

SEEKING GOD’S KINGDOM

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SEEKING GOD’S KINGDOM

CHAPTER ONE SEEKING GOD’S KINGDOM

The Lord Jesus Christ gave us perhaps His most important command regarding our daily walk and discipleship with Him:

“Do not be anxious then, saying ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘With what shall we clothe ourselves?’ For all these things the Gentiles eagerly seek; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you.”

- Matthew 6:31-33

Seeking the Kingdom of God first is a command of Jesus to His disciples. The Kingdom of God is something very precious to God. In fact, it is so precious and important to God that His Kingdom be established in the hearts

of people that He, God Almighty Himself, has *promised by covenant, by solemn contract* with us that if we give priority to establishing His Kingdom in our hearts, He will personally make sure our everyday needs are met. He'll make sure we're in the right place at the right time to receive all we need for our daily lives. Obviously, if having the Kingdom of God in our hearts is that important to God Himself, then it should be our top priority in life.

What is the Kingdom of God that Our Lord Jesus Christ talked about? The Apostle Paul tells us: "For the Kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit." (Romans 14:17)

The Kingdom of God, our Lord taught us, is not something external, but rather exists in the inner heart of a person (Luke 17:21). Without our hearts, certain characteristics are to rule. These characteristics are aspects of the very personality of God the Father, our Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. The life of God within us, the Life of Jesus Christ within us is to rule our hearts.

First, righteousness is to dwell within our hearts. The very righteousness that can only come from our fellowship with Christ, not our own good works, is to have rule and dominion in our hearts. Paul wanted to "be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith." (Philippians 3:9) In other words, the first step in establishing the Kingdom of God in our hearts is the "born again" experience which Jesus Himself said we must have to both see and enter the Kingdom of God (John 3:3-8). As we become God-bought and God-owned through the blood of Jesus Christ, we enter His Kingdom.

Secondly, having entered the Kingdom, we are to dwell in peace. Peace is the wonderful quality that gives our troubled weary hearts rest. Peace bears within us the fruit of quietness, assurance, confidence and the ability to literally just drop our emotional burdens. Such peace comes from activating our inner spiritual fellowship with Jesus. The Word of God tells us that God will keep in *perfect* peace the one whose mind is fixed on Jesus (Isaiah 26:3). This comes through knowing Jesus on a spiritually intimate level and comes through knowing Him through dedicated prayer and study of His Word. It means renewing our minds by dwelling on the *good promises of God's Word* (Romans 12:2; Philippians 4:6-9).

Thirdly, this inner peace that comes from fellowship with Jesus will break forth into the joy of the Holy Spirit. In our hearts, we'll always have the ability to love, to laugh, and we'll have an inner thrill and delight knowing

that all is well because Jesus is Lord. We read in Psalms: “In Thy presence is fullness of joy.” (Psalm 16:11) And we will manifest this joy to others.

The power and the command of the Kingdom of God is that we respond to life, all the circumstances of life, *on the basis of our spirit*, not on the basis of outward circumstances. This puts us in a “take charge” position. *It is through having the Kingdom of God established in our hearts that we do not become captive to circumstances, but rather we bring circumstances into obedience to the Word of God.*

The secret of a victorious life is having the Christ-life within us. Satan and all the powers of evil did everything possible to break Jesus, to defeat Him, but they could not because the Kingdom of God ruled in Jesus’ heart. Having the Kingdom of God in our hearts is the way of tapping into God’s unlimited resources and the very resurrection power of Christ Himself.

When we have the Kingdom of God established in our hearts, we become a victorious, conquering people that give honor and glory to God. I repeat, it is so important to God that we have His Kingdom established in our hearts that He has promised, by covenant, by solemn contract, to meet our daily needs if we give His Kingdom priority. So many people in this world miss what life is really all about. By the grace of God, may we Christians, saved by grace, walk in the Kingdom as we should.

CHAPTER TWO RIGHTEOUSNESS

Jesus told us to seek first God’s Kingdom “and His righteousness.” It is significantly important that we seek His (God’s) righteousness. What does this mean?

So often when people think of “righteousness” or a right standing with God, they think in terms of earning a good standing with God by doing certain good, kind, religious or charitable acts. Hopefully, so the thinking goes, the good deeds will be put on a scale opposite their sins and faults, and the good will outweigh the bad and this will please God and give a right standing with Him. This view, to be sure, is probably the most common among those people who don’t know Jesus Christ as their Savior but yet hope to be at peace with God.

In fact, this was the Jewish Old Testament view and the view of righteousness among the Jews at the time of Jesus’ earthly ministry. Jesus Himself, in the Sermon on the Mount, referred to the three basic acts that Jews considered as righteousness: almsgiving (Matthew 6:1-4); prayer

(Matthew 6:5-8); and fasting (Matthew 6:16-18).

The Word of God, however, makes clear that the righteousness we must have before God does not consist of a balancing out of our good deeds against our sins. Our good acts cannot earn righteousness. In fact, compared to God's holiness, our own good deeds are like filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6). Also, if we even commit one sin, we can stand before God to be judged as if we had broken all of God's commandments, so great and pure is His holiness. (Read Romans 2; also James 2:10-11.) This does not mean we should stop doing good acts to bless others. It simply means our own good acts will never be sufficient to earn a right standing before God. Jesus' command is for us to seek *His* (God's) righteousness, not our own righteousness. If we cannot obtain a right standing with God on the basis of our own works, what are we to do?

God has provided for us a way to obtain the perfect righteousness we must have to be in a right standing with Him. His Son, Jesus Christ, earned a perfect righteousness by living a perfectly sinless and perfectly obedient life. This perfectly obedient Son was put to death on a cross by wicked, sinful men. Jesus, while on the cross, did not curse or revile those putting Him to death; rather He offered Himself to God the Father as a sin offering to pay the price for the sins of mankind. God the Father accepted Jesus' offer (Isaiah 53:4-12). On the cross, Jesus established a covenant, a contract with God the Father that His sacrifice would pay the penalty for all mankind's sins (1 John 2:2) and He would purchase perfect righteousness for all who would come to God through Jesus, repent of their sins, and accept what He did on the cross as their way to righteousness. God the Father entered into this eternally binding contract with His Son Jesus as Jesus signed the contract through His own blood (1 Peter 1:18-19).

The Apostle Paul was aware of his need for a righteousness better than his own: "In order that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith." (Philippians 3:8-9)

Paul again writes:

He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, ... that being justified by His grace we might be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

- Titus 3:5-7

In other words, He took our sins upon Himself so we could receive His own perfect righteousness and become fit to stand before God in a right relationship with God: “He (God) made Him (Jesus) who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” (2 Corinthians 5:21)

Thus, the righteousness is a free gift (Romans 6:23) available to all who will come to God through Christ (Romans 5:17-19). This free gift was bought and paid for by Jesus (Colossians 2:13-14).

We obtain this gift of God’s righteousness at the moment of our new birth. Jesus said a man must be born again in order to enter the Kingdom of God and see the Kingdom of God (John 3:3-8). When we come to God, acknowledge and turn away from our sins (repent), ask forgiveness through what Jesus did on the cross, and ask Jesus Christ to live in our hearts, an event known as the “new birth,” or being “born again,” takes place. The resurrected, glorified Christ actually comes to live in our spirit. He cleanses us, forgives us, and brings our inner spirit alive with eternal life. Because of His life within us we are made righteous, and we enter the Kingdom of God and become heirs to all the rights and privileges of His Kingdom.

Are you in this Kingdom? Is Jesus Christ your Savior? Do you have the perfect righteousness you need to be in a right relationship with God?

If you do not, you can have God’s Kingdom within your heart by praying this prayer and *meaning it from your heart*:

“O God I come to You today and admit I am a sinner. I repent and turn away from my sins. I ask You for forgiveness on the basis of what Your Son Jesus did for me on the cross. He alone is my righteousness. Lord Jesus, I ask You to come live inside my heart and give me that new birth I need. Give me eternal life. And, I’ll live the rest of my life for You to please You. Thank you Lord. Amen.”

If you prayed that prayer and meant it, welcome to the Kingdom of God.

CHAPTER THREE

PEACE

Peace can be defined as the inner comfort of knowing that all is well. There is a total absence of fear, worry, or anxiety. When one is at peace, one is at inner rest and there is a knowing that all problems that one may be confronted with have a favorable solution.

True peace in the Kingdom of God, which is in fact the only *real, true* peace man can ever attain, is the result of our having been given true righteousness from Jesus Christ. Peace comes, above all, from having and knowing that we have a right standing with God. The perfect righteousness given to us at the moment of salvation establishes us as acceptable in the eyes of a holy, righteous, perfect God. As the Apostle Paul wrote, we are accepted in the Beloved (Ephesians 1:6). Jesus is the “Beloved.” If we are accepted in the sight of the Sovereign Power, the Omnipotent Person, the Creator, then all else we face is under control. Our Lord Jesus Himself made this point when He said, “And do not fear those who kill the body, but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him Who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.” (Matthew 10:28) The key issue in the Kingdom of God, then, is our focus on God, not on circumstances.

A true inner knowing of our right standing with God creates peace in our heart, our innermost being. When people come to God and are born again through accepting Jesus Christ into their heart, He *brings* peace inside the person as He takes up residence. People will comment on this new, heretofore not experienced peace. Peace is a fruit of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22).

The Word of God tells us concerning Jesus, “For He Himself is our peace...” (Ephesians 2:14). Jesus causes us to be at peace with God and He is the only true source of peace between men (Ephesians 2:14-18). The Apostle Paul wrote, “Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Romans 5:1)

The Lord Jesus Christ promised this inner peace would be one of His gifts to those who believed in Him, to those who entered God’s Kingdom: “Peace I leave with you; My peace I give you; not as the world gives, do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled; nor let it be fearful.” (John 14:27) What a promise! What a benefit of belonging to God’s Kingdom, always knowing that all is well!

Peace is our inheritance as members of God’s Kingdom. God *wants* us to be at peace. Jesus gives us His peace when He enters our heart. God has given us His principles so we can *keep* and *maintain* this peace once we have it so we will not lose it.

First, we are to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus Christ, the Source of our peace. We read, “The steadfast of mind Thou wilt keep in perfect peace, because he trusts in Thee. Trust in the Lord forever, for in God the Lord, we have an everlasting rock.” (Isaiah 9:6) Peace simply exudes from the personality of Jesus. As we fellowship with Him, His personal peace is turned loose in our hearts.

Second, we should not worry about things, but rather bring them to God in prayer and thank Him that we know He will work things out for the best for us. “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, shall guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:6-7)

Worry never accomplishes anything. Our Lord Jesus told us that we cannot lengthen our lives by worrying (Matthew 6:27). In fact, we might shorten it! Instead, we bring our problems to God, pray in faith knowing and trusting He *will*, as the King and Sovereign of His Kingdom, be faithful to answer the prayer according to what is in our best interest. We thank Him for the answer, *give* the problem to Him, and *leave* the problem with Him.

Then, the scripture tells us, the very peace of God Himself will rise up in our heart. The very peace within God the Father’s heart will overtake us and guard our heart like a soldier standing watch over us. Did you know that God, the King and Sovereign of this universe, never worries about anything? Did you know that He is always at peace because He always has everything under control? Did you know that God never fears anything? He created all things and all things exist only by His will and permission. This very tranquility will be *ours* when we bring our problems to God in prayer instead of holding onto them and worrying about them.

And thirdly, we maintain God’s peace in our lives by thinking of good things rather than bad, evil and ugly things. God’s Word commands us to think of good things! “Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, let your mind dwell on these things... and the God of Peace shall be with you.” (Philippians 4:8-9)

God is trying to get us to stay out of the two most dangerous forces a human being can be attacked by: fear and unbelief. Fear and unbelief totally undermine all that the Kingdom of God promises us, especially our inheritance of *peace*. If we get bound up in fear and unbelief, we start indulging in *negative* creativity and we can actually cause bad things to start happening in our lives. The problem is not with God, for He is always good, powerful, and never changing (Malachi 3:6; James 1:17). God never has a bad day; God never “gets up on the wrong side of the bed.” *We* have to carefully guard our hearts and hold onto our precious inheritance: *peace*.

Peace is ours. If we have Jesus in our hearts, we have all the peace we’ll ever need; for where Jesus is, there is perfect peace.

CHAPTER FOUR

JOY

“The Kingdom of God is... joy in the Holy Spirit.” (Romans 14:17)

The Kingdom of God gives us possession of joy. This is not just any human type of joy, but a specific joy that comes from being in the Holy Spirit.

Joy can be defined as an inner delight, a feeling of being blessed, an inner thrill. Joy is often contrasted with happiness. Happiness is described as a glad emotion that is determined by favorable outward circumstances. Joy, however, abides within and is not dependent upon outward circumstances.

The durability of joy in the Kingdom of God is derived from the Source of Joy, the Holy Spirit. The joy God promises us in His Kingdom is a gift to be received, not a work to be earned. Joy is a gift from God that is given to us when we simply rest in His presence. Joy is a natural follow-up result of being established in God’s peace (see Chapter Three). If we are at peace with God and have rest within our hearts, a thrill, a delight will arise in our hearts.

When we enter God’s Kingdom through the new birth, the very life of God, the entire Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit dwells within us. Jesus stated that both He and the Father take up residence in the believer’s heart: “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and we will come to Him and make Our abode with him.” (John 14:23) Jesus also stated the Holy Spirit would be *in* us (John 14:17).

Joy comes from the invigorating, life-giving presence of the Holy Spirit within us. Godly joy comes from the presence of God within us. As David wrote in the Psalms, “In Thy presence is fullness of joy; In Thy right hand there are pleasures forever.” (Psalm 16:11) The fulfillment that comes from *experiencing* the total satisfaction, perfection, and eternal life of God within us, fills us with the holy thrill and delight that is God’s joy.

The Word of God tells us, “The joy of the Lord is your strength.” (Nehemiah 8:10) The joy that comes from the person of the Holy Spirit is a result of His life-giving resurrection power. “But if the Spirit of Him (the Holy Spirit) Who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He Who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit Who indwells you.” (Romans 8:11) Jesus also spoke of the Holy Spirit as being like a river of living water flowing from our innermost being (John 7:37).

Just as a river of living water is constantly flowing and does not stay still

or stagnate, we, as members of God's Kingdom, are to be flowing rivers of joy. We are to let the joy within us flow out to others. The Word of God commands us to "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say rejoice!" (Philippians 4:4) and "Rejoice always!" (1 Thessalonians 5:16).

The joy of the Lord enables us to always smile, always have a good word available to make every moment edifying (Ephesians 4:29) and even to be able to always give a healthy laugh in any situation. The joyful laughter of the Holy Spirit does not always have to lead to hilarious laughter, although on occasion it might. The joy of the Lord always rules and takes charge over all circumstances because essentially, this joy coming from the very presence of the Holy Spirit Himself, proclaims to the world, "All is well," "All is under control," "God has everything under control."

Hand in hand with this joy will go *love* and *praise*.

Jesus said, "If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments, and abide in His love. These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full." (John 15:11)

There is joy in abiding in Jesus' love. When we open our hearts to receive His great love for us, He makes us feel worthwhile. His love lifts us and makes us feel valuable. As we share this love with others, we feel the joy of having blessed and touched their lives.

The Bible also tells us that we enter the very presence of God when we give thanks and praise (Psalm 100). In God's presence, there is joy (Psalm 16:11). Songs of praise are inhabited by the presence of the Holy Spirit. Songs of praise exalt and lift up Jesus. The Holy Spirit is committed to lifting up and exalting Jesus and is present when praise is offered to Jesus. This is why praise songs and music bring such joy – the Holy Spirit is present.

Joy in the Holy Spirit is our inheritance. The Holy Spirit within us will make us "greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory." (1 Peter 1:8)

CHAPTER FIVE ONE DAY AT A TIME

The Lord Jesus gave us the important Kingdom of God principle of taking one day at a time:

Therefore do not be anxious for tomorrow, for tomorrow will care for

itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

- Matthew 6:34

God has created us in such a way that we can handle life successfully in 24 hour segments. Of course, we can make general plans and have general hopes for the future, but *we must always stay focused on the 24 hours at hand.*

God has done this for a very specific reason. First of all, He is a God of the *everlasting now*. Eternity is basically a concentrated focus on a present moment when all is well, all needs are met, all is secure in the presence of an all-powerful loving God. We truly appropriate eternal life to the fullest degree possible in our present earthly state by focusing on the *now* movement. It is in the *now* that we can always have peace and joy. If we focus on the future, we often let fear and misfortune get into our spirit. But with Christ, the *now* is always under control.

Secondly, God commands us to live in the present day because He is the God of the daily provision and the daily bread. He knows what is best for us. He knows our only true hope in this life is to remain trusting and faithful to Him. He alone can be our never-failing Source. Our Lord Jesus, in the Lord's Prayer, prayed for *daily* bread, not monthly bread. God supplied the Israelites with daily – not weekly or monthly – manna as Moses led them through the wilderness.

God gives us the promise that He will make sure we have whatever we need for the day called *today*. When *tomorrow* becomes *today*, we'll again have what we need. God shows His faithfulness and provision in the *present* moment. Knowing this, we can trust all our future moments to Him.

This is a great truth that the Lord Jesus Christ has given us. This is the way to victory over every sin, defeat of every worry, the meeting of every need: focusing on the present moment and being in God's great caring and love.

I once heard someone say, "There are no clocks in heaven." I'm sure that time does not matter in the direct presence of God the way it seems to matter here on earth. Time is basically a creation of man himself, for his own convenience. Time can be a great deceiver. Time can rob us of peace and joy because we worry about things which God promises He will take care of. Time can also be a great deceiver in causing us to be complacent about salvation and serving God and loving others. The Apostle Paul warns us:

Behold, now is "the acceptable time," behold, now is "The Day of

salvation.”

- Corinthians 6:2

The Lord Jesus Himself said:

“Do you not say, ‘There are yet four months and then comes the harvest?’ Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes, and look on the fields, that they are white for harvest.”

- John 4:35

The Lord Jesus warned that we are fools if we think we have control over tomorrow by our own will or strength. (Read Luke 12:13-21.)

The Kingdom of God calls us to live one day at a time and, as much as possible, *in the present moment*.

CHAPTER SIX BE A GIVER

Jesus Himself said, “It is more blessed to give than to receive.” (Acts 20:35) What was He saying? God has set up certain laws in His Kingdom just as He has set up natural laws in the physical universe. God sets up laws to show two basic dependable characteristics of His nature: He is Faithful and True.

So often, in ancient cultures, people created their own religions with many gods. People often tried to explain trouble and suffering by believing that their gods “had a bad day,” or were subject to the same character inconsistencies that people have. Typical of this type of thinking was the religion of the Greeks and Romans. The One, True Living God, however, reveals Himself as Faithful and True, as One Who operates according to laws He has established so man can see Him as reliable. Typical laws of the physical universe are the laws of gravity and centrifugal force.

In God’s Kingdom, He has also established two vitally important laws: the law of giving and the law of sowing and reaping. These spiritual laws are just as reliable as the law of gravity.

God, as Creator (read Genesis, Chapters 1-3), has created man in His own image and likeness: to be one who generates and creates within the world God has given to him. God has given us the power to generate and create

according to what we give. And, according to what we sow, we shall reap. The Word of God tells us:

Give, and it will be given to you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, they will pour into your lap. For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return.

- Luke 6:38

The Word also tells us:

Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh shall from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the spirit shall from the spirit reap eternal life. And let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we shall reap if we do not grow weary.

- Galatians 6:7-9

God has given to those who dwell in His Kingdom a powerful law that works in all aspects of life: the spiritual, the emotional, the physical (for healing), and the material. When the laws of sowing and reaping and the law of giving are put into action by members of His Kingdom, they *always* produce results. God calls for His people to be givers, according to Acts 20:35; to take the initiative and give *first* (Luke 6:38; Galatians 6:7-9), and to give cheerfully in faith and trust (2 Corinthians 9:6-8).

We become creators and initiators as we set His laws into motion:

1. Spiritually – We take the initiative to pray and praise and study the Word of God, and it brings results, even spiritual revival. And *we grow* spiritually as we take the spiritual steps *first*.
2. Emotionally – We take the initiative to forgive others, love others, even our enemies; we seek to initiate godly peace and reconciliation. If we feel lonely, we *first* reach out to someone else who is lonely, and we begin to generate emotional wholeness in both ourselves and others.
3. Physically – We take the initiative to pray for the healing of others and *minister* healing to others in any way we can, and we put ourselves in a position to be healed as we generate a healing atmosphere (James 5:16).

4. Materially – We overcome material lack by taking a little bit of what we ourselves need and joyfully giving it to someone else with the same need. In the giving, we see God’s miraculous multiplication which comes back to us (1 Kings 17:8-16 and Mark 6:33-44).

In each case, God’s invisible, spiritual law brings about a very real result. *Because parts of God’s Kingdom are at the present time invisible because they are spiritual, this in no way makes those laws any less real!* Keep your thinking straight. Remember, the law of giving and the law of sowing and reaping are God’s way for us to create and generate in His Kingdom. These laws are available to all who will enter His Kingdom and have faith to operate them.

The operation of these laws holds within them the potential of impacting this world in a miraculous way. I dare say that if we properly exercised God’s laws of giving and of sowing and reaping the way God really intends them to be operated, we would see the problems of this world disappear one by one. We’d see wars end, and poverty and famines end. We’d see our God-given, resource-rich planet properly utilized.

God’s whole purpose in establishing these laws of giving and of sowing and reaping was to establish a character in us that is in the image and likeness of God Himself. The Lord Jesus Christ was, of course, the perfect giver, freely giving His own life for the life of the world (John 6:41-58; Philippians 2:5-11).

One great lie of the evil one, Satan, the enemy of our souls, is to get people lying down on the inside, feeling sorry for themselves, thinking they are too weak to do anything. God has called His children to be “take charge” people, to be creators who subdue who take this world for Christ. He wants us to know we are heirs to a Kingdom, His Kingdom. Kingdom people rule. His instrument for ruling is giving us the law of sowing and reaping, and the law of giving to set things in motion.

CHAPTER SEVEN

FAITH ALWAYS

In this final chapter, I want to conclude with one of the most important principles in the Kingdom of God: the principle of faith. Faith always! Faith always! I’m going to give you a short, but powerful rule to live by. Make this your motto:

“As I live, only faith will come out of my mouth!”

As members of God’s Kingdom, the Kingdom where God truly rules and is sovereignly in charge, we have a *fundamental choice to make, that only we can make*. We should exercise faith and believe that if we are truly in a Kingdom, a place where God rules, then a sovereign, all-powerful God will cause things to work out for our good *all the time* (Romans 8:28). This means, even if He has to override outward circumstances of other people. For in *His* Kingdom, He has the authority to do this: “And I am God. Even from eternity I am He; And there is none who can deliver out of My hand; I act and who can reverse it?” (Isaiah 43:12-13) For this reason, Christians have absolutely no excuse for either murmuring or doubting.

Murmuring is the quickest way to waste the blessings of God or miss receiving them. Murmuring or complaining is insulting God by telling Him He’s not acting in your best interest. Murmuring is questioning the goodness and the love of God. The Hebrews, after being led out of Egypt by Moses and the miracles of God, nevertheless continually murmured and complained on their way to the Promised Land. They continually berated God’s love for them, even though He performed great miracles to supply their every need. As a result, God finally declared that the unbelieving, complaining generation would not enter the Promised Land (Numbers 14:1-38). They lost their blessing because of murmuring.

In the same way, doubt or lack of faith will rob us of God’s blessings that He intends and desires us to have (Hebrews 4:1-3). Doubt or lack of faith is insulting God by telling Him He’s not powerful enough to meet a particular need. In the Bible, all the great victories and accomplishments came about because of *faith*, trusting that God was both faithful to keep His promises and powerful enough to bring to pass what He had promised (Romans 4:20-21).

I’d rather go down and crash practicing faith instead of unbelief. But do you know what? When we really do have faith and truly trust God, we *never* crash or go down in defeat!

Exercising faith does not mean life will be free of battles. The Apostle Paul called the life of faith a fight. He wrote, “Fight the good fight of faith; take hold of eternal life to which you were called.” (1 Timothy 6:12)

The Lord Jesus Christ taught us two things we must do. *First*, we must be persistent in prayer. Keep on praying until the answer comes or until you feel confident in your heart that God has answered the prayer. Jesus told two parables about the importance of being persistent in prayer. In Luke 11:5-13

He tells about a person who got company late at night who went to his neighbor to ask to borrow bread because his cupboard was empty. The neighbor was in bed and didn't want to get up. But the man kept knocking until the neighbor got up and gave him as much bread as he wanted just to get rid of him.

Again, Jesus told about an old widow who kept bothering an unjust judge to help her and decide favorably in her case. She was so persistent that even though the judge didn't want to bother with her case because he was cruel and unjust, he finally decided the case in her favor just to get her off his back (Luke 18:1-9). It is important to persevere in prayer. God loves it when we are a pest; it shows we are serious and that we believe He has the power to bring an answer.

Secondly, Jesus taught us that we must *press* into the Kingdom of God and with spiritual energy take the promises of God by almost "violent spiritual effort" in our believing. The Lord stated, "And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and violent men take it by force." (Matthew 11:12) Those who claim the promises of God must have a *never-give-up* attitude once they claim something, and they have to be so *committed* that they will believe until their last breath, if necessary, that God will be faithful to bring His promise to pass. There can be no possibility of falling back on "Option 2" or "Plan B."

The classic example of such faith in the Bible is the story of Abraham, who is called the father of our faith (Genesis 12-25). Abraham was a man called by God to leave his homeland which was filled with idolatry. He was called to go forth into a new land trusting God. God, furthermore, promised Abraham and his wife Sarah, who were childless and past child-producing age, that if they went forth in faith, God would give them a son and make Abraham the father of descendants so numerous, they would be like the stars of heaven or the sand on the seashore.

We read that Abraham went through a journey of faith that lasted 25 years before God fulfilled the promise and Sarah gave birth to Isaac. Abraham *knew* what it meant to endure and be committed to the promise of God: twenty-five years of waiting. The promise was given when Abraham was 75 years old. Isaac was born when Abraham was 100 years old.

What is often overlooked in this story is the fact that Abraham died at *175 years old* (Genesis 25:7). The Word of God tells us, "And Abraham breathed his last and died in a ripe old age, an old man and satisfied with life." (Genesis 25:8) God rewarded Abraham by letting him enjoy possession of the promise *three times longer* than he had to wait to receive the promise.

I think of something Harold Hill wrote in his book, *How To Live Like A*

King's Kid: "God's kids never give up!" Remember, say, and believe, "As I live, only faith will come out of my mouth!"

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We invite you to send any prayer requests you might have for prayer at our chapel prayer meetings. Send to:

Christ's Chapel
PO Box 3182
Fall River, MA 02722

Also write to be put on our mailing list to receive periodic letters. Let us know specifically if you'd like to receive the Daily Devotional.