

01 December 2018 Grace Christian Fellowship

The New Covenant

Jeremiah 31:31-34

31 "Behold, days are coming," declares the Lord, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, 32 not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them," declares the Lord. 33 "But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days," declares the Lord, "I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. 34 They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them," declares the Lord, "for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more." (NASB)



Sea of Galilee (This was very close to where our Lord gave the greatest sermon ever preached on New Covent living)

It has been our experience that there is a great need within the Church (the Body of Christ) to receive a fresh and powerful revelation of the glory, might and promises of the New Covenant. So many believers are trying to live in the New Covenant with Old Covenant thinking, principles and practices. However, it is our prayer that God might use this newsletter to shed light on aspects of New Covent living for believers so that we all might enter into the fullness of what God has for us in this side of eternity.

Faith

Written by JP Le Roux

"For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God" (Eph. 2:8)

In the days that we live there is just so much confusion in the Church regarding many core and foundational truths of Scripture. Satan has spent much time to complicate and distort basic Gospel truths in an attempt to blind Christians from the life and power that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. This is certainly the case when one considers the biblical teaching about Faith. For many Christians today faith has either become just emotion, wishful thinking, intellectual consent or an irresistible gift from God. If I ask Christians what faith is few are confident in what they answer, and fewer are biblical in what they believe faith is. Over the next couple of months we will consider the following:

- 1. What is faith?
- 2. What relationship exists between faith and works?
- 3. And, finally, how is faith a gift?

In my humble opinion most of the confusion that is in the Church with regards to faith has to do with one of these questions above. Let us consider what the Scripture says!!

1. What is faith?

"Now faith is the assurance of *things* hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1)

There is no clearer definition of what faith is than what we read in Hebrews 11. However, here is where popular English translations fail to accurately communicate the rich meaning of this definition of faith. In my estimation the Greek words that are translated assurance and conviction in the above passage poorly communicate the author's clear intention. Let

us consider the first half of the verse:

"Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for"



Celsus Library, Ephesus

The Greek word that is translated assurance is *hypostasis* (ὑπόστασις), which can be translated a number of different ways. However context clearly indicate to the reader what the author is communicating. There is little linguistic evidence that support *hypostasis* being translated "assurance" and instead favors much more a translation such as "reality". HCSB translation actually translates the first half of the verse this way:

"Now faith is the reality of what is hoped for" (HCSB).

"Reality" far more than "assurance" brings to light the plain statement of the author and seems more fitting in the context of Hebrews 11. As one Scholar notes:

We probably understand this statement best, however, if we remember that "faith" refers to a way of life and not to mere theoretical belief. Thus, one might paraphrase, "Faith is living in accord with the reality of things hoped for," or

¹ Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000). *A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature* (3rd ed., p. 1040). Chicago: University of Chicago Press; Gareth Lee Cockerill, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Kindle; Grand Rapids, Mich./ Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2012), "B. The Past History of the People of God until the Coming of Jesus (11:1-12:3)".

"faith is living as if the things hoped for are real."²

This is exactly what we see in Hebrews 11. Noah lived his life according to what God said would happen. Noah builds the ark!! Abraham lived as a sojourner because he was looking forward to the heavenly city as his dwelling place. Abraham's life was lived according to Moses' faith, similarly, can be this reality!! seen, as he lived his life in hope of the eternal reward. Example after example in Hebrews 11 demonstrates this clear definition of what faith is. Faith is living ones life in complete harmony with God's promises. Real faith is a way of life. Real faith is action. Real faith works. It does not work for approval, but rather, works because it believes that God's promises are certain.

However, we are not done yet. The second half of the verse says:

"the conviction of things not seen" (NASB).

Here again conviction seems to be a rather poor translation.³ "Evidence" or "proof" is a far better translation of the Greek word *elenchos* (ἔλεγχος).⁴ The verse is not saying that faith is merely the subjective conviction of the unseen reality, but rather, the objective evidence or proof of the unseen reality. What do I mean? Lets consider Paul's words to the Romans for a moment:

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is God's power for salvation to everyone who believes, first to the Jew, and also to the Greek" (Rom. 1:16) (HCSB).

Now Paul says that the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation, but only, to those who

believe, to those who have faith. Now faith is what brings the power of the Gospel into one's life. Thus, faith is evidence to all of the power of the Gospel. Faith is proof that the Gospel has power. Now notice Paul does not say that one simply has a strong conviction that the Gospel has power when one believes, but rather, Paul emphatically states that faith brings the power of the Gospel into one's life. This is what we see in Hebrews 11. All the saints in Hebrews 11 lived their lives according to God's reality, and so experienced His reality in their lives. This is what faith is!!

Now the call is to us. We are to live our lives in accordance with the Gospel truths, if we are to experience the power of the Gospel truths in our lives. Do you live a life that is in line with the truth that you are crucified with Christ? Do you live a life that is in line with the truth that you were buried with Him in your baptism? Do you live a life that is in line with the truth that you raised with Christ and that you are now to seek the things that are above? If not you will also not experience the power of these truths.

You see we want to have the reward of faith without believing God and what He has done for us in Christ.

Let us repent and respond to His call and we will experience His power and faithfulness in our everyday lives!!!



Theatre in Ephesus

² Gareth Lee Cockerill, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Kindle; Grand Rapids, Mich./ Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2012), "B. The Past History of the People of God until the Coming of Jesus (11:1-12:3)".

³ Ibid

⁴ Ibid

Testimonies for Jesus

John Wesley had religious zeal, but needed salvation⁵

Written by Oswald J. Smith

As a boy he thought he was a Christian. He was taught that he could only be saved by keeping all the commandments of God. He considered himself a Christian because he read his Bible, prayed, attended church faithfully — and was not as bad as others.

As John grew into young adulthood he still thought of himself as a Christian. "I was doing so much and living so good a life," he reflected. He set apart an hour or two a day for religious devotions. He took communion every week.

"I watched against all sin, whether in word or deed. I prayed for inward holiness," he recounted.

John began to study for the ministry and became a student of theology at Oxford. While at Oxford he visited prisons, the sick and impoverished, doing as many good works as he could fit into his schedule. "I fasted on Wednesdays and Fridays, diligently strove against sin and practiced self-denial," he noted.

After his years of study at Oxford, John was ordained to the ministry. He decided to become a missionary and left England for America to preach among Native Americans. While crossing the Atlantic, this was his daily routine on board the ship:

From 4 to 5 private prayer

From 5 to 7 public Bible reading

From 8 to 9 public prayers

From 9 to 12 Bible study

From 12 to 1 testimony

From 2 to 4 reading aloud or witnessing

From 4 to 5 evening prayers

From 5 to 6 private prayers

From 6 to 7 public reading

From 7 to 8 evening service

From 8 to 9 public teaching

Despite this impressive regimen, his education at one of the most prestigious universities in the world, and his ordination, John's religion became a burden. It only made him miserable. He had no joy in his heart, no peace in his soul. He was religious and sincere, but he had no assurance his sins were forgiven.

Could a man be a minister or a missionary and still not be saved? Could he spend years in the study of theology and yet remain in darkness? Could he earn degrees, put on robes and be ordained, but still not know Christ? Could he endure indescribable hardship, turn from every sin and live a sincere, upright, religious life and not be saved?

Among his fellow passengers on the ship were some Moravians, one of the oldest Protestant denominations in the world. As John observed their behavior, he was impressed by the way they served other passengers and never seemed to complain.

Stormy seas

During one of their worship services, a rogue wave broke over the ship, split the mast in pieces, and poured down between the decks. Screams of terror broke out among the English passengers, but the Moravians calmly continued singing their hymns and praying.

John was astounded by their calm demeanor and approached one of their leaders. "Weren't you afraid?" he asked.

"I thank God, no," the man replied.

"But weren't your women and children afraid to die?" John asked.

"No, our women and children are not afraid to die," the man said mildly.

John recognized he still harbored a fear of death within himself. If he was a true Christian,

⁵ Smith, Oswald J. "John Wesley had religious zeal, but needed salvation." No pages. Cited 18 December 2018. Online: https://blog.godreports.com/2015/06/christian-minister-had-religious-zeal-was-shocked-when-he-discovered-heneeded-salvation/

he reasoned, he would have no fear of death. He continued to ponder this in his heart.

After John arrived in America, he had an encounter with another Moravian pastor who asked him some personal questions. "Have you the witness within yourself?" the pastor inquired. "Does the Spirit of God bear witness with your spirit that you are a child of God?" John was stumped and didn't know how to respond.

"Do you know Jesus Christ?" the pastor continued.

"I know He is the Savior of the world..." John answered.

"True, but do you know He has saved YOU?"

"I *hope* He has died to save me," John replied, somewhat weakly.

"Do you know yourself?"

"I do," John replied, but in his heart, he feared they were vain words.

A missionary in Savannah

John served as a missionary for two years in Savannah, Georgia, among Native Americans and other immigrants. Somewhat discouraged by his experience there, he decided to give up and return to England. As he departed, he said, "I went to America to convert Indians; but oh, who shall convert me?"

"Who...will deliver me from this evil heart of unbelief?" he asked. "I have a fair summer religion. I can talk well and believe myself while no danger is near, but let death look me in the face and my spirit is troubled. Nor can I say, 'To die is gain."

When John returned to England he consulted with Moravian Pastor Peter Bohler. John confessed to Peter he thought he should stop preaching. How could he continue to preach what he himself did not possess?

"Preach faith till you have it," Peter advised him, "and then because you have it you will preach it."

John preached his first message of 'salvation by faith alone' to a death-row prisoner. He recognized now that salvation was by faith, not works. But he still couldn't grasp the idea that salvation could happen in a moment – that it could be instantaneous.

He began to search the Scripture. "I could not

understand how this faith should be given in a moment; how a man could at once be turned from darkness to light, from sin and misery to righteousness and joy in the Holy Ghost."

John poured over the Book of Acts. "To my utter astonishment, I hardly found any instances there other than instantaneous conversions," he noted. He found only sudden conversions! None of them were gradual. All were instantaneous.

Because of his background and training he couldn't accept this conclusion. It may have been this way during the time of the Apostles he reasoned, but not today.

Peter Bohler brought several people to John who gave their witnesses to him of their instantaneous conversions, "from darkness into light, out of sin and fear into holiness and happiness."

John was struck by what he heard. "I could now only cry out: 'Lord, help my unbelief."

He couldn't deny the testimonies of these witnesses who had sudden conversions. He began to preach this new faith-oriented message in his church, even though he did not yet possess it himself. But he met a hostile reaction within his own church. Before long, he found the doors of the churches where he ministered closed against him.

But the hour was at hand for John to pass from death into life. At long last, he was to experience this conversion for himself.

The service at Aldersgate

He attended a Moravian service on Aldersgate Street in London, where a minister read from Martin Luther's preface to the Book of Romans.

John describes this significant moment: "About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation: and an assurance was given me, that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death." Glory to God! John Wesley, the Episcopalian clergyman, had finally found Christ in a personal, saving way. He trusted in Christ, in Him and Him alone, without works, without any efforts of his own.

John noted the change in his heart immediately after his conversion. "I have constant peace – not one unholy thought. And I have freedom from sin – not one unholy desire."

Such was the experience of the great founder of Methodism, the spiritual father of untold multitudes.

Like the Apostle Paul, both men were highly educated. Both were deeply religious. Paul was a member of the Sanhedrin. John was an ordained minister of the Anglican Church. Neither was saved. Both had to be converted. If Wesley could do so much in the church, and yet not know Christ personally, what about you?

Religion without Christ is like an empty shell without a kernel. It is dead. Religion is not

salvation. It is Christ who saves.

You may be a member of the church and yet not be saved. You may be very sincere and still not know Christ. You may perform many good deeds and never be born again. Let me urge you to make your calling and election sure. Be certain. Nothing else matters. It is Jesus Christ or eternal death. Therefore choose Christ and choose Him now.

"For we have all become like one who is unclean [ceremonially, like a leper], and all our righteousness (our best deeds of rightness and justice) is like filthy rags or a polluted garment; we all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away [far from God's favor, hurrying us toward destruction].(Isa.64:6, amplified)

Wisdom From Saints

A Word From Ravenhill

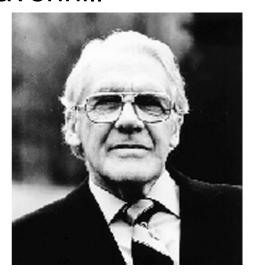
The Gospel Of Prayer⁶

There's nothing more transfiguring than prayer. People often ask, "Why do you insist on prayer so much?" The answer is very simple because Jesus did. You could change the title of the Gospel according to St. Luke to the Gospel of Prayer. It's the prayer life of Jesus. The other evangelists say that Jesus was in the Jordan and the Spirit descended on Him as a dove - Luke says it was while He was praying that the Spirit descended on Him. The other evangelists say that Jesus chose 12 disciples - Luke says it was after He spent a night in prayer that He chose 12 disciples. The other evangelists say that Jesus died on a cross - Luke says that even when He was dying Jesus was praying for those who persecuted Him. The other evangelists say Jesus went on a mount and He was transfigured - Luke says it was while He was praying that He was transfigured. There's nothing more transfiguring than prayer.

The Scriptures say that the disciples went to bed, but Jesus went to pray - as was His custom. It was His custom to pray. Now Jesus was the Son of God - He was definitely anointed for His ministry. If Jesus needed all that time in prayer, don't you and I need time in prayer? If Jesus needed it in every crisis, don't you and I need it in every crisis?

The story goes that a group of tourists visiting a picturesque village saw an old man sitting by a fence. In a rather patronizing way, one of the visitors asked, "Were any great men born in this village?" Without looking up the old man replied, "No, only babies." The greatest men were once babies. The greatest saints were once toddlers in the things of the Spirit.

C. H. Spurgeon was converted at the age of 16 and began preaching in London at the age of 19. When he was 27, they built him a tabernacle seating 6,000 which he packed twice on Sundays - that's 12,000 - and once on



Thursday nights. How? He waited on God. He got alone with God. He studied...and he prayed.

Desperate Prayer

God makes all His best people in loneliness. Do you know what the secret of praying is? Praying in secret. "But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, and when you have shut your door..." (Matt. 6:6). You can't show off when the door's shut and nobody's there. You can't display your gifts. You can impress others, but you can't impress God.

I Samuel 1:1-15 gives an account of the yearly trip Elkanah and his wife, Hannah, made to Shiloh to worship and sacrifice to the Lord. During this time, Hannah had been distressed that she was not able to bear a son for her husband. This passage of Scripture gives quite a descriptive account of her time in prayer concerning the barrenness of her womb. It says that Hannah wept. More than this, she wept until she was sore. She poured out her soul before the Lord. Her heart was grieving; she was bitter of soul, provoked, and of a sorrowful spirit.

Now that's a pretty good list of afflictions - sorrow, hardship, and everything else that came upon this woman. But the key to the whole situation is that she was a praying woman. In verse 20 it says that she reaped her

reward. "And it came about in due time, after Hannah had conceived, that she gave birth to a son; and she named him Samuel, saying, 'Because I have asked him of the Lord.'"

Now I say very often - and people don't like it - that God doesn't answer prayer. He answers desperate prayer! Your prayer life denotes how much you depend on your own ability, and how much you really believe in your heart when you sing, "Nothing in my hands I bring, simply to Thy cross I cling...." The more self- confidence you have, the less you pray. The less self-confidence you have, the more you have to pray.

What does the Scripture say? It says that God takes the lowly, the things that are not. Paul says in I Corinthians 1:28 that God takes the things that are not to bring to nothing the things that are, so that no flesh should glory in His presence. We need a bunch of "are nots" today.

The Language of the Poor

Prayer is the language of the poor. Over and over again David, the King of Israel, says, "Incline Thine ear, O Lord, and answer me; for I am afflicted and needy" (Psalm 86:1). And do you remember that one of the greatest psalms he wrote says, "This poor man cried and the Lord heard him..." (Psalm 34:6).

The apostle Paul overwhelms me with his spirituality, his pedigree, his colossal intellect. Yet he says that he's very conscious that when he's weak, he is strong. He was always trying to prove to himself and to others that he was a nobody.

True prayer is a two-way communication. I speak to God and God speaks to me. I don't know how the Spirit makes communication - or why God needs me to pray - but that's how God works.

"Get Up And Pray!"

One day I was at a conference with Dr. V. Raymond Edman of Wheaton College, one of the greatest Christian educators in this country. He told us of an experience he had while he was in Ecuador as a missionary. He hadn't been there long before he was sick and dying.

He was so near death that they had already dug his grave. He had great beads of sweat on his brow and there was a death rattle in his throat. But suddenly he sat straight up in bed and said to his wife, "Bring me my clothes!" Nobody knew what had happened.

Many years later he was retelling the story in Boston. Afterward, a little old lady with a small, dog-eared, beaten-up book, approached him and asked, "What day did you say you were dying? What time was it in Ecuador? What time would it be in Boston?" When he answered her, her wrinkled face lit up. Pointing to her book, she said. "There it is, you see? At 2 a.m. God said to get up and pray - the devil's trying to kill Raymond Edman in Ecuador." And she'd gotten up and prayed.

Duncan Campbell told the story of hearing a farmer in his field who was praying. He was praying about Greece. Afterward, he asked him why he was praying. The man said, "I don't know. I had a burden in the spirit and God said, 'You pray: there's someone in Greece that is in a bad situation.' I prayed until I got a release." Two or three years later the farmer was in a meeting listening to a missionary. The man described a time when he was working in Greece. He had been in serious trouble. The time? Two or three years ago. The men compared notes and discovered that it was the very same day that God had burdened a farmer, on a little island off the coast of Scotland, to pray for a man in Greece whose name he didn't even know.

It may seem the Lord gives you strange things. I don't care. If the Lord tells you something, carry on with what the Lord tells you.

Who Shall Ascend to the Hill of the Lord?"

There's another experience Duncan Campbell told about when he was working in Scotland.

"I couldn't preach," he said. "I couldn't get through to God. The heavens were solid. It was as though there was a 10 ft. ceiling of steel." So he quit trying to preach. He asked a young man named John Cameron to pray. The boy stood up and said, "What's the use of praying if we're not right with God?" He quoted the 24th Psalm, "Who may ascend into the hill of the Lord?"

You can't approach God unless your hands are clean, which means your relationships with others are clean and your heart is clean. "Who may ascend into the hill of the Lord? He who has clean hands and a pure heart..." (Psalm 24.3-4).

After the boy recited Psalm 24 he began to pray. He prayed 10, 15, 20 minutes. Then he suddenly said, "Excuse me, Lord, while I resist the devil." He turned around and began to tell the devil where to go and how to get there. He fought for all he was worth. You talk about having on the armor of God and resisting the devil! When he finished resisting the devil, he finished his prayer. He prayed for 45 minutes! When he finished praying it was just as though God had pulled a little switch in heaven. The Spirit of God came down on that church, that community, on the dance hall at the other end of town, and the tavern on this end of town. Revival was born in that prayer!

At the end of Malachi it says, "And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly (that's the word I like, suddenly) come to his temple" (Malachi 3:1). Remember what it says about the shepherds? They were watching their flocks by night when suddenly there was the sound of the heavenly host. Do you remember a bunch of men that had been waiting in the upper room? Suddenly the Holy Spirit came on them in that room.

There's a date in history that I love very much. It was Wednesday, August 13, 1737. A little group of people in Moravia were waiting in a prayer meeting. At 11:00 suddenly the Holy Spirit came. Do you know what happened? The prayer meeting that began at 11:00 lasted 100 years! That's right. That prayer room was not empty for a century! It's the longest prayer among men and women that I know of. Even children six and seven years old travailed in prayer for countries the names of which they couldn't even spell.

Why We Don't Have Revival

In an old town in Ireland they'll show you with reverence a place where four young men met night after night after night praying for revival. In Wales, there's a place in the hills where three or four young men only 18 or 19 years old met and prayed night after night. They wouldn't let God go; they would not take no for an answer. As far as humanly possible they prayed a revival into birth. If you're thinking of revival at your church without any inconvenience, forget it. Revival costs a lot.

I can give you one simple reason why we don't have revival in America. Because we're content to live without it. We're not seeking God - we're seeking miracles, we're seeking big crusades, we're seeking blessings. In Numbers 11, Moses said to God, "You're asking me to carry a burden I can't handle. Do something or kill me!" Do you love America enough to say, "God, send revival or kill me"? Do you think it's time we changed Patrick Henry's prayer from, "Give me liberty or give me death," to "Give me revival or let me die"?

In the 30th chapter of Genesis, Rachael goes to Jacob and throws herself down in despair. She says, "Give me children or else I die." Are you willing to throw yourself down before God to seek the spiritual birth of spiritual children in our country?

People say, "I'm filled with the Holy Spirit." If the coming of the Spirit didn't revolutionize your prayer life, you'd better check on it. I'm not so sure you got what God wanted you to get.

We've said that prayer changes things. No! Prayer doesn't change things. Prayer changes people and they change things. We all want Gabriel to do the job. God says do it yourself - with My sufficiency and My strength.

We need to get like this woman, Hannah. What did she do? She wept, she was grieved, she said she had a complaint, she fasted - and she prayed.

Jesus, the anointed of God, made prayer His custom. Paul, with his background and intellect, depended on prayer because he said he was weak. David, the king, called himself a poor man and cried to the Lord. Hannah prayed for a son and gave birth to a prophet. The prayers of a handful of young men sparked revival.

There's nothing more transfiguring than prayer.

For the Disciples of Jesus

The New Life

Written by Rev. Andrew Murray⁷

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life." -- John 3:16

"For ye died, and your life is hid with Christ in God. Christ is our life." -- Col. 3:3,4

"We declare unto you the life, the eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us. God gave unto us eternal life; and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath the life." - 1 John 1:2,11,12

How glorious, then, is the blessing which every one receives that believes in the Lord Jesus. Not only does there come a change in his disposition and manner of life; he also receives from God out of heaven an entirely new life. He is born anew, born of God: he has passed from death into life. (John 1:12-13; 3:5,7; 5:24; 1 John 3:14; 5:1)

This new life is nothing less than Eternal Life. (John 3:15-16,36; 6:40,51; 6:25-26; Romans 6:11,23; 8:2; 1 John 5:12,13) This does not mean, as many suppose, that our life shall now no more die, but shall endure into eternity. No: eternity life is nothing else than the very life of God, the life that He has had in Himself from eternity, and that has been visibly revealed in Christ. This life is now the portion of every child of God. (1 John 1:3; 3:1, 5:11)

This life is a life of inconceivable power. Whenever God gives life to a young plant or animal, that life has in itself the power of growth, whereby the plant or animal as of itself becomes large. Life is power. In the new life, that is, in your heart, there is the power of eternity. (John 5:10,28; Heb. 7:16,29; 6:25,26; 2 Cor 7:9; 8:4; Col. 3:3-4; Phil. 4:13) More certain than the healthful growth of any tree or animal is the growth and increase of the child of God, who in reality surrenders himself to the working of the new life.

What hinders this power and the reception of the new spiritual life is chiefly two things. The one is ignorance of its nature, its laws and workings. Man, even the Christian, has of himself not the least conception of the new life that comes from God: it surpasses all his thoughts. His own perverted thoughts of the way to serve and to please God, namely, by what he does and is, are so deeply rooted in although he thinks that he him. that. understands and receives God's word, he vet thinks humanly and carnally on Divine things. (Jos. 3:4; Isa. 4:8,9; Matt. 16:23) Not only must God give salvation and life; He must also give the Spirit to make us know what He gives. Not only must He point out the land of Canaan, and the way thither; we must also, like the blind, be led every day by Himself. The young Christian must try to cherish a deep conviction of his ignorance concerning the new life, and of his inability to form right thoughts about it. This will bring him to the meekness and to the childlike spirit of docility, to which the Lord shall make His secret known. (Ps. 25:5,8-9; 143:8; Isa. 42:16; 64:4; Matt. 11:25; 1 Cor. 1:18-19; 2:7,10,12; Heb. 11:8)

There is a second hindrance in the way of faith. In the life of every plant and every animal and every child there lies sufficient power by which it can become big. In the new life, God has made the most glorious provision of a sufficient power whereby His child can grow and become all that he must be. Christ Himself is his life and his power of life. (Ps. 18:2; 27:1; 38:3; 34:8; John 14:19; Gal. 2:20; Col. 3:3,4) Yet, because this mighty life is not visible or cannot be felt, but works in the midst of human weakness, the young Christian often becomes of doubtful mind. He then fails to believe that he shall grow with Divine power and certainty. He does not understand that the believing life is a life of faith whereby he reckons on the life that is in Christ for him, although he neither sees, feels, nor experiences anything. (Hab.

2:4; Matt. 6:27; Rom. 1:17; Gal. 3:11; Heb. 10:38)

Let every one then that has received this new life, cultivate this great conviction: it is eternal life that works in me: it works with Divine power: I can and shall become what God will have me be: Christ Himself is my life: I have to receive Him every day as my life given by God to me, and He shall be my life in full power.

O my Father, who hast given me Thy Son that I may have life in Him, I thank Thee for the glorious new life that is now in me. I pray Thee, teach me to know aright this new life. I will acknowledge my ignorance and the perverted thoughts which are in me, concerning Thy service. I will believe in the heavenly power of the new life that is in me: I will believe that my Lord Jesus, who Himself is my life, will by His Spirit teach me to know how I can walk in that life.

Amen.

Try now to apprehend and appropriate the following lessons in your heart; --

- 1. It is eternal life, the very life of God, that you have now received through faith.
- 2. This new life is in Christ, and the Holy Spirit is in you to bring over to you all that is in Christ. Christ lives in you through the Holy Spirit.
- 3. This life is a life of wonderful power. However weak you may feel, you must believe in the Divine power of the life that is in you.
- 4. This life has need of time to grow in you and to take possession of you. Give it time: it shall surely increase.
- 5. Forget not that all the laws and rules of this new life are in conflict with all human thoughts of the way to please God. Be very much in dread of your thoughts, and let Christ, who is your life and also your wisdom, teach you all things.

A Word For Families

Emotional Problems Point to a Poor Thought Life

Written by Rick Thomas⁸

Your emotions can be good or bad, but in either case, they reflect what is going on in your thought life. If the emotions are right, the person is thinking and responding biblically. If the emotions are not good, the person needs your compassionate and patient biblical care to help them change their thinking.

Mable came to counseling on the verge of an emotional breakdown, so she said. Marge asked how she could work through the emotional abuse from her husband. Mildred has concerns about her erratic emotional problems.

All three of these ladies have self-diagnosed themselves as struggling with their emotions. They have convinced themselves that they have emotional problems. All three of them are most definitely struggling with something, but none of them have "emotional problems" in the way they think they do.

Their emotions are working fine—just as God designed them to work. Their emotions are working well enough to signal that something is amiss in their lives. This ability to perceive truth is a mercy from the Lord.

The real issue for these ladies is not primarily about their emotions, but about their thinking. Mable, Marge, and Mildred have thinking problems. Emotions cannot be damaged or abused. Unfortunately, our psychologized culture has made significant inroads regarding the way many Christians think about their emotions.

Abusing emotions can be loosely analogous to abusing smoke. If I tried to harm smoke, I suppose I could wield a ball bat and take a swing at some smoke. According to secular theorists, I would be a "smoke abuser." Smoke abuse, like emotional abuse, is not

possible, but if you buy into the term emotional abuse, you'll have to look outside the Bible for help, which is no help at all. But, if you want to stop unwanted emotional fluctuations, you would need to discern the real source of your emotions, which is your thinking. This approach can bring change to your "mind and your emotions."

Proper Emotions Illustrated

Let's pretend you walked into your local bank only to find a gunman robbing it. As you enter, he whirls around and puts a gun in your face and yells for you to get down on the floor. At that moment, your emotions will be working fine. They will be responding to how you are thinking about during the crisis.

How about this: you just received a phone call, saying you won a brand new digital tablet. Now you're the one yelling, rather than the gunman in the previous illustration. You shriek and bolt upstairs to let your spouse know the good news. You are ecstatic. Your emotions are working well, and they are consistent with your thoughts in the celebratory moment.

Perhaps you received another phone call that was not as pleasant. Someone just informed you that a family member passed away in the early morning hours. You end the call and sit in your chair sadly reflecting upon the news. In all three of these illustrations, your emotions will follow your thoughts, which is normal because your emotions are normal. You are normal.

Of course, there are times when your emotions are not helpful and need to change. The process for doing this begins by tracing the emotion back to your thought life. It is in your thoughts where your emotions find their origination. Here is another illustration: suppose you held a rock about the size of your fist above your head. You release the stone. It

⁸ Thomas, Rick. "Emotional Problems Point to a Poor Thought Life." No pages. Cited 18 December 2018. Online: https://rickthomas.net/emotional-problems-point-to-a-poor-thought-life/

falls to the ground.

You would not say that you had a gravity problem on your hands. Gravity does what gravity always does. Gravity is being itself, which is also the nature of emotions: they do what they are supposed to do. It's a psychological law: thinking produces comparable emotions.

Dangerous Minds

Some thoughts can lead to unpleasant emotions. In such cases, it is essential the person begins to change their thinking to have better emotional responses. Remember, emotions are consistent with your thoughts. A happy person is merry in his heart. A habitually angry person has a bitter heart. We are true to ourselves: what we show on the outside is what we are on the inside (Luke 6:43-45; Proverbs 23:7).

If you want to change your "emotional outside," you must first adjust your thinking on the inside. For example, here is a list of bad emotions (or reactions) that point to an unbiblical thought life.

Pouting – This is a manipulating emotion that a person employs to show he is not getting his way. When you see a person pouting, you should immediately have a good idea of what he is thinking. There is a level of disappointment and manipulation working in his thought life.

If this is a child, it would be easy to focus on him in the wrong way by giving him what he is manipulating you to give him. The better response to the pouter is to identify what is going on in his mind. More than likely his thoughts are not biblical. He has a worship disorder that is motivating him to cave to his selfish desires rather than esteeming others more significantly (Philippians 2:3).

You will need to call him to repentance. If you don't, you could validate this type of behavior, which would motivate him to employ it regularly to satisfy all of his selfish thoughts.

Guilt/conviction – This kind of emotional manifestation is from a person who feels terrible about what he has done. He needs

explicit biblical intervention. There could be several things going on in the person's mind. If it is unbiblical guilt, he must remove it because it is not from God. There are many Christians who are weighed down by some "form of guilty-regret" for things that have happened in their past, whether it was because of them or because of someone else.

For example, it is common for a parent to rear their children wrongly because of lingering traces of guilt that remains in their lives. These parents parent their children from a position of fear because they feel (think) they have displeased God in some way.

Maybe they had an unbiblical divorce, or the marriage dissolution was not primarily their fault. Rather than living in the freedom of God's forgiveness, they over-compensate and spoil their child by giving him whatever he wants. This tactic is the parent's way of making up (paying) for what they did to the child because of the divorce.

You'll hear them say, "I've asked God to forgive me many times for what I did." The practicalization of the gospel is not real to them. They can't believe God will forgive them by merely asking. God's grace is sufficient, no matter what they did. But because of their poor theology, they feel a sense of guilt or conviction that is a product of their thinking rather than from the Spirit of God.

Anger – The angry man typically is the manipulative man. Most of the time he is using his "angry emotion" to gain or regain control of his world. If you fall prey to his emotion, you will respond precisely how he wants you to react. You will cringe and give into his manipulations.

But if the situation allows and you know you are not going to be harmed by the angry manipulator, you may be able to help him understand the corrupted thinking that motivates him to emote in a manipulative way. His thoughts are where the real issues reside.

You want to speak into his thought life. I realize in these types of situations with women primarily, this redemptive opportunity is not an option. Typically the wife needs to contact her pastor or other spiritual authority for help.

The angry man is playing god. Rather than trusting God to bring about a specific preference, he is circumventing God's way for his way. So, he can—and usually will—use any means necessary to justify his position, while blaming you for the things that are wrong. Anger is a form of insanity: it's not in line with a biblical mind. It is also a manifestation of insecurity or what the Bible calls fear of others (Proverbs 29:25).

Despair – This is the emotion of the hopeless. According to the discouraged person's thinking, they have lost all hope and what you are observing by their emotional response is some form of despair, grief, or depression. Typically the despairing person didn't fall into the ditch of despair.

It is usually the accumulative effect of many years of poor thinking that has gone unchecked. It is hard to ferret out this kind of thinking because a person who allows their thoughts to run along these lines is not usually forthcoming about what they are thinking due to embarrassment.

You may not be aware of how they have been processing things until full-fledged despair has overtaken them. You must remember when serving a person like this that you will need to be patient, but yet firm with them (1 Thessalonians 5:14). Don't let their emotional despair overly influence your care. You may be tempted to coddle the discouraged person when what they need is compassionate, faith-filled, and courageous grace.

Jealousy – This is another form of anger. The jealous thinker is mad about something they are not receiving. They are coveting in their thought life and what you observe on the emotional outside is a jealous attitude.

This person does not need your coddling; they need for you to bring them back to the cross of Christ. How can the jealous thinking coveter continue in his coveting while responding to the cross? His thoughts need a significant gospel-reorientation.

Fear - This emotional attitude is the most common emotion of them all. "Do not fear" is

the most oft-repeated command or appeal in the Bible. Our entire Adamic makeup stands upon the fear/unbelief dynamic in our minds. We are born fearful, and it's the emotion we express most often.

No person can escape this emotion. While at times it can serve us well, as in the case of the bank robbery noted above, it can also be our worst enemy. The fear-based person needs the gospel just like all of the other people that I have described in this short list of "dangerous emotions" and reactions. Nothing points directly to our unbiblical thinking like fear. And what does fear say about our thinking? It means we are not trusting God.

"Do not fear, trust me."
These five words can transform you.

All of God's choicest servants yielded to sinful temptations, but God was more significant than all their sin. If God is for you, who can be against you (Romans 8:31)? When you are struggling with doubt and fear, merely utter these simple, but powerful five words. I realize it will take more work than this, but minimally, it is a good start.

Go ahead and say them now: "Do not fear, trust me." God is entirely trustworthy no matter what you may be going through at the moment. Repeat this truth often. Let it transform your mind and massage your soul: Do not fear, trust God!

Emotional Checkup

Make sure when you are caring for your friends that you don't become confused by what you are observing from their behavior. Let what you are seeing be clues that take you deeper into their minds. Start with their emotions and move inward to their thoughts.

Once you get into their thought life, ask God to give you the discernment to truly understand what they are thinking and how their thoughts are affecting them. Solving wrong thinking in one meeting would be rare.

Sometimes it takes several meetings, many people, and different contexts to speak into a person's life who has had their thinking shaped in unbiblical ways for many years. Paul's

exhortation in 1 Thessalonians has been meaningful to me as I think about people who need long-term biblical care:

And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all. – 1 Thessalonians 5:14

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