

Steps in the Faith Life

Faith Life

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Well, we knew after we were coming to a conclusion of this part of our faith study, I do plan to do a third part probably next Fall sometime and we will spend our time in Hebrews 11, that Hall of Fame of the faithful, and we will be applying and see how these truths apply to those heroes of the faith. But tonight what I would like to do is to talk about the steps in the faith walk. Now we've talked about a few of these but I want to round out the rest of them for you tonight and then I want to open up next Wednesday night for some of you to share with us your words that God's given you. I know some of you have come to me and said, "You know, God spoke to me, gave me this back when." And I think it would be beneficial for some of you to share those with us next week. So if you think back as we've been going through this and you've been thinking, "Yeah, yeah, that happened to me. Yeah, I remember that. God said that and I think He did." You know, you don't have to know all these steps to be able to walk in the faith life, that's the great thing about it. God will bring you through it and you may not have understood what was going on at the time and now as we study it you look back and say, "Yeah, I see that. That's what was happening." But I would like for some of you to share. You won't be here next Wednesday night, Miss Sue?

[unintelligible]

Will you share with us your word that you got about Jan next Wednesday night?

[unintelligible]

Good, good, because that was one that I was particularly encouraged about and, again, some of the rest of you. We want to give you an opportunity to share about God. And Mark, you were telling about one God gave you one time, one of the ways he brought you to him. Would you be willing to share that with us next week?

[unintelligible]

Do you remember the one it was? It was the one about he was a God of all peoples, remember? Do you remember now?

[unintelligible]

Okay, alright. You weren't just making that up, were you? [laughter] Okay, alright, so that's right. Well, again, the rest of you, jot down this week and I'd love to hear it because I've shared with you a lot of what the Lord's given me and I know he's been giving to you as well.

Okay, so let's get started tonight on these steps. Now you will not necessarily have to go through all these steps. It's not something like, "Well, you know, preacher, I didn't have step 4, I didn't have step 6 in mine." Well, that's okay. You may not but you may and I want you to be aware of these steps as we go through.

Now the first step is you have a problem. You won't see any miracles, any mighty works of God in all of Scripture if there wasn't a problem. Problems are platforms for miracles. Obstacles are opportunities to see God work. And so you will have a problem, that's where it all starts, that's what moves you to a point of holy desperation when you seek God. "God, I've got to know what's going on in this situation." And sometimes God has to break us of all of our human efforts to show us we cannot handle the situation because we tend to go to God last, not first. And so he brings up a situation, he engineers that situation to bring us to the limit of our humanness until we realize, "God, if You don't do something I am sunk. I am ruined. I've tried everything I know to try, I've done everything I know to do and it's not enough." Now that's where God has wanted you to be the whole time and he's had to keep on applying the situation, the pressure and the hardship of the situation until you would get there. We could save ourselves some misery and heartache if we'd go ahead and go there first, if as soon as we found ourselves in a hard place, we immediately go to God and say, "Okay, God, now I know that every trouble is a telegraph from You. Now what are You wanting to teach me in this situation? I really want to learn it and I'd like to learn it sooner rather than later." Right? So we could move on. So go ahead and find out what he's got to say.

You can have holy desperation, you seek God, and we talked about what that meant, and then God gives you a word. He takes that verse from Scripture or a part of a verse, or he may, as he did with Miss Sue, speak to you in what she felt was an audible voice. He's never spoken to me in an audible way but I have had him speak it to my heart but I've always woke up when he uses the Scripture but he doesn't have to. He can speak to your heart from Scripture but it's like the God of heaven has opened up heaven and he has singled you out of all the people in humanity and he has spoken directly to you, and you know it. You know you have connected with the God of the universe and it is humbling. It is worship. I mean, it's just you and God and you know it. It speaks to the innermost part of your being. Well, that's the second step.

The third step is you must act in faith. We talked about that last week. When God gives you that word, you must choose to act in faith, to believe him. Now sometimes this is, and most of the time this is not an easy thing to do because it further shows you your limit. It usually is something you cannot do, you know you cannot do it, and so you have to strictly step out believing God in obedience. But faith comes from hearing and hearing

the word of Christ. So when God gives you that word, he imparts faith with that word and then you have got to choose to make a choice that you're going to believe God.

That involves two things at this point. Remember we talked about it last week? You need to confess the word. You need to verbalize the truth that God has given you. You tell somebody, not yourself but somebody. But then, secondly, you need to act in faith. You need to be a living embodiment of that word that reveals the will of God because, you remember, faith is acting like a thing is so because God said it's so even when it doesn't appear to be so in order to make it so. And so this is the part where you begin to act in obedience to the word God's given you. Now this may involve a struggle on your part because sometimes it will cost you great sacrifices to obey God. He may be telling you to leave a job. He may be telling you to leave where you're living. It may cost great sacrifice on your part. Nonetheless, you act in faith. You act like the thing is so because God has said it's so.

Then you come to the fourth part and this is kind of the new material that we've not covered before and that's called the activity of faith. Now this is like the act of faith but you have to keep on doing it. Rarely will you get a word from God, confess that word, act that word and immediately have it. Rarely. Usually there will be a time period, sometimes years between the time God has given you his word and revealed his will and the time it actually comes about in your human situation. So what do you do in the meantime? You continue the activity of faith. You continue to act as if it is so because God said it is so. And you continue and you continue and you continue and you keep on acting in faith until God either gives you the answer in your heart or in your head, right? And I'll explain to you what that means later.

But you continue to act until you see the answer and that generally moves us in that process to step 5 which is the fight of faith. As you are acting in faith, doing the activity of faith, sometimes, in fact most of the time it's been my experience, you will enter into the fight of faith. The fight of faith is when everything in your world looks different from what God told you his will is. For example, say God gives you his word that he's going to save a relative. He speaks it to your heart, you know it's true, you begin to act on that and you may see in two or three weeks that person maybe even get more like the devil than they were before you got the word. Well, then you're going to have this fight of faith. The devil is going to come to you and he's going to say, "Ah, you're a fool. He's not gonna get saved. Look at him, he's acting worse than ever. He could care less about, he couldn't care less about the gospel." So the devil comes and he wants you to look at the situation rather than look at God and the truthfulness of his word. He wants you to take your eyes off the spiritual world, which remember we said is more real, and he wants you to look at the physical. Don't, as we've seen in situations.

So don't be a bit surprised if you go through the fight of faith and there are two things I've found that you need to do when you're in the fight of faith. First, you need to renew your mind on the word. You need to keep going back to the word God gave you. You need to keep renewing that. You need to keep confessing that. You need to hold onto that word. And you might even say, "Devil, I don't care what it looks like, God told me," then you

give him that word, you speak it. And then secondly, you must refuse to doubt God. I have been in situations where I just had to say, "God, you know, I don't know how to believe You but I'm not going to doubt You. I'm not going to doubt You. I don't know exactly how to believe but I'm not going to doubt You. I am going to choose to believe Your word is truth and I will not doubt You."

Now let me share with you from Rees Howells, and I have talked to you about Rees Howells before, great testimony again of the walk of faith. I encourage you to get ahold of the book of Rees Howells, "Intercessor." You can get it on amazon for less than \$15 and it's well worth the money. But I want to share with you one of the illustrations that he has in his book that has to do with the fight of faith and to give you a good example of the fight of faith. This is where the Lord told him that he was coming face-to-face with death in a situation and God told him this fellow was not going to die. So here's where we pick up the story.

"He [that's Rees Howells] was called to see a man in a village who was dying. He found him already unconscious. His wife was sobbing her heart out for there were 10 children and he was the only breadwinner. The effect on Mr. Howells was immediate. The suffering of the woman came on him as if it were his own sister. He went out into a field and wept and as he said, 'Once you weep, or the Holy Ghost in you, you are the very one to touch the Throne.'"

Here he was an intercessor. God had brought him to this level of intercession meaning he could actually feel what people were feeling and therefore he could really go to God's Throne on their situation.

"He knew the only way to help her was to bring her husband back to her, but the man was beyond human aid. However, it seemed as if the Lord made him enter into her feelings to the point where her sufferings became his own, and her need his responsibility. God is 'a Father of the fatherless,' and 'relieveth the widow'; so he knew that, unless he could prevail for the husband, the Holy Spirit would insist on taking that place through him [listen to this] and he would be responsible to provide for this woman and support her children."

That's a place of intercession, isn't it? That'll get you praying, won't it? Get to the Throne and get this man healed or I've got to look after his wife and 10 kids. Woo.

"He returned to the woman's house and was sitting there, waiting for her to come downstairs, when he heard a voice speaking on a plane that seemed new to him, and saying, 'He is not to die; he is to live.' 'The stillness that came into that room!' said Mr. Howells. 'It was the stillness that God makes when He is there.' The wife came down and he immediately said to her, 'Since I last saw you, a great burden of prayer has been on me for your husband, and the Lord has told me he is not to die; he is to live.' But

she was not convinced. He could see that she hadn't taken it from him, and there was every natural reason for this: there was her husband's condition, and then the fact that the last person Mr. Howells had said would be healed had so recently died."

You can see why she wouldn't believe him, don't you?

"He left her and returned home. But as he was crossing the common the Lord began to speak to him again and said, 'You didn't speak to that woman in the same way you do when you are really certain. Tomorrow morning early you must go back and tell her again, and go without doubting.' It was such a strong confirmation that, as he went to bed, he declared out loud, 'I'm returning tomorrow to challenge death, and say to it, "You will not take this man!"'"

"As he had a train to catch the next morning at eight o'clock, he started out before six for the two-mile walk to the village. It was snowing and pitch dark, and the Evil One attacked him all the way. 'It was as though legions of devils were withstanding me,' he said. 'I felt like a man walking against the tide, and the enemy kept saying, "The man died as soon as you left last night.'" It was a severe test of faith, but after battling his way through, as he got near the house 'it was sweet to see the light.'

"When he entered, he said to the woman, 'I don't blame you for not taking what I told you yesterday. I didn't say it to you with the certainty with which I tell things that I know, but I have come over this morning to tell you now that your husband will not die; and as a proof of what I say, if he should die, I will support you and your children.' She brightened visibly, as she really took it from him this time, and he returned in great joy, very differently from the way he had departed. 'It seemed as though heaven had come down to rejoice, and I knew death could never take him. There was no death there,' he said.

"He was away for two days, during which he refused to take note of the enemy's attacks."

Satan didn't let go, he kept attacking.

"As he was returning, the devil still kept at it, telling him they would be waiting to give him the news that the man had died, and to ask him to speak at the funeral!"

Isn't that like that? Not only have to die but they're going to want you to speak at the funeral. "But you said he wouldn't die."

"When he arrived at the station, some of the believers were waiting for him and one called out, 'He is out of danger. The moment you left the house he changed for the better!'"

That was the fight of faith.

Alright, next comes the rest of faith. Once you have gone through the fight of faith and, again, there is no certain length time this lasts. It could last months. It could last a day. But once you get through that fight of faith by continuing to believe God, refuse to doubt God, continue to renew your mind in that word, then suddenly you get the rest of faith. It's just like the peace of God floods your soul and you know that you won't have any more struggle, you know that God's about to do the thing he told you. There's just a peace floods your soul.

Now let me share with you another example from Rees Howells where this peace of faith came upon him, and here this had to do with him going on some journey and needing some money to go on this journey that the Lord wanted him to go on.

"On one occasion he only had a few days in which to get £20. This was needed for Mrs. Howells' admission to a maternity course in the City Road Hospital, for which she was coming down to London. There was another student, a Cambridge graduate, who had been saying openly that he had never prayed a prayer that had brought a direct, definite answer. So Mr. Howells invited him to join in this prayer for £20. He had never heard of praying for money like that and expecting it to come. They were to pray for two hours one afternoon, each in his own room. The young man was exhausted at the end of it! He had never known time to go so slowly; he said the two hours were like two months!

"Mr. Howells did not pray through in the afternoon, so he suggested that they should go back for a further two hours in the evening. 'What!' exclaimed his friend, 'Four months' hard labor for £20!' However, he agreed to try again if Mr. Howells thought he could be of any help. Before the end of this second period of prayer, however, Mr. Howells went to the young man's room and said, 'You don't need to pray any more; I am through.' 'Have you got the money?' he asked. 'No, but I have got the faith, and the money will come.'

"Late that night they were taking a walk together when this student suddenly stopped, leaned against a fence, and roared with laughter. 'What are you laughing at?' Mr. Howells asked. [The student said,] 'I was just thinking of the chap who will have to give that £20.' He had seen it. Two days later Mr. Howells received two £10 notes. What a blessing it was when he went to his friend's room and held them up for him to see! It became quite a habit of the Principal of the College to invite Mr. Howells in for tea whenever he had any special visitors, and ask him to relate some

of his experiences of faith."

Now prayed through, that's when you are burdened about a situation and it's kind of like you're seeking God for that word and you pray and you pray and the burden is just still there and you keep praying, but then God lifts the burden and with the lifting of that burden he gives you the assurance of faith that he's heard that praying. That's when you have that rest.

I think I told you about the time when I was pastoring a church in Alabama and there was this young guy, Frankie, who was on our softball team and he was on the team because the guys wanted to see him come to Christ and through a softball team was a way to get him there because he had to come to church to be on the team. [unintelligible] They all knew him. Now we were having an all-night prayer meeting one night with the guys at the church and we were praying for Frankie's salvation and just in the midst of that praying God just broke through, we prayed through and God just gave us the assurance that he was going to save that boy. So from then on we didn't ask God anymore. It would have been a lack of faith to ask God. We began to thank God he was going to save this guy. And sure enough, within a couple of months, he came in my office totally convicted, totally miserable and God got ahold of him and saved him. But when you pray through it's when God just gives you that rest and you just know it's going to come. His time. His way. You can't explain it. It's that peace that passes human understanding but you have it.

Now again, it may be at sometimes this fight of faith comes and then you get the peace, then for whatever reason you may get into the fight again. So I'm not saying once you get it, it never leaves because sometimes we, for various reasons, take our eyes off the Lord or whatever and so you may go back and forth with this for a little bit. But you persevere you will finally come to that peace and it's going to stay. It won't leave. It'll stay. And when that happens, you know you're getting close of seeing it in your hand what you had in your heart.

Alright, then you have the praise of faith. After you get the peace of faith, again there's no time frame on when this praise comes, but I've seen it and, again you may not have all these steps but then again you may, but after you have that rest of faith, you're just at peace, and then all of a sudden you can't anticipate why but you just suddenly get this powerful urge to praise God. You just are so excited that this thing that he's told you about is going to happen and you just begin the praise of faith, and when the praise of faith comes, that indicates that the answer, seeing it in your hand is going to be real soon. It's coming right around the corner. But the praise of faith, it is sight. God moves.

Let me share with you again in Rees Howells' situation where he got the praise of faith. Now this has to do with God led him to build a Bible college in Wales and they had to purchase the property and all, of course, he had to trust God for the money.

"But to return to the purchase of Glynderwen. The next sum asked for was £2,000. The Lord sent gifts varying from 5s. to £300 during the next three months, but when he still only had £1,700, the solicitor suddenly called for

it to be paid by eleven o'clock the next morning. At first he was baffled a bit, as to why the Lord had allowed this sudden demand to be made."

In other words, the man had told him he would sell him the property for £2,000 and he'd give a certain time to get it, but then the guy changed his mind and says he wants the money by tomorrow morning, alright? He had only 1,700 but he needed 2,000.

"He was walking down Wind Street in Swansea, and as he came under the bridge the word came to him, 'Trust ye in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah are everlasting resources.' It was a word from heaven to him, and he believed that by eleven o'clock the next morning he would be passing back under that bridge having the money with him. Rees had a train to catch, and finding an empty carriage, he got down on his knees and praised the Lord. He could have danced for joy!

"The next morning he had the £300! The woman who sent it told him afterwards that she had a great burden for him during the very same half-hour that he believed. It was so heavy on her that she had to close her shop and post the money off to him. He was able to pay the £2,000 that day with £18 to the good!"

Hallelujah. We see the praise of faith in the end and God is given that praise and he was praising God and singing hallelujah.

Alright, you have an understanding somewhat manner of the faith war. Next week, again, I want to give you an opportunity for some of you to share and if we have time after that I'll read some more from Rees Howells. You need to get this book. You just need to get it. It will strengthen your faith. It will encourage you. It will mystify you.

Last point is, what was it? Faith becomes sight, there you go. That's when the thing actually comes about that you have been waiting on God to bring about. You get the £300. Praise of faith and then shortly after that comes. You see, now he didn't have the fight of faith in this case and you won't always go through all of the steps. You have a problem, you seek the Lord, he gives you a word, you act in faith, but then after that you may not have the fight, you will definitely have the activity of faith and maybe longer sometimes than others, the rest of faith, the praise of faith. I believe those will come as you get ready to see it and faith becomes sight, you see it in your hand what God has said. But true faith is just as happy when it's in your heart as when you have it in your hand. You don't have to have it in your hand. You know God's going to do it in his time and you can rejoice just like it's in your hand. Amen? And what God says that without faith it's impossible to please him. Those who seek him, right, he is a rewarder of those who seek him.

Alright, let's pray.

Father, we do thank You that again we could study the faith walk and we thank You that You are dealing and have dealt with each of us so graciously and lovingly in this area of faith, and many have testimonies to share next week and I look forward to hearing them, how You have worked to bring glory to Yourself. In Jesus' name. Amen.