

GENTLE SHEPHERD MINISTRIES

CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH ~ MAKING DISCIPLES ~ EQUIPPING THE SAINTS FOR MINISTRY

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JULY 2011

Unfeigned Faith Part 10 Ultimate Goal of Faith

What can you say about faith? How can you describe a faith that can move mountains, reach unlimited depths of growth, climb the incredible heights of heavenly revelation, and cross grave wastelands of hopelessness to reach its ultimate destination? How can you present the type of faith that can only be embraced by a simple, child-like confidence, glides over rocky terrain according to its blessed assurance, is lifted up by the wings of pure persuasion, and soars on the currents of unadulterated trust to come to a place of complete rest in the arms of God?

For the last nine months I have tried to give each of you insight into this incredible gift of God. Note, I said a gift of God. We cannot possess faith unless there is something that warrants such a confidence. We cannot believe in something that is incapable of performing that which it is designed to perform or what it has promised to bring to fruition. For example, we will not turn on a light switch if we do not have the confidence that it will produce light.

It is God who gives us the confidence to exercise faith. The gift He has given to us in the form of faith is Himself (*Hebrews 11:6*). If He is not who He is, we could not be assured that He means what He promised in His Word. If He did not possess the means to bring forth a matter, we would never live in any expectation as to what He said; rather, we would live in a state of utter hopelessness.

The essence of our faith solely rests in who our God is, and not what He does. As stated in the past it is obvious that many put their faith in God's power and not in His character. It is true God can do anything, but His power is greatly disciplined

by who He is. He will never step outside of His holy character to show Himself in a powerful way. For example, consider electricity that serves as a current that ensures the light switch produces the light. If the electricity was not properly channeled, turning on the light could easily result in a person being shocked and possibly killed. God's power is channeled by who He is. If it was biased, unpredictable, or fickle, we would be tasting judgment and wrath instead of love, mercy, and grace.

It is because of who God is and His commitment towards us that any faith we possess must be first imparted to us in some measure or given as a gift (*Romans 12:3, 1 Corinthians 12:6-9*). The confidence that God means what He says is stirred up by His actual Word. As *Romans 10:17* declares "So then, faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." For example, in regard to salvation that initial sense of sin and being lost to God is imparted to us by heaven itself. It is the Spirit who convicts us of our sin according to God's Word, while we were being drawn by the Father with His cords of love towards the reality of Christ's redemption. It was from this premise, we begin to sense how far away we were from the mark, how lost we have become to the things of God, and the hopeless state we would remain in if we do not embrace God's solution. It is at that time the sweet invitation of Christ to come to Him to partake of the eternal life-giving water of heaven can begin to penetrate the darkness of our soul with the glorious message of hope.

Once we believe what the Word has said about our state, we must respond by receiving the hope of salvation. Notice salvation is a matter of unseen hope. It is not tangible, but because God has promised it we can expect it as an end result. This is why Peter stated that the end of our faith is the salvation of our souls (*1 Peter*

1:9). Once we receive something by faith, the measure of faith that was stirred up in our souls is then enlarged to possess more of the heavenly life as we begin to take the necessary steps of obedience towards the expected end.

I encourage you to meditate on my last statement. The Bible tells us we walk by faith (*2 Corinthians 5:7*). Each time we exercise the measure of faith through obedience to what we know is true, the more the heavenly life will be unveiled to us and in us. Keep in mind, the gift we are given is the eternal life of Christ. When we receive the gift of this life, we must then unwrap it and, according to our faith begin to explore the beauty, depth, heights, and width of its everlasting ways.

However, exploration of this life is done with steps of obedience. In the infancy of my Christian life, I started out thinking that somehow faith was conjured up, but I never realized it came from above and was refined, defined, and expanded through obedience to the Word of God. The obedience that unfeigned faith produces has various facets to it that we must consider.

The first facet is that obedience is a choice. I do not have to obey if I choose not to. Unfeigned faith will always line me up to the will of God. In essence, His will, will become my will. Such faith puts me in step with God, bringing me under His yoke. As a result, I will never get ahead of Him nor will I lag behind.

The next aspect we must understand about unfeigned faith is that its natural inclination is to obey because it believes what has been said about a matter. Promises of God have conditions that must be met to ensure a proper environment for God to bring forth His promises. Each act of faith is like planting a seed in the ground. Each step of obedience in accordance to the measure of faith is what nurtures that seed, producing a proper environment in which that seed can come to maturity. In the end, a person will reap the fruit of his or her investment.

Since faith believes what is said, it will display great wisdom. Unfeigned faith shows discretion because it recognizes a matter for what it is. Godly wisdom will respond according to righteousness. If you walk in the ways of disobedience, you will pay the consequences. If you are inactive or unresponsive towards the ways of righteousness, you will be held accountable for the fruits that materialize because of such inaction. Clearly, what is not a matter of unfeigned faith will be counted as sin (*Romans 14:23*).

Another aspect of obedience produced by faith is identification. Faith is always leading us to that which is excellent. However, we cannot obtain excellence without obedience. Jesus gave up the glories of heaven in obedience to the plan of the Father. In His obedience, Jesus became identified with our plight. We know it was through suffering brought on by obedience that Jesus was perfected in His humanity to become the sacrificial Lamb of God (*Hebrews 5:8-9*). As the Apostle Paul reminds us, Jesus became sin for us so that we could be made in the righteousness of God (*2 Corinthians 5:21*).

The truth is that through obedience the life of Christ is being formed in us. Sometimes obedience points to the travailing of a soul as one wrestles with the price that must be paid in order to unveil a greater measure of the life of Christ (*2 Corinthians 13:5; Jude 3*). Such a price requires denying the self-life of its right to rule and crucifying the flesh in order to gain such a life. However without the travailing that comes with walking in obedience, faith would never be refined in the ovens of separation, defined by the ways of righteousness, and enlarged to inherit the fullness of that which is eternal.

Faith has left us a cloud of witnesses that will testify of its excellent ways, while bringing judgment on those who refuse it simplicity, purity, and sweetness. These witnesses speak of the victory of faith in light of blessings and persecutions. They point to the abiding promise of faith. This promise speaks of a greater resurrection, which will manifest itself

in the glory of Jesus' life being unveiled in and through us. It is a life that truly will identify us to the eternal inheritance that is awaiting us.

Unfeigned faith looks upward in expectation, walks in abiding confidence towards God, and abides in the eternal Rock of Jesus. It is faith that causes us to hide in the Rock as we seek protection, stand on the Rock when we are facing the tests and storms of life, fall on the Rock when we are in need of mercy, seek the Water of the Rock when we need revival, and hide in its shadow when we need grace.

Faith is always going forward, looking beyond the present horizon in expectation of the glory of the next world. Since its focus is heavenward, faith is always prepared to see into the future. For example, though the incident on Mount Moriah where God commanded him to offer Isaac, Abraham saw the figure of Christ's entrance into the world to become a sacrificial offering and was glad for it. He also was preparing himself in light of possessing the city made by the hands of God (*Genesis 22; John 5:56; Hebrews 11:10, 19*).

Unfeigned faith is eternal (*1 Corinthians 13:13*). Since it finds its reliance and complete source in the eternal God of heaven, it clings to that which is eternal. It is steadfast because its anchor is the joy of salvation. It is compelled by the abiding winds of God's love, inspired by His righteous ways and examples, and disciplined by the ever abiding presence of His Spirit.

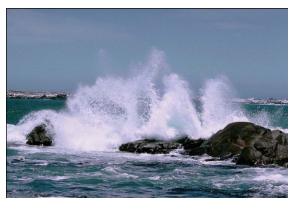
The subject of faith is inexhaustible, but it is clear it cannot be captured by mere words. It is for this reason that many people pursue it. However, they often start with romantic notions about it. They swing from the limbs of expectation as to what God can do, rather than begin from the foundation of abiding hope in light of who He is. They strive to become experts of faith, rather than those who strive to obey His Word. Sadly, when such people have an experience because of faith they memorize it into a formula, often boxing God in with unrealistic expectations. They even write about it so others can have the same experience. However, faith is personal. It addresses present challenges by exercising the ways of righteousness in regard

to current problems. Faith never lives off of past happenings, but is active in truthfully facing the present mountain ranges that loom in front of it as it clings to the eternal Rock of heaven.

Great people of faith have lived it and experienced it. They have realized that even though it cannot be captured any more than the great waves of the world's oceans could be preserved in a glass jar, they had the confidence that they could witness its power and results in their lives. As a result, kingdoms were subdued, righteousness brought forth, promises acquired, lions rendered powerless, violence quenched, swords unable to find their mark, weaknesses became platforms for strength to be displayed, women received their dead, and many endured to the end to receive a better resurrection. This is the witness of those who discover the depth of faith's hope, the height of its expectation, the width of its accomplishments, and the enduring qualities that enabled them to finish the course.

This brings us to addressing the last two aspects of unfeigned faith. The first one is that of judgment. We are living in precarious days. Jesus said that the end of the last days would be as in the days of Noah. Even though judgment abided on the known world of that time, people continued to do their daily activities without any regard to the clouds of God's wrath gathering in the distance. Perhaps they were living in denial as they scoffed at any such possibility as they danced in and out of wishful thinking. Whatever frame of mind existed during that time, the people could not perceive in the darkness of unbelief that such a judgment would come upon them in such a manner. After all, they were too busy living according to the endless wretchedness of their wicked, vain imaginations. From all appearances, they insisted on remaining clueless about the impending judgment.

This state kept these foolish people in a fog of deception until the judgment came. At that time it was too late to escape the wrath of God. It is said of Noah that his



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IN THE MIDDLE

By Jeannette Haley

Once upon a time there was a certain very strange creature that no one in the Middle Ville could adequately describe. Some said it was mostly a donkey. Others declared it was part elephant. Nobody could decide exactly just what it was, but everyone knew that its name was Mugwump.

The elusive Mugwump didn't like the bright light of day, nor did he much care for the darkness of night. Thus he was rarely seen except when the sky overhead was gray. Some villagers said he appeared just before sunrise—others said just before sunset.

Many said that he was happier in the winter cold. Others loudly disagreed, and declared that he definitely relished hot weather.

A few curious people tried to track Mugwump to discover where he lived. After awhile, the villagers began to argue with one another about the creature's home and habits. Some insisted that Mugwump liked to live among the trees. Others declared that he definitely preferred the swamp lands. Of course, this was the result of Mugwump's inconsistent habits in his habitat.

The villagers liked to gather in the local sports bar and grill to discuss where Mugwump came from. Some held to the belief that he was truly a local "good old boy." After all, he possessed a strange sort of magnetism that bamboozled people. Others argued that he wasn't as great as he made himself out to be, and he could be dangerous. After all, such a mysterious creature might possibly pose a threat to the village people.

Heated arguments also arose over Mugwump's diet. Some insisted that he was a vegetarian, while others were adamant that he was a lover of meat.

Finally, in order to settle the argument, it was decided to appoint a committee to head up a thorough investigation into the life of Mugwump. The cost of this project nearly bankrupt the village, but the matter had to be settled one way or the other. Two teams were appointed to carefully

track and take note of everything Mugwump did—one team during the day, and the other team during the night.

At last, after many months of tedious work, the teams gathered to compare notes. The entire village turned out to hear the results with the hope that they could at last have a concrete definition of this disturbing creature.

The daylight team was the first to reveal their findings. Their summary shocked the people. It read, "We have made a conscientious and thorough investigation into the daylight habits and motivations of Mugwump and have come to the conclusion that he is not available to track and study in the daylight." The people all moaned at hearing this, and looked to the night team for an answer. They likewise read their report to all the people. "We have given the best efforts possible to discover and document the nighttime habits of Mugwump to determine just what his goals and intentions are, and have come to the conclusion that Mugwump is not available to be studied in the night." All the people groaned at hearing this news. What, then, would properly identify Mugwump?

All the people stood in shocked silence and dismay. Was there no one who could solve the mystery of Mugwump? Then, suddenly the voice of a young lad rang out. "I know! I know! Do not be sad and in despair! I can explain Mugwump to you." But, the people ignored him. What could an inexperienced kid possibly know about such a mysterious and confusing creature?

"Give me one minute, and I will explain it to you," he said as he stood on the steps of the town hall.

"Well," the old mayor said, "Let's hear what he has to say, and then we can be done with it and go meet at the bar and grill." So the people nodded and stood quietly to hear the youngster.

He took a deep breath, and his voice rang out loud and clear. "This creature is a Mugwump, it's plain for all to see. His mode of operation is what is called PC. One night he may be on the left, then on the right by day—this is because his ideology has led him far astray. He munches on leaves and peas (the vegetarians to please). But, then he dreams of juicy steak and takes a break—to plan a barbeque! Can't you see? How hard can it be? It's

plain to me! Mugwump is neither left nor right, nor is his life lived in the dark or light. He's not awake, he's not asleep, from reality and truth he's in retreat. The swamp won't do, the trees won't work—right and wrong he's chosen to shirk. He has no goal, he cannot think, his mind, you see, is all PC. PC regulation, and religiosity, he got his education in a liberal university. So, there you have it," he explained with a grin, "with his mug on one side and his wump on the other, he's mediocre in the middle with no plan to be any other."

What did the village people do after they heard this? They met at the bar and grill to argue over whether they should elect Mugwump (who was now considered to be a genuine "good old boy") to be their political leader, or whether he should be their religious leader. After all, with his vast experience in being politically correct, people could ignore truth and live in delusion. On the other hand, if he was their spiritual leader, people could ignore truth and live in delusion.

Of course, either way, they'd have to find a way to silence that pesky, outspoken kid....and here ends our tale.

The Bible teaches us that there is no middle ground with God. He is not "politically correct" or "wishy-washy" and He doesn't accept half-hearted, lukewarm responses from us either. Jesus warned the Laodicean church, "*I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth*" *Revelation 3:15, 16*. There was no comfortable, non-committal middle ground for these people and there is none for the true Church of our day. The call that Moses made in *Exodus 32:26b*, is still going out to all who will hear, "*Who is on the LORD'S side? Let him come unto me...*" First the decision has to be made whose side we are on, then we have to act on that decision. To make no decision is a decision to not wholly follow the Lord by consecrating (setting aside) oneself to belong totally to God. Our footsteps follow our heart.

The Apostle Paul wrote, "*I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your*

bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service" Romans 12:1. The only way Christians can joyfully and freely give their bodies to the LORD to be a living sacrifice (that means all the time, day by day, come what may), in holiness (Christ in us, the hope of glory), acceptable to God (without compromise, filled with the Spirit) is through the love of God. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind" Matthew 22:37. We must never forget, lest we be tempted to think highly of ourselves in this regard, that this is our "reasonable service."

Loving, believing, and obeying God is a choice—a decision that every person must make. God's ways cannot be found in some "gray area" in between light and darkness. His ways are not confusing because His ways are truth. They are plain enough for a child to comprehend because they are simple, yet profound because they are living and eternal. God's ways cannot be altered by the most powerful of men or angels. They will forever remain.

God's Word spells it out for us—the narrow road or the broad highway; life or death; heaven or hell; right or wrong; wise or foolish; awake or asleep; righteous or wicked; good or evil; spiritual or fleshly; moral or immoral; clean or unclean; bond or free; truth or lies; godly or satanic; saved or unsaved and so forth. The choices are simple, yet so many long to live with one foot in each world; that is, one in "spirituality" and one in the world. Reprobate minds who despise the God of the Bible and the Bible of God through the centuries have always sought to find a middle ground that would somehow appeal to the majority of people in order to gain control over their lives. This is what the "politically correct" movement is about today. Its aim is to overthrow every absolute and usher in a man-centered, one-world politico-religion that makes everyone feel good about themselves.

People who try to have the "best of both worlds," are "middle of the road" mugwumps who take pride in their tolerance and so-called "intellectualism." These are the "elites"

among us described by Jude in verse 4, "For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ." Jude went on to explain in the following verse the end of such deceivers, "I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that the Lord, having saved the people out of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not."

Paul warned the elders in Ephesus, "For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears" Acts 20:29-31. "Perverse" in this verse means to distort, misinterpret, or corrupt.

By distorting the Word of God (such as the new NIV and other so-called "versions" do) the Scriptures are easily misinterpreted which leads to a corrupt spin on truth, resulting in corruption in the lives of people who buy into it. No wonder Paul "commended" these people to God, for He is the only one who by His Spirit and truth can keep the souls of His people undefiled as they consecrate themselves to Him with all their hearts, so that He is able to sanctify them.

Jesus said, "No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon" Luke 16:13. Therefore, sitting in the middle of the road results in road kill. Trying to balance on the fence means falling off on one side or the other. Isaiah puts forth the challenge: "How long halt ye between two opinions? If the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him." (See Isaiah 18:21.) There are no mugwumps in heaven.

Who are you following today? †



THE PATH OF THE CHRISTIAN

"Thou art my hope in the day of evil." Jeremiah 17:17

The path of the Christian is not always bright with sunshine; he has his seasons of darkness and of storm. True, it is written in God's Word, "Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace;" and it is a great truth, that religion is calculated to give a man happiness below as well as bliss above; but experience tells us that if the course of the just be "As the shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day," yet sometimes that light is eclipsed. At certain periods clouds cover the believer's sun, and he walks in darkness and sees no light. There are many who have rejoiced in the presence of God for a season; they have basked in the sunshine in the earlier stages of their Christian career; they have walked along the "green pastures" by the side of the "still waters," but suddenly they find the glorious sky is clouded; instead of the Land of Goshen they have to tread the sandy desert; in the place of sweet waters, they find troubled streams, bitter to their taste, and they say, "Surely, if I were a child of God, this would not happen." Oh! say not so, thou who art walking in darkness. The best of God's saints must drink the wormwood; the dearest of his children must bear the cross. No Christian has enjoyed perpetual prosperity; no believer can always keep his harp from the willows. Perhaps the Lord allotted you at first a smooth and unclouded path, because you were weak and timid. He tempered the wind to the shorn lamb, but now that you are stronger in the spiritual life, you must enter upon the riper and rougher experience of God's full-grown children. We need winds and tempests to exercise our faith, to tear off the rotten bough of self-dependence, and to root us more firmly in Christ. The day of evil reveals to us the value of our glorious hope.

—Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892)

obedient actions, which were wrought by faith, condemned the world (*Hebrews 11:7*). The Apostle Peter made this declaration in *2 Peter 2:5*, "And spared not the old world, but saved Noah, the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly." Noah's life and preaching gave people the opportunity to flee the wrath that was coming, but they did not believe. As a result, the example of his faith and the conviction of his preaching paved the way for God's wrath to flow.

As I consider this perspective of faith, I have to wonder if my faith serves as a powerful testimony as to the judgment that is gathering on the horizon in regard to this generation. Does it bring the contrast between the light of God and the darkness of this world? Will it ultimately be used by God to usher in His judgment and wrath upon all of those who refuse to believe? In my mind there is no doubt that God will raise up those who will usher in His wrath in these end days including the 144,000 Jews in *Revelation 7* and the two witnesses in *Revelation 11*.

This brings us to the reality that to be able to bring such an indictment against the world, we must not only be walking in faith, we must be looking up in expectation. We must be established firmly in the ark of Jesus, ready to be lifted above the wrath to come. It is when God's people have finished their course in relationship to their commission, and are finally shut in with Him, that His wrath will suddenly come upon the world.

The second aspect of faith is that it makes the world unworthy to even witness it in abiding assurance (*Hebrews 11:38*). Granted, due to God's righteousness, unfeigned faith will be used to bring a contrast to the world and an indictment upon it for its unbelief and lawlessness. But, the reality is that the world is not worthy to witness such great faith. The world hates such confidence and has strived through the centuries to wipe out its light, silence its testimony, and mock its way in order to replace it with its foolish idolatrous and pagan

ways of unbelief.

Recently, I was studying the lives of saints that possessed true faith. It was a way to remind me of how faith responds to matters of life. It was inspiring to see how these people's faith carried them through troubled waters of persecution, isolation, and death. Clearly the world hated the distinction that these people's faith had produced in their lives. The world will rant, rave, and gnash at it. It will sneer, mock, and render it to be non-essential. However, the world could never get around the record of unfeigned faith. It was there serving as a living witness and bringing an indictment against their unbelief.

The world is not worthy to witness unfeigned faith. However, the rejection of the world in regard to true faith is the one indication that such faith is worthy of God to consider, honor, and reward. It is a type of faith that He reckons or counts as being righteous. I could not help but wonder if my faith would create such a reaction from the world. Is it such a faith that would be worthy of God to make a notation concerning it?

As I was considering these realities about faith, I had to consider the real purpose of faith. It is simple enough. Faith wants to lead us home, to the place of abiding rest. It wants us to follow the past footsteps of the saints of old into glory, to receive the ultimate reward and inheritance awaiting every saint who finishes the course, the Lord Jesus Christ. Granted, the walk of faith leads us down the path of salvation, the course of faith leads us towards eternal glory, the place of faith ensures rest for the soul, the promise of faith is that of a better resurrection, the hope of faith is the unfolding revelation of Christ to us and in us, and the expectation of faith is heaven where we will look into the glorious face of our Lord. This is truly the victory wrought by unfeigned faith. Clearly, the ultimate goal of such faith is that we possess the fullness of His promises and our inheritance by possessing Him.

The question is what does your faith towards God say about your relationship with the Lord, your present walk, and the way you are traveling? Does your walk speak of unfeigned faith or wishful thinking? †

The just shall live by faith.

QUOTABLE

God has called every Christian to a holy life. There are no exceptions to this call. It is not a call only to pastors, missionaries, and a few dedicated Sunday School teachers. Every Christian of every nation, whether rich or poor, learned or unlearned, influential or totally unknown, is called to be holy. The Christian plumber and the Christian banker, the unsung housewife and the powerful head of state are all alike called to be holy.

This call to a holy life is based on the fact that God Himself is holy. Because God is holy He requires that we be holy. Many Christians have what we call a "cultural holiness." They adapt to the character and behavior pattern of Christians around them. As the Christian culture around them is more or less holy, so these Christians are more or less holy. But God has not called us to be like those around us. He has called us to be like Himself. Holiness is nothing less than conformity to the character of God." — Jerry Bridges, *The Pursuit of Holiness*

God's special agency is by His Holy Spirit. Having direct access to the mind, and knowing infinitely well every person, the Holy Spirit employs the truth that is best adapted to His particular case, and then sets it home with divine power. He gives it such a vividness, strength, and power, that the person quails, throws down his weapons of rebellion, and turns to the Lord. Under His influence, the truth burns and cuts its way like fire. He makes the truth stand out in such aspects that it crushes the proudest man down with the weight of a mountain. If men were disposed to obey God the truth is given with sufficient clearness in the Bible that they could learn all that is necessary to know. But because they are wholly disinclined to obey it, God clears it up before their minds and pours in a blaze of convincing light upon their souls, which they cannot withstand, and they yield to it. In the same way, because we do not know what we should pray for as we should, the Holy Spirit makes intercession for the saints.—Excerpt, *Spiritual Power* by Charles Finney

RAYOLA'S Q & A CORNER

WHICH BIBLE VERSION?

Q: *I know you have dealt with this subject before, but why do you prefer the King James Version of the Bible? I have tried to read it but I get caught up with the "thee's" and "thou's" of it. It seems outdated to me.*

I can understand why the King James Version seems outdated, but if you do a study of how this Bible came to be, you would understand why there are those who consider it the most reliable version. In fact, I just recently obtained information about it that simply confirmed why I trust it. The King James Version of the Bible came about due to the various versions of the Bible that inundated the British people in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, causing much confusion as to what was the proper translation. Due to self-serving rulers some of the versions had been tainted to serve immoral and dishonorable purposes.

It was King James' first royal act as king to push a draft through Parliament that would support a translation of the Bible that not only lined up to the original version used by bishops, but would ensure the intent of it. Fifty-four Bible Scholars and linguists were chosen to do the task, but only 47 were known to participate.

Fifteen stringent rules were set down in which to ensure the integrity of the work. For instance, if there was confusion about a matter, the translators were to take the high road as to the meaning or intent of it and not the easy, acceptable, or biased road. They were to remain true to the pronunciation and meaning of the names of the books of the Bible and the people of the Bible. There were not to be any marginal notes where opinions or personal judgments would confuse or sway a person to a particular belief or interpretation.

As I considered the many versions that exist today, I cannot help but note the same environment exists



that required a king and a nation to step in and bring God's Word back to the center of truth. I have handled some of these versions and they leave out basic truths that change the intent of Scripture. I have considered paraphrases that clearly speak of wicked agendas that appeal to carnal attitudes. Today there are bibles being written according to cultural preferences such as the environmental or green bible that exalts creation over the reality of a holy, just God, the politically correct bible that exalts tolerance over righteousness, the gender-acceptable bible that deifies gender over truth, and the morally inept bibles that redefine what constitutes sin, confirming that the Word of God has been clearly tainted. Today many of the Bibles are being written according to cultural indoctrination. Depending on taste and preference, people can pick and choose which version will best soothe their religious conscience. The result is that bibles are being interpreted according to political, cultural, and moral preferences, as well as being adjusted according to religious emphasis.

Each version that is coming forth today seems to be a "dumbed down" presentation of the latest moves and preferences of society. Each "dumbed down," tainted version is simply desensitizing the reader as to what is true. It takes away the "black and white" from God's truth, holiness, and redemption and renders such subjects as being gray or obsolete, causing confusion and inconsistencies.

The question is what version is trustworthy? The real test of the Bible is not whether it is understandable enough that one can skim over it, palatable enough that it does not leave any "bad taste," or comfortable enough that it is unable to challenge one's present state. Rather, the real test is whether purity and intent of truth is being upheld and maintained in it. I, for one, do not want to wade through a particular version of the Bible to see if it is valid enough to believe it as truth; rather, I want to be able to read the Bible knowing it is trustworthy. I don't approach the Bible to test, debate, or negate it; instead, I approach it to believe it as being truth with the intent of obeying it.

The one translation I can approach in faith is the KJV. I value it because I can trust its witness and credibility. My advice to people is that if you do not have a KJV you better buy one. And, for those who own one, make sure it is not collecting dust. Begin to break it in. Seek its truths and counsels. I say this because in the near future, this version will most likely be outlawed for the unpopular truths it speak about the character of God, the reality of sin, and the immovable, unchangeable boundaries of truth contained within its pages. †

PETER MARSHALL QUOTES

"Church members in too many cases are like deep sea divers, encased in the suits designed for many fathoms deep, marching bravely to pull out plugs in bath tub"

"I am growing more and more aware that all too often we preachers aim at nothing and hit it."

"The measure of a life, after all, is not its duration, but its donation. How much will you be missed?"

"Prayer, like everything else in God's universe, is not accidental in its way of working.

It is based on laws—spiritual laws—in their field just as constant and inexorable and fixed as their companions in the natural realm."

"Man cannot comprehend Infinity. Yet the crumb of our pity comes from the whole loaf of God's compassion. The milk of human kindness comes from the dairies of God's love."

"Our Father, remove from us the sophistication of our age and the skepticism that has come, like frost, to blight our faith and to make it weak. Bring us back to a faith that makes great and strong, a faith that enables us to love and to live, the faith by which we are triumphant, and the faith by which alone we can walk with Thee. We pray for a return of that simple faith, that old-fashioned trust in God, that made strong and great the homes of our ancestors who built this good land and who in building left us our heritage.

In the strong name of Jesus, our Lord, we make this prayer, AMEN."