

The Laws of the Faith Life Part 2

Faith Life

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But God is the one ultimately in control. You remember when Satan wanted to attack Job, God gave him permission but he told him he could not do certain things and he couldn't do it. He even came back and said, "You've got a hedge around him." And even when God allowed him to do certain things, God said, "You can't take his life." And so there was still a limit to what Satan could do now. Now Job didn't know any of that was going on behind the scenes, that's been given to us so we can understand, but the truth was, and it is for us today, that nothing can come into your life unless God allows it to come in and if he allows it to come in, he has promised that he will work good in that situation and that good will be to conform you to the image of Christ and to bring glory to him. And if you're going to walk by faith, you must come to the place that you truly believe that truth.

Now we come to the next law or principle of the faith law and that is what's called personalized revelation. This is where God takes a word and speaks it particularly to you in your situation. Now there is the general revelation of God and that is what's called the logos. There are two different Greek words that are translated "word" in the English. The first one is logos. The logos is the general word of God. This whole book is the logos, the word of God. However, there is another word called "rhema." The rhema refers to that personalization of God's word for your given situation.

All right now over in John, look over in the gospel John the first word that I ever remember getting from God is over in John 19. I was a junior in college and it was right toward the end of the school year, and so I was trying to find out what God wanted me to do that summer. I had wanted to take a position in a church somewhere working with youth during that summer. Back in those days, back in '71, '72, it was very popular during the summer to have a college student come and work with the high school and junior school youth and he'd worked during the summer and then he'd go back to college. And so that was what I was wanting and desiring to happen. I put the word out. I was at a Christian college and so we would have people come in, ministers come in and interview various students with this in mind. And so I said, "Lord, you know, I really think this would be great. I'd like to do it." Now at this time, I was engaged to Terry and we were planning to get married at the end of the summer in August, and she was in school with me and we were out in Jackson, Mississippi, and so when school was over, obviously,

she'd go back home and be back getting ready for the wedding and then I would be in Mississippi or wherever working and then I'd go back for the wedding.

Well, as I was looking and waiting and went to some interviews, but nothing opened up and so I came to the conclusion that, I guess God just wants me to go back home and work. I could work back home. My dad was a hospital administrator and I had worked there every summer since I'd been in high school doing yard work and stuff like that. So I knew I could get a job back home, but I was wanting, I thought, to get into ministry.

Well, it looked like nothing was going to open up, so here we're getting to about a week before school's out and so I've already decided, okay, I guess, you know, "God, you want me just to go home and work at home and be with Terry and we get ready for the wedding together." So I had my mind set on going home then, and then about a week before school was out the Dean of students called me up and said, "I got a fella here, a pastor that I think you need to talk to. He's looking for somebody to work with his youth this summer." Well, I'd already made my mind up to go home and be with my sweetheart for the summer, you know, and then this happens. And so I said, "Okay, I'll go talk to him." So I went and talked to the guy and he had a position down in Brookhaven, Mississippi working with the youth. I would live in a boarding house, old two storey boarding house, no air condition in southern Mississippi in the summer time. But I wanted to be obedient to the Lord so I was praying and I said, "Lord, you know, you just got to show me what you want me to do in this situation." And I'd never gotten a word from God before so, you know, I was just saying just, you know, somehow let me know, somehow show me. I didn't know how but I just said, "Let me know." And I was just having my normal devotion time, my normal prayer time and Bible reading time, and I was reading over in John and this was just a part of my regular Bible study time, and actually I was reading over in John 21, and it was a conversation that Jesus had with Peter after the resurrection. You remember the guys, the disciples took off and went back to Galilee to fish and then Jesus shows up and this conversation goes on between Jesus and Peter in verse 15, "When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?' He said to him, 'Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.' He said to him, 'Feed my lambs.'"

Now, when I read that, it was just like God said to me, "Do you love me more than going back and being with Terry during the summer? Do you love me more than anything else? And if you do, feed my lambs." Those youth were his lambs. And it was just like it just came off the page and I knew God had spoken and I knew God's will was for me to go and work there that summer with those young people. And once he spoke, he made it clear to me what he wanted, I knew his will on earth, and so to me as far as I was concerned the only thing left to do was say, "Yes, Lord," and obey. But when God gives you the word, when he speaks it to you and it can be a verse you've read a thousand times, and that's not the first time I've ever read that verse, but it's just like God speaks out of heaven and takes that verse and speaks it to your situation. Alright, and that's God's word, his rhema, to you. It was no longer a logos, at that point it became a rhema, God's special word to me.

And to me the greatest joy in my spiritual life is when God gives me a word like that because it's just like God has just moved everything else in the universe out of the way and he's speaking just to you. It's just like you and God are having an intimate conversation and sometimes I've even gotten the impression, "God, you knew when the Bible was written, you knew that you were going to take that verse and you were going to speak it to me on this occasion and if I didn't know better, I think you had them write it just so you could speak it to me." You see, God knows all those things. He knows everything. He's so wise and all-knowing that he has those verses there, but sometimes I've read verses and wonder, "I guess that must be a word for somebody because I can't figure out why that's in the word. You know, it doesn't make sense to me, maybe God 's going to use it to speak to somebody." But that's what a word is.

Now over to Ephesians 6. In Ephesians 6 he's talking about our spiritual armor and the spiritual armor, in that spiritual armor there's the sword of the word. Now guess which one of the Greek words is used for that sword of the word, logos or rhema? It's rhema. The sword of the word is not the Bible. The sword of the word is that particular word God has given you about that situation that you can use against the enemy. On over in Ephesians 6:17, "and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the rhema of God," because when God gives you a word, it's going to cause you to get into a situation when you step out in faith that you're going to have a fight of faith. And when you have that fight of faith, you've got to take that word that God's given you and that's what you use to defeat Satan. You take that word, and you say, "I don't care what things look like, I don't care what people are saying, God, you said this and I believe it and I'm going to use this and slay the enemy." When Jesus was tempted, he used the rhema; he went back and quoted Old Testament passages and those were the rhema that God gave him for those particular temptations and they sent Satan on his way.

When Jesus over in Matthew 14, in Matthew 14 you remember Jesus was coming to the disciples and they were there in the storm and Peter says to Jesus something about, "If it's you, Lord, let me come to you." Do you remember that. All right, let's pick up with verse 22 of Matthew 14. "Immediately he made the disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up on the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, but the boat by this time was a long way from the land, beaten by the waves, for the wind was against them. And in the fourth watch of the night he came to them, walking on the sea. But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, and said, 'It is a ghost!'" Because the prevailing tradition was if you saw a ghost in a storm it meant you were going to die. And so they were afraid, "and they cried out in fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, 'Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid.' And Peter answered him, 'Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.' He said, 'Come.'" That word "come" was Peter's rhema because with the word comes the faith. When God speaks the word to you, he imparts the faith with that word. What does Romans 10:17 say? "Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the rhema of Christ." Not logos but rhema of Christ. So when God gives you a word, he gives you the faith that comes with that word.

Now that's why you can't expect somebody else to get on your word. I mean, you know, a man can go to his wife and said, "God's told me to do something. Come on, get on board." And she says, "Wait a minute, I don't know about..." "What do you mean, you just don't believe?" Well, she can't believe because she hadn't gotten the word. God needs to give her the word for her to believe. So don't expect people to get in on your word. God spoke it to you and by that hearing came the faith.

So with that word "come" Peter received the faith to get on that water and walk, and as you know, as long as he kept his eyes on Jesus he walked. When took his eyes off, he started falling. You remember a few weeks ago we saw when Elijah went to the king and said it wasn't going to rain for three years? You remember that? Well, he could say that because he had gotten a word from God. It says over there in Kings 17:1 that according to the word of the Lord Elijah said it's not going to rain for three years. He didn't just wake up one morning and said, "I think that would be a good thing to get the king's attention and the people 's attention, it just won't rain for three years, I'll just go say that." No. With the word comes the faith.

When God makes his truth personal, you can trust him because you now have a word from God himself and you know what his will is for your situation. Until we know God's will for our situation, we don't really know how to believe, and know what he's going to do, and that's why we have to get that word from him. Now, Lord willing, in our second series on faith, we will talk about how do you get that word from God. Are there certain things that can help precipitate you getting that word from God? Now I get very concerned when I hear people say, "Well, God told me to do so and so," and it's like God's just telling him all the time to do stuff. You know, God doesn't talk to me like that, not you know... Now I'll say I think the Lord is leading me to do this and I think the Lord is leading me to do that when I think he is, but I don't say God told me unless he gives me a word, unless, man, it's spoken to me, it's jumped out of the page on me and it has hit me like a bolt of lightning, grabbed me like a new pair of pliers. Then I know the Lord's got me. He spoke to me. Then I say God told me. Other than that I say, well, you know, I really think God 's leading me to do this and I believe he wants me to do this, but I don't have that certainty unless he gives me the word.

All right that's the next law. The next principle, the law of appropriating faith. The law of appropriating faith. After you get a word, you must believe it. Remember Mark 11:24, whatever you shall pray for believing that you have already received it. Well, how can you believe you've already received it before you have received it? You can believe it because he's given you the word, and with the word comes the faith.

I told you a few weeks ago in a sermon about a young man named Frankie, Frankie Bell, and I told you how God got ahold of this guy and he was under heavy conviction and he came into my office, you remember me saying that, and he was just so miserable. Well, a few weeks before that, I think I had mentioned to you that a number of us had been praying for Frankie and got him on the softball team so that he'd have to come to church and we were praying for him and we were having an all night prayer meeting and some guys, young guys and I at the church, and we were praying for Frankie and it was just as

if God just spoke in our hearts and said, "I'm going to save him." So from that point on, we didn't ask God to save him anymore, we started thanking God he was going to save him, all right? You see, that's what faith does. When God gives you the word, you act like it. So it would have been unbelief to ask God to save him after God said he was going to save him, right? So then we started thanking God that he was going to save him. We didn't know when but we knew God was, so it didn't surprise me when he came in all under conviction. I knew exactly what was happening.

But you see, when God gives you the word with that comes to faith, and so you have it in your heart even before you see it in your hand, right? But faith believes what God says, and there are three different levels of faith. First, there's the grace of faith. Over in Romans 12 we read about this grace of faith. Romans 12:3, "For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned." God is the one who gives faith. You and I cannot engineer up faith. We cannot work it up. God is the one who gives faith, the grace of faith.

Look in verse 6, "Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us." What's that grace? Faith. God gives different levels of faith. You exercise your gift, your spiritual gift according to the faith that God has given. That's the grace of faith. God gives the ability to believe and to obey and to receive from him, according to his revealed word.

You remember when there was this man that came to Jesus whose son was demonized and he was being thrown into the fire and the demon was trying to kill him and the disciples could not deliver him? Do you remember that? That's over in Mark 9. Jesus acts like he's a little bit put out with the folks because they just don't seem to be getting the picture. Mark 9:14, "And when they came to the disciples, they saw a great crowd around them, and scribes arguing with them. And immediately all the crowd, when they saw him, were greatly amazed and ran up to him and greeted him. And he asked them, 'What are you arguing about with them?' And someone from the crowd answered him, 'Teacher, I brought my son to you, for he has a spirit that makes him mute. And whenever it seizes him, it throws him down, and he foams and grinds his teeth and becomes rigid. So I asked your disciples to cast it out, and they were not able.' And he answered them, 'O faithless generation, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you? Bring him to me.' And they brought the boy to him. And when the spirit saw him, immediately it convulsed the boy, and he fell on the ground and rolled about, foaming at the mouth. And Jesus asked his father, 'How long has this been happening to him?' And he said, 'From childhood. And it has often cast him into fire and into water, to destroy him. But if you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us.' And Jesus said to him, 'If you can!' All things are possible for one who believes.' Immediately the father of the child cried out and said, 'I believe; help my unbelief!'" This man recognized where faith came from, didn't he? He said, "I do believe but I don't believe enough. Help my unbelief. Give me the faith that I need." He recognized the grace of faith.

There is also the spiritual gift of faith. Over in 1 Corinthians 12 that passage that deals with the spiritual gifts, mentions the spiritual gift of faith. 1 Corinthians 12:8 and 9. "For

to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit." And so there is a spiritual gift of faith.

Many people think George Mueller, who you may remember ran an orphanage in Bristol England and millions of dollars came through from people who gave to help support that orphanage and he never made a public appeal for funds. He would not even put out a yearly statement of the financial condition because he said people might interpret that as him soliciting funds, and he had made a commitment to God to trust God to provide what they need without him asking a single person, only laying in it before God. And it's a tremendous book if you want to read the book on George Mueller's answered prayers, how God answered prayers over and over and over providing for those orphans. Just miraculous stories. Now he said he didn't have the gift of faith. I think he did. I just don't think he had the gift of discernment to know he did have the gift of faith.

But we all have a measure of faith if we're Christians. We all have a measure that God's given us and then there are those that have the gift of faith, but then the third level is the impartation of faith. Over in Galatians 2:20, now this is the impartation of faith. This is where Jesus actually gives you his faith. This is the highest level. Galatians 2:20, Paul says, "I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." Now look, listen look at that phrase, "I live by faith of the Son of God." Now your translation probably says "in the Son of God," doesn't it? I don't know why they do that because the Greek word clearly is "of" and it changes the whole meaning. Paul is not saying I live by faith in Jesus. He's already said it's not him living anymore but Christ living in him and he's saying this life I live in this body, I live according to the faith of Jesus. Jesus gives me the faith to believe.

Now, when you get in the faith walk, you're going to find some situations, like I told you about last week when God told me to give it all, you're going to come to a place you're going to say, "God, I don't have enough faith. I do not have the faith. I don't know how to believe you in this situation. Jesus, I'm looking to you to supply your faith to me. I'm trusting your faith to be my faith in this situation, that you will give me the faith I need to know how to trust you and believe you and obey you in this situation." And that is the impartation of faith. That is the greatest level of faith when your faith has reached its limit, this thing that God is asking of you is beyond your faith and you realize it, and you know it, and you acknowledge it, and so you say, "I've got to live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me. Jesus, I'm trusting you to show me how to believe and supply the faith I need." And he will. He'll give you that. He'll give you his faith and you'll know it's not you so you won't be proud. You will be humble because you know this is not my faith, this is Jesus' faith that he's supplying and giving me.

All right, quickly let's move on. The next one is the law of inevitable warfare. You are going to be involved in warfare when you start walking in faith. Over in Matthew 13:58, I've referred to this verse last couple of weeks, but I want you to actually see it. Matthew 13:58. "after 1358. Jesus is in Nazareth, his hometown, a prophet is without honor in his

own town. They didn't really believe him. What does it say? "And he did not do many mighty works there, because of their unbelief." And we talked about that. Faith unlocks the power of God in your situation. Now God can work apart from your faith, he just has chosen not to. That's just his own choice. And Jesus did not do many miracles in Nazareth because of their unbelief. And so when you step out in faith, let me tell you the devil wants to try to destroy that faith. He wants you to fall by the wayside. He engages you in fierce warfare and the battle comes because we want to see with our eyes rather than with the spirit. We're so accustomed to seeing what's going on around us and when God's word tells us truth that's contrary to what we see with these eyes, we get in a fight because we're thinking, "Yeah but, God, you say this but, man, look at it. It's totally opposite of what I'm seeing here. You say he's going to get saved but he's acting worse than ever. You know, he's on a drunken binge and you say you're going to save him."

And so you know, we get in that fight. "God, you say you're going to supply what I need but I just got a big bill today and my car just fell apart on me, the transmission fell out." You know everything looks totally opposite and that's where we get in the fight. "But he that is in us is greater than he that is in the world." And when you get in the fight, you've got to renew your mind on the word. You take out that sword of the rhema that God's given you and you say, "I don't care what it looks like, devil, God says," and then you slash him to pieces with God's truth and he cannot stand before that. Amen? Get behind that shield of faith, faith in God's rhema and those old fiery darts get extinguished, that door shield, get behind it and those darts just come and they just die. His fiery darts cannot stand against your faith in the word of God.

And then the last principle, the law of abiding in the Spirit. The law of abiding in the Spirit. You've got to maintain your sensitivity to the Holy Spirit as you walk the faith walk. Philippians 2:13 talks about, "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure." You will realize that God is the one working in you. It's the abiding life of John 15. Jesus says, "Apart from me you can do nothing." It's the abiding life, the Spirit-filled life, that's the key to walk in the faith life. But it's not you but Christ living through you supplying you with the faith, working in you to give you the desire and the obedience to walk by faith and see him move in your situation and accomplish miracles, things that are unbelievable because he's worked. Amen.