



Building Our Faith

Maturing In The Faith: Shelf 3 — Volume 27

Chapter 1

• A Foundation Of Faith •

Awareness of God allows the individual to soar to unimaginable heights of freedom above all who would dismiss God's presence in this world.

Some would wonder why there would be a discussion of faith in a course on life orientation. And therein is the problem of the world in which we live. We live in a faithless world, a world that has allowed itself to be stripped of any standard for moral and ethical behavior. If there is no God, then there is no authority that exists outside our own moral inventions. And if there is no eternal standard of moral and ethical authority outside ourselves, then we are left to ourselves to develop moral and ethical standards by which to live. The problem with this is that humans are terrible inventors when it comes to determining what is either right or wrong. We always digress to inventing moral rules that appeal to our own desires, and in some cases, the annihilation of a society.

When we refuse to conduct our lives according to the One who created life in the beginning, we are left as ships without anchors on a sea of social disorientation. Developing character, establishing relationships, being productive citizens, and being the best we can be, are challenges of life that have limits when we have no personal faith. It is for this reason that we will never be truly oriented in life unless we are oriented around God.

God consciousness brings richness into our life

and success into our challenge to develop as a person. Any study on life orientation that does not focus on the faith yearnings of the human spirit has simply failed to be a complete study. It is incomplete simply because we are religious beings. If we refuse to recognize our religious nature, then we are ignoring the development of the total person.

The South African constitution, as well as many constitutions of nations throughout the world, there



“To educate a person in mind and not in morals, is to educate a menace to society.”
President
Theodore Roosevelt

are guarantees for religious expression. This is a very important part of a constitution that represents the people. It is important simply because the people of any nation are religious people. So for this reason, the development and empowerment of the people must exist within the context of freedom of religious beliefs and expression. **Responsible governments establish laws that**

guarantee the religious freedom of its citizenship.

Responsible citizenship and character building is based on the level of one’s sense of accountability he or she has toward Divine authority.

If we know that we will be held accountable for our misdeeds we may commit against our fellow citizen, then we will conduct our lives with dignity and self-control. If we have no sense of accountability, then anarchy will exist in our personal lives, and in society in general. If there is no sense of accountability, everyone would do as he or she pleases. We would do as we please, and thus carry out our selfish ambitions to the extent of violating the rights of our fellow man. **A sense of accountability guarantees that we do not violate the human rights of others.**

Citizens who dwell in nations that are governed by the rule of law, maintain a respect for the rights of one another. **Only by submitting to law is there**

true freedom. Stable nations must establish law, and rule thereby. This is done in order to guarantee the freedom of citizens. If there is no rule by law, then citizens will often violate one another's rights. Human rights cannot exist in nations that are not governed by law.

Rule by law is our guarantee for freedom. God allows government to create civil laws so that we not bring ourselves into the bondage to any one man's twisted desires to steal our freedom. We are set free by law. God seeks to guard us against ourselves. He wants to protect us from those who would bring us into bondage by their own selfish desires for power.



**Submission To Law
Guarantees Our
Freedom.**

When rulers refuse to recognize both civil law, and a higher law from God, then they destroy the freedom of individual citizens. God has established a higher rule of law for man. This is the rule by His law. By making God's law the final rule of our personal lives, we are guaranteed freedom, even though the practices of men may bring us into captivity. We are guaranteed freedom from those who would oppress us by their own corrupted desires.

It is for the above reason that we must develop a sense of responsibility to the will of God. This is the part faith plays in the development of great citizens and great nations. When the citizens of nations respect the rule of higher laws in their lives, great societies are developed. When every citizen feels a sense of accountability to God and a higher law than the civil law of the land, then citizens will seek to respect their neighbors and civil law. Nations are unified only when the citizenship unites together in honoring God. Human rights are guaranteed only when people accept and remain obedient to the law of One before whom they feel they will eventually give account for their behavior.

The truly God-fearing person will be the best citizen of any nation. He or she will be the best citizen simply because he or she sees an authority beyond national government. The God-fearing citizen behaves according to the law of the land because he or she behaves according to the higher laws of God. When we know we will give account of our actions before God, then we will behave honorably in our relationships with our fellow man.

It is important to understand some of the key moral and ethical principles that are a part of religious faith. These principles are taught by every religious faith, and thus, in order to be complete as the morally and ethically equipped person, we must consider these fundamental principles of faith. If we honor these principles, then we will enjoy an enhanced and uplifted life. We will guard ourselves against unfortunate consequences that come as a result of violating these moral and ethical principles. However, if we violate these principles, then we must expect to reap what we sow. It is for this reason that every person must seriously look at righteous principles by which he or she can live life.

A. Maintain An Active Faith

This brings us to the subject of moral and ethical behavior. Governments of this world establish civil laws to direct the interaction of citizens. However, it is the purpose of religion in society to teach moral and ethical behavior. This behavior must come from God simply because the moral and ethical principles of man continually change. The different civil laws of governments have always changed.

Citizens Of A Society
Must Live By An
Unchanging
Moral Code.

However, **God's moral laws do not change.** His principles of moral behavior and ethical relationships between people have never changed since the beginning of the world. It is important, therefore, that our moral and ethical behavior be directed by God in our relationships with one another.

An example of reaping consequences by violating God's law is illustrated by man's persistence to commit sexual immorality. The civil laws of a government may say nothing about sexual immorality. However, God's laws have never changed on this subject. Since men and women often violate God's law in reference to sexual immorality, they have reaped many unfortunate consequences.

God's law concerning the sexual activity between a man and woman is embedded in the law of marriage of one man to one woman, both of whom are married for life. In this marriage relationship, sexual intercourse is a blessing from God. When we violate this law, people get hurt. Even if one does not contract some sexually transmitted disease from immoral behavior, relationships are destroyed. Hearts are broken. When God's moral laws are broken, lives are often broken.



National Unity
Should Be Based
On A Nation That Is
United Under
One God.

The God-fearing citizen honors civil law because he or she honors the will of God. One does not normally look for loopholes in man's civil laws in order to violate the rights of his or her neighbor. We do not because we have a religious sense of accountability to God's higher laws that say we must love our neighbor as ourselves. If we desire to respect the laws of God, then we are not looking to see how much we can get away with; **we are looking for what we can do to be obedient to His will.** By being obedient to God's will we seek to manifest our faith in Him by our service to others. Obedient service is a manifestation of faith.

God-fearing citizens are always the best citizens because they are first obedient to the higher laws of God, and then to the laws of the land.



Law Brings
Freedom.

B. Believe There Is Only One God

The most important principle for developing a character of faith is the recognition of the existence of God. This recognition assumes that we seek to practice His will in our lives. Without this fundamental faith, we will not be able to reach our greatest potential as a person. We will reach a plateau in character development, and then be frustrated if there is a desire for continued personal growth.

God made all people to yearn for His presence in their lives. If we refuse to recognize this yearning in our lives, then we will live a life that is void of fulfillment in the inner man. **Great characters cannot be built with a spiritual void.** One cannot build a great character by refusing to recognize his or her inner spiritual nature that was created after the image of God. Only those who recognize this character will reach their potential in growth as a person.



Greek Parthenon

The Greek philosophers knew that there was a God beyond the gods they created after their own imagination. After they had imagined every possible god who would behave after the desires of man, the philosophers of Greece knew that there must be a God who is beyond the definitions of the words of our dictionary. They thus built an idol in the city of Athens to this God, lest in their ignorance, they offend Him in some way. It was the idol directed to *“The Unknown God”* (See Acts 17:23).



When the apostle Paul saw this idol in Athens, he stated, *“The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands”* (See At 17:24-28). He is the God who *“gives life to all, breath and all things.”* He created all men *“so that they should seek the Lord, if perhaps they might grope after Him and find Him, though He is not far from every one of us; for in Him we live and move and have our being.”* Sincere people of faith seek after God. They do so because God made us to be religious.

Every responsible citizen of the world must recognize the existence of God. In Him we live and have our being. Our recognition of His existence moves us to seek after His will. In doing this, we become better people. We become individuals who seek to live by higher laws than the laws of this world. Successful character development depends on honoring God and His will.

C. Be Accountable For Actions

Within the beliefs of all religions is the concept of accountability. It is a part of religion that is essential for the development of the individual concerning his or her conduct. Though we may escape the judgment of civil laws which we violate, there is a final judgment where everyone will be held accountable for deeds done while on earth.

We may steal and escape the police. But there is a final judgment we cannot escape. Being

When Moral Laws Are Broken, Someone Always Gets Hurt.

aware of this final judgment motivates us to maintain obedience to both civil law and God's moral laws. The statement is true: *"It is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment"* (Hebrews 9:27; see 2 Corinthians 5:10; Romans 14:10; 2 Peter 2:3).

All people on earth must live with the realization that they will eventually give account for their actions. This realization of accountability motivates

A Sense Of Accountability Produces Good Behavior.

us to do that which is right. **Those who realize that they must give account for their actions will live better lives.** They are so motivated because they will always seek to do good to their neighbors and live obediently in reference to God's will. Accountability produces good behavior.

D. Sow What Is Good

Not only must we live with the realization that we will give account of our actions at a particular time of final accountability, we must also live with the real-

ization that in this life we will reap what we sow. We must not forget these words: *“Be not deceived, God is not mocked, for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption. But he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap eternal life”* (Galatians 6:7,8).

If one violates religious moral laws concerning sexual behavior, then he or she must expect to reap the consequences of sexually transmitted diseases. If we give ourselves to stealing, then we should expect prison. If we give ourselves to deceitful practices, then we must expect the mistrust of others. We reap what we sow.

If we sow that which is good, then we must expect to reap good things. When we live in this life knowing that we will reap from our actions, then we will be motivated to live better lives. This is the part religion plays in culture. It is the responsibility of civil government to establish civil laws that govern our lives as a nation. However, it is the function of religion within a nation to teach citizens that they are to be subject to the higher laws of God. Civil government must deal with civil laws. Religion must develop a conscience in citizens in reference to moral and ethical behavior.

The preceding is illustrated in reference to moral laws surrounding our sexual activity. One of the areas of life wherein millions are reaping bad consequences is sexual immorality. Our world lives with the scourge of sexually transmitted diseases. God’s law is that sexual relationships are to exist only in the bond of marriage (See Hebrews 13:4). The marriage bed is to be undefiled in the sense that sexual relationships are not to exist outside the bond of marriage. It takes only one person to stop the spread of sexually transmitted diseases. Each person must make a decision to be that one person who says no to sexual immorality. When a society begins accepting a morality as normal that is contrary to the law of God, then that society has begun its termination.

Chapter 2

• Launch Out On Faith •

Those who have left legacies that have changed human history are those who established the history of their being upon the foundation of a faith in God.

One must take a leap of faith in order for faith to grow. God works that way. The greatest obstacle in the life of the Christian is a lack of trust in God to work exceedingly abundantly in the life of His children who must walk by faith. We are not testing God when we launch out on faith. We are testing ourselves; we are testing our faith. And unless we put ourselves to the test, we will never really understand the magnificence of God's work in our lives.

Christianity is built on faith. As opposed to a legal system by which one walks by sight and personal performance, Christianity is a world view of faith, and thus, the Christian is optimistic in reference to the future.

We listen to what God says:

The Greatest Obstacle To Faith Is Simply The Lack Of Faith

“And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28). ***“If God is for us, who can be against us”*** (Romans 8:31). ***“But in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us”*** (Romans 8:37). ***“I can do all things through Him who strengthens me”*** (Philippians 4:13). ***“For whoever is born from God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that overcomes the world, our faith”*** (1 John 5:4). We must believe all these promises.

Ralph Bumpus once said, *“We must stop allowing the knockers, knit pickers and No No Birds to run our lives.”* For the Christian, it is not true that things will get worse before they get better. They are now great and the best is yet to be. There is some irony in what the renowned radio commentator, Paul

Harvey, used to say when closing some of his radio broadcasts, “Don’t worry about anything. Nothing is going to turn out all right anyway.” There are too many people who spend half their time figuring out what we cannot do. We need those who envision what we can do. We need leaders of faith. We need leaders of faith who firmly believe that things will turn out for the best.

Our mental attitude determines what we get out of life. If we feel like conquerors, then we will live a victorious life. However, if we come to the conclusion that the battle is already lost, then our mental attitude will make sure we operate as those in retreat rather than those who are marching home from victory. As Christians, we must recognize that God has already given us the victory. We must simply stay in the battle.

A. Looking For The Best

We are surrounded in our lives by too many pessimists. Someone once said, “A pessimist is a man who looks both ways before crossing a one-way street.” This is the person who believes that things are as bad as they can possibly be, and yet, expects them to get worse. “A pessimist is a man who does not choose the lesser of two evils. He chooses both.”

The story was told that before the championship boxing fight between Gene Tunney and Jack Dempsey, Tunney woke up one night before the fight, having dreamed that he had been severely beaten by Dempsey. When he later referred to the dream in a conversation with a friend, he said that he had been reading too many newspaper accounts concerning the ferocity of Dempsey. That ferocity had been eating away at his mind, discouraging him concerning the upcoming fight. He then made a decision. That decision was to stop all input of negative thinking. He would focus on winning. He would concentrate on his own ferocity. The result of his positive thinking was his winning the championship fight.

If we would place Christianity in the field of philosophy for a moment, the greatest psychiatrist in the world would classify it as an extremely positive philosophy for mental behavior. We notice some of the exhortations from the Holy Spirit: *“Fight the good fight of the faith,”* *“We can do all things,”* *“All things work together for good,”* *“God is for us,”* and a host of other positive concepts define the nature of the Christian mental attitude. It is for this reason that Christians can *“do all things without grumbling”* (Philippians 2:14). They can *“count it all joy”* when they fall into various trials (James 1:2).

B. The Best Is Yet To Be

A self-centered optimist once said, *“An optimist is a man who tells you to cheer up when things are going his way.”* That is really not a true optimist. A true optimist is the one who spends his last dollar to buy a new billfold or purse. He or she is the one about whom someone once wrote, *“Optimism is the belief that even when things come to worst, it won’t be so bad.”*

It Is The Nature
Of A True Christian
To Be Optimistic
In All Things.

We do live in a world that seems to have gone wrong. Sin has had its epic in eternity, that epic being the time of the existence of this world wherein sin has ruined an Eden environment. However, we must remember that sin has been overcome by a cross that was posted at Calvary.

F. H. Bradley concluded, *“The world is the best of all possible worlds, and everything in it is a necessary evil.”* We live in a “necessarily evil world” simply because God has turned the work of Satan—a world gone wrong through sin—into a preparatory environment for those who are headed for an eternal dwelling. It is for this reason that the Christian firmly believes that all things are working together for good. It will turn out well in the end. Really. It is not what Ken Hubbard said, *“An optimist is a fellow who believes what’s going to be will be postponed.”*

For the saint, what is yet to be is an eternal reward of glory in the midst of a truly optimistic heavenly environment.

We must think on the positive side of life. In his best selling book, *The Results of Positive Thinking*, Norman Vincent Peale wrote,

A positive thinker does not refuse to recognize the negative, he refuses to dwell on it. Positive thinking is a form of thought which habitually looks for the best results from the worst conditions. It is possible to look for something to build on; it is possible to expect the best for yourself even though things look bad. And the remarkable fact is that when you seek good you are very likely to find it.

And so you will. Someone once said, *“Always act as if it were impossible to fail.”* We believe that this is what the apostle Paul had in mind when he wrote from prison that we can do all things through Christ (See Philippians 4:13). With God on our side, how can we fail? Paul concluded,

For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8:38,39).

C. Making A Decision To Be Positive

Each one of us have a choice concerning our mental attitude. We can choose to be optimistic about life. Or, we can choose the alternative. We can choose to drink from the darkness of discouragement and despair. Or, we can feast on the brightness of that which is good and true. The world is full of those who have chosen to be happy, to look on the bright side. In fact, if it were not for so many optimists in the world, the pessimist would not know how unhappy he really is.

Each one of us have a choice of being either optimistic about life or thinking that things are bad and will get worse. We can choose to be the pessimist

about whom J. B. Cabell wrote, *“The optimist proclaims that we live in the best of all possible worlds; the pessimist fears that this is true.”* We may think that the pessimist is more often right. However, he is not the one who is more often happy. It was said, *“The optimist consoles himself that things could be worse; the pessimist just waits a while, and sure enough, they are.”* His mental attitude brings him to the conclusion that the worst is yet to be.

If our vision of the future is dark, then dark clouds will rise over the horizon. The state of our mental attitude has a habit of bringing into reality the nature of our dreams. If we see an opportunity in every calamity of life, then life will be filled with the reality of sweet dreams. However, if we focus on calamities in every opportunity, there are only dark clouds in the future. Looking on the bright side of life leads us beyond feeling that we are only half way there. It leads us to believing that we are nearing the end of the worst and coming into the reality of the best.

Squirrels store up nuts for the winter season. When things get bad, squirrels have a store of nourishment from which to feed. So it is with our mental attitudes. We must store up positive thoughts, thoughts of good times. When winter comes, we will then have a host of pleasant thoughts from which to draw in difficult times. We can be as the tea kettle when it is up to its neck in hot water. It just whistles.

The Key To A Bright Future Is An Unwavering Faith In The Present.

A trapeze instructor once had a difficult time in training a young student. The student complained, *“I can’t do it. I can’t do it.”* The wise instructor said, *“Just throw your heart over the bar and your body will follow.”* We must train our minds to learn to expect, not to doubt. This was what Jesus said to a father who had brought to Him an afflicted son. Jesus said, *“All things are possible to him who believes”* (Mark 9:23). However, most of us are in the situation concerning our faith as the father. Jesus recognized

his pessimistic outlook in reference to his weak faith and responded to Jesus, *“Lord, I believe! Help my unbelief”* (Mark 9:24). *“Help our unbelief.”*

It is not natural for the Christian to suffer with unbelief. Unbelief is a cankering leaven that will destroy our positive mental attitudes. Paul had this in mind concerning the leavening of sin among the Corinthian members. His instructions were, *“Purge out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump”* (1 Corinthians 5:7). We need to be purged of unbelief, purged of negatives, purged of doubts, and thus purged of fear. Once we have purged ourselves of those things that hinder us from reaching our potential, then we will aspire to what God would have us be. Samuel Ellsworth Kiser was right in his following poem:

There was once a man who smiled,
Because the day was bright,
Because he slept at night,
Because God gave him sight,

To gaze upon his child;
Because his little one,
Could leap and laugh and run;
Because the distant sun,
Smiled on the earth, he smiled.

He smiled because the sky,
Was high above his head,
Because the rose was red,
Because the past was dead.

He never wondered why,
The Lord had blundered so,
That all things have to go,
The wrong way, here below,
The overarching sky.

He toiled, and still was glad,
Because the air was free,
Because he loved, and she,
That claimed his love and he,
Shared all the joys they had;

Because the grasses grew,
Because the sweet winds blew,
Because that he could hew,
And hammer, he was glad.

Because he lived, he smiled,
And did not look ahead,
With bitterness or dread,
But nightly sought his bed,
As calmly as a child.

And people called him mad,
For being always glad,
With such things as he had,
And shook their heads, and smiled.

Chapter 3

• Dealing With Our Doubts •

It is not doubt from which the faithful have been set totally free, but the obsession with doubt that would hinder them from aspiring to reach their destinies.

We often impetuously respond to someone who has imparted to us a piece of previously unknown information by saying, “I doubt that.” We have the right to doubt. However, our response obligates us. We are obligated to search for a reason for our doubt. We must investigate, search, dig, study. **One has no right to doubt if he or she is not willing to study or investigate in an honest manner that which he or she doubts.**

Our doubting is often too frivolous. We are too quick to doubt what one says. Or, we are often too quick to doubt what is new and not according to our traditional way of thinking. We are thus too hard on ourselves. Our inability to change in order to incorporate new information into our thinking and behavior leads us to be too quick to be challenged by others who might question us.

When it comes to the subject of doubt, it is usually not a problem of doubt in what others say. The problem is ourselves. We burden ourselves with countless questions about our own beliefs. In fact, our resistance to the questions of others is often a resistance to add to our own assortment of questions. We thus reside in a dark room of self inflicted

doubt, refusing to allow in any more questions that might add to our confused world of doubting. When we have allowed our faith to be attacked by our own selves, we resist the skepticism of others who seek to perpetuate our own faithlessness.

Webster's Dictionary defined doubt *"to waver or fluctuate in opinion or belief, to be uncertain or undecided respecting the truth or fact; to be undermined."* That covers about everything in reference to questioning everything. The uncontrolled doubter has a lot of territory to cover. The uncontrolled doubter is a skeptic. He is skeptical of all that cannot be identified by the five senses. A Christian is not a skeptic if he or she has those times where questions arise concerning one's beliefs. Our questions should drive us to seek answers. The skeptic simply gives up on faith and is satisfied to live in a world of lingering questions.

The fact is that we all have some doubts. Sometimes we even doubt our own faith. Many years ago E. D. Starbuck made a survey wherein 53% of 142 women and 79% of 95 men he surveyed had doubts concerning their faith when they were between the ages of eleven and twenty-six. It is during this time in life that young people are moving from the foundation of their faith. They are moving from basing their faith on their parents to making up their own minds. Bertrand Russell once said, *"In all affairs it's a healthy thing now and then to hang a question mark on the things you have long taken for granted."* It is not wrong to have times of doubt concerning our faith. This is especially true during those formative years when we are transitioning from the foundation of our parent's faith to a faith that is based on our own conclusions.

There is nothing unnatural about doubting. The problem is not with doubting. The problem is with our unwillingness to do as the Bereans. ***"They received the word with all readiness of mind and searched the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so"*** (Acts 17:11). If doubt does not drive us to

searching, especially searching the word of God, then we are not honest with ourselves. It is something like Wilson Mizner said, *“I respect faith, but doubt is what gets you an education.”* If we doubt what someone has said, we are not fair to the one we doubt if we are not willing to investigate that which was said. **If we doubt our own beliefs, then we are not fair to ourselves if we do not search for answers. Doubt that resides in a lethargic mind has found a permanent residence.**

The Bible
Is The Answer
For A Heart Of Doubt.

A. The Causes Of Doubt

A normal process of intellect is questioning that which is accepted as true. However, a chronic doubter is a skeptic, and thus, one who is unable to accept anything. He is a perpetual agnostic; one who makes questioning his hobby. However, some are like the insomniac dyslexic agnostic who stayed awake at night wondering if there were a “dog.”

Unchallenged doubt has its unfortunate consequences. We must not lead ourselves to believe that a failure to deal with doubt demons will somehow resolve itself. These demons can rake havoc with our faith. They can crush our hope. It is for this reason that we must be vigilant about dealing with those things that cause doubt.

1. Bible Ignorance

Ignorance of the Bible causes doubt. One’s doubts about the Bible are more often the result of our lack of study of the Bible. People have often accused the Bible of being a book of fables, myths and contradictions. At the same time they have not investigated the text of the Bible enough to understand its literary nature. They do not understand that God has left to us the responsibility of making sure the text of the Bible is preserved in a way that will lead those who are searching to a knowledge of God and His salvation for man.

Those who know little about the Bible have not studied it enough to understand that **the Bible has come down to us through history in a manner that God has wanted it to come down to us through history**. If a scribe, in making copies of the Bible, stumbled here and there in the text of the Bible, then God allowed such to happen in order to test our faith in His word. We may blame a copyist of the Bible for not being perfect, but we cannot blame God for allowing the copyist to do his work, regardless of his imperfections. We simply know that **we have the Bible today in a form that God intended that we have it**.

Concerning doubt of the content of the Bible, we must be honest with ourselves. One's lifestyle may make him prejudiced concerning judgments the Bible makes about sin in his or her life. Doubt that is based on a rejection of Bible truths because of sin in our lives is not fair. It is a doubt that is generated by rebellion.

Now if the general content of the Bible is doubted, then that is another matter. If we want to write off the content as an assortment of myths and fables, then we have obligated ourselves to some necessary objective studies. We have committed ourselves to study the evidences of the text of the Bible. In this study, one must not only investigate the content of the Bible (See John 20:30,31), but also external evidences that prove that God's word could not be the invention of men. If it were, then the invention would be greater than the greatest human philosopher or religionist leader. We must never forget that dedicated people gave their lives because they believed that they had personally experienced Jesus. They believed He was who He said He was, the only Son of God. Men and women went to death because they walked by the fact that a miracle happened in their presence. They wrote, died, and thus have handed to us a written testimony that only the hardened agnostic would continue to doubt.

**The More One Knows
The Bible, The Greater
His Faith, And Thus,
The Less He Doubts.**

2. Despair And Depression

Despair and depression cause doubt. Someone once said, “*There is no weariness like that which comes from doubting, for doubt is brother devil to despair.*” Again in his book, *The Psychology of Religion*, Starbuck told of a patient who wrote to him,

I have had times of doubt when I wondered almost if anything were true and how we could believe it. This would usually come at times when I felt unusually despondent and nothing went right; it would end as soon as I felt better.

When was the last time you were depressed? We would assume that that time was also a time when your doubts surfaced. It is not doubt that brings on depression. We must turn this around. **Our depression only gives doubt an occasion to make us question ourselves.**

3. Traditions And Doubt

The religious traditions of men cause doubts. Every religious person seeks to please God. And every religious person knows that at the end of the day, God is the one who must deliver truth to those who seek to please Him. **The problem comes when worshipers seek to serve God after their religious traditions and not after the revelation of God.** If one is honest, he or she knows when something is tradition and something is Bible.

When we confine ourselves to an institutional system of religion, then we know that something is questionable about what we are doing. If we do not know for sure if our beliefs and behavior in reference to our faith are based on the word of God, then we have doubts. If we are honest with ourselves in our ignorance of the word of God, then we will wonder if what we are doing religiously is truly pleasing to God. If we are not honest with ourselves in these matters, or greatly concerned about doing what God says, then we will carry on with our traditional beliefs and behavior.

But for religiously honest people who seek to be

pleasing to God, this is not good enough. The truly honest person seeks to conduct himself or herself according to what the Holy Spirit, through Paul, instructed in **2 Corinthians 13:5**: **“Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test your own selves.”**

The only relief one can have for religious doubt is to love the truth of God (See 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12). Paul, Peter, and the other inspired writers of the word of God, received their message from the Holy Spirit. It is by perspiration that we will get it. **Nothing short of diligent searching of the Scriptures will deliver us from doubt concerning our traditional religious beliefs and behavior.**

B. The Consequences Of Doubt

As stated before, everyone at times doubts his or her personal beliefs. In reference to the behavior of institutional religiosity, we often question what we are doing. If our doubts drive us to investigation, then we are on our way to an answer for our doubts, and the building of our faith. However, if our doubts remain unanswered, then faith will often crash and burn. One can become as the one about whom it was said, *“A skeptic is a man who has faith in nothing except in his own lack of faith.”* But one cannot continue on with uncontrolled doubt without some unfortunate consequences. The following are only a few:

1. Doubt Has No Center Of Reference

Doubt leaves us without a life center of reference. Faith comes by hearing the word of God (See Romans 10:17). God meant that His written word would be our source of faith. However, if one allows his or her doubts to bring into question the source of our faith, then one's faith takes the fall.

One of Satan's greatest attacks against our faith is to bring into our minds questions concerning the validity of the Bible. When the Bible is discarded to being simply good religious literature,

then we are left with no revelation from our Creator. When the Bible becomes just another book on the shelf with an assortment of good books of philosophy and religion, then we are left to our own religious inventions. We are relegated to a world of religious competition wherein might makes right or the majority rules the day. **If there is no standard for right, then right does not exist.** Who would want to live in a world wherein everyone did that which was right in his own eyes?

Our Knowledge Of
Jesus Is The Entire
Center Of Reference
For Gospel Living.

2. Doubt Submits Us To Inward Turmoil

Doubt submits us to endless inward turmoil. James explained the nature of the one who has burdened himself or herself with perpetual doubts. *“He who doubts is like a wave of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind”* (James 1:6). Doubt makes God feel a long way off in some corner of the universe, somewhere off in a distant universe, unapproachable by finite beings He may have deserted on a planetary desert. And when one feels that God is distant, unapproachable, he then leaves himself to be driven by the waves of turmoil. Ralph Waldo Emerson was right when he said, *“Skepticism is slow suicide.”*

It is the lot of the skeptic to doubt his or her beliefs, and then start believing one's doubts. The philosopher Descartes took this road. He discovered that at the end of this road, the human mind really needed some type of faith. So when he had exhausted himself with questioning, even questioning his own existence, he concluded, *“I think, therefore I am.”* At least this is a start toward faith.

3. Doubt Destroys Faith

A skeptic is often told that seeing is believing, **but he refuses to look.** It is often true as someone said of the perpetual doubter, *“A skeptic is a man who has faith in nothing, except in his own lack of faith.”* And without faith, one has no anchor of the soul

in times of turmoil (See Hebrews 6:18,19). **Doubt burns bridges to our way back to the tranquility of our emotionally secure homes.**

There are many who, as someone said, who “*believe their doubts and doubt their beliefs.*” But such mental gymnastics lead one only to a life of endless uncertainty. God would not have us behave this way because He does not want us to believe this way. We must pray without doubting (See 1 Timothy 2:8). We must move mountains by faith (See Matthew 21:21). We were never emotionally designed to be doubters, and thus we must conclude that persistent doubt is not natural. **It is not human to be skeptical.** The skeptical mind is a deviation from how God emotionally created us.

4. Doubt Destroys Confidence

One can be confident in his or her ability to work and reach goals. We are a self-reliant people. We can “do our own thing.” We can “do it our way.” All these mental attitudes cause men to do great things. However, when it comes to faith, there is a biblical teaching that “*we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us*” (Romans 8:37). “*I can do all things through Him who strengthens me*” (Philippians 4:13). We get the point.

We humanly have the ability to do great things. We can build a tower of Babel, for God Himself pronounces concerning the ability of man, “*Nothing that they propose to do will be withheld from them*” (Genesis 11:6). However, if we recruit God for our side, then we are more than master builders. We are more than conquerors. We can have the confidence that the best is yet to be. We can have the faith that God “*is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think according to the power that works in us*” (Ephesians 3:20). Take away this faith, and the Christian can have no confidence beyond his or her own abilities. Take away our faith and we are no better off than the disillusioned world in accomplishing that which we dream to do.

Regardless of where one is in reference to his or her doubts, the fact that we are in doubt means that there must be a reconstruction of our faith. This is not an option if we seek to establish our own mental and emotional security. In view of the consequences of faithlessness, there must be a building again of a foundation that leads to a life of faith, for without faith, we are lifeless. And lifeless people can never discover their destiny.

C. Curing Our Doubts

We must respond to doubt according to what O. H. Tabor once said, *“In our day, when so many creeds written and unwritten, are bound upon people, everybody is a doubter to somebody. There must be a real search for truth; an honest doubt is sometimes the path to truth.”*

Doubt will often come knocking at our door. But we must allow faith to open the door. And when the door is opened with faith, no one will be there. Faith makes our doubts vanish away. Someone once said, *“Faith is dead to doubt, dumb to discouragement, blind to impossibilities, and knows nothing but success in God.”*

Turnbull once said,

Doubt is the disease of this inquisitive, restless age—it is the price we pay for advanced intelligence and civilization—but as the most beautiful night is born of darkness, so the faith that springs from conflict is often the strongest and best.

In a time where doubt seems to triumph over faith, a strong faith will emerge from the conflict if we turn to God and His word. If we do this, then out of the mire of an environment wherein chaos has been produced by faithlessness will come a faith that has been purified by testing. Doubt may often take us down the corridors of despair; but it is faith that will chain us to faith in God. Things were written that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ and Son of God (See John 20:30,31). It is our responsibility,

therefore, to investigate that which has been written. Charles H. Gabriel expressed our victory over doubt when he wrote the following verses:

*I'm possessed of a hope that is steadfast and sure,
Since Jesus came into my heart,
And no dark clouds of doubt now my pathway obscure,
Since Jesus came into my heart.*

Chapter 4

• Waiting On Patience •

**It will be the patient who will be rewarded
with the satisfaction of a job well done.**

If life is a puppet show, then God is the artist that moves us along by the strings of faith. Therefore, we must never allow the scissors of skepticism to cut the strings that bind us to hope. We must keep remembering that it is through faith that we will eventually be victorious.

Someone once said that patience is ***“the ability to idle your motor when you feel like stripping your gears.”*** Bierce added that patience is *“a minor form of despair, disguised as a virtue.”*

In some or all areas of life, this is the personality characteristic with which all of us struggle. It is the flaw we first see in ourselves, and the one from which we reap a host of negatives in our relationships with others, for impatience always affects relationships. Many of us have pronounced the self-condemnation, “I am too impatient.” Or, if we have a dear one who has felt we needed the same exhortation, he or she has replied, “You are too impatient.” And we often are.

Peter said that to our self-control we need to add patience (See 2 Peter 1:5,6). It is possible that we need more than an addition. We need multiplication. Impatience has ended in too much strife, heartaches in our lives. We have had to offer too many apologies for the nonsense we have spoken.

There are numerous exhortations in the Bible for the Christian concerning patience: *“In your patience possess your souls”* (Luke 21:19). *“We with patience wait for it”* (Romans 8:25). *“Be sound ... in patience”* (Titus 2:2). *“You have need of patience”* (Hebrews 10:36). *“Let us run with patience”* (Hebrews 12:1-KJV). *“Let patience have her perfect work”* (James 1:4). And on and on. We should conclude that God wants us to work on this virtue in our lives.

Patience Is Necessary
To Establish
And Continue
All Relationships.

A. Causes Of Impatience

Dealing with any problem in reference to our personalities means that we must deal with the causes behind the problems. Since the Bible gives so many exhortations concerning building patience, we must assume that God knows we can handle this challenge. If we judge ourselves to be impatient, then God expects us to change. And thus, we know we can change. But in order to change, we must recognize the areas of cause in order to deal with the results of impatience.

1. The Lack Of Mercy

The lack of mercy on others causes impatience. We remember what James wrote: *“For judgment will be without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy”* (James 2:13). We often try to fly like an eagle, but feel we are surrounded with turkeys. The result is that we blame others for our misfortune. Someone said, *“No matter how little patience you have with the mistakes of others, you always have lots of patience with your own.”*

This was the case with the unforgiving debtor in Jesus’ parable of the unforgiving debtors. After being forgiven of his own debt, the unforgiving debtor went to one who owed him a very small amount. He sought immediate repayment. Of this unforgiving one, Jesus said, *“And his fellow bondservant fell down and begged him, saying, ‘Have patience*

with me and I will pay you.’ And he would not, but went and cast him into prison until he should pay the debt.” (Matthew 18:29,30).

How many times have we cast into prison those friends with whom we should have been patient? Even to this day, how many of our friends are still in prison because they are not performing as we think they should, or being who we think they should be?

Goethe said, *“Tolerance comes with age; I see no fault committed that I myself could not have committed at some time or other.”* It is time to release others from the prison into which we have cast them. It is time to realize that *“in the way you judge, you will be judged”* (Matthew 7:1).

Some wise person stated, *“Patience consists of feeling and seeing things with your heart instead of your hands and eyes.”* In our relationship with some, it may be time to allow a tender heart to rule the day. We must seek to free ourselves by allowing others to be themselves around us. Once we are merciful to the faults of others by reflecting on our own imperfections, then patience will reign in our relationships.

2. Communicate With Others

A lack of communication with others causes impatience. Have you ever tried to finish someone’s sentence with a presumptuous statement that was not what the speaker wanted to say? If you have been married for some time, then you probably know that to which we are referring. Because some lack skills in how to carry on a discussion with another person, their impatience causes them to assume things the other person does not have on his or her mind, or even intends to say. Our impatience that has been generated by a moment of temper or haste has caused us to blurt out something that was never on the mind of the one with whom we have presumed to be communicating. One’s impatience is often revealed in how often we interrupt others when they are speaking. This is what James meant in James

1:19: *“My beloved brethren, let everyone be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath.”*

There was a case in Paul’s life where the magistrates of the city of Philippi impatiently presumed to be true some false accusations of irritated accusers. They subsequently *“tore off their clothes and commanded them [Paul and Silas] to be beaten with rods”* (Acts 16:22). Now imagine this. Before these magistrates questioned Paul and Silas, they went into a rage and commanded these two strangers to be beaten. They knew that a Roman citizen could not be beaten before a just trial. If he were, then the one who beat him could be sentenced to death. We would say that they were impatient and foolish. But how many times have we beaten a friend or loved one before we understood the whole truth? How many times have we struck a blow with our tongue before we communicated?

3. Anxiety Engenders Impatience

Someone was right when he said, *“A man is as big as the things that annoy him.”* There is the old Chinese story of a frustrated student and an old woman. One day the student became so frustrated with his studies that he threw his books away. He quit going to class. After a couple days, he was wandering down a street and saw an old woman rubbing an iron bar against a stone. He asked, *“What are you doing?”* The old woman responded, *“I am making a needle.”* We must keep in mind the old proverb, *“If you are patient in one moment of anger, you will escape a hundred days of sorrow.”* Just keep in mind that *“patience on the road will often prevent patients in the hospital.”*

B. Where Patience Is Needed

It is here that we get to the point. We need to work on our patience. We have identified what some of the causes are, but now we need to start to work on specific areas of life where we need to develop a personality of patience.

We have found that some people have patience in particular areas of their lives where in others they have a great problem with maintaining control of their person. Some are patient in working for a personal goal, but impatient with those with whom they must work in order to accomplish that goal. We have always thought it interesting that one would spend days, weeks and months in preparing a book to be printed. But once the final draft was made, the author rushed it to the printer and expected it to be printed yesterday. He was patient with his own work, but impatient with the printer when it was not printed on schedule.

Impatience Will Destroy Even Lifetime Relationships.

Our challenge is to work on patience in all areas of our lives. We need to take the patience we have in one area of life and spread it over the totality of our behavior, especially when working with other people.

1. Dealing With People

We need patience when dealing with people in general. God intends that we be led by those who have focused on being patient people. Elders are not to be *“quick-tempered”* (1 Timothy 3:3; Titus 1:7). Elder women are to teach younger women to be *“sound in patience”* (Titus 2:3,4). Shakespeare was right: *“How poor are they who have not patience.”* Poverty in patience leads us to have poor relationships with others. It is for this reason that Paul exhorted the Thessalonian church, *“Be patient toward all men”* (1 Thessalonians 5:14).

Winston Churchill once said to an impatient general, *“Sir, you do not possess your emotions. They possess you.”* We are too often possessed when we are dealing with the ignorance, faults, and often trivialities of those with whom we associate. Two Irishmen were once on a tandem bicycle. They had just reached the top of a hill. The one on the front was totally exhausted. When they came to a stop at the crest of the hill for a rest, the front rider said to

Pat on the back, “Pat, that was a stiff climb.” With no sweat on his head, Pat responded, “It was at that. And if I hadn’t kept the brake on, we would have rolled backwards.”

People need patience with people. We especially need patience with others in our times of folly. Give someone a “brake” by being a little more patient.

2. Patience With Our Performance

We need patience with our own performance in doing every task of life. One time the great inventor, Thomas Edison, had unsuccessfully tried hundreds of times to solve a problem with experiments. He was asked to justify so many experiments to come up with a solution. He replied, “Why, now we know 1,000 ways it won’t work.”

Luther Burbank estimated that he must have pulled a million cactus spines out of his hands in the sixteen years it took him to develop a cactus that cattle could eat. Norman Vincent Peale once wrote,

Why can’t people make better use of patience in their lives. Mainly, I think, because it has three great enemies: discouragement, that white surrender, the flag that makes people give up too easily; frustration, generating anger that clouds your judgment and wrecks your timing; and the tendency to overreact under stress, hit the panic button, lose your cool. (*Reader’s Digest*, 1972).

Peale was right. Nothing great ever came as a result of impatient work. It takes persistence to accomplish a lifetime of greatness. It is as a Chinese proverb, “Nothing is so full of victory as patience.” It is for this reason that we must “run with endurance the race that is set before us” (Hebrews 12:1).

3. Patience For Jesus

We must have patience for the coming of the Lord. The Christian is patient with the events of this world simply because he or she knows that this world is only temporary. It is not the Christian’s final end. Our focus on the eternal builds a spiritual foundation for

patience. We must have a living hope, a hope that pushes us toward that which is yet to be revealed. However, our anticipation must be mellowed with patience. James had this in mind when he wrote,

Therefore, be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. Behold, the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth. And he has long patience for it, until he receives the early and latter rain. You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near (James 5:7,8).

It takes patience to wait on God's work. In the context of James' words was the imminent destruction of the persecuting Jews, which persecution was a thorn in the flesh of the early church. While suffering under the oppression of intolerant Judaism, James encouraged the Jewish church to be patient for deliverance. We must also be patient. We thus glory in tribulation, knowing that it is through the trial of our faith that we gain a character of patience. ***"We also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation works patience"*** (Romans 5:3). It is through faith and patience that we will eventually overcome at the coming of Jesus.

And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end, so that you not be sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises (See Hebrews 6:11,12).

The Bible places a great deal of emphasis on the character of patience. The reason is that it is necessary to have patience in order to establish close relationships with others. Nothing destroys a relationship with another more quickly than impatience with the faults of others. It is imperative, therefore, that we focus on this virtue.

The ultimate purpose for developing a patient character is in view of eternal dwelling. Since we will dwell with one another in the eternal setting of heaven, then certainly we must have a very patient personality. Heaven will not be full of impatient people.