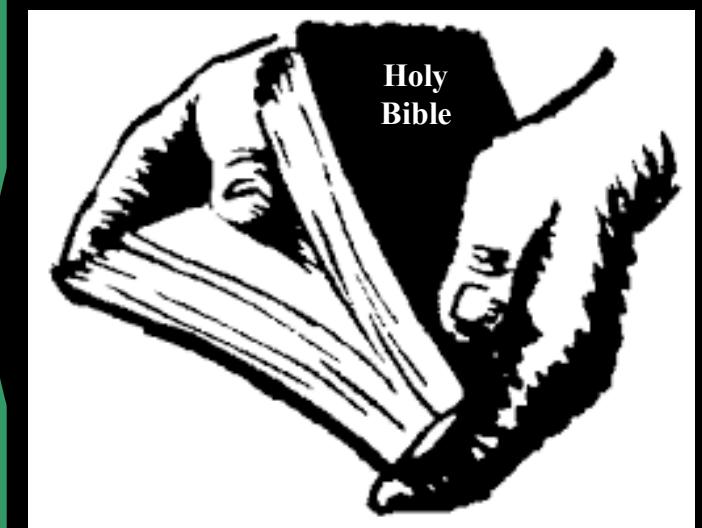


FAITH



Strictly
By The
Book

Copyright
2015 Ocala,
Florida
Rev. John
Marinelli

"All Rights
Reserved"

Written By Rev.
John Marinelli

Preface

The Purpose of this Book is to lead Christians back to a life of Faith. The author's goal and hope is that the reader will realize the true value of faith in everyday situations and practice his or her faith as a lifestyle.

The book will be presented in print as well as an eBook format so as to provide easy access and free downloads from multiple websites.

Acknowledgements are offered to my wife for her imput and typo searching abilities. Additional acknowledgement is made to the Holy Spirit of God for the authorship of this book in its preparation, expressions and rational.

About The Author

Rev. John Marinelli



John Marinelli is married and the father of two grown children. He is the co-founder, with his wife Marilyn, of the Fellowship of Christian Poets, a worldwide non-profit Christian ministry that currently hosts the largest Christian poetry library in the world. He and Marilyn are also co-authors of "Together Forever" a marital enrichment home seminar. He is also the author of "Rhyme Time", a children's poetry book.

John is an author, poet, playwright, songwriter and an ordained minister. A collection of his Christian poems is displayed on three foot by four-foot signs in the 250-acre nature sanctuary of Holy Land USA in Bedford, Virginia.

John is a member of the American Legion Post #347. He is also the Vice President of Have A Heart For Companion Animals, Inc., a 501 c-3 not for profit animal concern organization...and the producer of The Johnny Mello Show, a 50s & 60s musical show and dance that raises money for this organization. John enjoys being retired and volunteering as its chief fundraiser. John is also the founder and President of Marinelli Marketing Services, a marketing consulting firm that specializes in helping small businesses to grow and become successful.

Additional books written by John Marinelli are: The Art of Writing Christian Poetry, Forever Thoughts From The Heart of God, Think About It, Pulpit Poems, The Samson Trail To Victory, and Biblical Story Poems. Many are published in an eBook format and are free as a special gift to download at www.christianpoets.com.

Introduction

What is Faith? Why is it so important? How do we obtain it? Where did it come from? How is it used in everyday life situations? What kinds of faith are there? How does it benefit me? We will address these questions and more in the pages that follow.

Most Christians do not understand what Faith is, how to use it in daily life and how to obtain it. It's been lost in the shuffle and substituted by church membership, head knowledge and a mysterious sort of hope. You can prove this to yourself by listening to what folks are talking about. The topics of discussion are more on the lines of what the doctor said or other natural life experiences.

Did you know that faith is a supernatural experience that propels the believer into another realm beyond the natural? We will see, in this teaching, how faith can defeat the devil, prosper the believer, transform the situation from bad to good and bring you closer to God in the process.

We will discuss the application of faith in Spiritual Warfare, Spiritual Growth, Fellowship With God, Salvation, Obedience, and lots more. I am excited to share all that the Spirit has revealed to me. However, as a diligent student of the bible, I will be using lots of scripture references to validate what I say so there is no doubt that it is of God and applicable for today's Christian Living.

Isaiah 25:1

"O Lord, thou art my God; I will exalt thee, I will praise thy name; for thou hast done wonderful things; thy counsels of old are faithfulness and truth."



Faith

Strictly By The Book

To understand faith, we need to take a look at the Holy Bible. It will reveal all that we need to know so we can discover the necessity for faith in our lives. So let's take a quick trip into the scriptures.

1. Without faith it is impossible to please God. (Hebrews 11:6)
2. Faith comes to us by hearing the Word of God. (Romans 10:17)
3. Faith is both the substance and evidence of our hope. Hebrews 11:1)
4. Faith is believing what is not as though it were, (Romans 4:17)
5. Faith is supernatural, a gift of the Holy Spirit. (Galatians 5:22-23)
6. We live by the faith of the Son of God. (Galatians 2:20)
7. A measure of Faith is given to every believer. (Romans 12:3)
8. Jesus is the author and finisher of our faith. (Romans 12:2)
9. Faith without works is dead. (James 2:14)
10. We walk by faith and not by sight, looking for those things that are not seen by the world... that are eternal. (II Corinthians 5:7 & 4:18)
11. God's Word is a hook to hang our faith on. (Matthew 4:4)
12. Faith shields us from the fiery darts of Satan. (Ephesians 6:16)

There are a lot of definitions of faith. Its meaning depends on who you are talking to and what they believe. I prefer to go strictly by the book but not any book. I look to the bible. ***"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."*** Hebrews 11:1 KJV

Faith is both the substance and the evidence of what is hoped for. This definition is different from our dictionary. Here's one of several definition from Webster's dictionary:

"A firm belief in something for which there is no proof): complete trust"

This is the closest definition to what the bible says. However it is far from any biblical reality. I say this because biblical faith has all kinds of proof. One has only to read the 11th chapter of Hebrews and study the hero after hero of faith. The key phrase is, "By Faith." If that's not enough, there are countless books on how God was moved by faith to deliver His people and change the course of history. Finally, the committed Christian can look back into his or her own walk

with God to see God's hand at work as a result of having faith in God's written Word.

We are taught by science that we must see some evidence before we can believe. Biblical faith does not demand seeing to believe. Its ability to hope is its evidence that what is not yet seen does really exist and will show up in God's good timing. This is opposite to the teachings of science. Believe to see rather than see to believe.

However, faith by the book is not blind faith. It has its roots deep into the truth of God's Word. It requires a hook to hang itself on in order to become active. Thus, the Word of God provides over 3,000 hooks. We call them promises that were spoken by God in times past and recorded by dedicated men in a book called the Bible.

Contrary to popular teaching, faith is not mental delusion, presumption or self-deception, but a work of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God.

Types of Faith

Human Faith is a basic characteristic. The faith that they exhibit is soulish and self centered. It is not biblical faith. There is a difference. However, "All men do not have faith" (**2 Thessalonians 3:2**) (He is speaking of biblical faith.)

Many non Christians exhibit faith, that the chair will support their weight; that the sun will rise bringing another day; that life will go on as it has for thousands of years; that fate will smile upon them with riches and fame. Human faith is our own brand that plays out in our soul. It is based upon Self gratification and the will to survive.

Biblical Faith, on the other hand, is based upon what God has said and who God is. It always leads us to an abiding trust in God and a serious dependency upon Him to work everything together for our good. (**Romans 8:28**)

Blind Faith...There is such a thing as, "**Blind Faith.**" This is not really faith at all but rather an excuse to escape the voice of God. If you believe a thing without question, you open yourself to a flood of confusion, demonic attacks and disappointments. I say this because "Blind Faith" has no foundation or reference.

True faith rests upon the Word of God and His character. It justifies our belief and gives purpose to our hope.

Some say that there are levels of faith that we obtain as we grow spiritually but I disagree with that premise. Listen to what **Romans 12:3** says, “*For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.*”

This scripture clearly teaches that no one person is better than another. We are all equal in the sight of God and all have “A Measure of Faith.” I may use my measure of faith to accomplish great things and you may use your measure for less noticeable things but we both have no reason to think of ourselves as more spiritual or better than.

Hebrews 12:2 tells us, ‘*looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*’ He authored our faith and He has finished it. After all, it is His faith that we accept and live by and that dwells in us. **Galatians 2:20**

Great Faith...Luke 7:2-10 holds the secret to understanding and exercising faith.

And a centurion's slave, who was highly regarded by him, was sick and about to die. 3 When he heard about Jesus, he sent some Jewish elders asking Him to come and save the life of his slave. 4 When they came to Jesus, they earnestly implored Him, saying, “He is worthy for You to grant this to him; 5 for he loves our nation and it was he who built us our synagogue.” 6 Now Jesus started on His way with them; and when He was not far from the house, the centurion sent friends, saying to Him, “Lord, do not trouble Yourself further, for I am not worthy for You to come under my roof; 7 for this reason I did not even consider myself worthy to come to You, but just say the word, and my servant will be healed. 8 “For I also am a man placed under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to this one, ‘Go!’ and he goes, and to another, ‘Come!’ and he comes, and to my slave, ‘Do this!’ and he does it.” 9 Now when Jesus heard this, He marveled at him, and turned and said to the crowd that was following Him, “I say to you, not even in Israel have I found such great faith.” 10 When those who had been sent returned to the house, they found the slave in good health.

Here Are A Few Points To Consider

1. There was an acknowledgement of the spiritual authority and power of Jesus. We didn't hear such doubt as; "If it be thy will." The centurion recognized Jesus' authority.
2. His request was to speak the Word and he knew it would happen.
3. When faith rests on the Word of God, things happen.
4. Jesus marveled at seeing such a trust and belief in His Authority and said this was the greatest faith He had ever seen in Israel.

So, great faith recognizes Jesus as the ultimate authority and trust in Him to accomplish all that His Word declares.

¹⁸ *But someone will say, "You have faith, and I have works." Show me your faith without your ^[a] works, and I will show you my faith by my ^[b] works.*

¹⁹ *You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble!*

²⁰ *But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?*

²¹ *Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar?*

²² *Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works, faith was made perfect?*

²³ *And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness."*

^[d] *And he was called the friend of God.*

²⁴ *You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only.*

²⁵ *Likewise, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out another way?*

²⁶ *For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.*

(James 2:14-26)

Faith must have a purpose. It could be the hope of receiving an answer to a prayer or a belief that a vision or Word from God will come true. The believing initiates the action and motivates the work. Without it, faith is dead or non-existent.

Godly Faith.... Finally and most importantly, there is the faith of God. It is a gift of the Spirit to every believer for the expressed purpose of living life here and now in the flesh in this world. It is connected to God's will and purposes for His children. It is completely supernatural in its origin and nature. It comes with confidence and assurance that what our Heavenly Father spoke into our lives will indeed come true.



Building Blocks of Faith

There are several building blocks that produce faith in a believer. Divine revelation is one. Personal belief is another. Obedience to the Word is also a building block. However, we cannot forget Hearing From God and Personal Experience.

Hearing from God is how we obtain faith. **Romans 10:17** says, “*So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*” We must keep ourselves in a posture that supports hearing from God. Going to bars, watching porno films or “R” rated movies will not foster an open channel to God. That channel is through daily bible reading and prayer. The point is...are you listening? You cannot hear if you are not listening.

Remember Jesus’ words in **Mark 8:18**, “*having eyes, see ye not? and having ears, hear ye not? and do ye not remember?*” They see but don’t see. They hear but do not hear. We do not want to be like them.

If faith comes by hearing, that means that it is not our faith. We do not have enough to get the job done. God has to give us His faith so we can use it to master every experience. Listen to Paul in **Galatians 2:20**, “*I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.*” KJV. It is His faith that overcomes. Ours is just not adequate.

So...by hearing, we get the faith of God because Jesus lives within us and His faith becomes ours. We need only to believe to tap into it. It is this faith that we live by every day. His faith is strong and unwavering. It is based upon a total surrender to God and His will. It does not operate independently outside of God’s will. Jesus said, “*And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him.*”(**John 8:29**)

If we adopt a total surrender to God’s will and seek Him before we act, we will know His will and know that we are living by His faith.

Another building block of faith is Personal Experience. If we walk by faith, in the spirit and not in the flesh, we will no doubt see and experience God in a number of ways. We will hear his voice. We will see in reality what we have been praying

and hoping for, and we will build a history of the Move of God in our lives. This history is another building block of faith because we can look back and say to ourselves, “God was there for me when this or that happened and I made it through. If He was there then, He will be there now.” Thus enters confidence and trust in God that keeps us from wavering.

I have had more than one Christian say to me, “God talks to you?” They look with a puzzling attitude like, “How can that be?” I usually just laugh and tell them, “sure, He talks to me and I talk to Him.” It’s called Fellowship and I enjoy it most every day.

Faith & Reality

Faith is not a denial of reality. It is not pretending you don’t have a problem. It is, however, holding fast to an unseen reality that God says, not only exists, but also can be obtained. (**II Corinthians 4:18**) *“While we look not at the things, which are seen, but at the things, which are not seen: for the things, which are, seen are temporal; but the things, which are not seen, are eternal”*. As Christians, seeking to walk by faith, our eyes should always be on Jesus and what His Word says. We find ourselves looking for something we cannot see but know is there.

We do not say, “I am not in pain” when we are. We acknowledge and deal with it the best we can but our eyes are ever focused on the Word of God and His promises. The prophet Isaiah said this about that... (**Isaiah 53:1-5**)

*“Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed? **2** For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. **3** He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.*

4 *Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. **5** But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.”*

The key is to look towards the power of God to accomplish what He says in His Word and not towards the problem. We are always faced with a choice.

Whose report will we believe? Do we see only the facts and ignore the Word? Or do we believe God's Word and refuse to settle for the consequences of what the facts are saying. It is my feeling that if the bible says we are healed by His stripes, we are. We can, with confidence, hold fast to that truth and make it ours. If Abraham staggered not at what God told him, we can do no less. We stagger not at the Word. We believe it with all our hearts.

I see this a lot in TV commercials. They always say things like, "I am dealing with **MY**, whatever it is, but this pill has helped". Then there is a list of side effects. I always say, "It may have attacked my body but it is not mine." I see it and will deal with it but I do not lay claim to it. My eyes are on the unseen...the Power of God to intervene and deliver me as the word says. "*The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them.*" (**Psalm 34:7**) Either it's true or it's not. I happen to believe it's true and I hold fast to it.



Faith Requires Action

It is the Holy Spirit of God that leads us into all truth (**John 16:13**) and it is that truth that becomes the hook that we hang our faith on. His first leading will always take us to the bible where we can hear God speaking through the Prophets, The Apostles, and Jesus, His only begotten son. However, faith must be associated with a work to be active. (**John 6:29**) "*Jesus answered and said unto them, this is the work of God that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.*"

The work of God is to believe on Jesus, the Christ or Messiah. However, what exactly are we to believe? Listen to what Jesus said as recorder by **John 3:16**... "*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*"

Notice that Jesus is telling us about God, the Father and how much He loves us. Our faith can easily rest on this truth. It is a hook to hang our faith upon. Our believing it with all our hearts activates it and it becomes the Work of God. Faith is always linked to a biblical truth. It never sits idle or inactive.

We can trust in our Father God, that what Jesus said is true and we can be fully persuaded that what God said will come to pass in our lives. However, hearing the Word of God but not believing it makes it null & void. (**James 2:14-19 & 26**) KJV

¹⁴ “What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? ¹⁵ If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, ¹⁶ and one of you says to them, “Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,” but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit?

¹⁷ Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.”¹⁸ But someone will say, “You have faith, and I have works.” Show me your faith without your ^[a] works, and I will show you my faith by my ^[b] works.¹⁹ You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble!²⁰ For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also”

When a person believes in a God-given promise, faith begins to rise up in their spirit. The process of believing leads to obedience to the truth which is evident in some sort of work that ultimately brings, “*that which is hoped for*” into existence.

Living Faith has both belief & obedience but believing must come first. Many Christians get it backwards and end up saying that because I do good works, I have faith. Their good works are not born out of divine revelation or a belief in the vision shown them by God. There must be a promise from God that creates the good work. We believe that God said it and because He said it, it will come to pass. Because we believe this, we join in the work, partnering with the Holy Spirit to make it a reality.

If our, “*That which is hoped For*” is outside of God’s will, we can believe all we want but it will not come true. That’s why we first examine the vision or Word from God to be sure it is in fact from God. When we know that we know, we believe, adhering to the promise, even if it is beyond belief. Even if family and friends think we are crazy.

God told Abraham that he would be the father of many nations. He told Noah that he was about to flood the Earth and to build an ark. He told Moses that it was time to deliver His children from the bondage of Egypt. He told Lot that He was going to destroy Sodom & Gomorrah. In each case they were to believe that what God said would come to pass and that they were to play a significant role in His plan.

The point is...God told each of them. *What has God told you?* He has told all of us about the future and what we should be doing, about our enemy, Satan and how to defeat him, About sickness and how to gain victory over it, about our personal salvation and how to obtain it and all the other promises in the bible. We must have a “**God told me**” experience in order to activate our faith. Once activated, our believing it sustains it and holds it before our eyes until the power of God brings it into reality.

Faith & Feelings

Faith is not based upon our feelings. If I do not feel saved, it doesn’t mean that I am not saved. Remember, Salvation is based upon the Word of God. He tells us what is true. Our feelings often disagree with the Word of God. “*Let God be true, but every man a liar.*” (**Romans 3:4**). If our feelings do not line up with “Biblical Truth”, we should always call our feelings a lie and let God’s Word stand before us.

Here are some excerpts from an article on Faith Verses Feelings written by Kenneth E. Hagan, a renowned bible teacher and evangelist...

“The beloved man of faith, Smith Wigglesworth, once said, “I can’t understand God by feelings. I can’t understand the Lord Jesus Christ by feelings. I can only understand God the Father and Jesus Christ by what the Word says about them. God is everything the Word says He is. We need to get acquainted with Him through the Word.” Too many people try to get acquainted with God through their personal feelings. When they feel good, they think God has heard their prayers. If they don’t feel particularly good, they think He has not heard them. Their faith is based on their feelings whereas it should be based on God’s word.”

Thomas was one who based his faith upon his feelings, upon what his physical senses told him. He said that he would not believe that Jesus was raised from the dead unless he could see with his own eyes the prints of the nails in Jesus’ hands, and touch the nail prints with his own hands. That’s why he is known as “Doubting Thomas.”

He relied on what he could see and touch, not on what God had to say. We have so many “Doubting Thomas” Christians today – those who believe only what they feel, believe only what they can see, hear, or touch. But real faith in God is based upon the Word of God. Real faith in the Word says, “If God says it is true, it is.” Believing God is to believe His Word.

If our faith is based upon feelings, then we are just using natural human faith. We cannot get spiritual results with natural human faith. We have to use scriptural faith, Bible faith, believing in God's Word. If our faith is based upon the Word of God, then we believe the Word regardless of evidences that may or may not satisfy our physical senses.

Emotions are a vital part of what it means to be a human being. However, all of us recognize that there are good and evil emotions. This is clearly shown in Galatians Chapter five. If we are "Born Again" we are made in the image of God and redeemed in Jesus Christ. But often our emotions confuse and mislead us.

So what is the proper place for emotions in a Christian's walk of faith? I have already stated what Paul told the Galatians in Chapter five...that we are to crucify the deeds of the flesh and embrace the fruit of the Spirit.

Our enemy, the devil, according to what Peter said in **I Peter 5:8** "*Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:*" All he needs to do is give us a little push into the flesh (to operate with and through our feeling) It could be a suggestion or a statement communicated directly into your mind that stirs up resentment, hate, jealousy, prideful ego and all the other deeds of the flesh. The Apostle Paul addresses this very issue in **Galatians 3:1 & 3:3** "*O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you? Are ye so foolish having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?*"

The sum of the matter is to rely upon, adhere to and live by the Word of God, not your feelings.

Hebrews 4:12

"For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."



Faith Verses Fact

Faith and fact have been at odds for centuries. The premise of Faith is, believe it first and you will eventually see it. Fact, on the other hand says, don't believe anything until you see it first. Thus is the age old conflict between Science and Religion. It is also the basis for the controversy between evolution and creationism. However, both are a belief system that shapes the way we think.

The evolutionary scientist looks at life through his or her beliefs. This criteria shapes daily thinking, actions and lifestyle. It excludes God because He is not necessary. It strips human life of its dignity because there is no rational for its existence. Life is just there by chance with no divine purpose or absolutes.

Those of us that believe in creation see life based upon what God has revealed to us...things like we are created in His image, there is a purpose for our being alive at this time and in this place. Life now becomes precious and demands respect. We are accountable to God for how we live and treat others. We believe and thus see whereas they see and draw conclusions, most of which are wrong.

That being said, let's look at faith in our belief system. I will use Abraham as a case study to explain myself. **Romans 4:17** says, (as it is written: "*I have made thee a father of many nations*"), *in the presence of Him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead and calleth those things which are not, as though they were.*"

Notice that God called those things that were not as though they were. **This is the basis of all faith.** We look to God and listen for His voice. He will always call things into our life that do not exist and speak of them as though they do. With Abraham, it was to be the father of many nations. What has he said or called into your life? Abraham did not waiver at God's statement, even though Sarah was beyond child bearing age and he was approaching 100. Can you imagine telling folks around you that you will be the father of many nations? They might think you are a bit crazy but that's exactly what Abraham did. His name was Abram and it was changed to Abraham which I've been told, literally means "Father of Many Nations"

Here are a few points to consider

1. The facts did not line up with the vision. Sarah's womb was dead.
2. The vision, to be the father of many nations, was way beyond Abraham's ability to accomplish it.
3. Faith always depends upon what God says, not what we see or even facts that may or may not exist.
4. True faith is believing that God, who spoke it, can and will accomplish it. There can be no doubt because God is in charge and He never fails.
5. Time is not a factor when exercising faith. Abraham waited almost 20 years to see Isaac and died in faith never seeing the end result while living on the earth. But God still brought it about and I am sure he saw its accomplishment from heaven.
6. God's Word, spoken over us requires believing something supernatural that only God can accomplish. If it were natural, it would be left to our ingenuity with no need for God's intervention.

When we believe God, we open up ourselves to criticism because what we believe is beyond the comprehension of our critics. I was once told that you can not share a big vision with a small minded individual. He will not be able to handle it. That's why they criticize. They are small minded people.

Think about it. God told Noah to build an ark because it was going to rain. It had never rained before that time. The facts did not line up with the vision yet Noah was obedient and took the flack from all the naysayers of his day until he entered the ark.

Sometimes we are asked to believe and even act in the face of great opposition. Our faith does have consequences and we must weather every storm that rises up as a result of our standing in faith. Here's a hook to hang your faith on, **Romans 8:28**, "*And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.*"

I remember a time, about 34 years ago when I was the Executive Director of a Chamber of Commerce in south Florida. I was recently divorced, alone and chasing every skirt in town. I also had just returned to God after a brief encounter with backsliding from faith into fear and other stuff. Then I met my current wife. She was single and a great looking skirt, better than those of my previous

acquaintance. I even hired her as my office manager and we worked together for almost a year.

I had a policy not to date those I worked with but one day, as sure as I can be, I heard the voice of God in my head telling me I could be with this lady. That one Word from God told me that she was not just another skirt to chase around town and that I could trust her to be my wife without question.

This was hard for me to accept, even though it came from God, because I had been hurt in a previous marriage where marital trust had been broken. I had to believe God when He said, "you can be with this one." So, I broke my own rule and pursued my heart's desire. We have been together ever since.

I tell you this personal story because I want you to know that God always knows best. He will speak into your life. If you are listening, you will hear amazing things that will even change you and your destiny.

Faith Always Has Opposition

My decision to marry my office manager met with lots of opposition. My so-called friends felt I should stay single and keep running with them. My family wasn't sure that I was doing the right thing. My kids wanted me for themselves so they could run all over me. My bosses wanted me single so I would continue to put in 50-hour weeks, except for one who wanted me to marry her daughter. However, I chose to obey the voice of God and follow my heart.



Galatians 5:1

"Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage."



Faith & Spiritual Growth

Growing Spiritually should be the goal and desire of everyone that follows Christ. If we profess to be a Christian, we are bound by the teaching of Jesus. Listen to what He says, “*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.*” (**Matthew 16:24**)

Denying oneself is to reject the appetites of the flesh in order to be filled with the Spirit. **Galatians 5:19-25** says, “*Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, ²⁰Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, ²¹Envying, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.*”

²²“*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, ²³Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. ²⁴And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. ²⁵If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.*” Notice the differences between the fruit of the Spirit and the deeds of the flesh.

Faith is listed as a fruit. It grows as we walk in the Spirit. This total abandonment of self, with all its evil deeds dies and we are free to receive God in our spirit. **Ezekiel 36:26** says “*A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.*”

We must die so God can raise us up into newness of life. Look at **Galatians 2:12**, “*Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead. Romans 6:4* says it like this, “*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. Newness of life comes to us through death, burial and resurrection, not ours but that of Jesus who was the propitiation or substitute for our sins.*”

He died that we might live and fellowship with God the Father. Listen again to the Old Testament prophet, Isaiah, who said about Jesus, long before He was born, “*But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.*”

Isaiah 53:5

So, living by the faith of the Son of God, we deny our sin nature to begin a new walk in the Spirit with God. Faith grows in us along with the other fruits of the Spirit, which ultimately changes our thought patterns, lifestyle and destiny. That is how Faith operates in our spiritual growth. Without the death of Self, there is no resurrection and no transformation of thoughts and no new lifestyle.

Someone might say, like I said years ago, “Hey, this is me, good or bad, I am what I am and that will never change.” Back then, if you told me I had to crucify my feelings, suppressing the deeds of the flesh, I’d call you a nut. It makes no sense. I lived for me and I was the boss of me in everything. I sat on the throne of my own life as king.

This “Me” mindset eventually led down a road of sin and sorrow. Every time I tried to do right or think right thoughts, I failed and found myself back in the pigpen of sin. Then I began to read the bible and came across these scriptures:

1. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8)
2. For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23)
3. For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. (Romans 6:23)
4. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. (John 3:16)
5. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. (Romans 10:13)
6. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. (Romans 5:10)
7. For just as through one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so also through the one man's obedience the many will be *made righteous* (Romans 5:19)

- 8. Walk in the Spirit & you will not fulfill the deeds of the flesh.
(Galatians 5:16)
- 9. As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: (Colossians 2:6)
- 10. I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. (Romans 12:1)
- 11. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. (Romans 12:2)
- 12. And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit. (Ephesians 5:18)

I had to make a choice about what the scriptures said. On the one hand, I could see the bible as ancient literature. On the other hand, I could believe it as truly the Living Word of God. I chose to see it as God's Word for me and hung on to it for dear life.

Then I read another scripture that quoted Jesus. He said, "*But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.*" (**Matthew 4:4**)

I saw it and still see it as God speaking directly to me. It was the voice of God telling me to live by the Word of God.

Jesus paid the price for my sin. He lived the life I could not live because of sin and died on a cruel cross, paying the penalty for my transgressions. I missed the mark of God's righteousness but Jesus did not. He is my Savior and that is why I follow Him.

Romans 5:8

“But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”

Faith & Spiritual Warfare



Faith is always tested. If we Christians were never tested, then we wouldn't need to have faith. Therefore, faith is more valuable in hard times than good because it proves our allegiance and reliance upon God. When Christians take God at His Word, they are holding up the shield of faith and preventing injury. Oftentimes, strong faith people can model this principle and even use their shield to protect others. (Taken from Sharefaith Media)

The shield of Faith is a defensive weapon that is designed to protect the child of God in the spiritual battle. This is made clear in **Ephesians 6:16**: "*Above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.*"

You probably didn't know that you are currently in a life and death battle with Satan. The prize is your soul. Will it be filled with the fruit of God's Spirit? or will it fall in battle to become full of sin and debauchery? You can be the image of God here on the earth or the image of Satan. The reflection is your choice. It will show up in your lifestyle and attitudes. The bible says, "*For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.*" (**Galatians 5:17**)

We are commanded to put on the whole armor of God and lift up our shield of faith to quench the enemy's fiery darts. (**Ephesians 6:13**)

A fiery dart can be an impure thought, a feeling of inadequacy, a critical statement by family or friends, an accusation against our character, a lie about us, and a whole lot of other things. They are meant to bring us to depression, suicide, low self-worth, and hopelessness. However, your shield of faith can and will stop them from entering into your soul and causing damage.

I know you may be asking, "How does the shield work? Remember, faith activates by believing the Word of God. If He says you are loved and accepted (**Ephesians 1:6**) and you hold fast to that when someone says you are good for nothing or rejects you, your belief in what God has said about you will help you to overcome the attack. (Read my other book, The Battle of The Ages. It's a free download from www.christianpoets.com)

Who cares what others think or say? God loves me and accepts me and that's all that really counts. Paul put it this way in **Romans 8:31 and following...**

“31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? 32 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? 33 Who will bring a charge against God’s elect? God is the one who justifies; 34 who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. 35 Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? 37 But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. 38 For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

As I have said before, the Word of God is the hook that we hang our faith on. When we believe what God has said, we stand strong and the fiery darts of our mortal enemy are quenched. They cannot harm us any more because we do not take them to heart. We reject them, replacing them with God's Word.



Psalm 34:7

“The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them.”

Faith & Obedience

You cannot demonstrate faith without obedience. What would have happened if Noah didn't build the ark? What if Moses refused to return to Egypt to do God's bidding? What if Jesus ran away from Calvary's cross? Thank the Lord that all of those mentioned above were obedient. Their obedience was, for sure, due to an undying belief that what God said would actually happen. Because God said so, they stepped up to the plate and played the game.

Now let's look at a few situations where God said and the man of God did not obey and observe the consequences.

First is the disobedience of Adam, the 1st man. The disobedience of this one man caused the entire human race to plunge into sin and be stripped of the indwelling Spirit of God. Paul tells us of the event in **Romans 5:12-14**.

"¹² Wherefore, as by one-man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: ¹³ (For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. ¹⁴ Nevertheless, death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come. (KJV)

Let's continue with verse 17-21 KJV

¹⁷ For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.)

¹⁸ Therefore as by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.

¹⁹ For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. ²⁰ Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: ²¹ That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord."

So what really happened? God gave Adam a command, telling him that failure to comply would result in his demise. *“But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.”* (**Genesis 2:17**) The devil came along and deceived Eve but Adam, ignoring God’s warning, willfully disobeyed. This is what Paul says is **“One Man’s disobedience”**.

Adam did die as a result of his sin. He died spiritually. When God created him, He breathed into him the breath of life and he became a living soul. (**Genesis 2:7**) He lived on but with a dead spirit. God’s spirit departed from him and he populated a world full of Zombies. We, without God, are surely the, ”Walking Dead”

But wait, there is good news, Jesus enters the human drama but comes by way of a Virgin birth. This was essential because Adam’s DNA was tainted with sin and caused everyone coming through his lineage to be of a fallen nature. He was a prototype, the 1st man.

Jesus is referred to by Paul as the Last Adam. “And so it is written, the **first** man **Adam** was made a living soul; the last **Adam** was made a quickening spirit.” (**I Corinthians 15:45**) His DNA was pure, free from sin, which made Him acceptable as the spotless Lamb of God, whose coming was foretold by the prophets and whose life was sacrificed on the cross of Calvary as a penalty for the sins of mankind.

Now listen to Jesus as He refers to Himself as recorded by John. (**John 3:16**)
“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

By the way...everlasting life is not a life separate from God that last forever. It is, however, the life of God, which is everlasting, being placed back into humanity, in particular, every “whosoever” that believes on the only begotten Son of God.

Here’s what Jesus said to Nicodemus, a religious ruler in Israel, *“Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.* ⁴ *Nicodemus saith unto him, how can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?*

⁵Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water (physical birth) and of the Spirit (Spiritual Birth), he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. ⁶That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. (**John 3:1-6**)

Now let's look at one more act of disobedience. This time the bad consequences are restricted to the one who disobeyed, Jonah. You'll remember the story when God told Jonah to go to Nineveh with a proclamation that God would destroy that city because of its great sin. (**Check it out in the book of Jonah**)

But Jonah flees the voice of God, running away because that city was so very wicked and he feared them. So he books passage on a boat, is caught in a huge storm and ends up tossed into the sea as an appeasement to the gods. But that's not all. He is swallowed by a great fish and spends three days in its belly fighting for his life.

He cries out to God from the belly of the monster fish (Probably a whale) and is heard by God who commands the fish to dump Jonah on the shore. You know the rest of the story...he goes to Nineveh, delivers his message, the city repents and life goes on.

The point is...sometimes disobedience puts you in a life and death struggle inside the belly of a whale. Today, that whale in your life could be drugs, unemployment, divorce, sickness and a host of other difficult circumstances. If you find yourself there, don't forget to cry out to God through a repentant heart.

Faith requires obedience. It is always a call to believe God for something that is beyond your natural ability. It is a supernatural event that God wants you to be a part of and believe in. He offers His own faith for you to use in believing and asked only that you put away all, "I can't do this" feelings.

Stick to your Standards Faith As A Lifestyle

Walking in faith is a lifestyle. You have to be there all the time. If you pop in and out when it suits you, you'll miss the richness of a Spiritual relationship with God. If I were to relate lifestyle as being a drunk you would automatically

understand. That means I drink all the time to excess until I am intoxicated. That's easy to understand. However, when I speak of being intoxicated with the Spririt, most would say that I am a fanatic. I've gone off the deep end and so forth. **Ephesians 5:18** says, "*And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;*"

I am reminded of what an old minister from my past said about this scripture. He would say that the true meaning of this verse is...if you're going to be intoxicated, be intoxicated with the Holy Ghost because there is no hangover or ill effects. Instead, you experience Love, Joy, Peace, longsuffering and all the rest of the fruit of the Spirit. It will explode inside of you. It is intoxicating to say the least.

Faith as a lifestyle requires a positive perspective. It avoids depression, poor me attitudes, gossip, and all other negative emotions. Its focus is on what God is saying and how that affects the day I live in. It is a die-hard commitment to doing God's will, not my own. It is a persistence that keeps on keeping on until it breaks through every barrier. It trusts in the Lord at all times and if it should fail, it's quick to seek the Lord for help in being restored.

We are to live faith and speak faith in every situation. **Luke 6:45** tells us that,

"A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh." KJV

We put good in our heart that we gleamed from the biblical fields of truth knowing that because it is stored up inside of us we will automatically speak it out in times of need, thereby confessing faith. The NAS Bible offers this from **Matthew 15:11** "*It is not what enters into the mouth that defiles the man, but what proceeds out of the mouth, this defiles the man.*"

Speaking the right thing can only happen if we have the right thing inside of us. Otherwise we draw from what is there, evil and negativity that raises it head when we least expect it.



II Corinthians 5:7 says, “*We walk by faith and not by sight.*” That should be the lifestyle of every Christian. Walking by faith in an upside down corrupted world is hard. We are forever attached by things and people that try to lead us back into a non-faith lifestyle. The Spirit of God stands in the gap between the two styles of life beckoning to us to come...to believe what He tells us and not what we see. Our sensory perception can deceive us into thinking we are doing the right thing. However, that road can only lead to death and destruction.



We should always focus on what the Word of God says. The Holy Spirit will guide us into the truth of God’s Word. It’s time to walk down the Highway that leads to glory.

Faith
does not
make things easy
it makes them
POSSIBLE
luke 1:37

Faith is not by chance. It is not a strange notion or just a positive attitude. Faith is the only way to please God. **Hebrews 11:6** tells us this..." *But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him*".

Proverbs 3:5-6

“Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.”



Conclusion

“Faith Failure”

We have covered what faith is, what it is not, how it operates in Spiritual Growth and Spiritual Warfare. We have discussed building blocks and types of faith. The one thing we have not discussed is, can Faith fail?

The answer is YES & NO. Biblical Faith always works. It cannot fail. Here's why:

1. It is supernatural, a gift of the Holy Spirit.
2. It was authored and finished by Jesus.
3. It comes to us by hearing the Word of God.
4. It hooks itself to biblical promises.

However, a Christian can experience a, “Faith Failure,” when one or more of these conditions exist. (1) We stop hoping for what the Word said we could have, thereby falling into unbelief. We then lose the promise. (2.) We are disobedient to the Word. We lose the promise. (3.) We hope for things that are not in accordance to God’s plan and purpose for our lives. These things will kill faith and cause us to lose the promise.

The most common reason why faith does not work is unbelief...we stop believing. Satan will discourage you and trick you into believing that God did not really tell you or that it hasn’t happen yet so it most likely won’t happen and therefore why continue to believe. Remember Abraham; he staggered not at the promise of God. That means he never stopped believing, even after 20 years of waiting for it to happen.

When we stop believing, we actually insult God. We are literally saying He cannot or will not accomplish what He revealed to us in His Word. Our posture should be, “I don’t care if it takes my entire life, God will do what He promised.”

Doubting what we hear and receive from God’s Word is the same as staggering. It is actually unbelief. Our faith can and does fail when we doubt. There can be no doubt or staggering.

Listen to what Jesus said to Peter. “But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.” (**Luke 22:32**) Peter must have been on the verge of giving up and doubting himself and all that Jesus taught him. His faith was certainly at risk. Will it remain or will it digress into

unbelief. Jesus prayed that Peter would stay in faith, even though he could not understand all that was about to happen.

Jesus also prayed for every believer that would follow Him from His day, down through the ages, until the end of time. His prayer is in **John 17:20-21**. “*Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word;* ²¹ That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.”

It should be noted that a faith failure does not result in a loss of one’s salvation. God is not an Indian giver. Our salvation is based upon His righteousness, not ours. He finished the work of God and became our Savior. We can not live in a back and forth lifestyle where one day we are saved but, oops, I failed and now I am not saved but I will get right and then be saved again. This notion puts salvation on our merits and subject to our feelings, not the blood of Jesus. It is a lie of the enemy.

FAITH IN GOD’S WORD NEVER FAILS. However, we can only have faith in what we have heard. We can’t believe until we hear. We must hear God before we can have faith in God. Faith in God will never fail to produce that which He has spoken. That brings us back to, “***Are you listening?***” If you are not listening, you’ll miss what God wants you to know. How can I believe for anything when I haven’t heard from God? Listen to what happens when God speaks.

“*So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.*” (**Isaiah 55:11**) KJV. It does not return void but prospers.

There is still that nagging feeling of disappointment that lingers in our souls when our prayers go unanswered. I prayed so long and fasted and gave money to the church but God remained silent...or the outcome was so very different than what I was asking for. There is an example of this situation in the scriptures. **John 11:24** says, “Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord, if thou had been here, my brother had not died.” Mary and Martha sent for Jesus but He did not come until after Lazarus was dead. They were disappointed in Jesus but when He did arrive He raised Lazarus from the dead.

However, the lesson for us to learn is... God’s timing is not ours. He operates on a different schedule. Life, Death and Eternity are in His hands, at His good pleasure. When life goes contrary to my plans, I tell my wife, “There must be a reason for that.”

If our prayers are not answered right away or not at all, there must be a reason for that. Our posture is to continue to believe and trust in God, knowing that He knows best. Our faith should rest on **Romans 8:28**, “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.”

God’s purpose and plan for our lives may contradict our own desires and feelings. We must remain in His Will and not get angry with God when things do not go our way.

I believe that our faith fails because it is ours and not God’s. We live by the faith of the Son of God. His faith never fails. Most of us just do not want to wait for God’s good timing. We live in an instant society and see God as a “Bellhop” that waits for our beckoning call. This kind of thinking is wrong.

Believing is the key to having faith. “*Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.*”(**Mark 9:23**) It’s time to believe God and don’t let go.

We believe in God, that He exists, that He is a loving and caring God, that He is continually sharing Himself with us and that He has our best interest at heart. Faith believes in God and His Word. It’s that simple and that profound.

**Free Downloads
Other Books By
Rev. John Marinelli
Available At
www.christianpoets.com
or Call 352-687-1776**

