking them out of our hands and into His. Do we want Christ to be our life? Then we must lose ours. What did we think this was going to look like? It will look like a mistake – at first – to natural thinking. It will be OTHER THAN we expected. But it is exactly the will of God.

FAITH is always the will of God. Always. Therefore, faith is never a mistake. There are no exceptions. Faith is fundamental to relationship with God. Faith is a walk in TRUTH.

What is Faith?

Many Christian people have been sold a bill of goods about faith. We hear such phrases as, "I am believing God FOR....." The heretical Word of Faith heresy, which suggests that you can, "confess into existence," what you desire from God, has formalized what is already in the hearts

of many people. Indeed, for the last two thousand years professing Christian people have devised religious patterns geared to getting God to do for them what they want Him to do.

Much false teaching is along this line. Either we construct a religious system we think will accomplish what Christ has already finished, or we construct one that we think will get God to do what He says He already wants to do by grace. Or we say we are plugging into a system that God Himself has already formed – if we do THIS, God will do THAT. But is this faith? Is faith nothing more than me pushing God's buttons and getting the desirable results?

No. In fact, these things are really the antithesis of faith. Faith is not something I do in order to get God to do. Faith is not a concession on my part to believe God so that God can be happy with me. Faith is not a merit I present to God – rather, it is out of the realization that I have no merits. In short, faith is the outcome of hearing and embracing the Truth.

Read Romans 10:17: "Faith COMES by hearing....the Word of God." Can we see that if faith COMES that it wasn't there to begin with? Thus, it is not out of ourselves as the source? So what is the source? The Word that God speaks – or, if you prefer, the Truth God reveals. Thus, faith is the result of God revealing to me the Truth, and me embracing that Truth. This is why Hebrews is able to say that faith IS the evidence and substance. Faith is the evidence and substance of the Truth of God in Jesus Christ finding a home in me.

Now, what this means is not only astonishing, but quite freeing. It means that REAL FAITH is impossible except it be the result of God speaking TRUTH. Thus, you and I cannot have real faith for anything except for the Truth. Sure. Faith comes by hearing the Truth, and therefore, real faith cannot be for anything except the Truth. So if my faith is in error, then it is not real faith.

Faith is not a merit – it is really the result of seeing I have no merits. Faith is not a contribution that I make – it is the result of my seeking I have no contribution to make. Faith is the result of my seeing and embracing the Truth that God reveals.

And what is the most basic Truth of all that God reveals to people? That He is faithful. That He can be trusted. "For without faith it is impossible to please Him. For whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists, and that He is a RESPONDER to those who diligently seek Him." That is basic.

Now, all of that being said, it is still possible to THINK I know the Truth, or to think that I have faith, when, in fact, I do not. Perhaps what I call FAITH is nothing more than presumption. How do I know the difference?

Well, often I won't know the difference. We are all going to make many mistakes along the lines of faith. But that does not mean that faith in GOD is a mistake no. The mistake we make is that our faith is sometimes in our interpretation of what God is DOING. We need to put aside what we think God is doing and put all of faith in God Himself.

Most of the heroes of the Bible did things thinking they were in God's will -- but they were not. Yet this does not mean they had no faith. It simply means their faith had to be tried. Their motives had to be purified. Only then did they come to know the Truth. But not just the Truth about what God was doing – but rather – they learned the Truth about God Himself.

Faith is Never a Mistake

God must allow mistakes of judgment so that our faith may be in HIM alone. We must not rely upon our own understanding. We must rely upon God.

God will redeem any mistake we make if we will turn to Him and believe Him. We need to see this. There is only ONE purpose of God. If we deviate for any reason that ONE purpose of God remains. We need only turn back to God and He will bring us back on track. There may be natural circumstances that cannot be reversed. But there are never spiritual issues that cannot be fully redeemed in Christ.

He is saying, "You were right to believe Me. But you are wrong about what it means; you are wrong about what I am doing. Yet if you continue to believe I will show you the Truth about My purpose."

Faith is not a matter of seeing what God is doing. Rather, faith is a matter of seeing God. Or, to put it another way, I may not know where God is leading, but I can trust that it is sufficient that He knows.

When we think of, "a trial of faith," we often think that God is trying to find out if we have

faith. Or we think that God is seeing if we will give up believing. This isn't the point. The trial of faith is a PROVING of faith -- it is the proving and exposing of the real nature of my faith. It is the PROVING of the Truth upon which my faith is based. Thus, if I have misinterpreted God, the trial of faith will eventually reveal this. If I have fake or shallow faith, the trial of faith will give me the chance to turn to Christ and to have faith built.

In short, God will seek to guide us into the Truth -- Truth about Himself upon which we can anchor our faith. But as we saw, faith comes by embracing God's revelation of Christ. Thus, our faith is not proven as a thing unto itself. No. Our faith is proven as God unfolds Christ. The more we see Him, the stronger our faith becomes.

So while it is possible for us to be wrong in what we think God is doing, it is nevertheless always right to trust Him. We can include in our faith the willingness to allow God to show us the Truth about our wrong presumptions. We can say to the Lord, "I am not going to put my faith in what I think you are doing. Rather, I am going to put my faith in YOU -- and be willing to see the Truth about what you are doing."

We are told to do this in Proverbs 5. We are told, "Trust in the Lord with all of your heart. Lean not upon your own understanding." It isn't that God won't bring understanding. But it is, "by faith we understand." In other words, trust God. But trust Him to open your understanding. Don't presume ahead of time that you KNOW.

This is fundamental to faith. It is really fundamental to losing your life into the hands of Christ. God has never told us to put our faith in what we think He is doing. He has told us to put our faith in HIMSELF. You cannot go wrong trusting God.

Seeing God

Israel burnt their bridges with Egypt and trusted God. He led them out into a place where they could not provide for themselves. But then He suspended His provision for them. This made it seem as if God was unfaithful and that their faith in Him was a mistake. We will encounter many situations like this in our walk with Christ. That is because God is bringing us on into the fullness of Christ.

There are many examples: Job was a good and upright man – God said so. Yet horrible things happened to him. Abram believed God. Then year after year went by – each year making it more impossible for Abram or Sara to have children. Joseph had a dream. Then he was sold as a slave into Egypt. Moses believed God told him to deliver Israel. Then he spent forty years tending sheep. Israel believed God would take them to the Promised Land. They found themselves in a wilderness – thirsty and hungry. David was anointed king. He then lived for years as a hunted criminal. John the Baptist believed he was called of God as the one to prepare the way for the Lord. He found himself in prison awaiting execution. The apostles were promised by Jesus that they would reign and rule in His kingdom. They saw Jesus crucified. Were all of these people wrong to believe God? Wrong because

things did not go according to their expectations?
Was their faith a mistake?

Their faith was NOT a mistake. It was not a mistake even though in all cases what was promised did not come to pass immediately – and in some cases, did not come to pass at all the way THEY expected. It was not a mistake because they sought God – yes, at first for a THING – but they eventually sought God for Himself. And in the end -- they FOUND HIM.

Let's go back to one of our examples – that of Job. Job spends all that time trying to figure out how to move God. He says, "If God would only explain this to me." He says, "God, just tell me what to do and I'll do it." All he got from God was silence. It seems as if God was being unfair. But God was being absolutely faithful.

Job wanted to see the answer. But what God gave him was much better: Job saw God Himself.

***I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye sees you. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.
(Job 42:5-6)***

This is a lesson for all of us. When we begin to seek God in our lives we have no clue as to exactly what we are dealing with. We imagine it is about getting something from God, or about getting out of our trial. But it is not. It is really about seeing God Himself.

So all believers need to expect to encounter the impossible in their lives. But likewise we can expect that it is intended by God as the means by which we will see Him and find Him.