

# **BLOOD, BREAD AND FIRE**

## The Christian's Threefold Experience

by

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### **CHAPTER TWELVE**

#### **FAITH IN CHRIST JESUS**

IT is a sick and sad and sinful world. There are plenty of specialists doctoring the sickness, but they are treating the symptoms, not the disease. Someone has said that if all the experts were laid in a row, they never would reach a conclusion! This sick old world is being treated with all the panaceas of countless isms and fads and cults and, all the while, the patient sinks lower for the need of a "few things for certain."

In the midst of it all stands the Great Physician of the soul Who is the answer to every need, the solution of every problem. By Him all things consist, in Him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. In Him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. But men will not receive Him, will not come to Him that they might have life, loving darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil.

Since Jesus Christ is the answer to the world's need, and since by faith we receive Him, therefore the world's misery today is due entirely to what is covered in the Scriptural phrase, "**because of unbelief.**"

Four times it occurs in the New Testament with application each time to a different group of humanity, and the four passages cover the whole race.

In Romans 11: 20 we read that "**because of unbelief**" Israel was broken off, set aside nationally in this present age of grace. The Jews rejected their Messiah, the gospel turned to the Gentile world. God is taking out from the Gentiles a people for His Name. So "**because of unbelief**" Israel is broken off as a nation until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.

In Matthew 13: 58 we read that the Lord Jesus did no mighty works in Nazareth "**because of their unbelief.**" This covers the whole unsaved world.

Only one thing hinders the power of Christ — human unbelief. He wants to save and sanctify men and live His life in them, but He cannot do His mighty works because of unbelief. Mark tells us in the same connection that He marveled because of their unbelief. How He must marvel today at an indifferent world that calls Him merely the carpenter's son!

In Hebrews 3: 19 we read that the Jews who came out of Egypt with Moses could not enter Canaan **“because of unbelief.”** Here the application is to Christians who stand on Jordan’s stormy banks but do not follow Christ, our Joshua, into the Canaan of a triumphant Christian experience whereby they reign in life by one, Jesus Christ. The land is ours, but **“because of unbelief”** Christians fail to trust the promises and take their possessions.

In Matthew 17: 20 we read that the disciples could not cast out the evil spirit from the demon-possessed boy because of their unbelief. For the same reason Christians and churches stand powerless before the forces of evil today. What text could better describe our plight than Mark’s expression about these same disciples, **“and they could not”**?

The pope boasted to Sir Thomas Aquinas, “No longer need the church say, ‘Silver and gold have I none,’” but Sir Thomas wisely answered, “True, but neither can she say, ‘Rise and walk!’” Just as the Lord Jesus can do no mighty works for us **“because of unbelief,”** neither can we do mighty works for Him for the same reason!

So unbelief accounts for all the world’s need. Jews nationally are broken off, the unsaved fail to know the power of Christ, unhappy Christians do not live in the Promised Land, weak Christians cannot prevail against the devil — and all **“because of unbelief.”** Truly we need to pray, **“Lord, I believe: help Thou mine unbelief!”**

If this be true, then of course the converse is true, that the way out is found in that word of our Lord’s: **“According to your faith be it unto you”** (Matthew 9: 29).

We go from book to book, from lecture to lecture; we devour devotional volumes, hoping to find on the very next page the magic secret of the life abundant, and all the while here is the key, and there is no other. Your life will be in proportion to your faith.

- **“According to your faith”**— not “according to your fate,” as the “bent-twig philosophers” of today would have us believe.
- Not “according to your fortune,” for **“a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth”**; faith goes in where finance cannot tread.
- It is not “according to your fame,” for the only success is in the Spirit, and **“he that ruleth his spirit is greater than he that taketh a city.”**
- It is not “according to your friends,” for popularity and “pull” cannot bring life, and our own familiar friend, in whom we trusted and who did eat of our bread, may lift up his heel against us.

Happy are we if, like this Psalmist, we can go on to say, **“But thou, O Lord, be merciful unto me and raise me up”**!

Nor does our verse read, “According to your feelings.” Ah, there is our pet false measure! We substitute wishful thinking for practical trusting and forget that “if wishes were horses, then beggars would ride.”

Our feelings rise and fall like a thermometer in April, and so does the experience of the Christian who knows how he feels better than he knows Whom he has believed.

After all, it is not a matter of where you are, how you are, who you are, what you are, but whose you are. If **“ye are Christ’s,”** then **“all things are yours.”**

So it is **“according to your faith.”**

But what kind of faith? Faith is a fetish with many people who say it doesn’t matter much what you believe just so you believe tremendously in something. But it is not the quality of faith that gives value nor the quantity (for as much as a grain of mustard seed will move mountains) but it is the object of faith that matters. One might as well close his eyes and look around on the inside of his head to see sight as to look around inside his heart to see faith. You see something and you know you have sight; you believe something and know you have faith. The real value of faith to the subject depends upon the object.

It is not enough to say, **“According to your faith be it unto you,”** unless you keep this in mind: **“All things are possible to him that believeth”** only if he believes in Him with Whom all things are possible! The only faith that saves and satisfies is faith in Jesus Christ, for only He is worthy of absolute trust, and only He can meet our need. Nor is it so much faith like Jesus had as faith in Jesus, for while He is an example of faith, He is more; He is the object of faith. So, while **“we walk by faith and not by sight,”** and while **“the just shall live by faith,”** the emphasis is on the Object, and the entire Christian experience may be summed up in the words **“faith in Christ Jesus”** (Galatians 3:26).

It begins with faith in Christ Jesus as Saviour. **“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved”** (Acts 16:31).

**“Repentance toward God”** must be accompanied by **“faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ”** (Acts 20: 21). **“Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God”** (Romans 10: 17).

The sinner, hearing the Word, is convicted and brought to repentance. But hearing the Word is not enough: it must be mixed with faith (Hebrews 4:2). Faith looks unto the Lord Jesus, receives Him into the heart, commits all to Him. **“By grace are ye saved through faith,”** and even that faith is **“not of yourselves: it is the gift of God”** (Ephesians 2:8).

Of course this involves mysteries, but believing faith is simple on our part — unless we try to understand it! Simple souls just trust Jesus, while philosophers try to unravel it and never trust. When the sinner, convicted and in godly sorrow and repentance, quits trying and begins trusting, he finds **“‘tis done, the great transaction’s done.”**

But why must we believe in Jesus Christ? Why is there no salvation in any other? Why is there **“none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved”**? Because of Who God is, to begin with. God is love, but He is also just and holy, and He has a standard of righteousness that must be met if men are to be saved. God could not be just and holy if He allowed men to be saved according to a lower standard than His own.

Man through sin has broken God's law, has become corrupt and fallen far below God's mark: **"All have sinned and come short of the glory of God."** If man is to be saved, someone who is sinless and can meet God's standard of righteousness on one hand and yet one who can identify himself with sinful man and become sin though not sinful on the other hand must pay the penalty of sin.

That is exactly why Jesus is our Saviour, because of Who He is and what He did. He was Son of God and Son of man, and He shed His blood a ransom for many and bare our sins in His own body on the tree. Yet it was the good Father Who gave His only-begotten Son, and so wonderful is His grace that the moment we receive Christ God accepts us and counts us as though we had never sinned. But we never could be saved by faith in anyone else, for only Jesus was Son of God and Son of man, and Jesus alone could truly die for the sins of the world.

All the blessings of salvation come through simple faith in Jesus Christ. Regeneration is through Him, for we are **"children of God by faith in Christ Jesus"** (Galatians 3:26) and **"as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name"** (John 1:12). Justification is through Him by faith, for God is the justifier of them which believe in Jesus (Romans 3:26) **"and by him all that believe are justified from all things"** (Acts 13:39). We are **"not justified by the works of the law but by the faith of Jesus Christ"** (Galatians 2:16). Righteousness is through Him by faith, for Christ is made unto us righteousness (I Corinthians 1:30). We have no righteousness of our own that God will accept, but when we believe Christ's righteousness becomes our own and we have **"righteousness which is of God by the faith of Jesus Christ"** (Romans 3:22; Philippians 3:9). Eternal life is through Him by faith, for **"whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life"** (John 3:16) and **"he that believeth on him has eternal life"** (John 6:47).

So all this cluster of blessings hangs upon simple faith in Jesus Christ. But one does not have to wait until he understands all this to receive the fruit of it. The natural man cannot receive these things anyway— one may as well try to describe a sunset to a blind man — so the supreme thing is not to understand it but to stand on it. The devil always seeks to get a man seeking salvation off on a by-path of questioning along such a line as: If faith comes from God, how can I believe? God gives air and lungs to breathe it but He doesn't breathe for us: He gives eternal life and faith to take it, but He doesn't do our believing for us.

After all, we are saved not by a plan of salvation but by a Person, and we are sadly beside the point when we try to understand the plan and process instead of coming to the Person and receiving the possession.

When I was saved, a small boy in the Carolina woods, I did not understand much about the mysteries of redemption, and I don't yet, but I came to Jesus as I was, weary and worn and sad; I found Him a resting-place and He made me glad. He Himself gave us both sides of this great matter when He said, **"All that the Father giveth me shall come to me."** There is the sublimity of God's side of it, **"and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."** There is the simplicity of our side of it!

Faith in Christ Jesus not only receives Him as Saviour but as Keeper. Not only are we saved through faith, but we are **“kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation”** (I Peter 1:5). Paul was persuaded that He Whom he had believed was able to keep. What does He keep? That which we commit unto Him. As much as we commit, He keeps. He not only keeps our souls in eternal security, but He keeps us amid the problems that beset us daily in proportion as faith commits them unto Him and looks unto Him to keep.

Four times did our Lord use the phrase, **“O ye of little faith”** in the Gospels, and each time it applies to some common problem of every-day experience. In Matthew 6: 30, He said, **“Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?”** Here faith in Him is the answer to care. He said, **“Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.”** We pretend that we cannot help being troubled, but He would not have said, **“Let not your heart be troubled,”** if we could not help it. We are to cast all our care upon God, for He careth for us. Caring for us is God’s business, so why not let Him do it!

To the alarmed disciples on the stormy sea (Matthew 8: 26) He said, **“Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?”** Here faith is the answer to fear. I have heard this incident used to illustrate the need of calling Christ, dormant in the life, into action. But if these disciples had had stronger faith, they would not have awakened the Lord; they would have let Him sleep, confident that with Him present no harm could befall them.

When we are fearful, we are not believing. **“There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love”** (I John 4:18). Now, faith worketh by love, according to Galatians 5: 6; so faith, working by love, casts out fear. We would expect this verse to say he that feareth is not made perfect in courage or in faith, but it says “love.” Love is the way faith works—faith’s expression.

In Matthew 14:31, our Lord said to Peter, as He rescued him from sinking, **“O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?”** Here faith is the opposite of doubt. Faith walks the waves toward Jesus. Doubt stays in the boat, dabbling first this foot, then that, in the water, afraid of sinking. But suppose you even should take a fainting spell and sink, you won’t drown!

Of course Peter got his eyes off the Lord. We are to **“consider Him”** lest we **“faint in our minds.”** The devil took the form of a serpent and raised first a doubt: **“Yea, hath God said?”** Jesus took the form of a servant and took His stand on what God hath said. We doubt because we see circumstance: **“The well is deep . . . he hath been dead four days . . . this is the third day since these things were done . . .”**—consider how circumstances loomed greater than the Lord! But He ever stands by the grave of the impossible, saying, **“Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?”**

In Matthew 16: 8 Jesus said to His disciples: **“O ye of little faith, why reason ye among yourselves, because ye have brought no bread?”** They had just seen Him feed the multitudes, yet now they were worried because they had no bread. Is that not a perfect picture of Christians today, singly or as churches, panicky over lack of this and that!

There is “**nothing to set before**” our friends who have come in their journey . . . and yet there is plenty and to spare in the Father’s house. He spreads tables in the wilderness. He replenishes the meal in the barrel!

We reason among ourselves; we hold conferences and appoint committees; we worry about how to get people to church, how to reach the young, how to pay our bills; we confer and discuss our lack of bread as though we had no Christ Who fed thousands with almost nothing and by Whom our God has promised to supply all our needs!

Truly He must say, “**O ye of little faith**, [worried, fearful, doubting, panicky] . . . **how is it that ye do not believe?**”

Must not God be saying of us as to Israel, “**How long will it be ere they believe me?**” (Numbers 14:11).

No matter which way you look, the answer to any and every need and problem and question is by faith in Christ Jesus.

How shall we overcome the world? “**Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?**” (I John 5:5).

How shall we live the victorious life? “**They which receive abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ**” (Romans 5: 17).

Do you need holiness? It is “**By faith that is in me,**” he declared (Acts 26:18), even the fulness of the Spirit they which believe on Him shall receive (John 7: 39).

He Himself declared again and again that it is our faith that appropriates from Him the blessing.

- To the woman anointing Him, He said, “**Thy faith hath saved thee**” (Luke 7:50): faith brings forgiveness.
- To the leper, He said, “**Thy faith hath made thee whole**” (Luke 17: 19). He said it also to the woman healed of the issue of blood (Matthew 9:22);
- To Bartimaeus (Mark 10:52): faith brings healing.
- To the Syrophenician woman, He declared: “**O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt**” (Matthew 15:28). Faith brings blessing to others as it did here to her daughter.

What we ask in prayer, believing, we shall receive (Matthew 21:22). We must ask in faith unwavering (James 1:6).

It is significant that when the disciples asked the Lord to increase their faith, He answered, “**If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamore tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you**” (Luke 17: 6).

He demands that we exercise the faith we have, stretch forth our hand, rise, take up the bed and walk, put our belief into action, be not faithless but believing.

We sing about faith in Jesus, pray about it, pay preachers to preach about it, but we live much as the world does, by our own wits and resources, and the life of faith is only a pious phrase, lovely but impractical. All the while the Lord stands among us marveling at our unbelief, asking, **“Believe ye that I am able to do this?”** saying, **“Be not afraid, only believe,”** **“If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.”**

The whole Christian experience is simply Christ Himself in the believer.

**“To me to live is Christ,”** said Paul, and this life he lived by the faith of the Son of God. The work of God is that we believe on Him Whom God hath sent (John 6:29). It is simply that we look unto Him first for salvation and then we cease to live; we have no life of our own; we just look to Him to live His own life in us. Don’t you see how that simplifies the whole matter?

The responsibility henceforth is His; our health, food, clothes, our wisdom, method, message, results, funds, all these are His concern. He is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, redemption. Our joy and peace are simply in believing Him (Romans 15: 13). It is not that we strive to imitate Him; we simply abide in Him; we travel the T and O Trail — Trust and Obey — and the Holy Spirit works in us the nature of the Lord Jesus. We decrease and He increases as we put on the Lord Jesus and let His mind be in us.

Everything we need is found in Him. Whether you need gentleness, He is meek and lowly, or whether you need boldness and bravery, He is fearless. Whether you are called to the lowly task, just going about doing good, so was He and so did He. But if you are to be a solitary seer, lonely and misunderstood, so was He! By Him all things consist, and we are complete in Him.

It is true that we cannot see Him, yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. Faith walks without seeing, but the faith that walks will see. Faith believes what God’s Word says about Jesus, acts accordingly, steps out, sink or swim, live or die, feeling, maybe, very weak and doubtless trembling, but steps out just the same while every circumstance makes it look downright foolish and while friends and neighbors caution us lest we become righteous overmuch!

But consider Abraham, the father of the faithful and our type through the ages:

- He went out not knowing whither;
- Against hope he believed in hope;
- He considered not his own body;
- He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God;
- And being fully persuaded that what He had promised, He was able also to perform — that is faith!

It is evident that we must live some way or other. All other ways are unsatisfactory; they end in despair and destruction.

Blessed is the man who comes to holy desperation and cries, "I am undone; I am at the end of my resources. Henceforth, with no 'if's' and 'buts' about it, I stake all on Jesus Christ. I give myself to live by the faith of the Son of God. I now trust Him as my Saviour. I yield to Him as Lord all I am and have that He may sanctify it to His use and glory. Looking unto Jesus for every need, I would know Him and make Him known. I would simply trust and obey, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and keep His commandments. I will spend and be spent for Him that my life might be a witness to '**faith in Christ Jesus,**' '**faith which worketh by love,**' love for the Lord, for the brethren, for the lost. My message will be 'Jesus only.' To me to live henceforth is not simply to live like Christ or for Him — to live is Christ."

A housewife took a check to the bank and, being asked to endorse it, wrote on the back, "I heartily endorse this check!" Of course, the cashier returned it and said, "You must sign your name." Many today endorse anything the Bible says, accept it intellectually, but have never committed themselves to it! You must sign your own name on the dotted line! "**According to your faith, be it unto you.**"

It is a strange world and a puzzling existence, but here is the key: "**Faith in Christ Jesus.**" How long will it be ere you believe Him?

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