

Foundations of Faith

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This is a tremendous subject facing the Body of Christ today. With every stream of approach that has been brought throughout these recent decades, it still has not diminished the need for us to *understand Faith*. God is teaching us some things even now as we seek Him for greater understanding. May we always be *changed toward spiritual growth* as we study His Word.

He is changing us from glory to glory (2Cor.3:18). As we take another look at faith, let us remember that this word in the original Greek is /pistis/ which simply means “total reliance on the word of another.” That is the noun, *faith*. Hebrews 11 says, “Now faith is the substance...” It is a noun. It is a reality. *Faith is for real.*

The *action* of faith, or the verb, is the Greek word from which we derive our word “believe,” or as we might say, “to act upon.” In other words: when noun and verb agree, or when heart and mouth agree, *faith is activated*. Does that communicate to you? How often we’ve *said* a lot of things that we really didn’t believe. That is as dangerous as believing things we don’t dare say. The combination of the two, noun and verb, is when our lives, our hearts, the totality of our being says, “This is what I believe.”

Let’s look carefully at two verses. First, Proverbs 16:23 says, “***The heart of the wise teacheth his mouth, and added learning to his lips.***” This is the balance to “confessing” something. In the church, many Christians actually have become superstitious concerning certain practices. If you say something in their range of hearing, admitting you have a problem, they nearly cackle at you with a *fear*, saying something like this: “Don’t confess that!” To them, when you *say* something, exactly that is going to happen to you, or somehow jump on you. *I refuse spiritual superstition.* It’s simply time for us to mature.

Is there a balance to the teaching of “what-you-say-is-what-you-get” (Pr.6:2; Mk.11:23)? Is there a balance to the fact that we *need* to speak positively and focus on positive things (Phil.4:8)? *Most assuredly there is.* **But only saying a thing will not make it happen.** There must be the combination of speaking the words and truly believing in the heart, in the whole of one’s being, for the miraculous to take place. If *people* could create things by what they glibly say, I would fear living. ☺ The difference is in this proverb: “***The heart of the wise teacheth his mouth.***” What God says to me I appropriate into my own living levels, I apply it in my daily life. And that which I appropriate, *that which is an integral part of me*, I dare to speak. Hello? **We need the balance in and for our understanding.**

I know you don’t really like hearing this, but you *need* to hear it. The reason we don’t like this is because we much prefer hearing truth just preached than having to live it out daily. We prefer people, preachers, who give us little things to go about “doing,” like a verbal formula. We want the magical potion: instant maturity, instant happenings, instant growth. We want to be able to go out and quickly win the world for Christ. We want to speak the word and things come into being. We want the creativity of the tongue, just like God, Himself has.

Now, the Lord said that is all promised **IF** – if what? *If you can believe.* “I believe. I believe–I believe!” We think by our many and frequent verbal repetitions we can make a thing come into being. But you see, what God means when He says “believe” is, ***if you are living fully according to the fullness of the revelation of truth that you presently have, everything you now know can become a reality when you say it.*** Is it too hard to hear this? I know this may seem like a little twist on what you have been taught, but this is the whole truth. How else do you explain the shortfall in your experience? Why is it that what you have been trying to *speak into existence* has not happened as you have spoken the words? We need to embrace the full counsel of God (see Ac.20:27) and not settle for partial understanding or partial obedience.

The second verse we need to look at is: Acts 2:26 – “**Therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad.**” Have you ever been in a service where they tried to “pump things up” to a higher spiritual level? They most likely kept encouraging things like, “Let’s just sing ‘The joy of the Lord is my strength!’” And, “Now let’s sing that melody again only use these joyful words: ‘Ha-ha-ha-ha-ha-ha-ha-ha-ha-ha-ha-ha!’” ☺ Did you really *feel* glad when you sang that? Or were you perhaps struggling with some realities in your life that struck at that gladness of heart? But you sang along just as you were instructed, reaching for the formula of speaking something into reality: “Ha-ha-ha-ha-ha-ha.” It was a bit “like sounding brass and tinkling cymbals” (1Cor.13:1) to many ears. That’s because it was actually the reverse of God’s instruction: “Therefore did my heart rejoice” **and then** “my tongue is glad” (emphasis added). When something is a *reality within me*, then it’s also a reality when it comes out of my mouth.

In the previous message, “**An Introduction to Faith,**” (LINK) we looked at *faith resisted*, and reminded ourselves of some of the great people of the Bible, among them were Thomas, Peter, and Paul. Then we saw Agrippa and Festus as they were under great feelings of emotional response to the conviction of the Holy Spirit, but both were able to *resist the moment of faith*. We simply mentioned in closing that message that faith not only could be *resisted*, but it also could be *reduced*. Let’s investigate that further.

Faith is limited by a number of issues:

1) Limited concepts of God. Some people only know Jesus as Savior. They are totally content to remain on a salvation level, knowing Jesus, our Savior. They have a soteriological approach to salvation. That big word simply means, “to be rescued from.” In other words, they are not going to hell; they have been rescued from that awful fate. These believers are happy, content, satisfied, pleased and fulfilled to have that level of relationship with Jesus Christ. “Hallelujah! I’m not going to hell.” It is God’s desire, of course, that all would come to know Him in that wonderful way! (see 2Pet.3:9).

Many people put a period on their relationship at that point. They are satisfied and do not desire anything further. In fact, if you talk to such people about the Baptism in the Holy Spirit, they usually respond: “I have Jesus and that’s enough. I have everything I need in Christ.” So they sort of carry Him around in a little box, limiting His abilities and power in their lives because they refuse to enlarge their understanding of or level of commitment to Him. “You’re still my Savior.” And that is true. It is their *choice* to live on that level with Jesus.

Other believers claim that knowing Him as their Savior and Baptizer in the Holy Spirit is enough for them. But even that *still limits* His function from within. He is active and alive in them, but there still is more available in our relationship with God. Still others know Jesus as Savior, Baptizer, and Great Physician, and *that* seems to be enough for them. But can we agree there is far more about our God to get to know? He is the Almighty God and He is limitless!

Faith then will be reduced by or limited to one’s concepts of God. The more we come to know Him – and that greater revelation is found in the Word, Church – the more we come to know Him, the greater will be our horizons of faith and our range of experience with God. **Great people of faith are people that are rightly related to a great God.** Not only rightly related but in close communication or communion with Him, ever increasing their comprehension of Who He is.

2) A limited knowledge of the Word. How often do we hear *Christians* say, “I didn’t know that was in the Bible.” “I didn’t know that promise was there.” “I didn’t realize that thus and so...” “I never dreamed God would ever this...” or “that there was a time that anyone in the Bible ever went through something such as I’m going through today.” That’s why He says to us, “Get in the Word! Read the Word! Listen carefully as you read.” If you are a new Christian, begin with a modern translation of the Bible. It should be something you can understand. Read it regularly and say, “Thank You Holy Spirit” for every new thing you read. Then graduate to other translations that will assist you in your study and subsequent growth process. The Word of God is *nourishment* to our whole beings. We need to learn to eat it, to ingest and digest it’s truths.

3) Limited obedience to the Word. Limited obedience. How important is that? Do you remember the story of Elisha and Joash? (2Kng.13:14-19). Joash was the king of Israel at a time when the Syrians had besieged Israel. Here is how the story unfolds. There was a man of God, Elisha, and he was about to die. He knew he was going to die and so he called for the king of God's people, Israel, and said to him, "Now I want to tell you some things." Elisha began to share his faith in God with Joash. During that visit, he said, "Joash, God is going to deliver you, and I really *believe* Him for it." Joash said, "Me too. I'm with you." It's worded a little differently in the King James. ☺

Elisha handed Joash his arrows and said, "Alright, smite the ground with these arrows. Let's go with God." Joash took the arrows and hit the ground: one, two, three times and then quit. Do you remember? Elisha got a little upset with the king and said, "You should have smitten and smitten and smitten and smitten and smitten the ground because had you done it more fervently, that would have been the same number of times you would be successful in battle over the enemy. Now, you will win only three times."

What is the whole point of this? ***We settle for less than God's desire for us.*** We win one victory and want to sit down the rest of our lives saying, "I'll never forget. Back in 19... Oh, that was a glorious time!" And sorrowfully, every time there is a testimony service at church, we hear the same old testimonies. Repeatedly, it's, "I'll never forget, back when..." Well, I wish you would forget! ☺ **A true testimony is a vital reality** that happens day by day, hour by hour, **and is in the present tense.** *When we limit our obedience to the Word of God, then we admit that faith has its limitations.*

4) Limited hearing. This condition also negatively affects faith. Isn't it interesting how we can hear from God through brother So-and-So, but not brother Such-and-Such? Isn't it interesting how we can hear from God in the New Testament, but not from the Old? Isn't it interesting how we can hear from God on certain subject matters but not on others? Can you see what *we* do to *limit God*?

That *limitation of our hearing* keeps us stagnating in certain positions of spiritual maturity, and we never go beyond them, or grow to higher levels, because our attitude is, "...it was good for our fathers, it was good for our mothers..." (and, bless God) "it's good enough for me." I won't sing "That Old Time Religion." I certainly don't sing that verse! ☺ My Mother and Dad have both graduated from this life, but if either or both of them were here, they would state this attitude: "I don't want her to settle for what we had." It's from glory to glory (2Cor.3:18) we grow and change.

Every generation has the benefit of the preceding generation's revelation – plus their own. Why would we want settle for less? When we receive fresh revelation from God, when we're challenged to rise to a higher level, we must *make a choice*. We can accept the challenge and make a difference, or return to business as usual. We can appropriate new truths and live like we've encountered the living God, or we can sit down and stagnate with everyone else. You will have a choice to make after being exposed to the truths you are reading today! Will you read and give only mental assent to the message, or allow God to make His challenge a *personal* one to you?

Oh, that we had the *courage to respond positively* to what we hear! "I'm going to shine as a light in my church, my home, my community, my workplace. *I'm going to make a difference!* I'm going to be the salt that everyone is crying out for! They are going to see a newness in me, a reality of something that I've now been able to lay hold of in my own understanding. I refuse to remain unchanged by the truth of God's Word!"

Before we actually begin our study, here is a side-sermon for some of you. In the Bible, the Garden, or the Garden of the Lord, or the trees, speak of people, or the people of God. *We* (believers) *are trees planted* (Ps.1:3; Is.61:3). The Lord put us into the Garden. To do what? To dress it and keep it weeded, watered, fed, nourished and fruitful. Selah. And incidentally – well, not so incidentally – the first Garden you are to take care of is your own (Sol.1:6), for we *are* the Garden of the Lord (Sol.4:12-16;5:1;6:2).

Gen.2:16 and 17. “The Lord God commanded the man, saying, of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat; but of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, thou shall not eat of it for in the day that thou eatest thereof, you shall surely die.” And the Lord looked at Adam, this first man. Adam was created in the likeness and image of God (Gen.1:26). Think about what that means. Our God is a “Triune” God – three parts in One – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. So, He made man a tripartite being – three parts in one – spirit, soul and body. Let us agree that it is in that particular order that man was created. It is the spirit of man that is to be in control of the soul. The soul is the seat of intellect, will, and emotions. The body then, is to be in subjection to all (Rom.6).

God came in the cool of the day and fellowshiped with Adam but He didn’t think it was quite enough for His man. God looked down and thought, “This is not good for man to be alone. I will make him a help meet...” (Gen.2:18). We need to pause here to understand that in the original language, there are two separate words. “Help” is the same Hebrew word that is used by the psalmist to describe God Himself: “the Lord is my help (aid)” (Ps.33:20; 70:5). The Hebrew word “meet” means “equipped” or “capable” or “fit.” We put the words together creating “helpmeet.” Subsequently, there has followed a lot of extrapolated teaching on the wife’s responsibility in a marriage. But the truth is, these are two separate words. God is saying, “In the same way I can fellowship man, I am going to create someone who can fellowship spirit, soul, and body, and I’m going to equip her for that.”

God put Adam to sleep, took a rib from his side and made “us” (Gen.2:21,22). Then He awakened Adam and said, “Well, what do you think?” And Adam said, “Whoa, man!” (Gen.2:23). And God said, “That’s a deal. We’ll call her that – woman.” ☺

Genesis, chapter 3. The serpent comes on the scene. “Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, Hath God said, You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?” Let’s pause here just a moment and think out loud. Here we have Adam and Eve in the Garden. God created the Garden; He created us, male and female. God put us in the Garden and said, “It’s yours. Just partake of everything. But listen, there’s one tree that’s a ‘no-no.’ You may not eat of that tree. You got it straight? Just that one tree.” (Recall now, our topic is obedience.)

God said that to Adam (2:16,17). Then Adam made it very clear to Eve. Her answer to the serpent proves that she knew that specific tree was a ‘no-no’ – it was forbidden fruit (3:2,3). What would be our attitude if God was saying this to us? “All this is yours, Iverna. This whole fantastic setting is yours, except that one tree.” Do you know what my honest response would be? “Then why did you put it there?” And it would be yours too, if you were as honest as I am. ☺ “Why do you put something in front of me, Lord, and then say ‘no-no – don’t touch?’” *That is the voice of the world today.*

May I be very bold and talk to you like “Mama?” Young people, that’s the voice of the back seat. God would never give you a desire, a passion for sex, if He didn’t mean for it to be fulfilled and satisfied. The *world* says, “It can’t really be wrong to do this or that or the other thing now, if you really *desire* to do it. If God Almighty created you, then every desire in you is from Him.” Tell the truth. Is that logical? Of course it is. That is very shrewd logic. Most Christians are afraid to admit it, but it is very logical. It appeals to man’s way of thinking, *and completely goes along with the enemy’s approach to everything.* Logic – rational thought – human reasoning. It is our human (humanistic) attempt to superimpose our ways of thinking on God’s prescribed ways of living (Is.55;8,9).

But God says, in essence, by putting the tree there – right there in your midst – and declaring, “Leave it alone,” He is saying, “The greatest sin of life is disobedience. The lesson, which absolutely must be learned, is that I am your Creator and you must learn to obey Me. If you obey Me,” God says, “the ease of life will never be destroyed” (see Deut.27 and 28). Was life easy for them before sin? Of course it was. They didn’t have to work for a living in the Garden. They could just enjoy every day as it came. “Isn’t this a beautiful day? The Garden is gorgeous today – every day! Which waterfall shall we sit near today?” Everything was so easy for them, Church.

Hear me carefully, now. I believe God intends for us to walk in that kind of ease of life. “Take no thought of what you should eat or drink or wherewith you shall be clothed” (Mt.6:31). *We* spend our whole lives worrying about these things. “I could lose my job.” “Oh, no, another Depression seems to be coming to the world, to the United States,” we wail. “Oh, what will happen?” The Lord assures us, “If you would obey Me, you wouldn’t have to worry about those things. I would take care of you” (Mt.6:33). God says, “I even know the little sparrows; I count every one that falls. I know the count of every hair on your head” (Mt.10:29,30). He says, “I am asking and looking for a people who will just do what I say and refrain from doing what I forbid, and the ease of life will remain.”

The enemy comes on the scene in the Garden in Genesis 3. Look again at the subtle approach. He does not come straight forward saying, “Hey, it won’t hurt for you to eat of that tree.” You see, the devil is smarter than that. He doesn’t come to you and say, “It’s alright for you to do this or that.” He comes in a *seemingly reasonable fashion*. He approaches you logically, and says, “Talk to me, Eve. What did you hear God say?”

Here’s another side-sermon – **the dumbest thing that Christians can do is spend time talking to the devil!**

Satan says to Eve, “Hath God said, You may not eat of every tree of the Garden?” She responds, “We may eat of the trees of the Garden, but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the Garden, that one, God said, No, you can’t eat it, or even touch it, lest you die” (Gen.3:2,3).

Are you seeing the subtlety of his approach? The serpent gave his own interpretation to the woman, “When God said ‘don’t eat this, or touch of it, or you shall die,’ God didn’t mean you would die die. He simply meant...” What does it say? Look at verse 5. “For God doth know that in the day you shall eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and you shall be as gods” (*little g*) “knowing good and evil.”

What the enemy is saying to Eve is, “What God meant was,” (giving his own spin on God’s words, if you will), “if you partake of this tree that He said don’t, *you will die to your own limitations.*” What voice does that sound like today? A bit to thee like the first voice that came to the United States of America a number of years ago with hallucinatory drugs? That voice said, “Here. Here’s a *religious experience*. You can be *free from your limitations*. You can have an experience with the Almighty that is greater than anything you could ever experience otherwise.” And our young people, by the thousands, began to pop those little pills and became involved in the “drug scene.” True, they had out-of-body experiences alright. Counterfeits of God’s original intent. And Satan just laughed because his tactics of years ago – eons ago – at the time of Creation – continues to work on us today!

Verse 6 – “And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took hold of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.” Verse 7 – “And both their eyes were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons.” Verse 8 – “And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day....” What did they do? They “hid themselves from the presence of the LORD....” - - - - Don’t we? – Didn’t they?

Any time people do not want to be in the Presence of God it’s because *disobedience is present in their lives*. Absolutely and positively, there is no other reason! For believers, for His faithful children, the Presence of the Lord is a delight! It is refreshing! It’s joy-filled! **The only time people do not want to be in the Presence of the Lord is because they know things are not in God’s order within them.** And under those circumstances, they cannot tolerate standing in the awesome Presence of God.

Are you ready for the next hard point in this message? Where did they go to hide from the Presence of God? Read it – the end of verse 8. Oh, isn’t that interesting? “Among the trees of the Garden.” Where is the safest place to hide from the Presence of the Lord? In the church! Because there no one will seek

you out or expose you to the searchlight. Everyone presumes or assumes that you are enjoying the same Presence of God they are.

God is out to find you, Sir. God's out to find *you*, Sis. You've been sitting in the church. You might have been looked upon by all the others as a great Christian. "Oh, she's been a Christian for X-number of years." "He's been Spirit-filled for so long." And the truth is, you've been hiding among the trees ever since you disobeyed God.

But today, the Holy spotlight is turned on and you know it. And it's as though God has read your private mail. It's as though God has tapped into your inward conversation and is sharing it through this preacher. And you know that too. God is saying, "I want you back, so I'm out to find you. I miss our walks together. I miss our fellowship."

God stepped into the Garden and said, "Where are you, Adam?" (vs.9). Now, do you really think God didn't know where Adam was? Is this the same voice *you* are hearing searching for you? Let me say it this way: can you honestly answer the question? "Where are you?" Where are you with God?

Why obedience? Why is it so important to obey His Word?

The whole relationship of the church that bears His Name, Christian, is to be discovered as either children or... We'll come back to that "or" later. ☺ Let's first look at "children of the King." We *are* the King's kids. We love to talk about that and it has some value. Many of us, however, by the way we live prove it. We are spoiled-rotten King's kids. We throw a temper tantrum every time things don't go our way. But – are you ready for this?

There are two ways to bear another's name. *The first is – as a child of*. I have two children. They are both grown with families of their own, but they are still my kids. They still can do certain things in my name because they *are* my kids. Are you hearing this in terms of what we can do in the name of our *parent*? But yet, what my own children can do in my name is *limited*. It *is* limited. They may not go out and freely charge in my name. I don't permit that. They may not make bold statements and say, "Mother said," unless mother said. Are we connecting on this? So, let's not be so proud of being the King's kids. *The only reason we start out as His children is so we can grow up*. And we *are* supposed to grow up!

First, we come into sonship. Now the father's name that is given to a child has a different usage than the name and privilege that is given to a grown son. We don't give a Visa card to a twelve-year-old and say, "Have a good time" (at least I don't! ☺). But you might give it to a twenty-year old and say, "Use it wisely" because they've learned some things. Then *you* learn some things – and take the card back! ☺ Are you still with me? What lessons, what consistent lessons have to be taught to both the child, the kid, and to the mature son? **Obedience.**

But is sonship the highest level of familial relationship into which the church may come? Oh, there is another way to take a name, isn't there? This is the "or" from above. It is far different from sonship. There is, instantaneously, *unlimited privilege* when the **Bride takes the name of the Groom**. Instantly, she is given all the privileges of his name, legally and lawfully. Does this make sense? And isn't it interesting that the New Testament teachings on the Bride are *obedience* and *submission* – **choosing to "come under" and obey** – which is the biblical understanding of "submission."

Do you see why, Church? Ladies, do you see that submission is not God's way of putting you down into subservience, or into some sort of lower position, but rather it is a picture He wants us to see. It is the reason Ephesians states it this way: "Husbands love your wives even as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it" (Eph.5:25). If you do that, Sir, then she will *choose* to come under your leadership and authority because a woman who is loved as Christ loves you will delight to do your will. Men, you need to hear this and say "Amen." ☺

Every time you wonder if you are loving your wife in a Godly manner, if you are rightly related to her, ask yourself this question: “Do I love her in the same way that I want God to love me?” And ladies, if that is the way he loves you, you will no longer have a problem with that awful word, “submission.” Our response will become an easy: “I delight to do your will” (Ps.40:8) and “to walk with you is not grievous unto me because of that *covering of love*” (1Jn.5:3). Can you see the truth of this? If a wife knows she is loved by her husband like Christ loves His own, sacrificially, there is security in that and she need not fear being used or abused in the name of submission.

The Bride of Christ is the one who is going to make changes in our world today. It’s going to be His Bride that establishes the Kingdom of God upon this earth. It’s going to be the *Bride who has complete and full access to all that her Bridegroom is and possesses*. Oh, true, that the Marriage Supper has not taken place yet, and true that it’s the Bride who *is* the Army. Hallelujah! *The Bride in combat boots is going to get the job done*. She’s marching along saying, “My Beloved spake and said unto me...,” “My Beloved said...” What His name is, Church, everything it stands for, we can walk in that fullness – *if we obey*. That is how we become rightly related to Him – through obedience.

An old song from my church background says – a song I never liked, by the way – but the truth of that song? Hear it: “Trust and obey, for there’s no other way to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey. If we walk with the Lord, in the light of His Word...” That’s the whole of what we are proclaiming here. “Oh, Iverna, I thought you were talking about *faith*.” I am, but **if you separate obedience from faith you have nothing but noise**.

You can walk about and say a lot of things, Sir. Sis, you can declare a whole lot of things and call it *faith*. But I promise you, you’ll never change the details with God. He is the One who established the principles of living. He loved first, provided for, and outlined the “how-to’s” of a successful life. When God zeros in and begins to talk to you about something specific, my dear Friend, everything you read, everything you hear, will always come back to His focus. You can say, “Now, Lord, I don’t want to talk about that, I just want to tell You how much I love You. I do love You, Lord.” Then when you finish chit-chatting at Him, He will bring you back to His focus: “Now, as I was saying...” ☺

It is absolutely mandatory we understand that prosperity relates to this totally – hear me, hear me, hear me accurately, please. (“God, give them ears to hear YOU in this”). **Prosperity relates totally to obedience before it is ever connected or in harmony with faith.**

Listen to these verses:

Isaiah 1:19 – “If ye be willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land.”

Deut. 5:28, 29a – “...and the Lord said unto me, I have heard the voice of the words of this people... Oh that there were such a heart in them, that they would fear Me, and keep all My commandments always...”

Did you hear that? God said, “I’ve heard the words of this people.” And then He cries out almost in desperation and says, “Oh, that there was a heart in them that they would *fear Me and keep all My commandments always*” (emphasis added).

Why Lord? Finish reading the verse: “that it might be well with them and with their children forever!” (5:29b).

Deut. 29:9 – “Keep, therefore, the words of this covenant, and do them, that ye may prosper in all that you do.”

Do you prefer New Testament references because you think Jesus brought an end to keeping the Old Testament commandments? ☺

James 1:22: “Be ye doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.”

James even amplifies the thought in the next few verses. You can read the whole context

for yourself.

Finally, we read that Revelation 22:14 and Psalm 1 both refer to this: that those who “do His commandments” have a “right to the tree of life.”

Obedience – did you know this? ***Obedience is the key to spiritual knowledge and wisdom.*** John 7:17 connects knowing the “doctrine” or teaching of God with “doing His will.” In Matthew 7:13 and 14, Jesus talks about the narrow gate versus the wide gate. We can understand that He is saying it is *wisdom* to choose the harder way of obedience because it leads to life. The easier way of living, this verse declares, leads to destruction.

We cannot separate obedience from prosperity. We can’t separate our obedience from our expression of love. We can’t separate obedience from faith. We can’t separate obedience from revelation. God states plainly throughout His Word that *everything we have in Him, past salvation, is a result of our obedience to His Word.* The promises of God find fulfillment in our lives as we walk in obedience to the conditions He puts forth.

We wonder why the church doesn’t grow beyond the toddler stage. It’s because, by and large, we **ignore** the *doctrine of obedience* and pick up a *teaching on prosperity*. We ignore obedience and pick up a faith doctrine, or some call it the “hyper-faith teaching.” We ignore obedience and pick up a focus on unconditional love – demanding nothing in character development; we’re just trying to love one another: “I love you with the love of the Lord.” And the problem with this perspective alone is that there is no depth of Godly character to back up what we *speak*.

When we do not balance the things we *want* to hear and embrace with the things from His Word that we *need* to apply, we end up with a sloppy, immature life that is ineffective for furthering the Kingdom of God. Choosing the easier, less demanding way of life does not produce in us continual personal spiritual growth. On the contrary, we may think we know what the best path is, but are actually ineffective in bearing the kind of fruit God is looking for. The largest, sweetest fruit in the harvest requires careful attention in the early days of when the blossoms set on the branches – the foundation times. It takes work at the hand of the grower all through the season nurturing and watering and feeding the trees.

Can you agree with me that it is time for us, the Body of Christ, to come back to the Word of God and do things God’s way? THEN – great will be our prosperity! I am a great believer in that! I so believe in it, I believe in a literal fulfillment of Isaiah 60. I really do. I believe the Church, the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ, is going to have the prosperity of the world in her hands (Pr.13:22b). I believe the only *true knowledge of wisdom* is going to be within the church. I believe that heads of nations are going to look up the people of God and ask for our input and advice.

Read Isaiah 60 and see if you don’t get stirred by the Holy Spirit. I believe, when the eyes of Israel are opened to the Messiah, I truly believe we are going to see a change in the whole world. We’re going to be a part of that – **IF – IF – IF we obey.**

Let’s review: *Faith is reduced by limited concepts of God, limited knowledge of the Word, limited obedience, limited hearing, and limited fear.* “Fear? I thought we weren’t supposed to be afraid.” There’s just one fear we are to possess and have possess us. “What is that?” The ***fear of God*** which is “the beginning of wisdom” (Pr.9:10). How many of you know that the church has, by and large, lost the fear of God? We have lost it. Reverence? Awe? Are you kidding? We come into the sanctuary, allow our children to run up and down the aisles screaming and bumping into people, but we try and keep them away from – the instruments and all the other *things* on the platform. All the while, the adults chit-chat with one another at will throughout the service, no matter what else is going on. When the Presence of the Lord comes into the meeting, we have our own agenda laid out, a business-as-usual thing that we *are* going to accomplish. Too often, our attitude is “Not now, Lord. We’ve got things to do here. We have a plan – and a clock.”

I'll tell you something else we do that's even worse than our rigid plans. We know how to dismiss God. We're very good at that. Are you surprised by that? In total disbelief of the statement? "We don't get rid of Him!" We do too! Any time He comes and stays too long, we become uncomfortable with Him being there, trying to run things. We do all sorts of funny things. Women either laugh or cry, there's no in between, and sometimes we do both. Men shuffle their feet. If the Presence of the Lord comes and a man is really uncomfortable, he leaves. We can take about two minutes of that powerful anointing. Oh, it's alright if we're doing something. If we have a leader that says, "Let's just sing, Hallelujah." And we begin to sing, beautifully too, in four-part harmony! That's good.

But *when the Lord stays...* we don't know what to *do*, so someone stirs up the gift of prophecy or tongues. "Thus saith the Lord..." and they stir up the gift. As long as *we're* doing the action, we don't care. God can stick around. But when everything has been done that we know to do, we want Him to leave. "Thank you very much for coming."

Two constant things we do in that time of discomfort: one, we dismiss Him with a song – usually one that doesn't have anything to do with Him – it usually has to do with us: "I'm so glad, Jesus lifted me!" That's an *outer court* song. It's an okay song if you're *on the way in*. It's *terrible* when you're already *in* the Holy of Holies, in His Presence.

I realize this may be a little heavy for many people, but I believe it is time for us to eat what is on the table. We just have to grow up. I'm not personally mad at anyone, not even at the church as a whole. I merely want us to grow up so we can move on into the *fullness He has prepared*. He is waiting for us to come on His terms. If that is your desire as well, if personal and corporate spiritual growth is a priority, we have to become accustomed to being in the Presence of the Lord. We must learn how to appropriately *fear Him*. Recall that is not a dread fear. It is an awesome reverence for Who He is.

Remember what God said to Moses? "Dear Moses, This is God. ☺ Please come up on the Mount and just *be there*, Moses" (Ex.24:12). Do you know what our response to that invitation would be? "And do what?" We simply don't know how to *be there* in His awesome Presence. In this country, we're not used to bowing before a king. We don't mind coming to Him with all our petitions. "Now, dear Father, in the name of Jesus, through the Holy Spirit..." We've got to get it right, as if He doesn't know who He is. ☺ But once we get through our "request-list" and our "thank-list" – "Oh, I want to say, by the way, thanks for the... Yes, thanks for... in Jesus' name. Amen. You can go now."

We struggle with Him being there yet being invisible and intangible. *Being there* is a spiritual thing but we are caught up in the temporal, physical world. It is a stretch for us to reach out to Him experientially, yet spiritually. We must grow beyond those limitations.

If we don't *sing* Him away with an outer court song – are you ready for this? – we *clap* Him away. Don't be contentious with the statement for I do believe there is an appropriate place for clapping, for applause: "I applaud You, Lord God, for Your awesome greatness, for Your many miracles, for answered prayer, for the display of Your mighty power!" There is such a thing as a "clap offering." I love that when it is appropriate, when it is timely. We can literally clap an offering to Him out of the gratitude in our hearts. But like singing His praises, clapping is for when we are on the way *in*, not when we have already arrived in His Presence, in the inner chamber.

Think of it this way: when I come onto the platform and you clap for me, I am blessed and truly thank you. It is a way of paying honor and respect to me and I'm extremely grateful for your hearts toward me. When I am finished and you clap again, I'm equally grateful. It's a wonderful compliment. But you do not walk up next to me and clap in my face. Do you see the difference? You don't come right up in my face and say, "Oh, Sister... CLAP!"

The same attitude should be operative with our approach to the Lord. We begin by entering His gates with thanksgiving (Ps.100). We come further into His courts with praise – which may include a lot of

physical actions, including the clapping of hands. But then what? “We come before His presence with singing.” The psalms direct us to “Sing unto the Lord a new song” (Ps.98:1), a fresh song. The word “new” in Hebrew here means “fresh.” That doesn’t mean you literally have to make up, create, write a new song every week. Sometimes “Holy – Holy – Holy” is a new song. When you *know*, when you believe and heartily agree with what you’re singing, listening to the lyrics with focused hearing, it becomes very fresh, for you, and a pleasure in your heavenly Father’s ears.

Once you are before His Presence – once you have sung your way into the inner court – the Holy of Holies – you are there in the Shekinah glory of God – how can I say it to help you grasp this? When you are completely aware God is *there* with you – why is it, Church, we so often talk or sing our way back out, or clap in His face to dismiss Him? I believe it is *because we have lost the fear of God* – that awesome *wonderment* that causes us to stand reverently in His Presence – and if I weep, I weep – if I laugh, I laugh – or if I’m in total silence, I don’t want you to disturb me with some kind of outer court ministry that’s supposed to take place at the golden altar.

I do want the gifts stirred up and utilized in and by the Church, but that should be at the golden altar, and that is outside of the Holy of Holies. That’s back at the candlestick revelation or the fellowship of bread at the table. In the Holy Place (it’s still *holy*, but not yet in His very Presence) the golden candlestick illuminated the table of showbread. The candlestick represents the Holy Spirit. The table of showbread reminds us of Jesus and being in fellowship with Him, “supping” with Him (Rev.3:20). The golden altar is for prayer and praise, an offering, fragrant and pleasing to our God. But once I am inside the veil, it’s just me and Him, and I don’t want you to disturb me. It can be you and Him, and *you* shouldn’t want to be disturbed either. Not when you are enjoying the awesome Presence of our Almighty God.

Or, do you prefer playing religious games? If so, then just stay in the outer court and play them all you want. He allows them out there, encourages them there. But now I’m talking to the ones who just have to have more of God – *the church within the church*. These are the ones who know what it is to have a hungering and thirsting spirit after the very demonstration of the Presence of God – who have once (or many times) known what it is to stand in the hallowed place and who are no longer willing to settle for anything less than intimacy with the King. I want you *all* to come to the place where you can truly sense that you have been in His Presence. I want you to have this awareness: “I felt God. I have been in His Presence and I don’t want any more games. I only want more of the Presence of God.” If that is true, if you want the more, then learn how to *be there*.

There are some people who are embarrassed by the displays or demonstrations of love and intimacy when we are in His Presence. There are no pretenses there in the inner chamber. No coverings. No facades. Nothing to hide behind. Yes, it can be embarrassing to every one the first time – the second time – even the fiftieth time – embarrassing because we feel stripped, naked and bare. The writer of the Book of Hebrews said, “I stand naked before my Creator” (Heb.4:13).

What do you think is expressed in that verse? Not sin, but awareness. “I don’t know what to *say* to Him. I don’t know what to *give* Him. I don’t know what to *do* for Him.” But a love relationship, a true love relationship, does *not* exist with one person making a list of “to-do’s” and presenting it so their needs are met by the other one “doing” something. A genuine love relationship exists in interrelating, each with the other. “So, are you saying it is wrong to clap?” No, there is a place for clapping – just know that when you come into His Presence, it’s a time for making love to the King.

In some meetings, there are those who are more sensitive to the move of God’s Spirit, to the entry of the King. His Presence is something to be discerned supernaturally, with anointed Holy Spirit sensitivity. His Presence is sovereign – He is the King; He is in control; His rule is supreme; His reign is absolute! It isn’t you or me or us who decide to come into that special place with Him. It is He, our Sovereign God, who decides if and when to show up in our midst. He beckons to us to come to the higher place with Him.

Sometimes, He just allows us to be in the court where we are able to enjoy the Holy Spirit with all the gifts in operation. I absolutely love those times. I'm not saying it is wrong or even inappropriate for tongues and interpretation, prophecy, words of knowledge, and all of the other gifts to flow. I thank God they have flowed through me. I enjoy those times. I can clap in the outer court. I can dance right alongside everyone else more anointed in the dance. I love those times! But I know what they are, and *they are not for inside the veil*, in the very Presence of God, in the Holy of Holies. I pray you can understand the difference.

When we are so privileged to have Him come on the scene and say, "I have seen you, My people, and I am coming close," all I want to do is bow my knees or be silent. "The Lord is in His Holy Temple and let all the earth keep silence" (Ps.46:10). That's when our faith must activate to "be" levels rather than "do" levels.

So we see, **faith can be reduced by loosing the fear of the Lord, but it can also be diminished by *fear* itself.**

I'll close this with a story. My point is to "life" you, not bury you with a heavy message! ☺ A little humor always sets us at ease... and then I'm going to turn you over to God. ☺

The disciples are out on the sea (Mt.8:23-27; Mk.4:35-41; Lk.8:22-25). Jesus is in the boat. He's weary from ministering and they know it, so they've invited Him to come onto their boat and sleep in the stern. Everything is wonderful. They're as pleased as we are when the Lord chooses to be there with us. ☺ Do you remember the verse that says, "The Lord has chosen Zion; He hath desired it for His habitation. This is My rest forever; here will I dwell" (Ps.132:13,14)?

What does the Lord want to do in you? Rest. You are the boat. You're Zion. He says, "I desire you. I'm going to rest in you." All of us like that – love it! "Alright, Lord. Come into my life and rest. Oh, Lord Jesus, be the Lord of my life!" We love that. We walk around saying, "The Lord is in me. He abides in me (Jn.15:15:4,7). 'Christ in me the hope of glory' (Col.1:27). Hallelujah! I have put on my garment of praise and the spirit of heaviness has gone from me (Isa.61:3)! Jesus is in me! Oh, glory! Praise the Lord!"

Suddenly, a storm hits our life-circumstances and we look startled and announce, "A storm! A storm? I don't confess this! A storm! How can this be? I'm a woman of faith and power. How can this be?" And the wind blows harder and someone says, "You'd better get hold of the Lord." "It's alright, He's in me and I'm in Him and we are complete and at rest, hallelujah!" And I start singing, "Peace, peace, wonderful peace, coming down from the Father above." But the storm gets worse. Can you relate to this?

It gets even worse. Finally, the Peter of my life says, "You better awaken the Lord." And I'm very spiritual at that moment, "He knows what I have need of even before I ask Him" (Mt.6:8; Lk.12:30). I remember He said, "I'll never leave you comfortless" (Jn.14:18), and "Lo, I am with you always even to the ends of the earth" (Mt.28:20). "As your days, so shall your strength be" (Deut.33:25); and "I will not suffer thee to be tested beyond what thou art able to bear" (1Cor.10:13). "So, I don't have a thing to worry about, the Lord is in me. Praise the Lord!" And my storm continues to increase in intensity.

"Oh, God, I hope you're there." Finally, *fear* becomes so real to me. I'm embarrassed to be afraid because I'm a Christian, so I transfer that emotion to some equal emotion that I can deal with, one that is more acceptable. I take the fear that's not acceptable to me and transform it into anger. Anger is more acceptable to me. Isn't that foolishness? But it's true in our society and it's almost automatic – something we do without conscious thought. We have no problem with someone who gets mad. We do have a problem with one that's afraid. Hello?

So, I transfer my fear to anger and I awaken the Lord. I use the same kind of words the disciples did when they shouted, “MASTER! Carest Thou not that we perish?” *Our* words go like this: “What are You trying to do to me? I witness to the whole world. I have told them You are my God. I’ve said, ‘my God shall supply *all* my need’ (Phil.4:19). I’ve told them You would never let me go (Heb.13:5). And I’ve also told them about all of Your promises. Do You realize that everybody is looking at me right now?”

Jesus is in the back of the boat. He stands up and maybe His answer goes something like this: “Excuse Me. I thought this was a resting place.” Then He looks out at the sea and the great swirling winds and says, “Peace. Be still (Mk.4:39),” because it was easier to calm the sea than it was to quiet the disciples! ☺ And then He turns to the disciples and asks them this very valid question: “Gentlemen, where was your faith?” What’s the answer to that? **Their faith was in the storm!** They *totally believed in the power of the storm*; they believed with fervency that storm could destroy them.

“Oh, Iverna, you just took a beautiful story and made it negative.” No, I love that story. I love knowing He can calm all my storms. Let me, however, tell you *a higher way*. **With Christ in the vessel, I can smile at the storm.** He’s looking for a church that has matured to a level where they can *go through* the storm successfully, coming out on the other side unscathed. He’s looking for a church that *knows* the Lord never promised we wouldn’t *go through* some things, but that He did say, “You’ll never go through them alone (Isa.43:2). I am with you (43:5) and I’ll bring good out of this negative situation. And whatever was intended for evil for you, I will make a blessing to you (Gen.50:20) – ***if you will not diminish your faith!***