

It is no easy matter to gain the priceless treasure of eternal life. No one can do this and drift with the current of the world.

UPSTREAM

How Faith WORKS

SECTION I

So many people wish they had more faith. What would you think if you learned that you could have as much faith as you wanted? How did Abraham become a man of great faith? Did you know that his father was an idolater?

Joshua 24:2 Terah, the father of Abraham ... served other gods.

This is one reason God holds Abraham up as an example of faith. He learned how to believe in the middle of unbelievers. He learned to be faithful in the midst of apostasy. He wasn't raised well, but he turned out well. And that was because of his faith.

In other words, Abraham became a beautiful example of how faith can mend the life of a messed-up human and thoroughly change that person. In both the Old and New Testaments, God uses Abraham as an example of how a very imperfect person can learn to live by faith.

“ Victory comes to those who don't think their problems are too great for God's promises to solve. ”

Memory Verse | Mark 6:5, 6

He could do no mighty work there, except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed them. And He marveled because of their unbelief.

Let's look at a few more facts about Abraham's faith.

Think about this: Abraham had been trying to have a child for many decades. But still he and Sarah were childless. When God said, "Sarah will conceive a son," Abraham could have reasoned, "Sarah and I have never been able to have a child. We have tried for years. If God could make her conceive, He could have done it long ago."

Such thinking seems logical, but it ignores the two things that Abraham was keeping in mind: God cannot lie and His word has power to do anything!

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So Abraham didn't think about his failures or his past history. And Abraham didn't consider his own weakness. He was, after all, about one hundred years old. You might have a grandmother or great-grandmother who is in her nineties. Can you imagine her getting pregnant? Can you imagine your great-grandpa becoming the father of a little baby? He is too weak. His body is wearing out.

Abraham was weak like that. But he didn't think about either his own weakness or that of his wife.

Romans 4:19 And not being weak in faith, he did not consider his own body, already dead (since he was about a

hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah's womb.

In some ways we are all like Abraham. When it comes to living a holy life, we are weak. Our history may show that we can't do it, even though we have tried for years. What would we do if God said to us, "You will live a holy life." Would we think about our weakness, about our history of failure? If we did, we would be "weak in faith." Victory comes to those who don't think their problems are too great for God's promises to solve.

That happened to Abraham; it can happen to us. (See Thought Questions, Section I.)

SECTION II

We can trip over very small things. Grown men have tripped over tree roots that were only an inch or two above the ground. People have tripped on tiled surfaces when they failed to notice a two- or three-inch rise. Has something like that ever happened to you?

Promises are like that. They aren't intended to trip us up. They don't exist to make us fall any more than a protruding root. But many people fall in their spiritual life by tripping over promises. Maybe you are wondering what this means.

Let's read another verse about Abraham's faith.

Romans 4:20 He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God. (KJV)

How do we trip over a promise? By failing to step up when we encounter it on our path.

Promises are so powerful. They enable us to ignore our past, our weakness, and many other circumstances. If God says something, we can talk and act as if it is entirely true and completely reliable. That is how to "step up" on a promise.

And how do we trip over a promise? By unbelief, by talking or acting as if God's Word isn't true.

You have heard about faith many times. Have you ever heard of "unfaith"? The Bible has a lot to say about it; and when it does, it uses the word "unbelief."

The disciples tripped over promises at times.

“Unbelief blocks the power of God from operating in the life.”

When Jesus promised to die and then be raised to life the third day, that promise could have been a great help to them. But instead, they stumbled over it. Listen to what Jesus said about that:

Mark 16:14 Later He appeared to the eleven as they sat at the table; and He rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they did not believe

those who had seen Him after He had risen.

The fall of the disciples was the result of their unbelief. When they ran and hid, they acted as if Jesus' words weren't true. When Peter denied his Lord, he talked as if he didn't believe. And Jesus rebuked the disciples for tripping over His promise. He had given them His word. They should have trusted Him.

Why would Jesus rebuke them when they were already feeling so bad? One reason is that unbelief is so very destructive. It can stop the flow of God's power to Earth. In some cities Jesus was not able to do many miracles at all, and that was because of the horrible power of unbelief.

Matthew 13:58 Now He did not do

many mighty works there because of their unbelief.

Mark 6:5, 6 Now He could do no mighty work there, except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed them.

And He marveled because of their unbelief. Then He went about the villages in a circuit, teaching.

(See Thought Questions, Section II.)

SECTION III

We have learned a lot about Abraham's faith. We have learned that he kept these two ideas in mind: God's Word is both creative and lifegiving. We learned that Abraham didn't stop to think about his weakness or his circumstances or even his past experiences when he had a promise from God.

We have learned that Abraham had great faith, just like the centurion and the Canaanite woman. And we have some more to learn. Did you know that the Bible talks about a mindset of faith? This mindset, or spirit of faith, was familiar to King David, who wrote,

Psalm 116:10 I believed, therefore I spoke.

The spirit of faith is to speak what you believe. And this is what we all should have: a spirit of faith.

2 Corinthians 4:13 And since we have the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, "I believed and therefore I spoke," we also believe and therefore speak.

Here we encounter a Bible verse that is very practical! Below are some examples of how to practice it, using these two promises:

Matthew 28:20 I am with you always, even to the end of the age.

Romans 8:28 All things work together for good to those who love God.

Practicing faith instead of unbelief—

Example 1: You believe that Jesus is with you to the end because He said so in Matthew 28:20. When you are tempted to feel discouraged, if you say, "My Savior is with me. I will not be discouraged," that is the spirit of faith. It is to talk what you believe. And if you gripe and complain as if God isn't taking care of you, you're talking unbelief.

Example 2: You believe that *all* things work together for good to those who love God because He said so in Romans 8:28. When something that seems bad happens to you, if you say, "I don't know how, but I do know that God will cause this apparent

tragedy to work out for my best good," that is the spirit of faith. But if you say, "Why, oh why did God let this happen to me? I can't believe He let me experience this!" you are expressing the mindset of unbelief.

And don't forget, unbelief blocks the power of God from operating in the life.

Abraham had the spirit of faith. He gave "glory to God" for the promise of having a son, even when he didn't feel like he would have one.

Romans 4:20 He ... was strong in faith, giving glory to God. (KJV)

Do you give glory to God when you don't feel like it? And what if you find inside yourself a mixture of faith and unbelief? There is good news for all such persons. If you will talk in harmony with the part of yourself that believes, and ask God to take care of the part that doesn't, God will hear your prayer.

Mark 9:24 Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!"

Read the following inspired commentary on this passage. It is one of the most encouraging statements you will ever find. Indeed, God rewards the spirit of faith even when it is found in the life of someone who struggles with doubts.

"If Thou canst do anything, have compassion on us, and help us." How many a sin-burdened soul has echoed that prayer. And to all, the pitying Saviour's answer is, "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth." It is faith that connects us with heaven, and brings us strength for coping with the powers of darkness. In Christ, God has

provided means for subduing every sinful trait, and resisting every temptation, however strong.

But many feel that they lack faith, and therefore they remain away from Christ. Let these souls, in their helpless unworthiness, cast themselves upon the mercy of their compassionate Saviour. Look not to self, but to Christ. He who healed the sick and cast out demons when He walked among men is the same mighty Redeemer today.

Faith comes by the word of God. Then grasp His promise, “Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out.” John 6:37. Cast yourself at His feet with

the cry, “Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief.” You can never perish while you do this—never. —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 429.

Why not go to Jesus right now and plead with Him to give you just the help that you need?

Amplification: “Take the word of Christ as your assurance. Has He not invited you to come unto Him? Never allow yourself to talk in a hopeless, discouraged way. If you do, you will lose much. By looking at appearances, and complaining when difficulties and pressure come, you give evidence of a sickly, enfeebled faith. Talk and act as if your faith was invincible.” —*Colporteur Ministry*, p. 115

(See Thought Questions, Section III.)

THOUGHT QUESTIONS

Section I

1. Do you know someone who is a Christian but who has a parent like Terah—one that doesn't follow God? Maybe that person is you! How could you or that person you know become a model of Christian living like Abraham?

2. Why does the Bible have so much information about the lives of people other than Jesus? What might we mistakenly conclude if we didn't have stories about imperfect people like Abraham? _____

3. Abraham didn't consider the age of his body when choosing to believe God's promise of a son. What are some things in your life that you will have to stop considering if you are going to take God at His Word? _____

Section II

4. Think about the last time you tripped over a promise. When a similar situation happens again, how could you handle it in a better way? _____

Section III

5. The lesson gave two examples of practicing faith in God's promises. Let's do that with two more promises. 2 Corinthians 12:9 is one of them, and you can choose the other one. How could you talk or pray in a way that matches your faith in these promises? _____

6. Using another sheet of paper, write the paragraph from *Colporteur Ministry*, p. 115 in your own words.



Faith Chapters

Just in Time—Part 2

Pastor Boonpranee Wannadee, president of the Lao Adventist Field, was traveling with an ASAP lay pastor, Mr. Song Somboon, to Song's home village. Some of the people there wanted to learn more about the true God they heard about from their radios. Hiking the steep, slippery path to the village was strenuous, since they were carrying heavy backpacks full of books and Bibles. So the two pastors stopped to ask God to send them help.

Shortly after we prayed, we noticed a couple coming our way. Song looked closer. "I think they are my relatives," he said. From their appearance, the couple looked like they had been hiking for a great length of time. Song could not contain his excitement. He ran to greet them, and yes, they were his relatives that he had not seen or heard from in many years.

"Is it really you, Uncle and Auntie?" Song asked.

"It is. It is!" they replied, greeting each other with joy. Song's uncle said that they were going to get their car that was in the garage in the city. After hearing that we were headed to their village, Song's uncle assured us that their car could travel these roads and offered to bring us there when they returned with the car. We were so relieved to hear this good news!

Not long after, we were slipping and sliding up the muddy, bumpy trail in their sturdy vehicle. As we drove, I began to worry that I might get arrested



for preaching in this village. Local village chiefs in Laos often feel threatened by Christians coming in to share the gospel and at times they ask the communist authorities to arrest the evangelists who enter their villages and preach without permission. I wondered if Song's uncle knew if the village

chief was open to Christianity. "Do you think there will be problems with the authorities if I share about Jesus?" I asked.

Do you think there will be problems with the authorities if I share about Jesus?

The uncle smiled and replied, "I am the chief of the village and of course I will not have you arrested!"

This news surprised Song and me. As Song asked his uncle questions about being the chief and about his village, I kept thinking about how wonderful God is. I could feel His presence leading and guiding us. When we arrived at the village, the chief arranged for our arrival to be announced to the villagers. They prepared a feast for us and welcomed us warmly as important guests. They were excited to meet the Christian pastors for whom many had been praying. We met with seven families in the village who had been studying about God through the radio and they wanted to be baptized. The chief and his family were among those who loved God and considered themselves Christians.

As we left this village, we rejoiced over how God led us every step of the journey. In the eight months following our visit, Song returned often. God has blessed with the establishment of a church group that worships together every Sabbath morning.

(Concluded)

Pray for guidance: Dear Heavenly Father, I commit my ways to You. Please continue to lead and guide me and the ASAP missionaries moment by moment, day by day.

To learn more about ASAP Ministries or to find out how you can help to advance God's work in Southeast Asia, visit www.asapministries.org or call 1-866-365-3541.



Historic Link

Justification by Faith—Part 2

Abraham's great act of faith is recorded for our benefit. It teaches us the great lesson of confidence in the requirements of God, however close and cutting they may be; and it teaches children perfect obedience to their parents and to God. By Abraham's obedience we are taught that nothing is too precious for us to give to God.

But many do not know what self-denial and sacrifice for Christ's sake mean. Should God speak to them as he did to Abraham, saying, Sacrifice your possessions, your temporal benefits, that I have lent you, to advance my cause, they would be astonished, and think that God did not mean what he said. God knew to whom he spoke when he gave the command to Abraham. Abraham knew that One faithful and true had commanded, — One whose promises are unailing. Had God commanded him to offer his gold, silver, or even his own life, he would have done so, knowing that he was only yielding to God his own. God requires no more of man than he in his infinite love has given.

The grief that Abraham endured during those three days of trial was imposed on him that he might learn the lesson of perfect faith and obedience, and that we might comprehend the self-denial of the Father in giving his Son to die for a guilty race. God surrendered his Son to the agonies of the crucifixion, that guilty man might live. Legions of angels witnessed Christ's sufferings; but they were not permitted to interpose as in the case of Isaac. No voice was heard to stay the sacrifice. God's dear Son was mocked, and derided, and tortured, till he bowed his head in death. What greater proof of his pity and love could the infinite God have given?

“He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?”

The apostle Paul says: “If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe

“ God requires no more of man than He in His infinite love has given. ”

in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the Scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shalt not be ashamed. For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him.”

God calls for faith in Christ as our atoning sacrifice. His blood is the only remedy for sin. For us he arose from the grave, and ascended to heaven to stand in the presence of God. He was delivered for our offenses, and raised again for our justification.

When we take hold of his wonderful truth by faith, we shall say, with Paul, “We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.” We behold the light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Such a view of Christ irradiates with glory the word of God. It lays for our faith a foundation. It sets forth a hope to every believing soul. Well may we bow our souls before the majesty of this precious truth.

—*The Youth’s Instructor*, March 8, 1900

THOUGHT QUESTIONS

1. Why did God inspire men to record the stories of the Bible? Romans 15:4 _____

2. List three important lessons that we should learn from Abraham’s great act of faith.

3. What should you do if you have been cherishing any ideas, plans, things, or friends that God wants you to surrender to Him? _____
4. How does faith help us obey when one of God’s requirements seems “close and cutting” to us? _____

5. Finish the sentence: “God requires no more of man than _____

6. What did Abraham learn from his terrible experience? _____

7. What can we learn about God’s character from Abraham’s experience? _____

8. Compare and contrast the story of Abraham giving his son with the story of God giving His Son.
How were their experiences similar? _____

How were their experiences different? _____

9. What is the greatest proof that God really does love us? Romans 8:32 _____

10. What is the only remedy for sin? _____



Creation Foundations

Not by Accident: Frogs

Frogs are cold-blooded, which means their body temperature is the same as the air or water around them. And because they live part of their lives in water (absorbing oxygen with gills during the tadpole stage), and part on land (breathing air with lungs as adults), they are classified as amphibians.

Frogs not only drink water in order to survive, but, **not by accident**, they were created to absorb water through their skin as well. Adult frogs breathe through their lungs, but they can also absorb oxygen through their skin.

As a general rule, we call frogs with dry skin “toads”; and, yes, toads usually do have warts. But touching toads does not cause warts in people. Although there are many exceptions, smooth-skinned frogs usually tend to stay close to water while the toad does best in a drier area.

There are about 3,000 species of frogs and 300 species of toads, and most of them prefer a warm climate. But again, there are many exceptions. Some of these amphibians do live in cold climates and hibernate in winter. The range of at least one frog species extends north of the Arctic Circle, and it has been equipped to survive being partially frozen!

A wonderful, **not-by-accident** characteristic of frogs is their bulging eyes which provide nearly-panoramic vision, aided by a partly-clear inner eyelid called the nictitating membrane. This membrane moves upward as needed, providing protection to the eye without completely blocking sight. Their eardrum disk is located behind each eye, and provides the hearing they need. **Not by accident**, the tongue of frogs is attached as a hinge up front in their mouths. That way, with one quick moment, it can flick out its sticky-tipped tongue to grasp an insect snack and bring it back into its mouth.

The Master Designer also resolved the frog’s need to swallow. Because there is no bone between its bulging eyes and its mouth, **not by accident**, each time it

swallows, it’s programmed to blink its eyes! With that blink the eye is pressed down upon the mouth and the hapless insect prey, bathed in mucous, is pushed deeper on its way down the frog’s digestive tract.



A special, **not-by-accident** defense characteristic of some frogs is their ability to engage in chemical warfare. Some frogs have poison glands that ooze a covering out onto their skin which quickly repels predators. The Creator placed behind the eyes of toads two swellings called parotoid glands. In some species of toads, these glands can excrete toxic fluid. Some toads can even squirt the poisonous fluid at a predator before it is grabbed—ample warning to its enemy to stay away.

The Creator enabled some frogs to give a loud scream when grabbed. That scream so startles the predator that it drops the frog. Still others are programmed to urinate when leaping away from an attack—leaving a bad taste in the mouth of the predator.

Our Creator has been careful to create ways to ensure that at least some little creatures in the food chain have a fighting chance so their species will survive. Meanwhile He has ensured that humanity will definitely survive throughout eternity—by His becoming human with us. That way, by His death and resurrection, our enemy of death and sin has been defeated forever. We’ll see that reality when Christ returns soon to escort us to His Father’s house.

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