

RIVERS OF LIVING WATER

How Obtained - How Maintained

STUDIES SETTING FORTH THE BELIEVER'S POSSESSIONS IN CHRIST

By Ruth Paxson

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CHICAGO

Chapter Nine -

THE BELIEVER'S PART IN BECOMING SPIRITUAL: FAITH

Some here may say "As far as I know I have yielded my life wholly to CHRIST, yet I still seem to be living on the plane of the carnal Christian. Is it possible to be yielded and yet not filled with the HOLY SPIRIT?" Yes, the emptied life waits for faith to claim the fullness.

Surrender says, "Lord, I am not my own. I present my body a living sacrifice." Faith says, "**Christ liveth in me.**" Surrender says, "**Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?**" Faith says, "**I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.**" Surrender crowns CHRIST Lord. Faith appropriates CHRIST as Life. Stephen was "**full of faith and of the Holy Ghost.**"

Faith is the Complement of Grace

Did you ever see a perfect rainbow? Usually one end is perfect and the other seems to go off into nothing. Looking out over the ocean I once saw distinctly both ends of a rainbow coming up out of the water, as it were, and forming an unbroken arch. Through this beautiful symbol the HOLY SPIRIT interpreted to me the relationship faith has to grace in salvation as revealed in Ephesians 2:8: "**By grace are ye saved through faith.**"

The arch of salvation is all grace from the Godward side and all faith from the man-ward. GOD's grace is always perfect. But how imperfect is man's faith! Grace has provided in CHRIST all that is needed for a life of habitual spirituality. But to make such salvation experimental faith must appropriate the provision. Grace provides; faith possesses. Faith makes experimental what grace made potential to every believer.

GOD tells us that without faith it is impossible to please Him. Some of CHRIST's severest rebukes were to unbelief in His disciples. To have His presence, His words, His works fail to inspire faith grieved the Lord JESUS exceedingly.

You remember when He was in the ship and the storm arose and they cried out in fear. What a word of rebuke He spoke! Even though the tempest raged and the waves dashed high and He were asleep - yet He was there. Why should they fear? Fear and faith are incompatible.

"And he saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm" (Matthew 8:26).

At another time Peter was walking on the water at the Lord's command. The wind became boisterous and Peter began to sink. But why should he doubt? Had not the Lord of the sea said, "Come," and did not the power of His protection accompany the command? Doubt and faith are irreconcilable. If we have doubt we haven't faith; if we have faith we haven't doubt.

"And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" (Matthew 14:31).

The disciples had crossed the lake after witnessing CHRIST feed the multitudes with a few loaves and fishes. They were greatly concerned because they had forgotten to take bread. Why should that cause worry? Had they not just seen Him feed more than four thousand people with seven loaves and a few fishes with seven baskets full left over? Would He not be equal to furnishing an evening meal for twelve people if need be? Worry and faith cannot dwell together.

"Which when Jesus perceived, he said unto them, O ye of little faith, why reason ye among yourselves, because ye have brought no bread? Do ye not understand, neither remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets ye took up? Neither the seven loaves of the four thousand, and how many baskets ye took up?" (Matthew 16:8-9).

Oh! how we crowd Him out of our lives by that triumvirate of evil - fear, doubt and worry! Failing health, financial losses, overwhelming burdens, tempests of affliction and adversity come upon us and we become insensible to His presence, doubt His Word and forget His works.

Some of CHRIST's sweetest words of commendation were called forth by faith, and strange to say they were spoken to those who knew Him the least. The centurion, whose servant lay sick, appealed to CHRIST to heal him. CHRIST promised to go to him. But the centurion answered, **"Lord... speak the word only and my servant shall be healed."** Oh! the joy such faith brought to JESUS' heart and the sweet commendation to His lip, **"I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel."**

There is no record in GOD's Word and no instance in human experience where grace and love have failed to respond to faith and trust. GOD would be untrue to His nature, which is love, if He failed once to respond to real faith.

To some of you such faith may seem impossible. But faith is the simplest thing in the world. Faith is just looking unto JESUS CHRIST and taking Him at His Word. Why isn't it easy then to have faith? It is because we look at the difficulties instead of CHRIST, and the more we look at them the bigger they become. They shut CHRIST out of our vision. Faith in itself has no power whatsoever to save or to keep us, but it links us to CHRIST who has the power. Let us now consider three ways in which faith operates.

Faith is Rooted in GOD's Great Facts

Walking along a wooded path in the mountains of Switzerland I saw an interesting tree. On a

steep slope was a tall pine tree with a huge boulder lodged right underneath it, lifting the main trunk several feet from the ground. The tree was fairly sitting on top of the rock, yet it shot straight upward fifty feet. How could such a position be maintained? The secret was not hidden from our view. The roots of the tree had spread themselves over that rock and had gone down, deep, deep into the earth around, so that even the boulder lodged at its very heart could not overturn or overwhelm it.

What a lesson it spoke! Afflictions, adversities, sufferings, sorrows, temptations, trials, doubts, disappointments roll in upon us. How can we go on in peace, patience and victory with such things in our life? Are they not enough to overwhelm us? No, not if faith spreads itself out over them and sends its roots down into the rich soil of GOD's great, eternal facts.

What are some of these facts? I can mention only a few tonight, but I hope you will search GOD's Word and find many more of them for yourself.

GOD is love

"He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love" (I John 4:8).

This is one of the greatest of GOD's eternal facts, for us to root our faith in. It may seem as though GOD had forgotten or that His hand of chastening were too heavy upon you. It may seem as though He had closed His eyes or deafened His ear. It may even seem as though He were altogether indifferent to the burden you carry and the heartache you endure. But, friends, isn't so, for GOD is love and the love of GOD shines as the brightness of the sun, whether you are warmed and refreshed by its rays or not.

A Chinese woman came to ask me why she couldn't win her mother, an ardent Buddhist, for whom she had prayed for years and whose heart had constantly grown harder. As I studied her face I saw lines which indicated hardness and rebellion in her own heart. With a little gentle probing there came a torrent of both tears and words. "GOD is unfair; He doesn't treat me right; other mothers can have their children but I have lost my five boys one by one; the last, my baby, died just last month. GOD is unfair."

For a few moments we cried together and then we talked together of the love of GOD. That love had given the five boys; surely it was love that had taken them back home to Himself. Slowly the roots of that little woman's faith spread themselves over that boulder of sorrow and went down, down, down into this eternal fact "**God is love.**" Then peace and joy came into her heart.

"What has happened to you?" she said; "I never saw your face like this before." Then the daughter told her of the rebellion toward GOD but that now it was gone. From that day the mother was willing to hear the gospel and in a few weeks had accepted CHRIST as her Saviour.

GOD's Grace is Sufficient

"And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me" (II Corinthians 12:9).

GOD never promised that the Christian would not have temptations and trials, but He did promise that with every temptation there would be a way of escape, and that with every trial there would be strength to endure. When our weakness is most pressing His strength is most perfect.

CHRIST is Able to Save to the Uttermost

Perhaps some of you said last night, "I cannot live a yielded life in Hong Kong." You thought of your non-Christian home, of your social circle with its gaiety and worldliness, of your business life with its temptations to dishonesty and graft, and you said, "I can't live a yielded life in such surroundings." Yes, you can if you let the roots of faith reach into the soil of this eternal fact, **"He (Christ) is able also to save... to the uttermost."** He has both the power to cleanse from sin and to keep from sinning.

Think of the boulders that rolled in upon the life of the Apostle Paul: stripes, stonings, shipwreck, perils and persecutions of all kinds. But his faith spread itself over all these testings and trials and rooted itself in the eternal facts of GOD's love, grace and power, thus enabling him to grow up to magnificent spiritual stature. What the glorified CHRIST did for Paul He stands ready to do for you and me.

Faith Reckons on GOD's Faithfulness

Our faith may falter but His faithfulness never. Peter failed CHRIST, but CHRIST's faithfulness to Peter remained unshaken. The heavenly Father cannot forget His promises nor can He deny Himself by failing to keep them. **"If we believe not [if we lose faith], yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself"** (II Timothy 2:13).

We may be ready to give up in defeat to the enemy, to lay down our task in sheer discouragement or even to take our hand from the plough and turn back altogether. But CHRIST is not dismayed or discouraged. He will not give up in despair. He acknowledges no victory on the devil's part. He has assumed responsibility for us and He abideth faithful.

"Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it" (I Thessalonians 5:24).

In Switzerland I watched two girls cross a glacier. The path was not marked out; there were great gaping holes in the ice; they were not properly shod with spiked shoes. Yet they tripped along unafraid and in safety, because they were roped to one who knew how to avoid the dangers and surmount the difficulties of that icy path and they reckoned on the faithfulness of their guide.

Our pilgrim journey is beset with dangers and difficulties but we need have no fear for we, too, are roped to a Guide, who is especially appointed by our Father to lead us safely the entire way.

Faith Receives GOD's Fullness

Are you GOD's child? Then, by virtue of your sonship, you may be filled with the Spirit.

Why, then, do you not possess your birthright? There are three ways an honest man may gain possession of a thing-by purchase, by barter or as a gift.

Can one buy the fullness of the HOLY SPIRIT?

Simon the sorcerer was severely rebuked for attempting it. Is there anything we can exchange with GOD for it? The rich young ruler might have exchanged half of his possessions for the life more abundant, but he went away sorrowful. Have you, perchance, tried to strike a bargain with GOD, offering Him some odd moments of time, some remnants of strength, some segment of talent, in exchange for the fullness of the HOLY SPIRIT? One way remains by which you may possess the HOLY SPIRIT's fullness, which is to receive it as a gift.

"And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us" (I John 3:24).

What does one usually do with a gift? He receives it and thanks the giver. This is precisely what GOD wants you to do with this wondrous gift of the HOLY SPIRIT's fullness.

Let me illustrate by an incident which brought this truth to my own heart with fresh meaning. Two Chinese friends, Mr. and Mrs. Wang, came to call upon me one day. Mr. Wang was only a young Christian but he loved the Lord devotedly. What a love for the Word of GOD also! It was his meat and drink.

Seeing this, I was reminded of a Scofield Bible some one had sent me to give to a Chinese friend. I presented it to Mr. Wang, saying, "I see you love the Bible. Here is a Scofield Bible which I should like to give you." At the mention of a Scofield Bible his face grew radiant and his eyes filled with tears. "Oh," said he, "the other day I saw a Scofield Bible and how I have wanted to possess one ever since! I began to pray for one. I went to a store to buy one but I couldn't afford it."

Mr. Wang decided he could not buy a Bible and no one had offered to exchange one for anything which he had. Just one way of possession was open to him - to receive it as a gift. And now it was being offered to him. What did he do?

Did he say, "I want that Bible more than anything but I haven't prayed long enough for it - just wait until I pray a few months more for it." Or, "I am really not worthy to receive that Bible. I must wait until I have made myself a better Christian and am worthy to possess it." Or, "This Bible is coming too easily. I think I should do something myself to get it." Or, "You say that Bible is for me but I do not feel that it is, so I think I should wait until I feel that I possess it."

If Mr. Wang had made anyone of those foolish remarks I should have been forced to one of two conclusions; either he was not honest and really did not want a Scofield Bible or else he thought I was not honest in truly offering that one to him.

But what did Mr. Wang do? I wish you could have seen the quickness with which he TOOK that Bible and immediately knelt down and THANKED GOD for it. As he rose he began to talk of how he would USE the gift in winning men to CHRIST.

Have you wanted the fullness of the HOLY SPIRIT? GOD offers Him in His fullness to you as a gift. What have you done with the offer?

Are you still praying for this fullness? Or are you refusing the gift until you think yourself worthy of it? Or are you foolishly attempting through self-effort to make yourself full of the Spirit? Or are you waiting for some ecstatic feeling as a proof of the infilling of the Spirit of GOD?

My friend, if you are telling GOD that you long to be filled with the HOLY SPIRIT and yet doing these foolish things, either you are not honest and really do not want to be filled or else you do not believe that GOD is honest when He offers you the gift of the Spirit's fullness.

Are you honest? Do you truly want to be filled with the HOLY SPIRIT. Then acknowledge the presence of the HOLY SPIRIT within you and claim His fullness as your birthright. Take the gift, thank the Giver, and use the gift immediately in winning souls to CHRIST.

By an act of faith you may receive the Spirit's fullness. By a constant succession of acts of faith the Spirit's fullness becomes habitual.

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