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FAITH AFLAME
By Victor Glenn

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Chapter 1
THE CHRISTIAN KNOWS NO CATASTROPHE

In the book of II Kings, chapter 4 and verses 9 through 37, reading only verses 20 and 37, we find these words: "And when he had taken him, and brought him to his mother, he [the child] sat on her knees till noon, and then died. . . . then she went in, and fell at his feet, and bowed herself to the ground, and took up her son, and went out."

In this passage of scripture we have one of the most touching scenes to be found anywhere in the Bible. As you study the background of this passage you discover that this woman had experienced an unexpected blessing and had suffered an unexpected burden. The child that had been given to her came as a result of divine intervention. The prophet Elisha had told her that she would be rewarded for her hospitality by receiving the deepest desires of her heart.

Those desires were expressed and fulfilled in the birth of her first-born son. After the child was grown it suffered an accident that resulted in its departure from this life. The child had been rushed to its mother and it died on her knees at the noon hour.

Doubtless the big question in her mind was "Why?" Why did God give her a son and then take him away so suddenly and unexpectedly? Why was she bereft of the only enjoyment that life

could actually afford? Doubtless these same questions pass through the minds of others in similar circumstances.

One individual who had faced just such a catastrophe made a statement that I feel is well worth our remembering. He had just received word of the passing of a dear and precious relative and the loss was felt as keenly as it could be felt. His heart was as full of sympathetic concern as any heart could possibly be. The tidings that had reached him spoke of a serious accident that had come suddenly and unexpectedly. When he received the news he spoke softly and tenderly about the seeming tragedy. Yet the words he spoke were not the kind that usually accompany condolences. While he stood silently thinking about the accident he uttered these words, "There is no catastrophe to the child of God other than his loss of faith." The calamity may come but faith will overcome it; the accident may take place, yet God knows no accidents.

Each step of our pathway is an appointed step and each day of our journey is divinely planned. There are no accidents with God. He doeth all things well and He is never mistaken in His actions or judgments. When the calamities of earth beset us we have the power to overcome that calamity by the exercise of our faith. If our confidence in God fails then we have no recourse to take and no redress from the wounds we suffer. Certainly the individual who abandons his reliance upon the Lord in such situations suffers a greater loss than the situation itself can produce. Abandon your faith and you have parted company with your comfort and your condolence in times of calamity. Abandon your faith and the fabric of life begins to fall apart. The whole universe becomes a dreary chaos without faith in the Creator.

The one stabilizing force in your life during times of tremendous stress is your trust in the care and concern of the Master. Certainly God is not exposed to accident in any measure. He has every detail of your life blue printed and He knows every turn that the road of life will take. Doubtless the severest revulsions in life will come in our direction. We will face the sudden visitations of serious illness. Our happiness will be interrupted by the call that cannot be postponed. The very throne upon which our reasoning powers sit may be demolished by circumstances beyond our control.

Yes, life's burdens may tumble in without warning and without relief, yet our faith will bridge the gap and hold us steady in such a situation. The thing we need to learn from the life of this woman is the fact that no calamity can touch the sacred relationship that exists between God and His children. The God of heaven exercises a continual and perpetual surveillance over His people. His infinite love and power is always taking notice of our struggles and our serious situations. The thing that injures you injures Him. The thing that brings grief into your own heart, brings grief into His as well.

Certainly every living Christian enjoys a living union with the Divine Nature and it is sufficient to sustain him. We enjoy a relationship in the realm of faith that upholds us every moment of every hour. Thank God, there is an arm that never tires and an ear that is never heavy. There is a concern on the part of God that never fades and never fails.

Not one of God's children are victims of chance. The things that befall us come only by divine permission. He knows how much we can take and He knows when we have reached the

point of saturation. The things that He allows in our lives are designed to strengthen our faith and confirm our love to the Redeemer. When the woman of the text realized the tremendous loss she was suffering, she did something about it immediately. She looked at her loss and put her faith into action. She did not know all that faith would accomplish, but she insisted on exercising it to the limitations of its own ability. She made faith take her as far as it could go. She put faith to work on a twenty-four hour schedule with no time off for leisure or rest.

Certainly this incident that seems to suggest unusual faith ought to be the usual, rather than the unusual. We ought to expect great things from God simply because He has promised us great things. He has pledged us His unremitting care and concern. He has told us that He would never leave us nor forsake us. He has promised to be present in every situation that we face in life. The calamity of all calamities would be our failure to trust Him in such situations.

The greatest loss you can suffer in this world is the loss of your faith. When faith is gone everything else is gone as well. When faith in God goes, man, the thinker, loses his greatest thought; when faith in God goes, man, the dreamer, has lost his greatest dream; when faith in God goes, man, the sinner, loses his greatest source of assistance. When faith in God goes, man, the mortal, loses his hope of immortality. Certainly we need to cling to our faith and allow it to reveal God's mighty power. We need to allow faith to solve the existing problems and create a climate of confidence for the future. The Shunamite woman never gave up in her venture for answers to her nagging questions. She stayed with it until heaven gave the answer. Your faith can be as valid and victorious as hers. You can believe God and you can witness His mighty power in your own heart and life.

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Chapter 2 FAITH'S UNERRING FUNCTION

"When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee." St. Mark 2:5.

In this passage of scripture we have an example of faith's ability to function in behalf of those who cannot exercise it for themselves. The man who had been sick of the palsy was in no position to exercise faith, yet others came to his rescue and believed the Lord on his behalf.

Doubtless the reason for the palsied individual's failure to exercise faith was due to the fact that he had no object to which to attach it. The one who could meet his need was not operating in his immediate area. The one who could bring about an effective cure was not close enough at hand to do so.

The scriptures make no mistake when they tell us that "faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God." The paralytic individual would have joined his faith to the faith of others if he had had an opportunity to do so, yet God wants to teach a lesson here that could not have been taught in any other manner. He wants us to know that there are instances when individuals are in no

position to believe for their own necessities. The only way their needs are going to be met is for others to exercise faith in their behalf.

It is necessary that we notice the importance of the faith of these individuals. The thing that needed to be done, looked like it could not be done. The task of getting this individual to Jesus seemed insurmountable. The crowd was too large and the problems too great to work out without difficulty. From the natural standpoint they may have been justified in doing nothing about the situation. Yet faith sought an opportunity where there seemed not to be any. Faith took steps that would seem both unreasonable and unnatural. Certainly true faith is always concerned about the welfare of others. It never seeks its own point of advantage and always labors for the good of God's kingdom.

Sometime ago the story was told of two blind men who had lost their sight during the prime years of their earthly existence. These two men were brothers yet each one had lost his vision entirely. As time progressed the one blind man began praying that God would restore the sight of his sightless brother. The prayers continued until the sight was regained and the brother restored to a natural and normal life once again. The brother who had prayed so earnestly was asked why he did not pray for his own eyesight and he responded by saying he had no faith for his own healing. He said he felt God wanted him to live out his days in total darkness. He felt there was a divine purpose in his loss of eyesight that could not be served if he were given perfect vision. Certainly this is an example of an unselfish faith that reaches out unto others. He could not believe for himself, but he had great faith for the restoration of his fellow man.

In this incident recorded in Mark we have four men exercising faith in regard to a paralytic brother. Doubtless their faith was inspired by the consciousness that Christ could do what He had done so often in times past and gone. The fame of Christ had spread like a prairie fire and the news of His healing power was known just about everywhere. When the men knew that Christ was in the house they began taking steps to get Him to act in behalf of the sick of the palsy. They made Christ the center of their concern and it was all that was necessary to produce positive results. Certainly their faith was the kind of faith that laughs at impossibilities. They had the kind that wrestles with difficulties, and tramples obstacles under foot. They had the kind of faith that never says, "impossible." . . . They had the kind of faith that clings to hope and believes far more than it can understand.

Someone has well stated that the deepest quality in God is His love and the deepest quality in man is his faith. God responds to faith when there is nothing else in us worth responding to. He responds to faith because faith is something that does not believe in failure. It moves men to take action and it reaches into the mists and lays hold of something substantial. If men will work all that they can work in the natural realm, God will go to work in the supernatural realm. I wonder sometimes if we are not waiting for others to believe what God wants us to believe ourselves. We urge people to exercise their faith, when it is our own faith that needs to be pressed into service.

Your faith can lead you to success where all has looked like failure. Your faith can take things out of the realm of the shadows and bring them into the realm of substance. The stronger you hope the more you can expect to realize your hopes.

The Hebrew writer said, "Faith is the substance, of things hoped for the evidence of things not seen." Certainly the substance you hope for will be realized as a response to your unfailing faith. When Columbus came to the New World he was in search of the substance upon which he had anchored his hope. He fought heroically against the odds of an unfriendly ocean and an insufficient sailing vessel. He had to argue against common sense and natural reason to accomplish the task he set out to accomplish. Yet the substance he hoped for became reality as a result of his persistent effort and his unfailing confidence.

The men in the scripture had a faith that God rewarded. When Jesus reacted to their action He addressed His remarks directly to the men who were lowering the bed into His presence. The scripture tells us that "Jesus saw their faith." It was not the faith of the paralytic, but the faith of the four that brought the glorious results.

We need to think of this scene as a type of the church and the lost all about us. We need to think of the lost in a manner that we do not usually think of them. Certainly we need a faith that will carry them into the presence of Christ. We need a faith that will overcome every obstacle and get the job accomplished. When we begin to exercise faith it will not be long until others will have their faith inspired as well.

God will see our faith and things will begin to happen that need to happen if souls are to be won to the Master. It is high time to do away with our excuses and our belabored reasonings.... It is high time to reach out by faith and tap the resources of God. These same blessed words that were uttered so many thousands of years ago can be repeated once again. The Master will respond to our faith just as He responded to theirs. Yes, faith can have its unerring function in your life just as it did in days past and gone.

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Chapter 3 A CHALLENGE TO YOUR FAITH

St. Matthew, chapter 18, verses 19 and 20 read: "Again I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

In this passage of scripture Christ speaks of the unlimited power that is available to His people. The door of opportunity is opened just as wide as we are willing to have it opened. The resources of heaven are available to us in the measure that we believe to receive them.

There are several things that Christ is trying to teach His people in this passage of scripture. First of all, He teaches us that there is a bond that unites us to each other just as there is a bond that unites us to the heavenly Father. Just as children agree to ask something of their earthly father so are we encouraged to ask things of our heavenly Father.

Christ made it clear that there are times when we must express ourselves in secret and times when we must express ourselves together. The one thing that united prayer must have to get the ear of God is a sense of agreement among those presenting the petition. If two people will agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done by the Father that is in heaven. This word "agree" translated, is one that has to do with musical instruments.

The text is talking about a symphony that is produced by different instruments playing the same key and developing the same tune. God's children are to blend their interests just as the musical instruments blend their notes. In other words there is to be unity of heart and a unity of intention. As long as we express mutual desires with the proper motivation we can expect our harmony to be heard in heaven. Just as the blending of those musical instruments provides music to the natural ear so the harmony of our prayers are like music in the supernatural ear of the God of Heaven. He will hear us because our affections are centered upon a common object. The whole tenor of our prayers is the accomplishment of a single purpose.

The text further suggests that each child of God has a definite dependence upon others of God's children. Just as the members of a family function as a unit so the family of God is to do the same. The more we see this harmony and unity the more we will receive the blessings that God wants to bestow.

The text is freighted with plenty of promise for those who will unite their hearts in earnest, believing prayer. In fact all of the resources of heaven are promised to those who can send up a symphony of united petitions. After God calls for united prayer He then tells us the means by which the petitions are to be presented. We do not go to God without proper credentials or certification.

Christ makes it clear that our prayers are to be prayed in Jesus' name. The name of Christ has been likened unto that of a wealthy financier. The company checks are invalid until they bear the signature of the one who owns the resources. When once that name appears on the certificate the money can be drawn from any bank in the country.

The name of Christ has also been likened unto an influential citizen whose character is recognized in a large segment of the business community. There are some doors that you cannot enter except as you know the name of its individual. It matters not what your own name is as long as you know the name you receive an audience with the man in the head office.

We learn a tremendously important lesson when we learn to call upon God through the merits of Jesus Christ. The Psalmist stated that "the name of the Lord is a strong tower, the righteous runneth into it and are safe."

The song writer wrote about it and said, "Precious name, O how sweet; hope of earth and joy of heaven; precious name, O how sweet, hope of earth and joy of heaven." Paul spoke about the importance of that name when he stated, "For this cause I bow my knees unto the father of our Lord Jesus Christ of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named. . . ."

Again he stated that "at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess unto God." Yes, the name of Jesus Christ is our credentials for getting audience with the

One who sits upon the heavenly throne. There is no other name given among men whereby we might be saved, but the name of Jesus Christ.

Our united praying gets results when it is done in Jesus' Name. The text tells us that our petitions shall receive answers. The things for which we pray will not go unnoticed by the God of heaven. The real means by which united prayer is distinguished from all other is in the fruit it yields. If our prayers are prayed in harmony with each other and in unity with the will of the Father the answer will soon be on its way. God will honor all such petitions and the thing we earnestly desire will be granted.

Certainly this ought to help each individual to pray for revival and for lost loved ones. If our agreement in prayer will bring the lost to Christ we ought to be about the business of harmonizing our efforts. There is no way to calculate the good that might be accomplished in this regard. Who can tell the power that might be developed if such praying was done on a regular basis? What torrents of divine grace would be released upon the church in these latter days? Someone has well stated that God rules the world on the strength of prayers of His people. Your prayers are the means by which Satan is defeated and the plans of darkness are frustrated. The prayers of the people on earth actually control the power that is released from heaven. Every assembly that ever gathers to worship Christ has Christ's promise. Every group that comes together can recognize that the Master is in the midst and that heaven is awaiting the symphony of their petitions.

O! That God would help us to blend our hearts and our voices in the kind of prayer that gains the notice of heaven. We need answers today as desperately as they ever needed them. We need an open heaven and a poured out blessing just as Paul and others needed it. And certainly we can have it if we meet the conditions laid down by our Lord in the scripture text. We have no excuse for our failure to see God move in behalf of the needs of this generation. Our duty is plain and God's blessing awaits those who claim it.

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Chapter 4 THE SUCCESS OF A FEEBLE FAITH

In the book of St. Mark, chapter 9 and verses 23 and 24 we read: "Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth. And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief."

In this passage of scripture we have an example of a faith that had been severely shaken before it was recognized and rewarded. The man spoken of in the text was desperately in need of the miracle working power of Jesus Christ.

According to the narrative, his son was totally deprived of his natural powers by the demon forces of darkness. The scriptures describe him as an individual with a dumb spirit and a person who is constantly tormented of the devil. When evil spirits lay hold of him they tear him and leave him foaming at the mouth and pining away. The man of the text evidently had heard of the

miracle-working power of Christ and had brought the boy in hopes of having him cured. No doubt his faith was about as strong as faith can be under such difficult circumstances. Certainly he felt he had a difficult case to bring to the Master and a cure would require something more than a human agency to effect. Matters were complicated even further when he brought the young man to the disciples and had to go away disappointed. The thing he thought could be accomplished by the disciples was not accomplished at all.

From the general tenor of the story I would suppose that the disciples made every effort to change the young man's condition. I can picture them kneeling in his presence and laying hands upon him. I can see them calling upon God for an answer to his perplexing situation, yet nothing happened. By the time they were through with the ritual of their own faith, the faith of the other individual must have been seriously shaken. He went away disappointed and disenchanted with the professed power of the disciples.

It was at this point that something happened that would alter his situation entirely. Jesus Christ appeared upon the scene and the question of the child's deliverance was raised once more. The individual took the time to explain the boy's condition to Christ just as he had explained it to his disciples. He told him how the spirits took the boy and cast him into the fire and into the water. It would appear that the father of the lad reached a point of desperation as he appealed to Christ for compassion and assistance.

In verse 22 he expresses his doubts by saying, "If thou canst do anything, have compassion on us, and help us." Certainly the "IF" of this statement is about as big an "IF" that you can find anywhere in the scriptures. It suggests to us that his faith had indeed been shaken. His heart was entertaining serious doubts about Christ's ability to perform the work that needed to be performed. He wanted the work done desperately, yet the faculty of faith had received a shock from which it was not easy to recover.

The picture you get here is that of the powerful Christ facing a man with an enfeebled faith. That faith is like smoking flax that could easily be quenched or fanned into a glowing fire. It is like a bent reed that could easily be broken or bound up and made strong once again.

Notice that Christ sets forth a challenge to this individual's faith in verse 23 where he said, "IF thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth." The big "IF" of verse 22 is followed by a bigger "IF" of verse 23. Jesus Christ lays the responsibility for the exercise of faith on the shoulders of this individual. Christ has no doubts about His own power to perform the miracle, yet that power must be activated by the faith of the individual. If the tragic condition is to be changed it must be changed by faith. If the forces of darkness are to be driven back they must be driven back by the faith and confidence that is placed in Jesus Christ.

What is true in this case is true also in our own. Doubtless there are many times when it seems our faith is shattered and shaken by the events that transpire. The things we thought would happen just never came to pass. The prayers we thought ought to be answered were not answered as we wanted them to be answered.

No doubt the advances of science have taken their toll of the faith of God's children also. We have seen a generation of mechanical miracles emerge such as the world has never known. Our age is one of constant scientific advances. The secrets of nature have been unlocked and the technology of our times has pressed those secrets into service. Questions are being raised today that tend to shatter the faith of individuals. There is much more taking place to inspire doubt than there is belief, yet we need to respond to the Master's appeal in a positive manner just as this individual responded. We need to take our enfeebled faith and press it into service.

According to the text the individual answered Christ by saying, "Lord, I believe, Help thou mine unbelief." In other words, I am doing all I can to believe, yet there are some nagging doubts in the back of my mind. Lord, I want you to honor my belief and help my unbelief in doing so. The sight of the restored individual would provide an answer to the unbelief mentioned in this passage.

One act of Christ's miracle-working power would cure the unbelief and increase the faith tremendously. When you take this passage and translate it into our own times, you have a picture of the need of this hour. Regardless of the things that have happened to shake our faith, we need to exercise whatever faith we have to exercise. We need to bring our enfeebled faith to Christ and ask Him to honor it. We need to bring the difficult situations to Him and insist on having something done about them. When once Christ begins to work in our midst we will witness the departure of unbelief. It will help the unbelieving world to recognize the realities of God's power and provision.

Our unbelief is banished by the exercise of our faith and the response of God to that faith. If you will finish the reading of this incident you will discover that faith was rewarded and the individual was made every bit whole. The miracle that was sought was received. The power of faith accomplished its work and the power of unbelief was tremendously shaken. God did what He said He would do in response to an open heart and operating faith. He will do the same today as we meet His conditions.

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Chapter 5 ENCOURAGEMENT TO YOUR FAITH

St. John, chapter 20 and verses 30 and 31 read: "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might BELIEVE that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that BELIEVING ye might have life through his name."

We are told that the things recorded in the Bible are recorded for the purpose of inspiring our faith and confidence in Jesus Christ. The Bible is filled with incidents that encourage the faith of those who would follow the Master. There is not a single incident in the life of Christ that would produce unbelief or promote doubt in the mind of any individual. The more you examine His life and His work the more convinced you become of His Deity and power. Christ gives you no reason to be discouraged, depressed, or disheartened. His every action reflects His tremendous interest in the welfare of humanity and His deep concern for each individual.

One writer stated that He paints a silver lining for everyone of your clouds and gilds your gloom with His glory. He has fully demonstrated His winning ways on every battlefield on which He has fought and in every conflict into which He has entered. He is the master of the earth, the sea, and the sky. He is the commanding officer and victorious general in the warfare waged against the forces of darkness. In your sickness He is the great physician, and in your disappointments He is your sustainer.

Someone has well stated that He is a joy bringer, a peace producer, and a faith inspirer. His stately steppings can be heard in the dim watches of the night and in the shadowy places of sickness and sorrow. There is not a sick room that He is not willing to visit or a prison cell that He is not willing to enter. If you will study your Bible you will see Him doing things for others that He would like to do for each individual. The same hand that calmed the fevered brow so many thousands of years ago is wanting to calm the fever of individuals today. The voice that stilled the storm is just as strong and just as effective now as it was in days past and gone. Watch Him as He moves through the multitudes healing their sick and binding up their wounded. See Him as He moves in and out among bleeding and broken humanity with a message of hope and consolation. When John the Baptist questioned Him, He sent John a message that answered his question. He told His disciples to tell John the Baptist that "The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk. . . . Tell him the lepers are cleansed and the deaf are made to hear...." "Yes, tell him that the dead are raised to life again and the poor have the gospel preached unto them in its fullness."

Doubtless this response of Christ was designed to shore up the sagging faith of His forerunner. He wanted John the Baptist to know that the things were happening that needed to be happening. The things that only God could do were being done. God was responding to the faith of the people and His wonder-working power was in full operation.

Someone has well stated that Christ's appearance in this world was like throwing a master switch in a giant industrial complex. It was like turning on every light bulb and setting every piece of machinery in motion. With one flip of the switch the dead machinery comes alive and the place is humming with tremendous activity. Raw materials are fed into the machines and the finished product emerges at the end of the assembly line. The rough, crude material is reshaped and remolded until it is revitalized and made fit for some specific service. Certainly Christ can do this with our own lives that have been so roughly handled by an unbelieving world. The tangled strands can be rewoven into a brand new pattern. The fragments of our failures can be gathered up and remolded in the fires of His love and compassion. The rough, raw material can be reshaped into something beautiful and useful. Yes, our faith in God can bring us into a relationship that fits us for the assembly of saints and the company of angels.

Again notice that Christ has been likened unto a rugged general who appears among his troops when all seems to be lost as far as winning the battle is concerned. During one of the wars one of the generals was credited with the inspiration of his troops just when it seemed the task was hopeless. He would ride into the midst of his dispirited men and urge them on to victory. He would take personal command of the battle and provide them with fresh motivation for victory. Somehow he would rekindle the fires of patriotism and awaken the spirit of valor. His presence had an electrifying effect on the troops and the inclination to retreat was abandoned.

This general reflects the kind of general that heads the troops in the warfare against sin and iniquity. Doubtless the enemy would give us a number of reasons why we ought to give up in the struggle. He can tell you many reasons why you ought to hang your harp on the willow and give up in the struggle against the forces of darkness. Yes, we have a commander-in-chief who knows when to make an appearance along the lines of battle. Jesus Christ knows the precise moment when our spirits are low and our weaknesses are about to take over. He knows when we are most likely to call for a retreat and when we are most likely to be overcome by depression. He has already given us an endurance test and He knows the limitations of our strength and power. The things that would dispirit us are countered by the Master's presence in the front line of battle. He urges us to buckle on the armor a little tighter and enter into the battle with greater determination. The consciousness of His own bravery is sufficient to inspire some of our own. The sight of His unflagging spirit is enough to quicken our own flagging spirits.

Yes, the consciousness of His unconquerable confidence is enough to urge us on till the last shot is fired and the final enemy captured. We have no reason to doubt or to despair. We have no excuse for retreat or withdrawal. Our faith ought to be encouraged to press the battle to the very gates of the enemy. We ought to be inspired to believe more firmly than we have ever believed before.

Read once again the wonderful exploits of your Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ and ask yourself just what reason you have to doubt His presence or His power. What excuse can we give for our feeble faith and our lack-luster confidence? Certainly it is high time to take a fresh grip on God and believe Him to do what He said He would do. The gates of heaven must be shaken with our prayers and our faith. We must get an audience with God and believe Him for the blessings we so desperately need in this hour.

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Chapter 6 KINDLING THE FIRES OF FAITH

In the book of St. Mark, chapter 5, verses 25 through 34, reading only verses 25 through 27, we find this account: "And a certain woman, which had an issue of blood twelve years, and had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing better, but rather grew worse, when she had heard of Jesus, came in the press behind, and touched his garment."

In this scripture we have an example of what can be accomplished if faith is allowed to fulfill her God-ordained function. When God created man He favored him with a faculty that has no physical function to perform. As far as the natural realm is concerned we are equipped with other human faculties that adequately meet the necessities of our lives. We have eyes to see and hands to work with. We have ears to hear and a voice to carry on communications. As far as faith is concerned it has no reason to operate except in the realm of the supernatural.

When man reaches his own extremity faith begins its marvelous and miraculous operation. Someone has well stated that the problems of life that man can solve have been solved and the problems that go beyond human solution demand the exercise of our faith. God does not employ His strength until our strength has been exhausted. He does not superimpose His own power until we see the insufficiency of our own. Once we see how hopeless we are God can begin to work His mighty work among us. Moses used considerable self effort to deliver the children of Israel, yet it was to no avail. He slew an Egyptian as though his own strength would be the deciding factor in the deliverance, yet God had to teach him otherwise. As time progressed he had to learn that the situation called for something more than he had to put into it. The task was beyond human strength and endurance. The natural must be supplemented by the supernatural if the work was to be accomplished.

If you will study the eleventh chapter of Hebrews you will discover that the success of every endeavor is attributed to faith. Those who fell in the wilderness did not go down because of their lack of physical endurance. They did not fail through physical weakness but through the spirit of unbelief. Doubtless there were others in the wilderness who were the equals of Moses and Aaron as far as physical strength was concerned. Yet they fell because they had no faith in the one who was leading them on to victory. There is no more withering influence in the world than the withering influence of unbelief.

The book of Hebrews is not only known for its celebration of heroes of faith, but also for its strong rebuke of men who had none at all. In chapter 3 and verse 12 it speaks of an evil heart of unbelief, and in chapter 4 verse 11 it speaks of unbelief as the cause of failure; in chapter 3 and verse 8 it is the means by which God is provoked and in chapter 3 and verse 10 it is the means by which He is grieved. It is presented to us as the destroyer of our own usefulness and the thing that cuts us off from the blessing that God desires to bestow. What problem did unbelief ever solve? What worthy cause has it ever espoused? What good purpose has it ever served? Unbelief has marshaled an army of followers, yet its altars are drenched in the blood of things that might have been.

On the other hand, faith is a builder of monuments, an ennobler of purposes, and a creator of heroic courage. Someone has well stated that our faith will get us to the end of our journey faster than our own footsteps.

In the text we have a picture of faith in action. The woman of this text was suffering from a human infirmity that desperately needed to be corrected. In her desperation she had consulted every available physician, yet to no avail. She reached the point of personal impoverishment and yet her condition was unimproved. In fact, time was taking its toll and the condition was no better, but rather grew worse. It was at this point that she began to face a fact that every individual must face if the situation is to be changed in any measure. She recognized that her real problem was not her physical condition, but her faith in the One who made these bodies in the first place.

She had to come to grips with the fact that Jesus Christ was the answer to her desperate situation. Certainly one of the perplexing problems of our times is that of getting individuals to turn their case over to Jesus Christ. This woman had to learn that wealth could never purchase health. Protracted periods of waiting would not bring about the needed results. If anything worthwhile

was to happen she had to take positive action and make it happen. She had to press her way past every obstacle and touch the hem of the Master's garment.

There are several things that worked together to bring about the cure of this woman's condition. First of all she realized that her need was too desperate to neglect. The life she was living was both monotonous and intolerable. The cycle in which she had been traveling was getting her nowhere but deeper into despair. One writer stated that her trust in human agencies had to be superseded by her trust in the provisions of Jehovah.

Again notice that this woman kept up a continuous search for a cure to her situation. The text indicates that she took every available measure in trying to affect a change in her tragic condition. Doubtless every suggestion was carefully considered and every possibility fully explored. She wanted help and she was not contented until she had found it. Certainly she was a woman who would never give up easily. The difficulties that had to be surmounted were surmounted. The problems that stood in her way had to be solved and the cure had to be successfully sought at the feet of the Redeemer.

This woman was conscious of the consequences of failure. Doubtless she felt that she could not afford to fail. The situation was too desperate to continue without resolution. When she learned that there was a cure for her condition she sought that cure until it was found. One writer stated that she had the courage to do what had to be done. He went on to say that most individuals lack the necessary "follow through" when it comes to getting things accomplished. We begin well, but end our quest before the victory has been accomplished. We need to "follow through" on our faith if we are to realize the rewards that faith has to offer us. If you have set out to believe God for something you must pursue that faith until God gives the answer.

The prayer that went unanswered today must be prayed again tomorrow. The faith you exercised must be exercised again and again. Doubtless there will be times when God will not permit you to see the results of your faith until you learn to trust Him without them. God wants your total attention and affection even if you never receive the results for which you so earnestly pray. Doubtless there is a greater faith involved in the accepting of discouragements as in receiving encouragements. The unanswered prayer is God's way of telling you to continue praying. Your failure to realize results is an indication that faith must reach out a little further. Certainly God wants us to make our claim and press our case until heaven gives the answer. The woman of our lesson refused to go home in disappointment. She stayed at the job until she got through the crowd and into the presence of the Master. When she got within reach of Christ she touched the hem of His garment and received the reward of her faith which was her healing.

That touch was a touch of confidence in Christ. It was a touch of faith in His ability to meet the need that she was bringing to Him. It was a touch of determination and desperation that brought her the victory.

Her touch brought her the touch of Christ. When she reached out as far as she could reach, Jesus Christ reached the rest of the way. O! How we need the touch of Christ in our lives today. Certainly the song writer was experiencing this touch when he wrote, "Shackled by a heavy burden, bowed beneath a load of guilt and shame, then the hand of Jesus touched me, and now I am

no longer the same. He touched me, O! He touched me, and O, the joy that floods my soul . . . something happened, and now I know, He touched me and He made me whole." This same Christ is waiting to touch your life. Will you not reach out to Him just as far as you can reach and let Him touch your heart and life. His touch is a transforming touch. His touch is a healing touch, yes, His touch is a touch of spiritual renewal.

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THE END