Captivated by the Cross
We Must Stand!

SINCE THE TIME of the apostles, Christians have had to stand against challenges to their faith. Some have experienced challenges in the form of outright persecution. Others have simply been made to feel uncomfortable for their beliefs. Some have stood against public challenges such as laws that go against Biblical principles or limit religious freedoms. Others have stood privately, as in times of affliction or temptation.

Florence Crawford’s sermon *The Trial of Our Faith* (page 11) reminds us that her faith was tried at the founding of this work and throughout her life. While many hungry souls embraced the Pentecostal message that she taught, it was not well received by everyone. Attempts were made to discredit her Biblical stand. Church services conducted by her were interrupted by troublemakers, local newspapers published articles mocking the services, absurd accusations were made and false rumors circulated. Persecution notwithstanding, she stood firm. She said in her sermon that “after God saved me, I had a battle royal. But God had planted the truth in my heart; I knew that I was a child of God. Neither men nor devils could tell me that the change wasn’t real.” That truth in her heart helped Sister Crawford to stand. She received her deeper spiritual experiences near the onset of the 1906 Azusa Street Revival in Los Angeles. After describing her spiritual walk and hunger to the leader, William Seymour, he declared, “Sister, you have a wonderful case of salvation, but you need to be sanctified.” She prayed through to sanctification the following Friday night at the mission, and was baptized with the Holy Ghost just one week later. Those three Biblical experiences were emphasized in the Pentecostal revival that soon spread from that simple meeting place around the world. Sister Crawford preached what she heard and experienced at Azusa Street for the remainder of her life, establishing the Apostolic Faith Church of Portland, Oregon, which still emphasizes the same teachings and continues to expand worldwide.

With God’s help and the grounding of her three experiences, Sister Crawford stood—to the benefit of so many of us who came to the light of the Gospel much later. Now it is our turn. We must stand and carry this Gospel forward.
Paul the Apostle knew that succeeding in the Gospel would require discipline and self-sacrifice, and he frequently communicated this truth to the Early Church in his epistles. In the Book of 1 Corinthians, he did so by referring to a scene familiar to his readers—the ancient Grecian footraces, where athletes trained and competed against one another.

We, too, are familiar with footraces. There are no shortages of such events in the Portland area. On the first day of 2012, the Twenty 12 Resolution Run was held. Runners were invited to participate in the Spring Marathon Training Run on Saturday, January 14. A week later, in Salem, there was the MLK Celebration Stride Toward Freedom Run. There are 3K, 5K, and 8K runs. There are runs to fund cancer research, scholarships, clean water in Africa, and all sorts of other causes. However, races like the ones held in Portland are not the kinds of races that the Apostle was talking about. Paul was using a physical race to illustrate the concept of the spiritual race.

A “Runner’s Guide” for effective participation in the race of a lifetime.

From a sermon by Darrel Lee

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Some physical races are just one hundred yards or one hundred meters in length, and those who are fast can run them in a matter of seconds. Other races take minutes or even hours. However, the race Paul was referring to demands our attention for more than just a brief span of time, whether a few seconds or a few hours. The spiritual race lasts a lifetime.

Some races limit the number of competitors. That is certainly not true of the Christian race. There is no limit to how many can participate; God encourages everyone to sign up.

The end result is different as well. Those who compete in physical races are striving for a temporal prize or earthly recognition. However, as Christians we are striving for an eternal reward. Paul points out, “Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain” (1 Corinthians 9:24). There is a prize awaiting those who finish this race victoriously, and we want to obtain it.

Let us look at six aspects of running a successful Christian race.

**Get the right start**

Not everyone starts off right in a physical race. I read that in a recent Chicago Marathon there were more than 30,000 competitors, but 250 were disqualified for cheating. In many competitions there are electronic devices which measure the runner’s progress throughout the race in order to prove that he or she did indeed run the whole course. There have been instances where individuals tried to get in toward the end of a long race, and perhaps were even temporarily awarded the prize, only to be required to forfeit it when it was discovered that they did not really run the whole race. They did not start at the right point, so they were stripped of their awards.

Those who participate in the Christian race must have the right start. We do not casually adopt the name “Christian.” We must repent—feel true godly sorrow for sin. It takes the Spirit of the Lord to draw us to that point, but God’s Spirit is faithful. Godly sorrow for sin leads to salvation. And a definite experience of salvation is the starting point for running the Christian race. Without that start, all of our efforts to live a good life or behave as a Christian will be ineffective in terms of gaining the spiritual prize.

**Be disciplined**

The second aspect of success in the Christian race is to be disciplined during the time between the start and the finish. The Greek athletes of Paul’s day underwent a period of intense training that lasted many months. It was important to maintain fitness.

The rigors of training pay off, and those who compete in any type of athletic event understand that. For a period of time in high school I was a wrestler. During the time I participated, I realized that those who competed took very seriously what weight bracket they were in. Even a few pounds could make a significant difference. They knew that at a certain weight, they would be in a lower weight category, and would have an advantage over someone at the lower end of that category. The wrestlers tried to maintain a weight just below that critical point so they could qualify for the lower bracket. That required discipline.

Paul referenced the need for discipline in our spiritual lives. He said, “Every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things” (1 Corinthians 9:25). He made this point to stress that Christians should be moderate in all things—not only refraining from the spiritually harmful, but even from that which is not “expedient” although it is lawful. If an athlete can be disciplined in order to receive a “corruptible crown,” we can be disciplined as we strive for that “incorruptible” or eternal reward. The prize we will gain will be more than the wreath the Greek runners received, which soon faded. It will be more than a blue ribbon or seeing our names in the paper. Our names will be written in the Lamb’s Book of Life!

**Stay focused on the goal**

The fourth thing we can do to ensure success is to keep focused on the goal. Runners look ahead to that point where they will cross the finish line. In a track meet, the first one whose chest hits the tape marking the end of the race is the winner. The beautiful thing about the spiritual race is that we can all be winners, every one of us. It would be disheartening to be in competition against those around us, knowing that if we won, our brother or sister would lose. That is not the case in this spiritual race. Everyone can be a winner; we only compete against the enemy of our souls.

Still, we must keep that goal before us, particularly when the demands are high. The challenges we face may at times cause us to nearly faint, but if we “faint not,” we will be rewarded. We may come to some bumps in the road, but we know that God’s grace is stronger than any trial in our path. To triumph in spite of it all we must consider the reward. One of these days the Trumpet of the Lord will sound and then every effort we have made will be worthwhile.
Maintain our confidence

The fifth thing we must do to be successful in our race is to maintain our confidence. Paul said he did not run uncertainly, or “as one that bea-theth the air.” He was confident, and so are we. The Christian race is not without hardship, but we do not have to be fearful about what we face.

The prophet Jeremiah was one who experienced times of hardship, and he expressed his hope to be relieved of what he was going through. But the Word of the Lord came to him: “If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses?” (Jeremiah 12:5). In effect, God was telling the prophet, “Jeremiah, this is not the worst thing you are going to go through.”

We too must have determination and confidence. No matter what we face, Christ is beside us. In Romans 8:37, Paul asserts, “In all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.” We will face challenges in many forms, but we must keep our confidence strong in the Lord.

Master self

To be successful in this race, we must master self. Paul said, “I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection” (1 Corinthians 9:27). The phrase “bring it into subjection” means to “lead captive.” Paul was accustomed to being in prison; he knew what captivity meant. In this passage, he declared that he had captured himself—had imprisoned himself, or controlled himself to that degree.

While success in the Christian race is not simply a matter of willpower, we do not minimize its importance. We know that we must exert some effort. God relies upon us to make decisions along the way that are conducive to a walk of sacrifice. What if only the strongest or the smartest or the most talented could qualify? Perhaps that would rule out most of us. But Solomon said the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong. This Christian race is not about being clever or talented or fast. It is about being teachable. It is about being hungry for guidance, and doing our best to subject ourselves to God, and being willing and obedient. Every one of us can qualify in that aspect.

Finish the race

The final aspect of a successful Christian race is to still be running at the finish. It is not those who start that are rewarded, it is those who start and then finish. We must keep running! Many times those who get off to a fast start fade in time. Sadly, the Christian “course” is littered with those who had a good start but did not keep going. Paul challenged those in the church at Galatia, saying, “Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth? This persuasion cometh not of him that calleth you” (Galatians 5:7-8).

We appreciate those who started in this Christian race before us and just continually, consistently, steadily kept running and eventually finished the course. Others were running when we got saved, and they are still running now. We must determine to keep going until the end of the race. There will be distractions and challenges from time to time. There will be those along the way who disappoint us, but we will be rewarded if we remain steadfast to the end.

Some people choose to run a different race. They want a way where there is no hardship, no price to pay, no discipline, no subjection. Those ways do exist. In fact, we were all on that type of course before we were saved. However, there is no joyous reward at the end of that race. We have the best way because it ends in Heaven!

We know what a one-hundred-yard dash is and how many miles a marathon covers, but we do not know how long our Christian race will last. We only know where it ends, and we know we want to be running when it ends.

Paul got to that end. Shortly before his death, he wrote, “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness” (2 Timothy 4:7-8). He went on to make it clear that this glorious finish was not for him alone, but for all those who love the Lord’s appearing. That can include you and me! We want to fight this good fight, we want to keep the faith, and we want to finish the course.

If you have not yet started in this Christian race, we encourage you to do so today. Offer your life to the Lord. Kneel before God, repenting of the sins in your life, and subject yourself unreservedly to Him. He will give you the start that you need to get going in this Christian race.

If you have already begun the race, then keep on running. Keep forging ahead. Ask God to help you to be steady, to be consistent, to have endurance, and to keep your eyes focused on that goal. If you do so, one day you will be rewarded in Heaven! That is our hope and what keeps us motivated in running this good race.

Darrel Lee is Superintendent General of the Apostolic Faith Church and pastor of the headquarters church in Portland, Oregon.
A college classmate and I were headed to class one day in March, 1990, when we discovered that the class was cancelled. She was in the process of moving out of her apartment, so she invited me to come over and help her with some packing. In her apartment, I noticed a Christian poster on the wall and asked a question about it. While she continued packing, she described the painful way in which Jesus died, with nails in His hands and feet, and His suffering for us. God used her words to really speak to my heart, and I found myself weeping because of what He went through for me.

Because my friend was packing as she talked, it completely caught her off guard to see me crying, and momentarily she felt badly. However, she realized the opportunity she had and asked if I wanted Jesus to be my Savior. I said...
yes, and she led me in prayer. I asked Jesus to be the Lord of my life, and my tears were a sign to God, as well as to me, of repentance. Immediately I noticed a change and wondered if the instructor in my next class would notice any difference.

Looking back, my story starts earlier than that day in 1990. From my childhood, I was tender hearted. Though our family did not attend church much when I was growing up, I was taught that there was a God, to pray by my bedside at night, and to do the best I could. However, I felt guilt and fear over the bad things that I did, and also found myself very afraid of death.

Once as a child, I went to a special church service with a neighbor. At the close of the meeting, they asked if anybody wanted to receive Christ as their Savior, and I raised my hand. I have a vague memory of going to a back room and repeating a prayer after someone. On the way home, I wondered what I was supposed to do from that point. Because I had no instruction, I drifted away.

When I was in high school, I felt drawn to read the Bible and try to understand it. Still with no guidance, I started in the Old Testament and seemingly found a God of destruction and judgment. In time, I developed the viewpoint that God hated me and I hated Him, and that seemed the best relationship we could have. Yet, God saw the desire of my heart and still drew me. He arranged the details of my life so my classmate would have the opportunity to lead me to Him on that day in 1990.

After praying and experiencing God’s salvation in my friend’s apartment, I became involved with a Christian group at the college and attended a church where some of the participants went. However, that church was located quite a distance from where I lived, and I had to take public transit. So my new friends encouraged me to look for a church closer to home. As I started to search for a place to worship, my goal was to go where the Lord led me.

During my high school years, I had developed a friendship with a young woman who went to the Apostolic Faith Church in Portland, Oregon. After I was saved, I sought her out to let her know what had happened to me. Before long, we were in the same college music program, and I went to some activities at her church. The Lord began letting me know in my heart that this church was the one He wanted me to attend.

Up to that point, I had done a poor job of serving God because I understood so little about how to be a Christian. God knew that I needed to have the truth of the whole Gospel or I was destined for failure! From the beginning of my Christian life, I had been taught that a person sinned and must ask forgiveness every day, so I had a lot of trouble being victorious. I was also told that if you sinned after being saved, the Lord was still with you and you would nevertheless make Heaven. That teaching did not sit right with me. At the Apostolic Faith Church I learned that a person could backslide because of sin and be separated from God. That concept really registered in my heart, and the Lord witnessed to me that this was the truth. I also heard that a person could live victoriously over sin, and I knew that was right too. The Lord let me know that the Scriptures supported these teachings and this was the church for me.

Then God began to show me how to live victoriously. Restitution for wrongs I had done in my past was probably the most difficult concept I had to learn as a new Christian, but now I am glad for it. One particular apology was the hardest of all. After the Lord had been speaking to my heart about it for awhile, I finally told Him that I would not do it. I knew it was wrong to tell the Lord no, but I felt that I was just too scared to make the situation right. At that point, I had pushed the Lord away. However, within a week or so, I was so miserable that I prayed in the back room of my work place and asked Him to please forgive me, telling Him that I would make that apology. Immediately, I knew He had heard and answered my prayer, and I started to work on taking care of that restitution.

The following year at camp meeting in Portland, God sanctified me. One Sunday night during the convention I was sure the Lord had given me that experience, but by the next night I was in great doubt about whether I truly had received it. For the next several days I prayed earnestly after every meeting, but then the doubts would return. Finally a Christian lady gave me some wonderful advice. She said, “When the Lord does these things for you, it’s like driving a stake. The devil is going to try to pull those stakes up, but don’t you be the one to pull them up!” It was just what I needed to help me believe that the Lord had truly sanctified me.

In the fall of 1992, it was necessary for me to change colleges to obtain my bachelor’s degree, and two schools were options. Attending Portland State University would allow me to stay in Portland near my family and the church I had been attending. Going to Western Oregon State College would mean a move to a small town called Monmouth, which was close to an Apostolic Faith Church in Dallas, Oregon. Over that summer, the Lord made it clear to me that I needed to go to Dallas. However, as summer came to a close, my housing search had not produced results. I felt that staying in a dorm was not an option because of the negative lifestyles and influences that sometimes occurred there. Two weeks before I needed to be moving, a minister’s wife from the Dallas church called to say she had found a roommate and an apartment for me. The Lord had come through with a miracle, and I was very excited!
Little did I know how hard moving away would be. Although I was twenty-two years old, I missed my family sorely, but God used this to draw me closer to Him. Before that, when I went through hard times, I had relied upon the spiritual strength of my friends and older Christians in the Portland church. But now I was in a place where I did not know anyone very well, and I had to learn to lean fully on the Lord. It had been a struggle to take time for private devotions, and reading the Bible and praying consistently was a challenge. Going through this difficulty led me to make the time to read and pray in order to survive spiritually. As God drew me closer to Him, my desire was to do and be all I could for Him.

All of the experiences I had that fall culminated on a special night in October of 1992. One Sunday night we had a great prayer meeting, and afterward someone asked if I had received the baptism of the Holy Ghost. The realization hit me that I was very close to receiving this experience from the Lord. That week I spent extra time seeking the Lord and even had a prayer meeting with my roommate, who was also a Christian, in our apartment. The next Sunday night, the Lord gave our church another wonderful prayer meeting, and He filled me, as well as one other person, with His Holy Spirit. In recent years, I have come to realize that the time I’d spent seeking the Lord’s will and drawing close to Him was the key to receiving that experience. It wasn’t a magical formula or some great thing I had to do or consecrate. The desire of my heart was to be close to God and to do His will, and that brought the blessing of the baptism.

After I received the baptism of the Holy Ghost, I found there were still trials. The enemy did not want me to move forward, and many times he tried to convince me that I was not saved because of mistakes I made. Yet God was faithful to help me understand who He is and what He truly expects from me. Over the next few years, He took the time to show me what a loving Heavenly Father He is. God helped me to understand that He is not looking for human perfection, but for the desire of my heart to be perfect toward Him. To this day, He continues to teach me discernment on how to know the difference between the two.

One of the veteran Christians in Portland used to testify, “Young people, if you want to be kept, you can be kept.” In my early years as a Christian, I clung to those words and made the decision that I wanted to be kept from sin and from falling. One of my favorite Scriptures says, “Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy” (Jude 1:24). This has been an encouraging verse for my life, and I want others to know that anyone can be kept and that God has no desire to see His children fail.

God continued to work in my life and led me to a wonderful Christian man. We were married and now have two daughters. Neither my husband nor I had the privilege to grow up knowing the full light of the Gospel, and it is a blessing to raise our children to know Biblical truths. God has healed our children and provided wisdom for me in handling situations as a mother. Our older daughter has special needs. When she was two years old, she was scheduled to have an MRI to help diagnose her problems. We asked the ministers at the church to pray for her according to the instructions in the Bible (see James 5:14). Within two months of their prayer, she went from a twenty-five-word vocabulary to over seventy-five words. There have been other times as well when the Lord has undertaken for our children’s health, and it has given them something to look back on to build their faith.

In recent years, my husband was out of work for nine months. His company provided a twenty-two-week severance that carried us from July 2009 through Christmas. Although he still did not have a job, we had money in savings and unemployment to get us through to the end of February. Then the Lord supplied us with more money which took us through the end of March. Right at the end of March, God provided a job, and to top it off, we had no less money in savings than we did at Christmas when his severance ran out. God had truly provided for all our needs. The Bible says, “I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread” (Psalm 37:25). Truly that was our case! We would tell our children that some people who are out of work for this long lose their homes and have very little. Yet we were able to make every house payment, always had food in our home, and had no major health problems during the time when we had no health insurance. The Lord took care of our every need.

We still live in Dallas and are serving the Lord with a wonderful church family as we await His return. It has been over twenty years since God saved me. Where once I thought the Bible told of a God of destruction and judgment, now I see a God of mercy and love. It was God’s mercy that led me to Him, and it is His love that has kept me in His care all these years. He is my strength, Counselor, Healer, Friend, Lord, and King. I am nothing special. All of the wonderful things He has done for me are nothing more than what He wants to do for all who will choose Him as their Lord and Savior. I am so thankful!

Dawn Boyce is a member of the Apostolic Faith Church in Dallas, Oregon, where her husband is on the ministerial staff.
One of the clear memories I have of when my children were infants is putting my finger on their palms, and watching their little hands grasp mine. How tightly those little fingers held on! As my children grew into toddlerhood, they loved to hold hands with me. Sometimes I would give their hands a gentle squeeze, and watch their faces light up as they reveled in the sheer joy of having their dad close beside them. Love, joy, security, and safety were all communicated to them by our clasped hands.

I remember hearing about a little girl who was walking home with her father late one night. As they trudged along in the darkness she said, “Take my hand, Papa! I can only take a little piece of yours, but you take the whole of mine.” A few minutes later she asked, “Papa, are you afraid?” “No,” he replied. “All right!” she said. “If you are not, I am not.”

How many times have we been in the same position as that little girl? It may not have been a walk in the darkness that concerned us. Perhaps it was something far more devastating: a financial crisis, troubles with a rebellious child, serious illness, or the loss of a job. Or it may not have been a major crisis, but just a nagging sense of insecurity or foreboding. The fact is, no matter how strong we are, times come when we feel like a scared child inside. We all face circumstances at some point in life when we simply want to say to someone bigger and stronger, “Hold my hand!”

What is there about holding a strong hand that is so comforting? I love the picture the prophet Isaiah gave us when he said, “Thus saith the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus [and we can put our names there in place of Cyrus], whose right hand I have holden…” (Isaiah 45:1). The Hebrew word translated holden literally means, “to fasten upon; to seize, be strong, cure, help.” God was saying that when our hands are in His, a strong, unbreakable bond is formed between Him and us. And like that little girl grasping her father’s hand, we somehow find reassurance and understand that we do not need to be afraid.

As children grow a little older, their perspective about holding hands changes. They become increasingly independent, and at a certain point they become embarrassed to be seen walking hand-in-hand with their dad. That is normal when it comes to a child’s development.

Sadly, it is also possible to develop an independent mindset in our spiritual journey, and begin to withdraw from our Heavenly Father. Perhaps
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we start to think that we are capable of taking care of our own problems; we do not need to “trouble” Him with every detail. We lose contact with God because we do not feel we need Him that much. As we loosen our grasp on God’s hand and cease to be fully dependent on Him, it is not long before we find ourselves alone, and without comfort or direction.

It is valuable to consider some benefits of holding tightly to God’s hand all the way along our spiritual journey. It shows God that we love Him. In certain cultures around the world, it is customary for adults to hold hands as a sign of friendship. I remember making friends with a Vietnamese interpreter. Once or twice he reached out to hold my hand. I felt a little uncomfortable at the time, given my American background, but I understood that the young man was trying to communicate that he was my friend and he trusted me. I think God feels that way about us when we cling to His hand. He understands that it is one way we show our love for Him.

It provides us with guidance. Only God knows what will happen today, tomorrow, next week, next month, or ten years from now if Jesus tarries. He knows where we will be. The Psalmist said, “If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me” (Psalm 139:9-10). We do not need to see far into the future, for God knows what we will be doing. We simply need to let Him lead us step by step, past every detour, every temptation, and every rough spot in the road.

It gives us strength and courage. In the Book of Isaiah we find this wonderful promise, “Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness” (Isaiah 41:10). Just a few verses on, we read, “For I the Lord thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not; I will help thee” (Isaiah 41:13). Although this covenant commitment was made to Israel, it applies to us as well. What a wonderful assurance!

It is a source of provision for our needs. When Ezra the priest desired to lead a group of Jews back to Jerusalem, he faced a challenging task. We read, “And the king granted him all his request, according to the hand of the Lord his God upon him.” The journey was accomplished “according to the good hand of his God upon him” (Ezra 7:6,9). Scripture does not tell us exactly what Ezra requested or how this occurred, but clearly God’s hand of blessing was upon Ezra. And it can be upon us as well.

It is a support in challenging times. Many verses in the Book of Psalms speak of God’s support and defense of His people. For example, regarding the advantages of the righteous, David declared, “Thy right hand hath holden me up” (Psalm 18:35). The “right hand” in Scripture is symbolic of power and authority. In Psalm 37:17, the Psalmist asserts, “The Lord upholdeth the righteous.” Those who serve God are not promised a trouble-free life, but they are promised that God will be there to sustain them.

It symbolizes our confidence and trust in God. Just prior to the 1988 Winter Olympics, a television program featured the training of blind skiers for slalom skiing. After mastering the skill of making right and left turns on flat ground, they were taken to the slalom slope, where sighted partners skied beside them shouting, “Left!” and “Right!” Think of the confidence those skiers needed to have in those who were issuing directions! By dependence on the sighted skiers’ words, they were able to negotiate the course and cross the finish line. If we live in trust and total dependence upon God, He will never let us down.

Knowing all this, why would we not want to hold tightly to His hand as a child does to a parent? When life is fine, it feels good to nestle our hand into the sure grip of our Heavenly Father and enjoy the journey. When life brings challenges, what a comfort it is to feel the strength of our Heavenly Father’s hand holding ours.

No matter whether we are new in this Christian journey or have served the Lord for many years, let us remain as little children who depend on their father for comfort, assurance, help, and guidance. In the good times, let God grasp our hand. In the hard times, let us grip His hand tightly. He will lead us safely all the way to Heaven!

Mark Worthington is the pastor of the Apostolic Faith Church in St. Louis, Missouri. He and his wife have five children, and are now enjoying being grandparents.
Florence Crawford, the founder of the Apostolic Faith Church, had a burning desire to spread the Gospel—a flame that was ignited in her heart when she received the baptism of the Holy Spirit during the Azusa Revival of April, 1906, in Los Angeles, California. In commemoration of that event, we are republishing one of her sermons, which was preached at the campground in Portland on July 26, 1929.

Faith is a great subject. There is nothing we need more than faith, for we read in Hebrews 11:6, “Without faith it is impossible to please him.” Jesus said, in Luke 18:8, “Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?” He was looking down through the ages to these last days, when people give heed to “seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils,” and depart from real faith in God.

In Hebrews 11:1 we read, “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” A substance is something real, tangible; it is actual material which comes into one’s possession. If we have a book in our hands, a million people might tell us it is not there, but we know it is. We feel that substance in our hands. If we have that “substance” of faith in our hearts, it will bring things that are not seen into our vision. Faith is that reliance upon God by the human heart that will bring to pass that which we hope for, though it remains unseen. Faith will cause hope to be realized.

In 1 John 5:14, we find these words, “And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us.” There must be an underlying confidence in God in order for us to have faith. Confidence engenders faith. It would be impossible for us to believe that God could do anything for us if we had no confidence in Him.

The natural inclination of parents is to give, nurture, and bestow care upon their children. So it is with God the Father toward His children. You and I belong to God—we are are His children through the second birth—and He desires to give, nurture, and care for us.

A child has confidence in his mother and father because he knows that they are his parents, and he has a right to ask them. He might shrink from asking someone else, but he has no fear of his own parents and goes to them boldly with his request. Just so do we go boldly to the Father. We ask because we are His sons and daughters, and we expect Him to give us that for which we ask, if it is according to His will.

What makes a child fear a parent? If he has disobeyed, there is a fear on the part of the child when he comes into the presence of the father or mother. So it is with us and God, our Father. If we have something in our hearts that separates us from God, we do not come boldly to the Throne of Grace and ask for that which we need.

We read in Hebrews 12:1-2, “Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith.” We are in a race from earth to Glory, and the writer of Hebrews tells us we are to run this race with patience. Further on in the same chapter, he admonishes, “Make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way” (Hebrews 12:13). Many are turned out of the way on account of lameness that comes into their souls. If they do not have a steadfast faith in God, that immovable confidence in Him, it is easy for someone to come along and shake their faith or bring in a doubt concerning the Word. Then they become lame and are turned out of the way.

As we run, we look unto Jesus, “the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.” At times, temptations, tests,
trials, persecutions, and slanders come against us; but like Jesus, we are looking for the joy that is set before us. Therefore, we run this race with patience, because we believe that it is profitable and that it will pay to be true to God at any cost.

Jesus faced trials when He lived on this earth. Verse 3 says, “For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.” Many people begin to faint in their minds because of trials. The enemy attempts to bring discouragement, perhaps saying, “You will never make it anyway, so you might as well quit.” Or, “The people of God don’t feel that you are getting along very well.” The enemy is doing his best to turn you out of the way by causing discouragement. In such times, we need only to look at what Christ suffered, and that spurs our faith and courage to go forward.

Verse 4 says, “Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.” Many people think that they have done a wonderful thing if they resist the least little temptation. Jesus resisted unto blood! We have not resisted unto blood yet. If a temptation were so severe that it would bring blood from your body, then you might have something to faint about in your mind. God will enable us to resist the devil and to stand against him.

At times God chastens us. We read, “My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him” (Hebrews 12:5). You may feel discouraged if someone says something to you that disturbs you—we have all been through that. God is permitting that person to try you. We cannot always see that. At times God has sent His Spirit down and rebuked us directly, but many times the chastening of the Lord comes from those who are the closest to us: those in our household, in our place of labor, or in our ministry for God. God wants us to accept all as the chastening hand of God has permitted to come. Romans 8:28 says, “All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.” All means everything.

God does not afflict His people, for He is not the author of disease—it is a result of the curse—but God does permit these things to come into our lives. We read, “For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth” (Hebrews 12:6). At times, God may permit the chastening hand of affliction to be laid on those He loves. The writer of Hebrews tells us, “If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?” Whatever the reason for the trial of our faith, we can have an underlying confidence that God will take us through to the end. We need not lose our faith in Him.

A woman said to me not long ago, “Well, God doesn’t do this for me, and God doesn’t do that for me, and I just don’t know where I am.” I said, “When I ask God to do something and He doesn’t do it, I just fall back into the will of God and say, ‘God, You know the end from the beginning. All of my ways are in Your hands. I am not planning my way; I submit to what You permit.’” God sees whether we will submit and not become rebellious, or anxious, or begin to find fault with Him. We want to be clay in the hands of the Potter, and if the Potter sees fit to mold us a little, that does not give us permission to say to God, “Why dost Thou this?”

I have seen potters work with clay, and it offers a great lesson. Many times you think the vessel is perfect; yet the potter will take that vessel and cut off a little here and there, and a vessel comes forth which is much more beautiful than you ever imagined! That is the way God is molding us today, and the only way to becomes what He wants us to be is to stay pliable in the hands of the Spirit and let Him mold us, chisel us, and get us into the place where He will call us a good vessel.

The writer goes on, “Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.” Will chastening pay? Oh yes, it will pay!

“Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous.” It does hurt when the chastening hand of God is put on us that He might try our faith. But He says, “Nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.”

“Exercise” means work. Late last night I saw some men laboring on the campground; they were at their task until three o’clock in the morning. I thought, “The camp is all at rest, but these willing hands still laboring.” God wants us to be exercised—to be affected by the test that comes upon us, even if it hurts terribly. We will apply ourselves to accepting it, and let it do its work in our lives. When this exercising of our faith is going on, the faith in our hearts is deepening.

If you are newly saved, God has given you faith. You may be scarcely a day old in the Gospel when God will permit that faith to be tried. The enemy will come along; he may come disguised as an angel of light, or as a roaring lion. He may say, “You weren’t really saved after all; I don’t believe God did anything for you.” The devil will do anything on earth to rob a soul of eternal life. That is his business! But your business is to have that faith in your heart and stand by it as long as the heavens hold. When God saves you, drive down a stake at that spot. Let the devil howl and rage and do what he will. You stand firm and say, “I am saved, and I know I am saved. I have the witness that I have passed from death unto life.” The enemy may come in like a flood, but you can hold onto your faith from the moment God saves you.

The devil does everything in his satanic power to draw people from God and to wreck the faith of the saints of
God. But God has given us, through the new birth, a work in our hearts which, if we will hold it fast, will cause the devil to take his flight.

I was brought up in an infidel’s home and after God saved me, I had a battle royal. But God had planted the truth in my heart; I knew that I was a child of God. Neither men nor devils could tell me that the change wasn’t real. In the night the enemy would shout in my ears, “Now, do you believe you are saved? What about this? and that?” I would say, “But God saved me, that I know!” Many times I would speak it right out loud, and things would clear up like a bell.

When God comes into the human heart, that heart is transformed by power divine. The angels of God, God Himself, and Christ the Mediator between God and man, are back of him, enabling the Christian to hold fast in the integrity of his heart.

In Luke chapter 4, we read of the temptation of the Son of God. “And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, being forty days tempted of the devil. And in those days he did eat nothing: and when they were ended, he afterward hungered. And the devil said unto him, if thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread.”

The Son of God had all power. He could have commanded that stone and it would have become bread, but God was permitting Him to bear the temptation that He might be a High Priest who was “in all points tempted like as we are.” He answered, “It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God” (Luke 4:4).

Many times we might attempt to lift ourselves out of suffering that God has permitted to come upon us by communing with someone else and getting a little help from that one. I feel that it is better for us to bear our suffering and let God prove us, rather than to seek for relief from some other source to lift us out of what God has permitted to come. Now, I do not say that we cannot ask God to lighten it, if our trouble seems more than we can bear. But why not let God try the reins of our hearts?

The devil was not done tempting Jesus. We read that he took Jesus up to a high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world, telling Him, “If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine.” Jesus answered, “Get thee behind me, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.” The devil was a liar, for all the kingdoms of the world belonged to God anyway. However, the temptation was not any lighter because Christ knew that. It was not the appointed time for Him to take into His power all the kingdoms of the world, so He resisted the enemy.

I feel that we have a great lesson there in just leaving matters in the hands of God when God sees fit to allow something to try us. Many people, when they face a test, begin to complain and say, “Oh, I am going through such a dark place. The enemy is just buffeting me about!” You would come out much better if you would leave those things unsaid. Many times people say those things to draw sympathy to themselves. God help us to just bear it quietly rather than telling it to everybody. If we flaunt our suffering, we may lose all the benefit God has for us.

Scripture tells us that the gold of our faith is purified by the trial of fire. 1 Peter 1:6-7 says: “Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.”

Gold is brought into perfection through heat. Twenty years ago in the city of San Francisco, I went into a place where they were refining gold. There were vats of molten gold, and as we came to the hottest vats, we could bend over and see our faces reflected perfectly. They may have other methods of refining gold now, but purified gold is like a mirror.

Gold can buy almost anything, yet as precious as it is, Peter said that the trial of our faith is much more precious.

We read in 1 Peter 4:12-13: “Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.” This Scripture is inserted here, I believe, so that when these strange trials come, we might know what they really mean. At times an oppression will settle down until you almost gasp. Many times I have asked, “What can this mean?” And then God brings that Scripture, “Think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you.”

In Psalm 66:10 we read: “For thou, O God, hast proved us: thou hast tried us, as silver is tried.” Solomon said, “The refining pot is for silver, and the furnace for gold: but the Lord trieth the hearts” (Proverbs 17:3). Job said, “When he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold” (Job 23:10). There was the trying of the heart; it happened to the stalwarts of the Old Testament, and it will happen to us.

The Bible is full of the precious truths that can satisfy our hearts and can make us strong, healthy, sturdy pillars in the temple of God. That is what we want. When we wholly surrender to Him, faith just pours into our hearts. Then God begins to try that faith, and we must say, “Lord, have Your way.” In the very depths of our hearts we say, “Lord, not my will, but Thine be done.”

Is that the purpose of your heart? By the help and grace of God, it can be.
I WANT TO THANK and praise God for a recent miracle of healing. Two weeks ago the Lord healed my body from an accident that I had been in over two-and-a-half years ago. I was hit by a car going fifty miles an hour; both vehicles were totaled out in that accident. My back was injured severely; the MRI showed extensive damage to the spine.

I have suffered a great deal of pain as a result of that accident. Two days before God healed me, I had thought, I forget what it's like to be normal. The people of God prayed many times, and God has answered. On January 24, when I woke up in the morning, I was completely healed. All the pain was gone for the first time. The Lord healed me instantly!

Also, for years I have had bone on bone in my knees, but that morning I woke up to feeling new soft cushions in my knee joints. I couldn't believe it! It just happened so fast. I just thank and praise the Lord for saving me, for healing me, and for the many things that He has done in my life. — Marv Reed

“There is no hope for you.” However, God put a hunger in my heart to get down before Him and seek for the deeper things of God, and He did not disappoint me. He wonderfully sanctified me, and one of those nights when I was down praying, all of a sudden Heaven opened and God healed my body. Our children were very young at the time, and that night my wife was home with them. When I got home after church I told her, “The Lord has done something wonderful for me. He’s healed me tonight!”

I worked as a logger, using a heavy power saw. Many times before God healed me, I did not have the strength I needed. Sometimes I had to lie down for a while out there in the bush to get extra strength. After the Lord healed my body, I went back to work a new person.

God not only saved my soul and sanctified me and healed my body, but He gave me a greater spiritual hunger than ever before. I wanted to receive the power of the Holy Spirit upon my life. One night, God baptized me, and what a wonderful experience that was!

I thank God for this old time Gospel. It’s real. It’s wonderful. It works, and I love the Lord with all my heart. He has been good to me, and I want to give the balance of my days to Him. — Kirk Hewlitt

MY PARENTS brought our family to America from Romania when I was small. Dad wanted his family to be in America because there was no freedom of religion in Communist Romania. When we got to this country, the Lord led my parents to the Apostolic Faith Church. I was saved at a Tuesday evening meeting after a presentation on the Book of Revelation and the end times. I was thirteen at that time and felt scared by what I had heard. I prayed, “Lord, I want You. I want to be saved and to live my life for You.” Though I was young, I really meant what I said, and I knew the Lord would help me the rest of the way.

I didn’t realize then how much of an impact coming to this church would have, but all the little steps in my life have been shaped by that event. I met my husband, Ryan, in this church and now we have three children and serve God together. The Lord daily proves Himself in our home. Our children are a blessing from the Lord, and when hard times come, we know God won’t let our family down.

I received sanctification as a teenager, and a few years ago at camp meeting, I was seeking for the baptism of the Holy Ghost. After the last young people’s service, I had a prayer meeting that was really different for me. I didn’t receive my baptism, but I felt His Spirit and that kept me seeking for more.

The next day I returned home with the goal to keep going deeper with the Lord. I remember getting down to pray in my home while my children were taking naps. As I prayed, I brought up our upcoming youth camp. I was going to be a counselor and I said, “Lord, if the Holy Spirit would help me do a better job for You, then the baptism is something that You are going to have to give me.” I told God that I wanted to be a stronger mom for my children, and that I wanted to teach them everything I could about Him. I definitely felt undeserving, but the Lord knew the desire of my heart. He showed me that He loves us despite our human imperfections. There in my living room, He filled me with His Holy Spirit!

God really revealed Himself to me through that experience. Afterward, I felt so encouraged to know that He could do something like that in my
own home. I realized that we don’t have to be at church or camp meeting for God to work; He can work anywhere and anytime. Later, I talked with my sister-in-law about what happened. She was seeking her baptism also, and we tried to encourage each other. Not long afterward, she received her baptism at home too. It is such a blessing to know that God can meet us wherever we are in such a definite way.

I thank the Lord for the opportunities He gives me to be a light, and I want to do my best for Him. I love the Lord and I want to trust Him in everything that happens throughout my life. — Iudita Trotter

I WANT TO THANK GOD for His healing power. A couple of months ago, I had to have surgery to remove a malignant tumor in my bladder. That night in the hospital the nurses wanted to give me some pain medication. I don’t like pain pills, so I refused them. After the nurses left the room, I turned over and talked to God about it. I told Him, “You know, I want this to be for Your glory.” I had absolutely no pain from then until now, and that was a difficult surgery. I thank God I had the chance to witness to many of those nurses in the hospital. After I was discharged, home health nurses came every day to dress the wound. They would ask me, “How is your pain?” I could tell them that I had absolutely no pain, and the reason was that God was taking care of me. I just thank God for His faithfulness to me. — Lyle Bishop

I am for what the Lord did for me when I was just a teenager. Though I didn’t have much time for the Gospel, I did not have any contention with my parents about it. They were Christians and that was fine as far as I was concerned—they could pray and get a prayer through when I had a problem. Then one evening I nearly lost my life in a sailboat accident down on the river, and I began to realize that even though I was young, I might have to stand before God and give an account for the way I was living. I knew it was not right.

Not too long after that incident, I came into another one of these Gospel services. When it was over, I knew I needed to pray, but I could not get the courage to go forward to the altar of prayer. I went out and walked around on the streets near the campground. After a while I came back, and as I was standing outside the tabernacle, I saw one of the brothers talking to a couple of young men my age. I knew he was talking to them about getting saved, and figured that if I stayed right where I was, he would come over and say something to me when he was done talking to them.

That was a wise decision, because as soon as he was finished talking to those two, he headed straight for me. He said, “Ivon, don’t you want to pray?” I did, but I don’t know that I even gave him an answer. I just turned, and we walked down to the altar area. I got on my two knees and asked God to be merciful to me a sinner, and God did it! God saved my soul; He gave me mercy. He picked me up out of the life of sin I was living and transformed my life.

I didn’t join a church that night. I just gave my heart to God and God saved me. I knew when it happened, and in the days and weeks following, I learned that salvation worked! Although I was still in high school, I was employed in a machine shop that summer. God helped me to go back on that job with the same men that I had run around in sin with and live for Him. That takes something for a young person to do that. It takes God to make that possible, and God did it for me.

I’ve had a good life serving God in the many years since that night when He saved me. He has blessed my life in countless ways, and I thank Him for all that He means to me. — Ivon Wilson

Acknowledge “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). “God be merciful to me a sinner” (Luke 18:13).

Confess “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).

Repent “I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish” (Luke 13:3). “Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out” (Acts 3:19).

Forsake “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him . . . for he will abundantly pardon” (Isaiah 55:7).

Believe “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

If you are a new Christian, write us and request the tract entitled, “Starting Out.”

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God has made an amazing transformation in my life. Considering my background, it is miraculous that I can stand before the people of God with the joy of the Lord in my heart. I am so thankful for God’s faithful-ness to me.

I was brought up on the island of Borneo in Southeast Asia. We did not have a Christian home, but even at a very young age—probably eight or nine years—I believed there was a God in Heaven. I had friends who were Catholic, and I learned to pray with them. They told me to say the Lord’s Prayer and Hail Mary twenty times when I was in trouble. I learned how to do so, but that was the only time I prayed—when I was in trouble.

In my teen years, I felt restless. I liked to party, go to movies, and be involved in sports. Those were fun at the moment, but at the end of the day I would feel a void in my heart. I was not satisfied.

I am so thankful that God brought me to a place where I could hear the truth of the Gospel. My brother was going to school in San Francisco, California, but he was in the same predicament as me: looking for God, but not knowing where to find Him. In 1972, he told some college friends that he was looking for a church that preached the truth. One friend told him, “It is down the street.”

My brother found that church—the Apostolic Faith on Sutter Street. He got saved and began to write to me about what had happened to him. I did not really understand, but my heart said, I want to go to San Francisco. I felt that if I could get there I would be happy.

God had a plan for me. The day came when I had an opportunity to go to school in San Francisco. I remem-ber as I flew across the ocean, I prayed, “God, don’t let this plane blow up. Just get me to San Francisco!” I thought I wanted to have a good time and get a good education, but God saw the real need of my heart.

I arrived on a Wednesday, and went to church with my brother on the following Sunday. When I walked into the church, the Spirit spoke to me, “This is where you belong.” I did not get saved that day, but the conviction of the Holy Spirit began to work in my heart. Little by little, God helped me to realize that there was sin in my heart. When I asked Him to forgive me, He did just that. Salvation is the most wonderful thing that has ever happened to me.

The first change I realized was that the restlessness was gone. My longing for the bright lights of the city and a great time in San Francisco was all gone. Church became my life.

I am thankful for the people of God. They were so kind and loving to me—they instructed me in the ways of the Lord and helped me to grow spiritually. I had never heard of being born again until that time, so I had much to learn. God knew my heart, though, and He helped me to grasp the sound truth of the Gospel. Later He sanctified me and filled me with the power of the Holy Ghost.

God has been faithful to me, and I thank Him for His patience as I walk with Him. It is truly wonderful to be a Christian. I remember when I was first saved, the saints of God would stand up and testify that they had been saved for forty or fifty years and that their salvation was still sweet. I thought, How can that be? Now it has been almost forty years since the Lord saved me, and I can truly say that each day grows sweeter as the years go by. The desire of my heart is to continue to serve God. I want to be faithful and share with others what God has done in my life.

Phil Wong is a minister of the Apostolic Faith Church in Langley, British Columbia, Canada.
A couple of months ago, my mom testified in a church service about how grateful she was for our church’s literature, which is prayed over for the healing of the sick before it is sent out. She was saved when I was three years old and at that point she began trusting the Lord for the healing of our family members. In her testimony, she told of a specific time when I was about four years old and had a sliver in my finger that she couldn’t get out. She put a church paper under my pillow before I went down for a nap, and when I woke up, the sliver was lying next to my hand on the pillow.

Immediately after my mom testified, I thought to myself, I have a good heritage. I have such a good heritage! I was raised in a home where answers to prayer were common, and my mom was sure to point them out to my brother and me. Although I was too little to remember the sliver incident, I do remember being told about it as I grew up. As a somewhat skeptical little girl, it was hard for me to believe that Jesus would even know who I was. But I could not deny that He must know me if He took out my sliver. And that was only one instance among other miracles He did for our family.

When I was seven years old, on the way home from a church service, my mom asked my brother and me if we were ready for Heaven. I told her I did not think I was, so later we went to my parents’ bedroom and prayed. She said a prayer of repentance out loud and I repeated it after her. At that young age I did not think I was, so later we went to my parents’ bedroom and prayed. She said a prayer of repentance out loud and I repeated it after her. At that young age I did not fully understand salvation, but I truly wanted to have my heart right with the Lord and I believed He would answer my prayer. That night, I knew I was saved. Not very long after that, when I was only eight or nine, my mom told me that if I wanted to be sanctified all I needed to do was ask God to do it. I didn’t make it any more complicated than that; I asked the Lord to sanctify me and then simply believed He would answer my prayer, and He did.

Even though I was saved and sanctified so young, as I grew up I still had doubts about whether the Gospel was the truth. My mom had told me that when she was saved, everything about her changed—the hatred in her heart was gone, the sinful movies that she had liked became repulsive to her, and with the Lord’s help she stopped telling the lies that she previously could not control. However, my experiences of salvation and sanctification were much less dramatic. I did not “feel” anything, and I did not notice a difference in my behavior,
probably because I was raised in a godly home and wasn't old enough to get into much trouble. As a result, sometime during my middle-school years I started having doubts about whether those experiences had been real. There was a serious struggle in my heart, but what kept me holding on were the answers to prayer I had seen and heard about growing up. Not only was there the time God took the silver out of my finger, but the time He stopped the snow while our family made a road trip to visit my great-grandmother, and when He instantly healed my brother of his migraine headache, and when He provided exactly enough money to pay our bills—down to the penny. Although my dad wasn't saved until I was in high school, he had been raised in a Christian home and I heard many stories of healing and miraculous provision from his side of the family as well. Despite the doubts I had, I could see that God must be real because He answered prayers.

Around the time I started high school, I realized I needed to have my own testimony of answered prayers. The Lord was calling me to make a deeper commitment to Him, but I did not have enough faith in Him to make that commitment. The miracles I had heard about growing up were great and I did not doubt what God had done for others, but I could not dedicate my life to a cause based on someone else's experience. Also, I felt that if it was possible to have a close relationship with the Lord, like what I saw my mom and my grandma had, I did not want to miss that opportunity.

Up until that time, I had been reluctant to take real problems to God in prayer because I was worried He wouldn't answer, and I didn't think I could handle that. But as I determined to prove God for myself, He was so faithful to me. I began by asking God for help with relatively small concerns, although they seemed important at the time. Once, I prayed about a class I was struggling with. It was a very difficult subject for me and I felt terrible after getting a bad grade on one of my tests. I prayed for help, and my following test scores were 100%, 100%, and 95%. There was no doubt that God had come through for me, and He far exceeded my expectations! Another time, right before I was supposed to run three miles in my gym class, I got a blister on my foot that made even walking painful. I was really worried about it and decided I had nothing to lose by praying. In a moment, the pain was totally gone and I had no problem running the three miles. These answers did not happen every day, but my faith grew with each one.

Around age sixteen I began seriously seeking for the baptism of the Holy Ghost. I focused on consecrating myself to God and praying for His will in my life. During that time, there were many answers to prayer and times when God gave some kind of encouragement, and each of those instances helped build my confidence in Him and in the promises of the Bible. After my first year of college, God fulfilled His promise to me and filled me with His Holy Spirit. There was not a specific final consecration before I prayed through; I just kept consecrating my life more deeply, and as I did that the Holy Spirit came down more powerfully, until one day He filled me completely and I began praying in another language. In one sense, it was a huge step in my walk with God. Yet, in another sense, it was just one more step closer to the Lord. The Holy Spirit continues to be with me every day, and that is still miraculous to me.

Looking back, I am amazed at how God had His hand over my life from the time I was so little—before I was even aware of who He was. At first it was the miracles He did for my family, which He was faithful to bring to my attention. Later, He allowed just the right challenges to come at just the right times; challenges that were big enough to cause me to realize I needed His help, but not so great that I was overwhelmed by them. And all along the way were countless moments of encouragement and guidance through testimonies, sermons, Sunday school classes, and friends. Believing in God and continuing to serve Him is not always easy. The temptations, pressures, and competing views of this world are strong. Yet every time I have sought the Lord, He has provided more than enough to keep me headed in the right direction.

Truly, I have a good heritage. I was taught about the Gospel from as early as I can remember, and I have benefitted in so many ways from it. I have peace in my heart and a clear conscience; I don't have to worry about the future because I know the Lord has it planned already; and God has given me a purpose in life. I want nothing more than to give everything I can to Him, and for those who are not saved to experience these blessings too.

Catey Hinkle is on the editorial staff of the Higher Way magazine and attends the Apostolic Faith Church in Portland, Oregon.
A leading travel agency advertises that “happiness is planning your next vacation.” If the Lord tarries, my wife, Rodica, and I will celebrate our twenty-fifth wedding anniversary this coming May, and it has been a lot of fun discussing destination options to commemorate that event.

There are many considerations to evaluate as we begin planning a vacation. First of all, it needs to be a desirable location. Being from Portland where we have a lot of rain each year, we often look for a tropical setting with warmth and sunshine. Something else that we look at is safety and security. It is desirable for a United States citizen to go to a place which has the same security that the United States offers, and I suppose this is true of any nation and its citizens. We must also decide on transportation. Will we drive, fly, or take a cruise? Another factor is the accommodations. Will we stay at a hotel or a resort? Will the rooms be nice, clean, and well-equipped? We want to plan how we will spend our time, so the amenities and nearby attractions are of interest. Another consideration is how long we intend to stay. Will this be three days, five days, a week, or maybe two weeks? And of course the reality check to all of this is the cost consideration. We may have all sorts of wonderful ideas of places we would like to go, but it must fit within the budget we have set aside for our vacation.

A lot of effort goes into planning a short time of rest and relaxation here on earth. Yet how much consideration do we give to our “eternal vacation”—the rest that God has planned and promised for His people? How much thought do we give to that heavenly destination? Do we offer it the appropriate level of expectation? Do we spend as much time planning for it as we should?

Disneyland is advertised to be the “Happiest Place on Earth” and I once read about the great lengths to which that operation goes in order to make it a desirable destination. For example, the staff repaints the knobs at the entrance every night, some decorations are real gold instead of painted-on gold, they have a meticulous twenty-four-hour maintenance and repair program, and incorporate strategies to respond quickly to any dissatisfied customer or even crying children.

Yet, consider what God has in store for us in terms of a desirable location: “And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new” (Revelation 21:2-5).

Despite Disney’s greatest efforts, children have tripped and skinned their knees. Others have gotten sick from one of the rides. Tears have been shed over not having enough money to buy a special gift. Given the length of time the amusement park has been in business, probably even a few people have died at their facilities. However, in the New Jerusalem there will be no tears and there will be no death. There will be no crying, no sorrow, no pain. All of those things will be forever gone. The New Jerusalem will not be a spruced up, remodeled, open-under-new-management.
type of place. No, God said, “Behold, I make all things new.” It truly will be happier than any place on earth.

**Weather**

Do you prefer to visit a bright, sunny destination? Revelation 21:10-11 says: “And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God; and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal.” The glory of God, Himself, will light this place with such radiance that the writer of the Revelation could only describe it by referencing precious and costly stones. He said that light will be “clear as crystal” to convey its absolute brilliance. And the warmth we feel from that light will make the best tropical setting cold in comparison. Oh, the blessing that we will feel in the sunlight of God’s glory!

**Security**

We live in a troubled world, and safety is a priority when we travel. If you are planning to go by plane, you hope it will not be hijacked. If you are on a cruise, you hope the ship will not run aground. No matter how statistically unlikely such an event is, there is cause for concern. But there will be no such anxiety at our heavenly destination. Revelation 20:10 declares that “the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.” The very one who has brought all the evil on this world will be forever banished. There will be nothing to worry about. Sin and evil will not have any part in the Holy City.

**Accommodations**

What about the accommodations? Do you like a nice room? We are a family of five and that’s an odd number when considering sleeping arrangements. My son, Johnny, often ends up on a hideaway bed, a couch, or sometimes even the floor. But there will be no such worry in this place. Jesus said: “In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you” (John 14:2). There is plenty of room in this place. Not only a room, but an entire mansion will be prepared and set aside just for you!

**Transportation**

It can be challenging to arrive at a location where you’ve never been before. Perhaps you must try to find your way to a hotel during the middle of the night in a strange city. Just the prospect of getting to your accommodations can be stressful. But in John 14:3, Jesus continued: “And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.” Just think, transportation is included with the mansion! That is how much God cares for you and me. Not only did He go to prepare a place, but He will come and gather us to be with Him throughout all eternity.

**Amenities and Attractions**

What about the amenities? When our family goes on a vacation, my children always ask if there will be a swimming pool. Heaven offers much better than that! John wrote: “And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations” (Revelation 22:1-2). Consider these attractions: a river with absolutely no impurities, the Tree of Life, and the Throne of God and of the Lamb.

We will not worry about having enough time or enough daylight to take in all of the attractions either. John’s description continues, “And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light” (Revelation 22:5). There will be plenty to see, there will be light all of the time, and we will enjoy the very presence of God and His Son, Jesus Christ.

**Length of Stay**

Sometimes a vacation can feel somewhat frantic. You’re in a hurry to get to your destination, then in a hurry to maximize your time, then in a hurry to get home! Even a leisurely-paced vacation can feel short. But the last part of Revelation 22:5 says: “And they shall reign for ever and ever.” This is no two-week-long vacation. This rest will last for all eternity. We will have time without end to be with our Lord and Savior and enjoy what God has created for us.

**Invitation and Cost**

Are you concerned about the cost? A formal invitation establishing the cost has been issued to each one of us. “And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely” (Revelation 22:17). Did you notice that last word? This trip of a lifetime is offered freely to everyone! And it gets even better than that. Revelation 21:7 says: “He that overcometh shall inherit all things.” Not only is your cost covered, but the whole place is given to you as an inheritance.

**Make Your Reservation!**

Though the cost has been covered, our eternal destination did have a price. Jesus paid that price on Calvary. However, to take advantage of this offer requires reservations and preparation on our part. We must be saved and living according to God’s Word. Revelation 22:14 says, “Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.” God wants you to enjoy the eternal rest that he offers to each one of us. If you are not sure your travel arrangements are in order, confirm them today. You do not want to miss out on this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity!

John Musgrave is a minister of the Apostolic Faith Church in Portland, Oregon.
I am thankful to God that I can give a testimony of what the Lord has done in my life. I was raised in a home where the name of the Lord was mentioned often. My mother was a Christian but my father was not. My mother prayed with us every day, taught us the Word of God, and took us to Sunday school.

On many occasions I saw the miraculous power of God demonstrated in our home. One day as my brother and I were playing together, he got a cut in his hand. It was a deep cut and the blood was spouting out. He screamed, and my mother heard him. She came out of the house quickly, and when she saw what was happening, she grabbed his hand and prayed, “Lord Jesus, stop this blood. In the Name of Jesus I pray. Amen.” Immediately the blood stopped flowing and in a few moments, the wound closed. It was amazing to me because I had never witnessed anything like that before. I believe it was the miraculous power of God.

Many other times we saw His power demonstrated in definite ways. Sometimes we were sick with fever, or with severe colds and coughs. My mother prayed in the Name of Jesus and we were made well. I knew that God is a real God!

As I grew older, I learned more about God. There was a time when many questions about Him were in my mind: where God came from, why He allowed sin to exist in the world, why so many terrible things were happening on this earth, and why so many people were hungry and starving. Why were so many people dying? Why were there so many wars? At one point, I even began to think that there was no God, or that He was out there but simply did not care. Perhaps He did not have the power that He said He had.

However, I praise God that He confronted me during the time of the missile crisis in Cuba. Khrushchev was sending shiploads of missiles into Cuba, and President Kennedy, who knew the dangers of those weapons, did not want them to be so close to the mainland of the United States. President Kennedy decided to set up a military blockade that would prevent the missiles from getting into Cuba.

While that international confrontation was going on, a greater
confrontation was going on in my life. I was without God. Realizing the dangers of those weapons in the hands of a hostile nation, fear gripped my heart because I understood that if those weapons were released, a world war could be triggered. Since we lived in the Caribbean so close to Cuba, I recognized that hundreds and thousands of us could easily lose our lives. I knew that if I died I would go to Hell, and that thought terrified me.

One day I got down on my knees at my bedside, and said, “Lord Jesus, please come into my heart and make me ready for Heaven. Then if I die, I will live with You in the Eternal Home.” I prayed in faith believing. There was no loud crying, no great emotion, no big fanfare, but I invited Christ into my life to be the Master. He came in and sweetly saved me, and from that day on, He took possession of my life.

God did a great job in my heart and I became a happy young man. I began to tell the story of salvation. There were old folks that I had not cared to be with in prayer meetings and in Sunday services, but from that time on, they were the ones that I found myself next to. As they prayed in the old-fashioned way, and gave those long testimonies, I felt good in their presence and had fellowship with them. Those were happy days, glorious days, joyful days.

One Sunday afternoon at about three o’clock, God sweetly sanctified me. Then I began to hunger for the baptism of the Holy Ghost. I was desperately seeking that experience, tarrying day and night. I fasted; food became of little importance to me, because I hungered more for my baptism. At times I thanked God in advance for baptizing me. I waited before God in great expectancy, praying to receive that experience.

At about that time, a man who had been a wild sinner came to Christ. He asked God to be his Lord and Savior, and shortly thereafter he was sanctified. He began seeking his baptism. I had been saved and sanctified long before him, but he was moving in that direction seemingly faster than I was. That motivated me to pray even more. The Lord honored my prayers, and one night when I was not really expecting it, He baptized me with the Holy Ghost. I found myself glorifying and magnifying the Name of the Lord, but I could not understand what I was saying. I was speaking in an unknown tongue, but I knew I was glorifying God. Praise God, I had received my baptism!

The Lord has been so good to me through the years since then. The Holy Spirit has been ever present in my life—the Third Person of the Godhead dwelling within me. He has guided me, kept me, and taught me many things. God has been everything to me!

While I was still a young man, I prayed at different times and asked the Lord to give me the wife of His choosing, and He answered that prayer. He gave me a lovely wife, Padecia, and then blessed our home with three beautiful children. I thank God for them. As they were growing up, I was able to pray with them often and hold family devotions with them in our home. There at the family altar we could meet and praise God, talk about the goodness of God to us, read His Holy Word, and pray together.
My wife and I prayed many years for my father’s salvation. He did not accept the Lord during my mother’s lifetime, although he did not prevent her from going to services. He did not even prevent her from going to a different island to spread the good news of salvation, and remaining there for seven years to establish the work of the Lord in that place. However, he persecuted her relentlessly. But praise God, less than four weeks after my mother passed away, my father came to Christ. One afternoon when I went to visit him, he said to me, “Clyde, I am saved. I have accepted Jesus as my Savior.” It was a great moment for me. I didn’t know whether to shout, cry, or laugh. What a feeling! I whispered within the depths of my soul, “Lord, may he stay with You forever.” And I praise God that my prayer was answered.

My father had never been to church, but that Sunday he said to me, “I am going to the house of God.” He did, and there he gave his testimony. Oh, what a wonderful day! At every opportunity from then on, he was in the house of the Lord. He was baptized in water, received his sanctification, and took part in our foot washing and communion services. It was so beautiful! And within eight months of my mother’s death, my father joined her in the Glory Land. By the grace of God, I am looking forward to joining them one of these days.

The Lord has done so much in my life. He has blessed me, provided for me, given me the comfort of a home. He has taken me many places that I never dreamed of visiting, given me so many friends—mothers and fathers, sisters and brothers in the Gospel of all races and walks of life. He has showed me what a big, glorious, unlimited Gospel we have. He has been a great God to me and He will be the same to whosoever will give Him their hearts.

Clyde Filmore Penn was born on July 18, 1941, in Road Town, Tortola. He began pastoring in St. Thomas, USVI, in 1988 and became the District Superintendent in the year 2000. He went home to Heaven on October 9, 2010.

A Statement of Bible Doctrine

We believe in the divine inspiration of the Bible, and endorse all the teachings contained in it. Following is a summary of our basic doctrines.

The Divine Trinity consists of three Persons: God the Father, Jesus Christ the Son, and the Holy Ghost, perfectly united as one. Matthew 3:16-17; 1 John 5:7.

Repentance is a godly sorrow for and a renouncing of all sin. Isaiah 55:7; Matthew 4:17.

Justification (salvation) is the act of God’s grace through which we receive forgiveness for sins and stand before God as though we had never sinned. Romans 5:1; 2 Corinthians 5:17.

Entire Sanctification, the act of God’s grace whereby we are made holy, is the second definite work and is subsequent to justification. John 17:15-21; Hebrews 13:12.

The Baptism of the Holy Ghost is the enduement of power upon the sanctified life, and is evidenced by speaking in tongues as the Spirit gives utterance. John 14:16-17; Acts 1:5-8; 2:1-4.

Divine Healing of sickness is provided through the atonement. James 5:14-16; 1 Peter 2:24.

The Second Coming of Jesus will consist of two appearances. First, He will come to catch away His waiting Bride. Matthew 24:40-44; 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17. Second, He will come to execute judgment upon the ungodly. 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10; Jude 14-15.

The Tribulation will occur between Christ’s coming for His Bride and His return in judgment. Isaiah 26:20-21; Revelation 9 and 16.

Christ’s Millennial Reign will be the 1000 years of peaceful reign by Jesus on earth. Isaiah 11 and 35; Revelation 20:1-6.

The Great White Throne Judgment will be the final judgment when all the wicked dead will stand before God. Revelation 20:11-15.

The New Heaven and The New Earth will replace the present heaven and earth, which will be destroyed after the Great White Throne Judgment. 2 Peter 3:12-13; Revelation 21:1-3.


Marriage is a covenant between one man and one woman that is binding before God for life. Neither person has a right to marry again while the first companion lives. Mark 10:6-12; Romans 7:1-3.

Restitution is necessary, wherein wrongs against others are righted. Ezekiel 33:15; Matthew 5:23-24.

Water Baptism is by one immersion “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” Matthew 3:16; 28:19.

The Lord’s Supper is an institution ordained by Jesus so that we might remember His death until He returns. Matthew 26:26-29; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26.

Foot Washing is practiced according to the example and commandment Jesus gave. John 13:14-15.

You may obtain additional information about these doctrines, and learn about our publications in foreign languages by writing to the Apostolic Faith Church at 6615 SE 52nd Avenue, Portland, Oregon 97206, U.S.A. or visiting our website at www.apostolicfaith.org.

Before these magazines are sent out, they are always prayed over for the healing of the sick and the salvation of souls.
Rediscover Church!

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