

CHAPTER ONE

FAITH FROM NEGATIVE TO POSITIVE

The Bible was written for people with no real faith. We all begin with a minus. If we have no faith, reading the Bible produces it, and if we have some faith we get more the same way. We don't acquire faith first and bring it to scripture. Scripture encourages faith "faith comes by hearing the Word of God" (Romans 10:17).

Many who don't believe don't read the Bible. They are sick and leave the medicine with the bottle tightly corked. People without faith should be warned that if they open the Bible they are likely to finish up as believers.

The Bible brings us to the cross people do not start moving mountains until they have been to mount Calvary. They could not move even a molehill or a mole. Real faith doesn't start in university. We'll have less if we go there without any! If we have not been to where Christ save not even a Doctorate in Theology will do.

The starting point is fired at the "green hill far away outside the city wall". From there, we tread on and on towards the mark of the high calling of God in Christ (Philippians 3:14). Walking in doubt is like going back to a Victorian age. We need a radar and faith provides it in this world of uncertainty.

"the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith as it is written, 'the just shall live by faith' (Romans 1:17). Believe God! It is life's knowledge and experience across the area of faith as widely as I can, whether people are well along the road or just and share treasures with them I have collected over a life time.

The plus life, one morning Jesus walked along the shingled edge of Lake Galilee and beckoned too few local fishermen. He said, "follow me!" (Matthew 4:19). At the moment everything began for them. Until then "Everything" had only been fish and then it became people, action, and changing world history, with ever-increasing faith, ever-increasing effects.

Jesus did not call them, smiles and wear sackcloth. Jesus didn't want to turn folk into stick in the – mud' people. He wasn't so conventional himself! The disciplines caught His bubbling spirit, which challenged the stuffy establishment. He showed them new things, especially faith and love, and then they conquered the world.

The primary truth about God is that He is the Deliverer, the emancipator, and the saviour. He is God only to the free. Faith is a venture that turns life into an adventure. Doubts get us nowhere. They are mooring ropes. Believing God means we cast off, like ships designed for riding the high seas and going somewhere. Faith inspires. Doubt paralyzes. Faith says "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" unbelief does nothing, faith is God is exciting.

We become what we were born to be only when we are "born again" by faith in Christ Jesus. Christ said, "If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed" (John 8:36). The world's greatest book on freedom is the Bible. The very idea of freedom came from the Bible not from Greece or Rome. Read it! Remember God made the first free nation ever seen on earth, Israel, and He wants to put a sense of liberty in our very soul. God opposes tyranny. The Gospel makes us the freeborn sons of God.

People have talked about those who "bury themselves in religion". Well, in religion may be, but

Christianity is Christ, and you can't call Christ a religion! He is the resurrection and the life. Christ said, "If you hold to my teaching.... Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8:31-32). He is no deceiver millions have found themselves gloriously free through the Gospel. His words do not strike us with rules and commandments. His yoke is easy and His burden is light. The Sermon on the Mount describes what Christians are naturally, what they want to do, not what people should be like.

When Paul the Apostle was preaching in an upstairs room in Trocas "there was many lights" there (Acts 20:8). The Bible writers have a way of saying that kind of thing when conveying a spiritual truth. There were two kinds of lights there, the oil lamps and the room full of Christians who were the true "many light". That is what believers are. "You were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord" (Ephesians 5:8). Believers are stars; unbelievers are black holes from which light never escapes. Faith makes us "children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation in which (we) shine like stars in the universe" (Philippians 2:15).

A Christian believer needs a church, just as a candle needs a candlestick, a tree needs soil and an electric bulb needs a socket. Without a candle stick a candle cannot stand; without soil a tree cannot grow; without a socket an electric bulb cannot shine. Neither can you. Without a fellowship, a Christian can neither stand nor grow nor shine.

When Christ beckoned to His first followers, they were unknown, quietly getting on with their own business, fishing on a lake. But He sent them out "to do business in great waters". (Psalm 107:23) and "to the uttermost parts of the earth" (Acts 1:8). In scripture, the sea represents nations, the waves roaring and turbulent. Christ once stilled the storm on the waters. He sends us to fish in every nation, through the waters of the water "roar and be troubled, as the Psalmist say in Psalm 46:3. The Lord speaks peace to the nations.

Jesus does not call us just to sit in church and vegetable as if in a rest home. We have a job to do, not a hobby, and the biggest job of all is to change the world. It is a joint effort, together and with Christ. He said, "I will build my church" (Matthew 16:18). The church is Christ's battle-axe. Every axe has a handle, a head and a cutting edge: the handle for the handler, the handle, a head for weight and the share edge to do the work. Whether we make the work of God possible by the thousand jobs that must be done or give weight to the work by our support or are the attacking and cutting edge of evangelism, we are all vitally needed. No man seemed stronger in faith than Paul the apostle. But when he heard that in Rome, Christians had appeared, he wrote to them and said, "I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong, that is that you and I may mutual faith. Each of us is like one sheet of paper that can't stand all able to stand on edge comfortable together, supporting one another. Every believer needs support. The world won't help. The world is no friend to the friends of Jesus.

Speaking of backing one another up together, the Bible uses a very striking illustration-oil! We should first understanding that oil in scripture always represents the Holy Spirit, when scripture talks about oil in lamps, anointing oil, cosmetic oil or perfumed oil, it is pictorial language for the work of the spirit. The idea originates from Psalm 133:1-2, "how good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity! It is like precious oil poured on the head", it was referring to the ceremony of pouring special perfumed oil upon the head of the High priest of Israel. Why is unity like oil? Because the Holy Spirit is oil and he brings unity. That is the link, the two verses, Ephesians 4:3-13 use the idea verse 3 states, "make every effort to keep the unity of the spirit through the bond of peace". Unity through the oil of the Spirit poured upon us is like the oil

poured upon us is like the oil poured upon us is like the oil pour on the head in Psalm 133. Then in Ephesians 4:12-13 it says, "Prepare God's people for works of service...until we all reach unity in the faith". So faith also comes into it; faith, the Holy Spirit, and unity all play their part.

Now scripture doesn't say "Become united be one"! It says, "KEEP the Unity"! We can't keep what doesn't exist, but unity does exist. We only have to maintain it. That unity is the presence of the Holy Spirit in every believer. This fact should be demonstrated. We are one in Him from the moment we believe.

Every born-again believer is "in Christ" together with all others "There is one body and one Spirit:", says Ephesians 4:4. The great body of believers in heaven and on earth.

Everything in the New Testament points to unity. We are to bear one another's burdens, for example, how can we do that if we have nothing to do with other Christians?

The New Testament ALWAYS assumes that all believers are attached to another locally. The epistle to the Ephesians is all about the church, and everything said is to the whole church, not to isolated individuals. It is the whole church, for example, that must have "the whole armor of God" (Ephesians 6:11), for it is a fighting force, an army.

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of unity. He is the bonding element. This bonding is a wonderful effect of faith in Christ. It is creative. It brings about a new kind of oneness not even known in the closest of earthly families. Next, oil represents light. The great national temple in Jerusalem had a famous golden lamp-stand, the seven-branched "menorah" is described in Exodus chapters 25, 35, 37, 39. The Romans carried it off when they plundered Jerusalem AD70, and it is depicted on the Arch of Titus see daily by tourists in Rome. The "Menorah" is the badge of modern Israel.

This lamp-stand or lamp standard had neither joint nor weld, being made out single piece of gold. Each arm had a single piece of gold. Each arm had a lamp a mere wick, and the oil came from a single source, the central stem. The seven lights shone as one light and had no shadow of itself-Jesus talked about oil in lamps, a symbol of the Holy Spirit.

The apostle John in the book of Revelation describes Christ standing among seven golden lamp-stands, each lamp standard representing a church. Also he said that before the throne, seven lamps were blazing. These are seven Spirits of God (Revelation 4:5) the seven flames of each candle labrum had a single fuel source-the Spirit of God, casting a single light. There is one Spirit as we read in 1Corinthians 12:4-11, though manifested in many gifts, ministries and operations.

If believers shine and bring a little brightness into our drab world, it is by the Holy Spirit; otherwise they are dead wicks. A wick can't shine without fuel, no matter how hard it tries. Christ sets hearts aglow, and we can blaze for God. Nobody just believes. If we believe, we shine.

However, one candle is lit from another. The fire the light of God is transmitted. That is why we are here. Paul the apostle spent only a few days introducing the Gospel to the people Thessalonica but a little later in letter to them Paul congratulation their enthusiasm saying "your faith in God has become known everywhere". (1 Thessalonians 1:8). Faith lights the lamp that show the way "send the light"!

We begin perhaps with no faith-a minus. But at the cross, the flame of faith leaps into our hearts, bringing the Holy Spirit, Salvation and Forgiveness. At that place. Christ's infinite work is accomplished, and faith makes it ours. We believe and receive. The Holy Spirit translate all Jesus did us into our personal experience.

We are the lights of the world. The world to think religion is dying, but in vast areas of the world the

death rattle is heard in the throat of secularism. As Christ is resurrection, godlessness is death – they are synonyms. People are turning to the things of the Holy Spirit.

That is the situation, have faith, be filled with the Spirit, and burn for God! Let the seven-branched lamp standard be ablaze if you believe, and I believe and we together strive, the Holy Spirit will come down and nation will receive.

AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE EFFECTIVENESS OF FAITH IN THE LIFE OF A CHRISTIAN

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