

Learning Faith at the Cross

#0542

Study given by W.D. Frazee—February 8, 1969

Last night, you heard somebody say in the testimony service that this meeting was just for them. I trust that again tonight, more than one will find that the message is just for them.

Sister Esther **Hurst**, who said that last night, put some of the thoughts in verse, and I want to read these lines for you tonight as we continue our study of faith and believing:

I Do Believe
He died for me and me alone.
His life and death my sins atone,
I will believe, I do believe,
Just now, His pardon, I receive.

No longer am I lost without,
No longer overcome by doubt,
It matters not what happens now,
I do believe; this is my vow.

By faith, I know God's word is true,
His hand will guide me safely through,
He gives me one step at a time,
I need not fear how high the climb.

I know He has a place for me,
In His great calm eternity,
I've been forgiven all my sin,
I'll never doubt my Lord again.

Can we say amen to that? The Lord grant it for each one of us.

Now let us turn to John, the third chapter—the Gospel of John, the third chapter—where we'll find our opening text in the words of Jesus to Nicodemus. There on the Mount of Olives this Pharisee listened to these wonderful words of Jesus as He made clear the plan of salvation.

We're going to read John 3, verses 14 and 15, and this, of course, is the prelude to the oft-repeated John 3:16:

“And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life” John 3:14-15.

Now, together, on the 16th verse:

“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.

Here, Christ pointed the mind of Nicodemus to the experience in the desert when the children of Israel were being bitten by the serpents, and as they cried to God, the Lord told Moses to make a serpent of brass and put it up on a pole and whoever was bitten was to do what? Look. And if he looked, what happened? He lived.

And Jesus said to Nicodemus, Now, just as that was lifted up on the pole back there, so the Son of man must be lifted up so that whoever believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life.

We’ve all been bitten by the serpent of sin, and the end is death, but thank God, while we live, we have the opportunity to turn our eyes to Jesus uplifted on the cross and, if we look, we will what? Live.

Now, what I want you to notice tonight is this—that Jesus uplifted on the cross awakens faith in those who look to Him. Looking is an expression of faith, but looking also develops faith. It is as we behold Christ hanging on the cross that we discover how much He loves us and therefore we learn to trust Him.

Faith works by love, the scripture says. The only belief in God which will help us is that which enters into an understanding of His love. James tells us that, as far as believing that there is one God—he says the devils believe that and do what? Tremble. But is that faith? No, that’s not faith. The faith which the scriptures speak of, as I say, is that which works by love, and Christ was lifted up upon the cross that He might draw all men unto Himself.

I want to read you a wonderful statement that was written years ago to a young minister. I knew the man to whom this was written when he was an old white-haired veteran. He was still preaching when I was a boy. But you’ll find this message that was written to him when he was a young minister in *Volume 4*, page 374.

“It will do you good, and our ministers generally, to frequently review the closing scenes in the life of our Redeemer...It would be well to spend a thoughtful hour each day reviewing the life of Christ from the manger to Calvary. We should take it point by point and let the imagination vividly grasp each scene, especially the closing ones of His earthly life. By thus contemplating His teachings and sufferings, and the infinite sacrifice made by Him for the redemption of the race, we may strengthen our faith, quicken our love, and become more deeply imbued with the spirit which sustained our Saviour” *Testimonies for the Church, Volume 4*, page 374.

Now, notice. What is it that you and I can do which will strengthen our faith? Review the life of Jesus from the manger to Calvary, especially these closing scenes of His life. Looking at the cross develops faith, strengthens faith, so if we want more faith, let's come to Calvary. Day by day, we're to gather at the cross and behold the love of God.

“If we would be saved at last we must all learn the lesson of penitence and faith at the foot of the cross” *Testimonies for the Church, Volume 4, page 374.*

What's another word for penitence? Repentance. That's the word we used last night—sorrow for sin. Where do we learn that lesson of penitence? At the cross. What other lesson do we learn there? Faith. That's the two lessons. That's the two steps we were studying last night. First, repentance; then faith. First, we give all; then we take all. First, we yield; second we receive. I surrender all; I do believe. I do give myself to Jesus; I do believe he accepts me and receives me.

And, as we continue to take those two steps, one after the other, repeating then, repeating them, repeating them, we shall arrive at last at the gates of the New Jerusalem, where Christ Himself will welcome us with outstretched arms. It's a wonderful trip, isn't it, friends?

I'm glad it's so simple. Aren't you? I can get hold of it. I know you can. First, to yield ourselves to Him; second, to believe, and to express that belief—to say, Lord, I do give myself to Thee and Lord I do believe that you accept me.

Now, what have we just read that you and I can do to strengthen that faith in our hearts? What is it? Come to Calvary and review the closing scenes of the life of Jesus. You see, when we come to the cross, we're face to face with somebody that loves us better than we love ourselves. He went through more for us than we would have either the capacity or the willingness to go through for ourselves.

He exhibited a love stronger than death, and the more we behold that love, the more it softens the heart, and the more we say, Here is somebody I can trust. Here is somebody I can trust. That's what faith is. It includes not only belief but trust.

No wonder Paul said:

“But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ” Galatians 6:14.

Here is the center of the Christian's experience. Here is where we learn the lesson of faith, as well as the lesson of penitence. So, when we come to the cross day by day, we should tarry until that lesson of penitence and that lesson of faith—the twin lessons—are learned anew. We should tarry at the cross until we are sorry for sin enough to give it up.

We may weep, literally, or we may not. Some people can cry more than others. Our emotions are different. But, my dear friends, what God is after is not to get us to cry, it's to get us to be sorry enough for sin to give it up, and there are some people that cry and don't give up their sins. They weep but they keep right on sinning.

And so, the question of whether we weep literally is not the point. Sooner or later, we *will* weep literally, but we can't control that and we don't have to worry about it. The thing we need to seek God for at the cross every day is a sorrow for sin enough to give it up; a repentance deep enough that we say, Lord, take everything out of my life that is not like yours.

But now, that isn't the time to leave. Then, as we linger there at the cross, we must hear the words from those lips of our Lord, You are forgiven, you are cleansed, you are accepted, you are Mine, you are accepted just as if you had not sinned. We must arise from our knees, dear friends, with the certainty in our hearts that we have been accepted.

I have a witness bright and clear,
Since I have been redeemed,
Dispelling every doubt and fear.

What is the witness? It is the witness of the Spirit as we express our faith that God has indeed pardoned us and accepted us and that we are His children. We need this. We cannot go forth to meet the enemy without it, and we need look for no mysterious feeling. We're to reach up—as we read last night—reach up the hand of faith and claim the promised blessing.

What did we read in Mark 11:24?

“...What things soever ye desire, when ye pray...” Mark 11:24.

Do what?

“...believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them”
Mark 11:24.

And so, as I give myself to Jesus, I believe He accepts me. As I say, Dear Lord, forgive me, following that, I must say, Dear Lord, I thank Thee that Thou hast forgiven my sins.

Wouldn't you do that with any friend? If you went and begged a friend for something, whether it was a loaf of bread or a pair of shoes or some money—when the thing was given you, what would you say? Thank you. Well, you say, but I can't see it. But what is faith? Faith is believing God's promise, and we read last night that when we receive the promise, we have what? The gift.

Do you see in this the Word of God is entirely different from the word of men. I might promise you something tonight and be dead by morning, or I might forget it, or any one of a hundred things might happen that would make it utterly impossible for me to fulfill my promise, but none of those things can happen to God.

Not only so but—watch this point—Jesus says the seed is the Word of God. Did you ever stop to think that whenever you put corn or wheat or any other seed in the ground, you're just planting promises? A grain of corn is a promise—it's a

promissory note—the promise of God. And *you* can't make that corn grow. *You* can't take that grain of corn and multiply it into many times its size and value, but God can, and God promises that in every seed, doesn't He?

And just as when you want corn, you pick out a corn seed, if you want wheat, you pick out a grain of wheat, if you want petunias, you put some petunia seed in the ground, so, my dear friends, in the Bible, we have a great seed catalog. More than a catalog, it's a counter filled with all kinds of seeds. There's a promise that meets your needs. Exceeding great and precious promises are given.

But seeds in the seed store never give us anything, and promises lying there in the Bible may lie for a thousand years unclaimed, but oh, take that seed from the seed store, stir the ground properly prepared, put it in, water the ground, and what happens? Pretty soon, you see the tiny shoot coming up, and by and by there's a harvest.

And so it is with the promises of God. Do not try to pray without these promises. As well, might you try to garden without seed. Many people are going through the motions of asking God for this and that, as if God were a sort of Santa Claus, a list of things, gimme, gimme, gimme, gimme. No. True prayer and true faith make use of the promises of God.

And so, when you kneel down and pray, have your Bible with you. Have some of these inspired books that help us to appreciate the Bible and apply its principles to our modern problems, and let God speak to you through this book and then you talk to Him.

And remember, friends, what did we read last night?

“What things soever ye desire, when ye pray...” Mark 11:24.

Do what?

“...believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them”
Mark 11:24.

So what must be mixed with all our prayers? Faith, believing. Turn over to Hebrews, the fourth chapter. I want you to see something very interesting here—fourth chapter of Hebrews, and the second verse. It's talking about the children of Israel back in the wilderness during those 40 years when the Gospel was preached to them through Moses and the sanctuary service.

“For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them:
but the word preached did not profit them, not being...”
Hebrews 4:2.

What?

“...mixed with...” Hebrews 4:2.

What?

“...faith in them that heard it” Hebrews 4:2.

Most of the people back there in the desert—they didn’t get much good out of what was presented. Even though Jesus was there in the cloud and speaking to them through Moses day after day, most of them didn’t get much good. Why?

“...the word preached did not profit them, not being...”
Hebrews 4:2.

What?

“...mixed with faith in them that heard it” Hebrews 4:2.

Now, a number of you men are acquainted with building operations. I don’t know too much about some features of building, but I know that when you have concrete, if you’re going to have concrete, you have to mix together certain things. Am I right?

What’s one of the things you put in, if you’re going to have concrete? Sand. All right. What else? Cement. Anything else? Water. All right. Now, you can put in some gravel, too, if you want it, but I suppose you can make concrete out of sand, cement and water. Is that right? All right.

Now, let me ask you something, friends. Could you leave out any one of those? No. All right. Tell me another thing. Would it be enough to take one of these big—what do you call these things you mix concrete in, and I mean when you’re mixing for mortar? The box. That’s right. Now, could you put the sand over in one corner and the cement in another and then just sprinkle the water in the other end? How long would it take on that program to get concrete. You never would have it, would you? No.

Now, today, people do a lot with these concrete mixers, and the purpose of that is to thoroughly what? Mix the sand and the water and the cement, and the gravel if it’s in there. Is it important that it be mixed? All right.

Now, that’s what has to happen on your knees in prayer as you mix the Word of God, your prayer and faith. Those three things have to be mixed, and unless they’re mixed, friends, you don’t get the results.

You ladies—most of you know how to make a cake. I’ve made one or two in my life. I took a cooking class when I was taking my medical missionary training, and I remember we had some flour and we had some sugar and we had some eggs and some other things, but part of following the recipe is to what? Mix.

Now, does it make any difference whether you mix it or not. Would it? Suppose you just take a pan here and put the flour in and put the sugar in and put the eggs in and put the shortening in, and then just put it in the oven. What would you have? You’d have a mess, wouldn’t you? And it wouldn’t be because any of the ingredients were lacking. It would simply be that they hadn’t been what? Mixed.

Now, friends, let's be very practical in our Christian experience. Some people wonder why the recipe doesn't work for them. It'll work for you if you'll carry it out. But somebody that didn't know anything about cooking that would just throw those different things in there and then put it in the oven—they'd say, My, it just turned out a flat failure, and it would be flat, wouldn't it, and a failure all around.

And they might say, It just doesn't seem to work for *me*. Well, did you mix the thing? Oh, no. Do you have to do that? Oh, yes. Is it that important? Very important. All right.

So, in our prayer experience and the study of the word and faith, they must be what? Mixed, mixed. So when we pray, dear ones, let us not wait for a day or a week or a month or even an hour to see whether our prayers are going to be answered.

“...What things soever ye desire, when ye pray...” Mark 11:24.

Do what?

“...believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them”
Mark 11:24.

And I want to tell you something. It takes more than a teaspoon full of water to make a ton of concrete. Doesn't it? And it takes more than a teaspoon full of faith to get you very many answers to prayer. The water has to touch every bit of that cement and sand. Is that right? Everything depends on that.

And so with your leavening, when you make a cake, the leavening has to go clear through the mass, whether it's eggs or some other leavening agent, and faith is the leavening agency in this whole recipe, dear friends, and faith must be mixed with these promises, mixed with your reading of the word, mixed with your surrender to Christ, mixed as you claim the promise.

Let's spend more time telling God we believe His promise and thanking Him that He has fulfilled it instead of just asking Him for a long grocery list. What do you say? This will give us answers to our prayers exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think.

But now, I come to a very important point. Do you know one of the reasons why we need to gather at the cross as we pray and develop these experiences of repentance and faith? I'll tell you why, friends. Because the cross is the life to which Jesus calls us.

The purpose of prayer is not to deliver us from sacrifice. It is to prepare us to enter into sacrifice. The purpose of prayer and faith is not to get God to give us our way. The purpose of prayer and faith is to prepare us to accept His way.

Let's think of it in the life of Jesus. Before He went to Calvary, He went to what garden? The garden of Gethsemane, and there for three long hours, He wrestled in prayer. There was something in His human nature that shrank from that bitter cup

that He knew was ahead of Him at Calvary, as the weight of the sins of the world would rest upon Him.

And what did He pray there in Gethsemane?

“...O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me...” Matthew 26:42.

Did He stop there?

“...nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.” Matthew 26:42.

Did He pray that prayer more than once? Oh, yes. Again and again, He came back to it. It was a fearful struggle.

Now, my dear friends, the success of the plan of salvation was hanging in the balance, and in prayer in Gethsemane, Jesus received the help He needed, not to avoid the cup, not to set aside the cup, not to escape the cross, but to take the cup and bear the cross. Do you see?

And when you and I come to God in prayer, one of the great reasons we need to get our vision filled with the cross is this—is that again and again, in these prayer seasons, God is seeking to give us the kind of faith which will accept His cross.

This is a very practical thing. This book, *Ministry of Healing*, a wonderful textbook for medical missionary workers—it says that:

“Often our plans fail that God's plans for us may succeed”
Ministry of Healing, page 473.

We may pray as David did for certain things, and God may have to set aside these things, but if we are willing to accept His will, He will guide us into that which is really for the best.

“Many are dissatisfied with their lifework” *Ministry of Healing*, page 472.

This is 472 and 473 of *Ministry of Healing*:

“It may be that their surroundings are uncongenial; their time is occupied with commonplace work, when they think themselves capable of higher responsibilities...” *Ministry of Healing*, page 472.

Did you ever hear anybody say, speaking about their work, Why anybody could do what I'm doing, and I've thought, Yes, well aren't you anybody? Aren't you anybody? The Lord of glory came down to this world and spent most of His time in this world doing what most anybody could do. Didn't He?

“...often their efforts seem to them to be unappreciated or fruitless; their future is uncertain. Let us remember that while the work we have to do may not be our choice, it is to be accepted as God's choice for us. Whether pleasing or unpleasing, we are to do the duty that lies nearest. If the Lord desires us to bear a message to Nineveh, it will not be as pleasing to Him for us to go to Joppa or to Capernaum. He has reasons for sending us to the place toward which our feet have been directed” *Ministry of Healing*, page 472.

So, my dear friends, instead of praying as the heathen do to their idols, Give me what I want, let us learn to pray the prayer of Jesus:

“...not my will, but thine, be done” Luke 22:42.

This is the purpose of prayer. This is the purpose of surrender. This is the purpose of faith. And until we have reached this point, we have yet to sound the depths and reach the heights of Christian experience. This is where many draw back, but real faith includes not only belief but trust and, if I trust Jesus, do I have to say to Him, Dear Lord, I'd like to follow you, but first I want to know where you're going to take me? Do I? That wouldn't be trust, would it. No.

Do I have to say, Lord, I'd like to work for you, but first I want to be sure that it's something I like to do—what you're going to ask me to do. Do I? That wouldn't be what? That wouldn't be trust; that wouldn't be faith.

So again, I say, one of the great reasons we need to come to Calvary and there behold the love and the sufferings, the sorrow, the agony, the sacrifice and death of our Lord, is that it will cause us to become willing to do anything He wants us to do. We will come to the place where we will say, Lord, I can trust you. I know that you won't lead me through any hard road unless I need it. I know you won't hold any bitter cup to my lips unless it's necessary.

And Lord, you drank for me a cup far more bitter than any I will ever drink. You walked for me a road far harder than any you will ever ask me to walk. You suffered for me a death such as I will never need to know if I walk with you. Oh, Lord, deepen love in my heart, strengthen faith, and thus, friends, here at Calvary we can learn the lesson of penitence and faith—penitence and faith, sorrow for sin enough to give up our way; trust in Jesus enough to say, Lord, I believe you, I love you and I know you love me.

How many of us would like to send Him the word that from day to day we're going to press closer and still closer to His bleeding side and learn these two precious lessons of penitence and faith. The Lord grant it for every one.

Now, the opportunity is yours to witness for Jesus. What blessing can you thank Him for tonight and what expression of faith is going to come from your lips? Can you say, Yes, Lord, I love you, I believe you, I trust you, I have given myself to you, I know you're mine.

He says:

“My praise shall be of thee in the great congregation...”
Psalm 22:25.

What is your word of praise tonight?

[Testimony meeting.]

[Comment made by Elder Frazee during testimonies meeting.]

Gospel Workers, page 261. Listen carefully to what this says:

“Faith takes God at His word, not asking to understand the meaning of the trying experiences that come” *Gospel Workers*, page 261.

Oh, friends, I think this is wonderful, and God has brought me, especially during the last year, to this statement again and again, because I’ve had to meet experiences that I didn’t understand at all. This tells me that if I have enough faith I won’t even ask to understand. Isn’t that wonderful?

Why some people think that, if they had enough faith, they *would* understand. It’s the other way around. If you have enough faith, you won’t even ask to understand. That’s what this says.

“Faith takes God at His word, not asking to understand the meaning of the trying experiences that come” *Gospel Workers*, page 261.

Why, you see, if you have faith, you don’t need to understand, and if you understand, you don’t need faith. You see how that is, don’t you? Seeing—understanding—is like going down the road here and everything clear and the sun is shining, but faith—that’s like being out on the high seas in a dense fog and the vessel’s going ahead but there’s a radar screen. That’s faith. You can’t see with your eyes, but you can see with the radar. Faith is the Christian’s radar.

May I read this again? Would you like to hear it again? *Gospel Workers*, 261:

“Faith takes God at His word, not asking to understand the meaning of the trying experiences that come” *Gospel Workers*, page 261.

Friends, this will save us a lot of time in prayer and otherwise. When we come to God in prayer, then it won’t be to complain of why this is done and why that happens and why this person does as he does and interferes with our plans and so forth. No. We won’t even say, Lord, I’ve just got to know why you’ve allowed this. Why’d you let this happen to me? No.

We will, rather, cultivate the attitude, Dear Lord, I've come to ask you to give me the patience to accept everything you send, and the love to accept every job you give me. And, Lord, I'm not going to even ask you to explain it all. You have said:

"...What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter" John 13:7.

"In the future life the mysteries that here have annoyed and disappointed us will be made plain. We shall see that our seemingly unanswered prayers and disappointed hopes have been among our greatest blessings" *Ministry of Healing*, page 474.

Oh, friends, this is the triumph of faith. Faith is the victory that overcomes the world. Shall we stand and be dismissed. Brother Martin, will you dismiss us, and let's remember the services in the morning and every morning.

Brother Martin: Our father in heaven, we thank Thee that by faith we can behold the invisible, that we have the privilege here of learning how to walk with Thee, to walk by faith and not by sight.

Lord, we pray that we'll exercise that faith, that it will grow and develop, so that when the time comes when every earthly support is removed that we will have a firm hold on eternal realities.

Father, may we day by day follow Thy will and learn to know Thee better. We can learn these wonderful truths that Thou hast for us that we may pass them on to others, that our knowledge may grow and increase as we get nearer the end, and we thank Thee for all these promises, in Jesus' name, amen.

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