

DESTINY BULLETIN

A commentary sent to the supporters of the ministry of Christian Destiny.

Dear “Special Friend” of Christian Destiny,

August 2007

THE IMPERATIVE OF FAITH

Part 2

Let us remember, then, that faith without “*the faith*” is delusion. Above all else, Christianity, the call to faith, presents the divine Person and the historical acts in which to believe.

As a result of this historical, objective faith, it is possible for us to have personal faith. That is what Peter is referring to when he says to “*add to your faith*” the other imperatives. He assumes that his readers have moved from cynicism to acceptance and have stepped from no faith to the faith.

Christianity is, therefore, not only “*the faith*,” but it is personal, subjective faith. When I exercise faith, the objective facts about God and the atonement available in Jesus Christ become my personal possessions.

Each person must ask himself, *Do I have this personal faith? What is personal, saving faith in Christ?*

This “faith unto salvation” has been illustrated in many ways. If I stand on the twenty-seventh floor of a tall building and press the button for an elevator, I am confident (I have faith) that the elevator will arrive. Indeed, it does, and the door opens. I am now presented with a vehicle that, I am confident (I have faith), will take me to the ground floor or to the top of that building, provided I step into it. When I do, my faith in that elevator takes the form of *personal* trust. It has become not only objective confidence but a personal reality to me.

In the same way, the faith of the Gospel—the truth of Christianity—becomes the path to my personal salvation when I exercise faith. This is accomplished by accepting Christ’s death as my way to right standing before God.

This way of salvation is presented to us by the Apostle John when he gives us his account of the life and ministry of Christ. He speaks of the Lord Jesus coming into the world to His own people and making them the loving offer of salvation. Sadly, their response was negative: “*He came unto His own, and His own received Him not*” (*John 1:11*). This is one of the saddest verses in the Bible.

Because they did not receive Him, Israel—and then the world—moved into desolation and rejection.

But then comes one of the happiest verses in Scripture. There were individuals who did hear and heed and who believed the facts about the Lord Jesus. “*But as many as received Him, to them*

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gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name” (John 1:12). Exercising faith comes in the form of receiving Christ—believing on His name.

Christ illustrated this transaction further when, explaining the way of salvation, He said, *“As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3:14-15).* In referring back to this Old Testament picture, Christ is using an event in the lives of the children of Israel to show the nature of personal acceptance of Him.

In Numbers 21, we see that the children of Israel committed a transgression against the Lord. In that regard, they are an illustration of the entire human race and of each one of us. They spoke against the Lord, and they held His provision for them in contempt. They said, *“For there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loathes this light bread” (Numbers 21:5).* The response from the Lord is most telling. *“The Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died” (Numbers 21:6).*

As a result of this judgment, there was the responsive conviction of sin on the part of the people. We have here an illustration of the purpose of God’s judgment of the world. *“Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord, and against you; pray unto the Lord, that he take away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed for the people” (Numbers 21:7).*

What was the provision that came from God? *“The Lord said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live” (Numbers 21:8).*

What an interesting and marvelous provision! The Lord instructed Moses that a serpent resembling the one that bit the people was to be made of brass. To obtain healing, the people were required only to look upon the serpent. The formula that came from God was “Look and live.”

Moses did as he was instructed, putting a serpent on a pole in the center of the camp and inviting those who were infected to participate in the divine remedy. What a beautiful result came to pass! *“If a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived” (Numbers 21:9).* The message that went out to the people of Israel was that God had provided a way by which they would be delivered. The requirement placed upon them was so simple as to be almost unrelated to the severity of the problem.

Now there may have been those in Israel who had philosophic arguments against this method of deliverance, who believed that other remedies were superior, or who allowed personal disillusionment or a dozen other problems to prevent them from believing and responding to this simple remedy. However, no other provision had been made except that one must look and then one would live. The simple way of salvation was also the sole way of salvation.

Christ used this account of the serpent in the wilderness to illustrate saving faith. He announced that in this very fashion must *“the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3:14-15).*

Following this statement comes that magnificent offer of eternal life. Jesus gives us the most well-known and revered statement in the entire Word of God, *“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16)*. Christ then tells us that the Son of Man came not to bring condemnation but salvation. Salvation becomes mine through faith.

The simplicity of faith is also evident in the life of Abraham. In Romans 4:1-2, the Apostle Paul says, *“What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, has found? For if Abraham were justified by works, he has whereof to glory; but not before God. For what says the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.”*

Abraham is the illustration of the exercise of saving faith. What did Abraham actually do in order to receive imputed righteousness? He believed God. The word used here is *amen*. Abraham said amen to God, and he was instantly and eternally saved, having received the gift of imputed righteousness. Paul presses the point by saying, *“Now to him that works is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that works not, but believes on Him that justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted [imputed] for righteousness” (Romans 4:4-5)*. Salvation, then, comes not to the one who works to earn or merit the gift. It is given to the one who believes. Faith alone brings imputed righteousness.

What is imputed righteousness? It is merit or acceptance before God that is put to our account, as it were, in the bank of heaven. It is not imparted righteousness, for there is no such thing. In salvation, God does not *make* us righteous, but He *declares* us righteous. Imputed righteousness, therefore, is the basis of our perfect *legal* standing before God. Because of this ascribed righteousness *“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus” (Romans 8:1)*.

Down through the years of Christian history, thousands, convicted of sin, conscious that they have offended God, wanting to be reconciled to Him, have asked the question, *“What must I do to be saved?”* Many discovered, even in the process of asking this question, the trust that became personal faith in the Savior.

From where does this faith come? *“Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:17)*. We can promise that the one who examines the teaching of the Scripture with an open mind will become aware of the need for faith. In the sincere seeker, this awareness will produce the desire for personal salvation. That desire, followed by the exercise of personal faith, brings the seeker to the transaction that is salvation.

From faith where do we go?

Having been saved by faith, the believer discovers faith to be a growing thing. God increasingly becomes the loving Father who rules our lives and who is to be trusted in every circumstance and with everything. Having come to Christ, the Apostle Paul tells of the consequences of his own personal step of faith. He said, *“I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day” (2 Tim. 1:12)*. By faith we can trust God not only for eternal salvation but for every other consideration in life as well.

In exactly this fashion, Paul, in the name of the Lord, extends an invitation to us. In his most brilliant treatise, the book of Romans, he speaks to those who have believed and says, *“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service” (Romans 12:1)*. Here the call to commitment is not extended to the sinner but to the brethren. Salvation and commitment are two distinct things. Eternal life come because of Christ’s commitment unto death for us on the cross. Significant service for the Savior comes when our faith leads us to commitment to Him. Faith, therefore, is the door to salvation and the basis of all the qualities that God intends to build faithfully into our lives. So imperative is this first quality of life that it is presented in the Word of God as the basis of life itself. Consequently, we have the oft-repeated principle in Scripture, *“The just shall live by faith” (Romans 1:17)*.

By faith we anticipate that we will live through each day. By faith we retire at night in the quiet confidence that we shall wake in the morning. By faith we cross the street, drive a car, ride on an airplane, and perform a hundred other daily tasks. The one who insists that he wants nothing to do with faith and claims that he operates only on the basis of his eyes will find it impossible to live at all. Those who deny the existence of faith and claim they rely only on what can be seen and proved are deluding themselves. It takes faith for anyone to live. The Christian, however, knows that and rejoices in it.

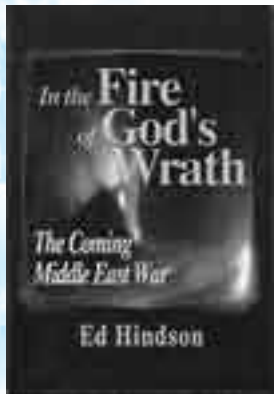
When the Christian decides to live by faith, to rest in its inevitability, he makes a wonderful discovery. He discovers that he has access by faith into the grace wherein he stands (Romans 5:2). Before him opens the treasure house of God--access to everything, including the universe itself--which has been purchased for him by Jesus Christ on Calvary’s cross. The promise given to us by the Apostle Paul has yet to be tested to its fullest by even the most ambitious Christian. *“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God” (Romans 5:1-2)*. Walking by faith should not be a tenuous and trembling activity on the part of the timid, reluctant believer. It should produce great accomplishments and rejoicing in what Scripture calls the *“hope of the glory of God.”* The believer who moves from a tentative pursuit of the will of God to enthusiastic participation in the life of faith can expect astonishing results.

In Hebrews 11, God has given us the believers’ hall of fame. Here we can read the stories of Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Joseph, Moses, and many others. The heroic lives of these spiritual giants reinforce what we already know but need to remember: *“Without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him” (Hebrews 11:6)*. Just a glimpse into the possibilities of faith should lead us to say with sincerity to our Heavenly Father, *“Lord, increase our faith.”*

From the writings of Dave Breese

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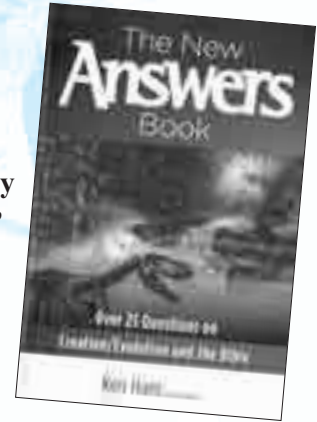


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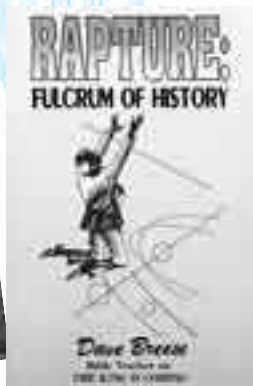
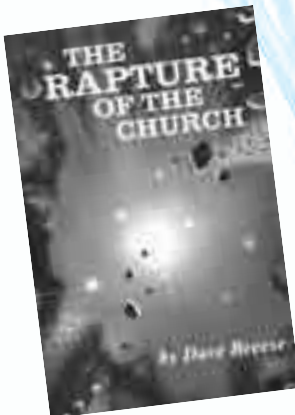


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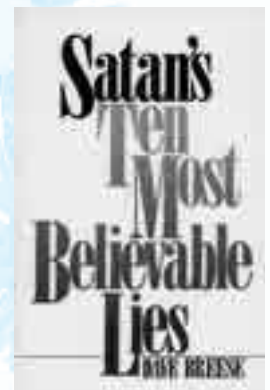
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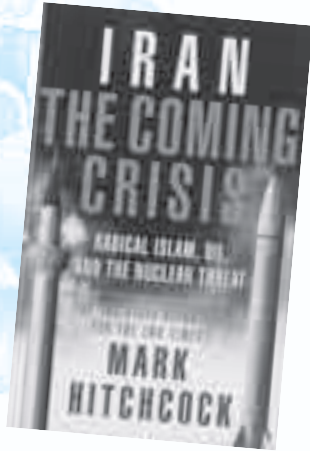


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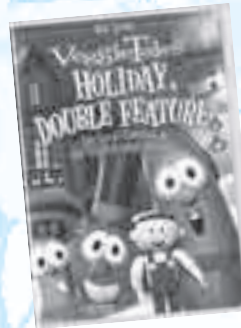


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