



Faith the compulsory link

F R A N C K K V A S K O F F



Faith, The Compulsory Link

Franck Kvaskoff

FAITH, THE COMPULSORY LINK

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Some other books by Franck Kvaskoff

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- Managing all my Being with my spirit
- Trials, Temptations and Persecutions, do not confuse them
- The Spirit Soul and Body
- And I see it come to pass
- “Heal the sick!” This is not an option
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- The Lord's Supper
- Fasting
- The True colours of satan
- The “Let” and the “That” of the Bible
- Now sit down and Watch
- The Character of God
- The Holy Spirit

BIOGRAPHY

Franck became a born-again Christian in 1986 in Brisbane, Australia at the age of 22. It was in 2006 in the south of France that God revealed to him His desire to use him to spread His Gospel. Franck then began to seriously study the Bible, and to write his first Bible studies. It is only 7 years later that he created the ministry The Real Good News in Australia as well as “La Vraie Bonne Nouvelle” in France, after having received a solid training from the Holy Spirit.

Franck does not consider himself a writer, but simply a Christian who recounts what he experiences in his personal life. His books in the form of biblical studies are often enriched with anecdotes from his life wherein he does not hesitate to reveal his mistakes along the way; we also sometimes discover situations with his family. He is a person who places great emphasis on loving his neighbour. This is why Franck likes to pray to heal the sick, but also to teach people to help them enter into autonomy in Jesus. His main goal is to see a Church that uses all that God has given us, but also to see as many people as possible experiencing the new birth.

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CHAPTER 1

DON'T MAKE A SPIRITUAL RULE OUT OF YOUR EXPERIENCE

We hear about faith in many areas of everyday life. The word is used alternately in religious contexts and in everyday conversations, often to describe some kind of motivation.

So we talk about faith, but few people, and unfortunately few Christians, have grasped what faith really is in its different aspects. We often have the impression that faith is something abstract, or not really clear. Faith is outside our five senses, which is why many people often find it difficult to activate it successfully.

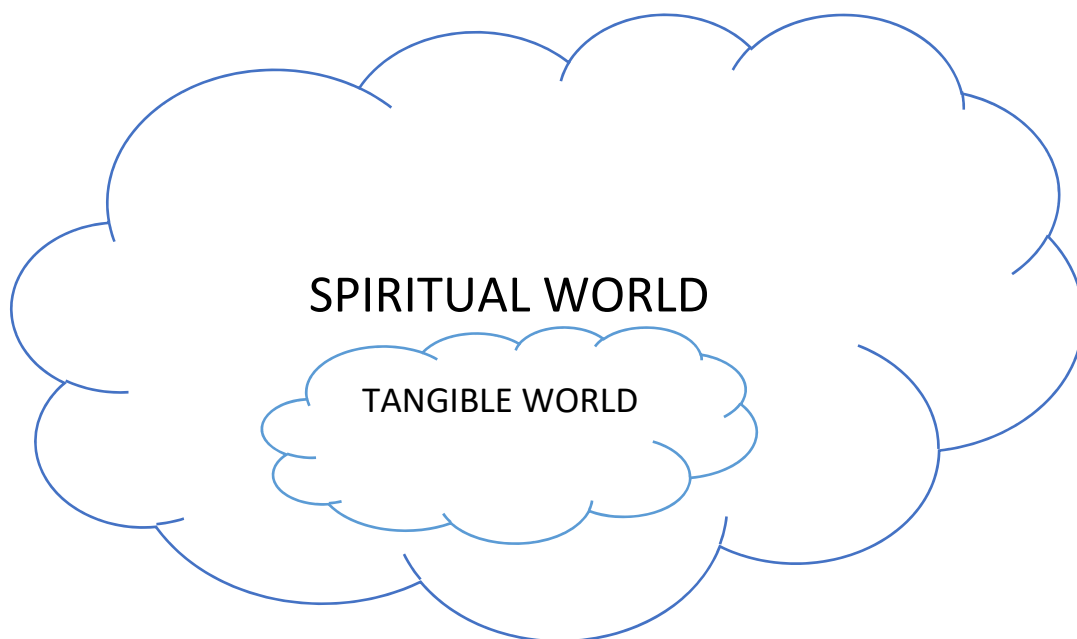
Most of the time in Christian circles, a majority of people think that faith simply means that you agree with something. We also often hear people say: *"I have faith, but it doesn't work!"* This is nonsense. If I have faith in the right way, it works, or else I do not have activated faith.

The Bible shows in hundreds of examples that faith is a link between God and humans. It is the compulsory link if we wish to enter into contact or a relationship with God.

Jesus said that God is a Spirit.

John 4:24 *God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."*

The particularity of a spirit is that it evolves in the spiritual world. Our tangible, earthly world is part of the spiritual world. This implies that our solar system, and therefore our earthly world, is like a subset of the spiritual world. If we were to visualise it, we could make the following diagram:



Our tangible world is thus included in the spiritual world. This notion is very important to assimilate, because it will help us to apprehend the spiritual world in a much more real way than we may think. Therefore we will integrate it as a truth in our way of thinking.

Often a majority of Christians see the spiritual world as abstract, distant, almost unreal, or anyway very vague. Therefore they find it difficult to assimilate it as a very real and living world.

The spiritual world is just as real and true as the tangible world we are in today. It is by realising this truth that I will be able to make better sense of the use of my faith.

I am often asked this question: *What is faith?*

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It is true that at first sight this may seem a little confusing. We cannot touch faith, we cannot feel it, we cannot taste it, we cannot hear it and we cannot see it. This shows us that it is impossible to explain faith with any of our five senses. And this is often where the problem lies. Some of the Christians try to perceive their faith with one of their 5 senses, but it is impossible. So often they will (mostly in an unconscious attitude) elaborate a feeling based on a carnal thought (5 senses) thinking to use their faith.

The irrefutable proof of this kind of attitude is the fact that very often their approach does not produce any result.

We start to pray and after a while we see that nothing happens; yet we were sure we had used our faith.

I remember when I was just over 25 years old, I had just lost my job as a workshop manager in a car dealership. I was out of work for a few months, and I was really starting to need to find a job.

In my last job, I had the opportunity to use a computer in my office at that time; computers were in their very first stages. Of course at that time the internet did not yet exist, and computer graphics were still in their simplest form: monochrome. So I decided to look for a job in IT because I liked it, even though my skills in this field were still at the beginner stage.

One day I noticed a company looking for a computer operator. I submitted my resume through a friend, yet after many weeks nobody called me for an interview.

At that time I was in a local church and naturally I told my pastor about it and he said, *"This is a case where you have to beg God, you have to cry out to God"*. This church taught that we should beg God when our prayers were not answered.

That day I was alone at home, and I remember screaming, begging, crying, despairing. I said, *"God, I beg You, I cry out to You, give me this job, make it possible for me to be hired, I cry out to You"*.

I have to say that at that time I didn't really know what it meant to shout to God, so I just started shouting, as if God were a deaf old man.

And guess what?

Within a week I get a phone call asking me to come for an interview.

I thought to myself: *"But it works! Shouting to God works!"*

But at the same time, I didn't know why, I felt a sense of unease, as if I hadn't done the best that could be done. I had also had this same feeling when I was praying while shouting. But I quickly forgot about it because after all, my prayer was answered and that was all that mattered to me at that time.

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I must say that since that day I have never done such a prayer again, begging and crying out to God. Even if it had worked in this particular case, I really felt that I had not acted in an optimal way.

It wasn't until more than 10 years later that I realised why I had been so uncomfortable praying that day. Not that God didn't agree with what I had done or said, but there were simply far better ways to do it.

When I prayed that day, I was at the end of my rope, I didn't know how to get a job, I thought I had tried everything: praying more, fasting, reading more, being more involved in my church, etc. So I said to myself afterwards that it's when you've tried everything and you don't know what to do anymore that faith kicks in. For me, my prayer had worked because I had gone through all the methods I knew at that time. I had concluded that this was the moment when faith could be expressed.

What a mistake!

Today I know very well that it was not faith at all that I expressed that day. But it was more distress, depression, fear, and pressure that I had unconsciously tried to put on God to give me what I needed. And the crazy thing was that God had answered my request.

So what happened?

How could I have my prayer answered without using my faith?

As I often say, God sometimes gives us nudges with the ultimate goal of not needing those nudges anymore.

Many Christians can testify that they have prayed without really using their faith, but worse, begging God or crying out in their prayers, and have had their prayers answered. Yet the Bible tells us that without faith nothing can be achieved.

James 1:6-8 *But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.*

Those who are familiar with my Bible studies may think that I am denying most of what I usually teach. But this kind of thinking is only an impression.

Am I saying that pleading with God, crying out to Him verbally, causes our prayers to be answered?

Certainly not! That is not what I am saying at all.

Let's look at few passages from the Bible that will support these nudges that God sometimes gives us.

Mark 1:30-31 *But Simon's wife's mother lay sick with a fever, and they told Him about her at once. So He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up, and immediately the fever left her. And she served them.*

We are at the beginning of Jesus' ministry. He is choosing His apostles. He arrives at Peter's family home where Peter's mother-in-law is suffering. Nobody, according to the text, asked Jesus to heal this woman. But Jesus heals the woman without anyone having shown faith by praying.

Mark 1:40-42 *Now a leper came to Him, imploring Him, kneeling down to Him and saying to Him, "If You are willing, You can make me clean." Then Jesus, moved with compassion, stretched out His hand and touched him, and said to him, "I am willing; be cleansed." As soon as He had spoken, immediately the leprosy left him, and he was cleansed.*

This example of the leper throwing himself on his knees before Jesus is typical of the example of a person who will beg God without showing faith to be healed. This leper begs Jesus saying: *"If you are willing, You can make me clean"*. It is easy to see that this man did not show faith in Jesus for his healing.

When you beg someone, it is impossible to show faith at the same time. Begging implies not knowing the outcome of the problem, but also not being sure that the problem will be solved. Moreover, we know that faith is a firm assurance, i.e. it is the opposite of what we have just said. It is therefore not possible to beg with faith, because these two attitudes are totally opposed to each other.

Then this man says that if Jesus wants, He can heal him. Clearly, he is not sure that he will be healed, because otherwise he would not have said: *"If you are willing..."*

So we can say that this leper believed that Jesus had the power to heal him, but that was it.

James says that the demons know that God exists and that He is all powerful, but this does not change anything for them. **(James 2:19)**

So this leper knew that Jesus could heal him if He wanted to, but he had no certainty whether Jesus would or not.

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Furthermore, the Bible does not say that Jesus said to him *"Your faith has healed you"* after He had healed him.

So this man had shown no faith, but Jesus healed him anyway.

Another circumstance is found a little further on, still in Mark's Gospel.

Mark 3:1-5 *And He entered the synagogue again, and a man was there who had a withered hand. So they watched Him closely, whether He would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse Him. And He said to the man who had the withered hand, "Step forward." Then He said to them, "Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?" But they kept silent. And when He had looked around at them with anger, being grieved by the hardness of their hearts, He said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." And he stretched it out, and his hand was restored as whole as the other.*

In this passage we see a man with a dry hand, yet he does not ask Jesus for anything. The Bible tells us that Jesus is confronted by the scribes and Pharisees in an attempt to trap Him. In response, He challenges this man with a withered hand and asks him to stretch out his hand. The man was healed instantly, without showing any faith, without even asking Jesus to heal him.

Another similar circumstance is found in:

Mark 4:36-40 *Now when they had left the multitude, they took Him along in the boat as He was. And other little boats were also with Him. And a great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that it was already filling. But He was in the stern, asleep on a pillow. And they awoke Him and said to Him, "Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?" Then He arose and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Peace, be still!" And the wind ceased and there was a great calm. But He said to them, "Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?"*

Jesus is in the same boat as His disciples. A storm is raging, and the boat begins to fill with water. The disciples are already in a somewhat advanced state of panic. Although they have already seen miracles, they do not have the reflex to pray. Their only reaction is to call Jesus for help. Again, the fact that they are certain to perish shows that they do not have an activated faith. Jesus confirms this after ordering the wind to stop, telling them that they had no faith.

So once again, Jesus comes to the rescue of people who have no faith, and who

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sometimes have not even asked for help.

Here is another interesting passage. One day a blind man is brought to Jesus. The Bible does not mention that this blind man asked for anything, and much less that he had to show faith by praying.

Mark 8:22-25 *Then He came to Bethsaida; and they brought a blind man to Him, and begged Him to touch him. So He took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the town. And when He had spit on his eyes and put His hands on him, He asked him if he saw anything. And he looked up and said, "I see men like trees, walking." Then He put His hands on his eyes again and made him look up. And he was restored and saw everyone clearly.*

Jesus takes him along, prays for him and the man gets his sight back, without him having to show any faith in praying.

This time we have another example where Jesus intervenes because His disciples cannot pray effectively.

Mark 9:14-29 *And when He came to the disciples, He saw a great multitude around them, and scribes disputing with them. Immediately, when they saw Him, all the people were greatly amazed, and running to Him, greeted Him. And He asked the scribes, "What are you discussing with them?" Then one of the crowd answered and said, "Teacher, I brought You my son, who has a mute spirit. And wherever it seizes him, it throws him down; he foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth, and becomes rigid. So I spoke to Your disciples, that they should cast it out, but they could not." He answered him and said, "O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? Bring him to Me." Then they brought him to Him. And when he saw Him, immediately the spirit convulsed him, and he fell on the ground and wallowed, foaming at the mouth. So He asked his father, "How long has this been happening to him?" And he said, "From childhood. And often he has thrown him both into the fire and into the water to destroy him. But if You can do anything, have compassion on us and help us." Jesus said to him, "If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes." Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!" When Jesus saw that the people came running together, He rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, "Deaf and dumb spirit, I command you, come out of him and enter him no more!" Then the spirit cried out, convulsed him greatly, and came out of him. And he became as one*

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dead, so that many said, "He is dead." But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose. And when He had come into the house, His disciples asked Him privately, "Why could we not cast it out?" So He said to them, "This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting."

I have deliberately put the whole context in this example so that everyone can take it into account. The fact is that Jesus' disciples tried to cast a demon out of this young child without success. When Jesus speaks at the end of this passage of *"this kind..."* He is speaking of this kind of unbelief, not this kind of demon. It is therefore a problem of faith on the part of the apostles, who have not been able to obtain any result from this prayer. Once again Jesus comes to their aid in order to teach them about this issue.

So we have seen a few passages in Scripture where people, more or less close to Jesus, had not shown faith and yet had their problem solved through prayer. Today Jesus has not changed, the Bible says that God does not change, His personality does not change according to how the day goes, or according to the attitude of people towards Him.

So as I said at the beginning of this topic, there are sometimes people who pray without showing faith, and have their prayers answered. I think we have all been in contact with someone who has experienced this, or we have experienced it ourselves at one time or another.

The problem is that often a majority of Christians make a spiritual rule out of their own experiences. They figure that because things happened this way once, then they assume that God works this way on a regular basis.

But this is not so!

I have met many Christians who think that the Christian life is all about praying, often in a panic, without expecting to actually see their prayers answered. But these people will tell me that they have seen their prayers answered in this way, and they will be right.

To say that a life of prayer is merely to have our prayers answered from time to time, without showing faith, is like saying that human life is to remain an immature child, dependent on his parents throughout his life.

Just because God comes to my rescue from time to time, does not mean that this is a normal attitude that God plans to have with me for the rest of my life!

As I said above, many times people think that because they have cried out or

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pleaded with God in their prayers, then this is the right way to go. God uses these little nudges in our lives to help us mature. These helps from God that we receive from time to time are there to propel us into a dimension where we will no longer need this help. They are therefore temporary.

Often these same people, because their prayers are not all answered, conclude that God only answers prayers from time to time. They make their personal experience with God a spiritual rule.

This is a devastating error because it traps us in lying thoughts.

As a result the majority of the Church of Christ thinks that this is the way things work in our life with God.

With time and a lack of teaching in the majority of the body of Christ, we have come to think that the solution is to beg God, and that prayers are only answered from time to time.

So just because God will occasionally help me with a little nudge, I should not make this a rule of life and turn this exceptional fact into a biblical doctrine. This is why many people have their prayers answered sometimes without having shown faith, or sometimes without even having prayed.

When we understand this we realise that God loves us so much that He gives us all the means to grow in the activation of our faith. It is therefore not correct to think that faith is not always necessary or that it is not required in order to have our prayers answered. It is also not at all to our advantage to live without learning to activate our faith and to live on 'nudges' from God. It is far more beneficial to learn to grow in maturity, activating our faith more and more to be self-sufficient in Jesus Christ than going through life questioning God or wondering if our prayer will be answered.

This kind of attitude and way of thinking will only lead us to have a false image of God. Most Christians who live in this dimension I have just described often live a frustrated Christian life, not knowing what it means to activate their faith.

CHAPTER 2

THE FAITH AND THE DISPENSATIONS

There is one parameter that often misleads us, whether in matters of faith, which is the subject of this study, but also in many other areas of our life with God.

To put it simply, we can say that there are three main periods in the history of the Bible that should not be mixed up or confused.

- Before the Law of Moses.
- During the Law of Moses.
- During the period of grace, and therefore after the cross.

Of course not everything is totally different in these three eras, but there are nevertheless things that were in force in some of them and not in others. There are also situations that can arise in some of these time periods that are impossible in others. That is why when reading the Bible it is important to have a clear view of these three main time frame (called dispensations).

Of course we could divide these three periods into other dispensations, but as I said before we will keep it simple.

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What does not help to have a clear vision of these dispensations is the fact that the books of the Bible are not necessarily classed in the order of these dispensation periods, or in a chronological order of time. As a result, many Christians are a bit lost if no one explains it to them.

For example, when we read Genesis, we may have the impression that the whole Bible is set in chronological order, but this is not the case at all.

The Book of Job is a perfect example. It is located between the book of Esther and the book of Psalms which are part of the period of the Law of Moses. We might then assume, if not checked, that the story of Job takes place during the period of the Law. This is what I myself believed for years when I was a young Christian, simply because I did not bother to check. Today the means available are much more significant than when I was a young Christian. But I had foolishly concluded that the book of Job was taking place during the time of the Law. Especially at the beginning of the book of Job, you can read that Job made sacrifices for his children. So I naturally thought that if Job made sacrifices for his children, and if furthermore the book of Job was included in the sequence of books being under the Law, then the story of Job must have taken place under the Law of Moses.

But I was wrong!

The Bible shows us that sacrifices were in force long before the Law of Moses, and that even the Hebrew people made sacrifices long before God established His Law through Moses. We won't go into the details of the sacrifices, but this example is there to show us that it is important to check the periods in which we study a passage of the Bible.

With this in mind, we can now begin to look at the subject that interests us today: faith.

We can see that Jesus spoke about faith when He was on earth. Take for example the following passage:

Luke 7:9 *When Jesus heard these things, He marveled at him, and turned around and said to the crowd that followed Him, "I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel!"*

From these words of Jesus, millions of Christians in the world still assume that faith is something that grows within us. They think that everyone receives more or less faith by a gift of the Holy Spirit, because in another passage we speak of the gift of faith:

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1 Corinthians 12:8-9 *for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit,...*

These two passages are often used to support the theory that God gives more or less faith to each of His children, but also that our faith can be increased by the knowledge of His Word or by a particular anointing.

Another passage that supports this is that of the disciples of Jesus asking Him to increase their faith. This passage can be found in:

Luke 17:5 *And the apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith."*

Some may say that this is after all three quotations in the Bible, two of which Jesus Himself made a comment that would suggest that faith would be different for Christians depending on certain parameters.

Yet the Bible shows us that the idea that we all have different faiths is not entirely accurate.

Let's take these three Scriptures one by one and breakdown them to see what exactly they say.

Luke 7:9 *When Jesus heard these things, He marveled at him, and turned around and said to the crowd that followed Him, "I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel!"*

I often explain to our Bible college students that the first thing to do when you want to understand a text in the Bible is to set the context. Here, when Jesus speaks to this centurion, we are still under the Law; grace and all its effects are not yet available to human beings since Jesus has not yet died on the cross and risen again.

Jesus talks to some Jewish elders about a Roman centurion who wants Jesus to come and heal one of his servants. This centurion did not want himself to go to Jesus because he did not feel worthy. We won't go into the details of this servant's healing, but rather we will focus on what Jesus said about this centurion: the centurion had great faith.

If we take the original word translated as "such great", this word gives the notion of quantity. So Jesus is really talking about a great faith in terms of quantity.

But this is often where a majority of Christians stumble. It is undeniable that Jesus speaks in this passage of a great deal of faith. Therefore, many Christians

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think that because Jesus said that this centurion had a great measure of faith, then think today that people may receive more or less faith from God.

But we must not forget that we are (when Jesus speaks) in the period that precede grace. At the time Jesus spoke to this centurion, faith as it is today for all those who are born again, was not yet available. We were still under the Law of Moses, and at that time faith could only be acquired on the basis of our own will.

Hebrews chapter 11 shows us many examples of Old Testament characters who had to show faith, and who did so on the basis of their own decision. For example:

- Abel deliberately chose to offer a better sacrifice than his brother.
- Noah deliberately chose by faith to believe that God would actually send a flood.
- Abraham chose to leave by faith when God asked him to go to an unknown land.
- Moses chose to believe by his faith that serving God would be far more beneficial than being the son of King Pharaoh's sister.

We could go on and on, but this is simply to show that in the Old Testament faith could only be acquired and manifested by man's own will. Each person had to decide whether or not to manifest their faith. Today things are a little different, as we will see later on.

CHAPTER 3

THE MEASURE OF FAITH

Luke 17:5 *And the apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith."*

Again, many people use this passage as an example to claim that all Christians have a different faith, received from God. Thus many think that our faith can be increased by God. These same people also think that all Christians are not equally equipped, and that all have received a different faith according to certain criteria.

But if we look closely to this passage, it does not say that God increases our faith. It was the apostles who asked this. But let's see what Jesus answers them.

Luke 17:6 *So the Lord said, "If you have faith as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, 'Be pulled up by the roots and be planted in the sea,' and it would obey you."*

It is now well established that Jesus did not say that He would increase the faith of His apostles. Nor did He say, *"I will pray that you will receive more faith"*. But then why didn't Jesus provide the apostles with more faith? Yet several passages seem to show us that there is great faith in some, and little faith in others. So it would seem that there are different levels of faith.

Let's look at some of the passages that talk about this.

Matthew 6:30 *Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?*

Matthew 8:10 *When Jesus heard it, He marveled, and said to those who followed, "Assuredly, I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel!"*

Matthieu 8:26 *But He said to them, "Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?" Then He arose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm.*

Matthew 14:31 *And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him, and said to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?"*

Matthew 16:8 *But Jesus, being aware of it, said to them, "O you of little faith, why do you reason among yourselves because you have brought no bread?"*

2 Corinthians 10:15 *...not boasting of things beyond measure, that is, in other men's labors, but having hope, that as your faith is increased, we shall be greatly enlarged by you in our sphere,...*

These few passages show us that it would seem possible to fluctuate in our level of faith. There are obviously examples where some people show more or less faith.

But can we necessarily say that faith is received at different levels?
Does this mean that some Christians have received more or less faith?
No, not at all!

There is a difference between receiving faith and using the faith we have received. This fact is crucial in understanding the exact mechanism of faith in a Christian.

Romans 12:3 *For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.*

Paul informs us about this very important point. Many have taken for granted that God has given a different measure of faith to each person according to

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certain criteria. But on closer analysis this is not quite what Paul said that day. Paul is explaining that Israel is a hardened people, who have refused Christ. Because of this hardening, the non-Jews have enjoyed the grace of Christ.

Does this mean that the Jews were “sacrificed” for the salvation of the non-Jews?

Not at all!

But simply that because the Jews at that time refused Christ, their messiah, salvation has become available to non-Jews as well.

So Paul is talking about not thinking too highly of ourselves. It is of course not a question of diminishing ourselves, but simply of having the right appreciation of our person according to our position in Christ. This is something that Paul teaches to everyone, no matter what their spiritual level or years of conversion. Everyone is concerned and everyone is encouraged to provide the same result of constant mind renewal.

How can we achieve this?

With our faith! With that measure of faith that God has given to everyone.

This measure is strictly the same for everyone. Everyone has received the same measure of faith. If this were not the case, then it would be inconceivable that Paul would encourage everyone to achieve the same results. Paul did not say, “*Do as you are able according to the faith you have been given*”. Instead, he gives the same overall goal for all, according to the same measure or dose of faith that has been given to each person.

The English Standard Version is the closest to the original text, it says this:

Romans 12:3 (ESV) *For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.*

In this translation it is much more obvious that this measure is strictly identical for everyone. It is much clearer in this translation that there is only one type of measure in the matter of faith.

In order to convince ourselves of this, if it were still necessary, let us take a look at an interlinear Bible. This is a tool that I often recommend to all our Bible college students, as it often gives a deeper insight into the text and the author's thinking.

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Here is what this translation of the original interlinear Bible says “word for word” in the passage we are interested in:

Romans 12:3 (Interlinear Bible) *I say for through the grace – having been given to me to everyone – being among you not to be high-minded above what it behooves [you] to think but to think so as – to be sober-minded et each as – God has allotted a measure of faith*

I am well aware that few of you have ever used an interlinear Bible, and that it can be a bit confusing at first. But it is nevertheless a great tool that I recommend to everyone, because it often highlights some of the translation errors.

Again we can see that Paul is talking about one measure that is the identical, not several types of measures of faith. Furthermore, at that time, when people spoke of using a measure, it was for a specific purpose.

In Paul's time, in the 50s AD, when the epistle to the Romans was written, the sellers at the markets used a measure. This measure was a kind of container. It had a specific volume and was therefore strictly identical for each customer. In this way both customer and seller were assured of selling or receiving the same volume according to the price given or offered. All customers could buy a measure of oil, for example, or a measure of grain, and they were sure to receive the same volume equally.

The measure was an instrument that made possible to measure out exactly the same volume of food, for example.

A quick look at the original word translated as “measure” in this passage of **Romans 12:3** is the Greek word METRON. It gave rise to the word 'metre' in English. So it is now very clear that this 'measure' Paul is talking about was an instrument for determining a given volume. With this clarification, it becomes easy to understand that Paul is talking about one type of measure and not several types of measure. It is therefore understood that God has given strictly the same volume of faith to all those who are born again. No one can say that they have received more or less faith from God.

This notion is also repeated in these two passages below.

2 Peter 1:1 (NIV) *Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ have received a faith as precious as ours:*

Jude 1:3 *Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our*

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common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.

With this fact now established, we can go a little deeper into understanding the faith.

Those who know me know that I do not avoid to mention certain texts in the Bible that might seem to contradict my teaching. On the contrary, I like to point them out in order to explain that the Bible does not contradict itself.

What can we do with these passages quoted above?

There are a few passages that might make us think the opposite of what I have just explained, namely, that we all have the same measure of faith.

Matthew 6:30 *Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?*

Matthew 8:10 *When Jesus heard it, He marveled, and said to those who followed, "Assuredly, I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel!"*

Matthew 8:26 *But He said to them, "Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?" Then He arose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm.*

Matthew 14:31 *And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him, and said to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?"*

Matthew 16:8 *But Jesus, being aware of it, said to them, "O you of little faith, why do you reason among yourselves because you have brought no bread?"*

2 Corinthians 10:15 *...not boasting of things beyond measure, that is, in other men's labors, but having hope, that as your faith is increased, we shall be greatly enlarged by you in our sphere,...*

As I said earlier, there is a huge difference between receiving a volume of faith, and the volume I choose to use in relation to what is already in me based on my experience.

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There is a passage about Jesus that will shed some light on this.

Luke 2:52 *And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.*

Luke's Gospel tells us that Jesus was growing, or increasing in wisdom, stature and grace. We know that Jesus was not contaminated by sin in a hereditary way as we all are. He was God and had that perfection in Him. He was tempted as we are, but He never fail. Jesus being God, He was wisdom, He was grace, and His stature was perfect. Everything was already in Him. But He still needed to put all these things into practice. He had to activate wisdom and grace one day for the first time for example, never having manifested them before in this human body. He had to grow up, i.e. choose to activate, or manifest for the first time His wisdom, His faith, etc...

Of course He had no difficulty in doing this because Jesus was wisdom, He was grace, perfection, etc. He did not have to remove sin by faith as we had to do at our new birth; but Jesus had to grow, He had to learn in His human body to manifest the whole fruit of the Spirit, to express the complete nature of God which was already in Him.

It is the same for us today: faith is already in us and we must choose to activate it, just as Jesus chose to activate wisdom, faith, love, etc.

2 Peter 1:1 (NIV) *Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ have received a faith as precious as ours:*

Jude 1:3 *Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.*

If we take the original word translated as “increased”, it is the Greek word PROKOPTO. This word does not give a notion of gradual growth at all. The most accurate picture given is that of day and night. The word PROKOPTO is used to describe the advancement of day or the advancement of night. Today we know that this phenomenon of day and night is linked to our planet, which rotates on itself, and around this physical source of light that is the sun. This phenomenon of day and night is therefore complete, it lacks nothing. This rotation of the earth does not need to receive any additional element to function in its perfection.

The same is true of Jesus who was increasing in wisdom. It was not that He was

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to receive wisdom from God, it was not that God was to send Him a few doses of wisdom as He grew.

No, Jesus had received in Him all that was in the nature of God. But He still had to grow as a child using all these things.

And it is the same for us today with regard to our faith. That is why we read in some passages that there is “little faith”, at other times “great faith”, and at still other times “increased” faith. All these examples concern people who have more or less activated the faith that was already in them. We can add the fact that in the examples we have quoted from **Matthew 6:30, 8:10, 8:26, 14:31** and **16:8**, this measure of faith had not yet been given because the sacrifice on the cross had not taken place.

But we can speak of this passage from:

2 Corinthians 10:15 *...not boasting of things beyond measure, that is, in other men's labors, but having hope, that as your faith is increased, we shall be greatly enlarged by you in our sphere,...*

In this case, the measure of faith had been assigned to each person. Paul seems at first to say that faith could increase.

Yes, this is true.

But this does not mean that God gives faith gradually.

Other translations give us a more accurate view.

2 Corinthians 10:15 (NIV) *Neither do we go beyond our limits by boasting of work done by others. Our hope is that, as your faith continues to grow, our sphere of activity among you will greatly expand,...*

2 Corinthians 10:15 (Contemporary English Version) *We don't brag about what others have done, as if we had done those things ourselves. But I hope that as you become stronger in your faith, we will be able to reach many more of the people around you. That has always been our goal.*

2 Corinthians 10:15 (God's Word Translation) *How can we brag about things done by others that can't be evaluated? We have confidence that as your faith grows, you will think enough of us to give us the help we need to carry out our assignment—*

2 Corinthians 10:15 (The Message) *We're not barging in on the rightful work of others, interfering with their ministries, demanding a place in the sun with them.*

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What we're hoping for is that as your lives grow in faith, you'll play a part within our expanding work.

We can see from these different translations that there is no notion of receiving more, but that we have received faith, and that this faith already in us, can be more or less activated according to our knowledge, experience, and desire.

Faith is a way of thinking. It is not something that can be broken down into small parts, as we might do when we experience various feelings. Faith is not a feeling at all.

When the apostles asked Jesus to increase their faith, Jesus did not say, *"All right boys, sit down here, I'm going to pray for you that God will give you more faith"*.

Luke 17:5-6 *And the apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith." So the Lord said, "If you have faith as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, 'Be pulled up by the roots and be planted in the sea,' and it would obey you."*

Nowhere do we see that Jesus would have increased the faith of the apostles. On the contrary, He answers them in a positive way that this potential is already in them.

If we take the original word in this passage translated as 'you have', it is the Greek word ECHO.

This word gives, among other things, a notion of "considering as holding".

We could therefore read this passage in other words as follows:

"If you considered that you already have faith in you like a mustard seed, you would say to this sycamore tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it would obey you".

So Jesus tells them that they don't need more faith, they just need to learn to use the faith they have already received.

Some may say to me, *"But Franck, why did this same Jesus also speak in the same Gospel about people of little faith?"*

Luke 12:28 *If then God so clothes the grass, which today is in the field and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will He clothe you, O you of little faith?*

Here again we can see that in the original text what is translated as "you of little faith" means "believing too little". So it is not a question of receiving more in

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order to have better results, but simply of using more of what we have already received.

Some other English translations give us another angle that goes in this direction.

Luke 12:28 (Living Bible) *And if God provides clothing for the flowers that are here today and gone tomorrow, don't you suppose that he will provide clothing for you, you doubters?*

Luke 12:28 (The Passion Translation) *If God can clothe the fields and meadows with grass and flowers, can he not clothe you as well, O struggling one with so many doubts?*

Here again, there is this notion of using what is already in us, and not of receiving more.

This thought that God would give more or less faith to each one and that if we don't have good results in our prayers it would mean that we need to receive more, is really a demonic craftiness. It is definitely a thought that makes Christians go around in circles in order to prevent them from obtaining what is best for them.

Think about it for a moment: God has given us all strictly the same measure of faith. We have all been given faith in its totality, for faith is not divisible. So the point is to learn to use that measure of faith that is in me.

For example, if a person thinks that he is not getting good result in his prayer life because he has not received enough faith, he will ask God for more faith.

Will he receive more faith because of this?

Not at all!

Why not?

Simply because he cannot receive more, since he has already received faith in its entirety, in its completeness.

So what will this person do?

He will simply go around in circles repeating month after month, year after year the same prayer: *"Oh God, please give me more faith, in Jesus' name!"*

But we cannot get what we have already received.

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Thinking that he or she must receive more to see results, that person will never move forward.

And this is unfortunately the case for millions of Christians around the world. They ask God to give them something they have already received. And because they are not aware that they have already got it, they are not going to use it, and if they don't use it, then nothing will happen.

It is by doing this analysis that we realise that this demonic deception is really harmful and paralyzes our spiritual growth.

The image to which we could compare this situation is that of people who sometimes swim towards the shore. They are sure that they have no footing, they are tired and can't go any further. Then they start to struggle, they are sure that if they stop swimming they will sink. Sometimes impatience, even panic, takes hold of them. Only one thought is active in their memory: *"I have no footing, if I stop swimming I might drown!"* After a while, exhausted, they let themselves sink, and realise that they have a foot on the bottom.

A bad knowledge of things can lead us to paralyse our faith.

Satan knows very well that he cannot do anything against us. He knows that the main way to reach us is to make us collaborate with him without us noticing it. This is why he often uses lies that he tries to make us swallow by different means so that we go unknowingly in his direction. As I often say: The more we know the truth of God's Word, the less likely we are to fall into deceitful traps.

It is important to distinguish between the faith we have received from God according to the Bible, and the faith we express in our new life in Christ. Of course it is the same faith, but its application will be different depending on the passage in the Bible. If, for example, I think that every time faith is mentioned in the Bible, it is the faith I have received from God, in the sense of the measure He has given me, then I will be making misinterpretations that will paralyse my spiritual growth.

Romans 14:1 *Receive one who is weak in the faith, but not to disputes over doubtful things.*

This word of Paul quoted above may lead us to think that some have received a more or less strong faith. But in this particular case, we are talking about using the faith we have already received.

Even if I have received all the faith I need, all the faith I may need to see the greatest miracles, I can still use it in different percentages. God gives me faith, and I decide how much faith I will use by activating more or less of my faith in

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different situations in my life. God gives us real potential, and it is then our responsibility to activate it to different degrees according to our choice.

CHAPTER 4

THE GIFT OF FAITH

There is another way of thinking that misleads many Christians concerning faith. It is about the *gift of faith*.

A large majority of Christians think that the gift of faith is a kind of “super faith”, a faith far superior to that which most have received from God, and which propels people into super powerful results. But this kind of idea is in total contradiction with everything we have just discussed above. One of the passages that some people use to feed this kind of idea is this:

1 Corinthians 12:9-11 *to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.*

Often these same people say that the Holy Spirit gives out like faith bonuses to some.

The gift of faith is not a “super faith” at all.

The Bible says that gifts are given to Christians to build them up, that is, to strengthen them in their spiritual life.

1 Corinthians 14:12 *Even so you, since you are zealous for spiritual gifts, let it be for the edification of the church that you seek to excel.*

I will not go into details about the various gifts, but simply mention that the gifts given by the Holy Spirit are given for the edification of Christians and for their improvement. A person who has received the gift of faith, for example, will be able to teach his brothers and sisters how to use their faith in an efficient way. The gift of faith is a gift that serves to give the Church a good use of faith. In practical terms, a person who receives a gift of faith will be able to help his brothers and sisters to activate the faith they have already received.

As I said earlier, faith is indivisible, it does not take more faith to heal a cold than to heal cancer. We will see this point a little later. But what is certain is that the gift of faith is an ability, a supernatural competence coming from the Holy Spirit that will allow the person who receives this gift to bring out the full potential of his brothers and sisters in terms of faith.

This person who has a gift of faith will therefore be able to present things from an angle that will perfectly suit the one who has difficulty activating his faith. He or she will be able, through this gift, to trigger awareness, to shed light on points that were previously inaccessible to the person who benefits from this gift.

When Jesus spoke of faith as a mustard seed, it was not without reason. We often think that faith has to be huge, of enormous volume to achieve satisfactory results. But there is this rule that Jesus gave when He spoke of faith as a mustard seed. *"If you have faith as a mustard seed..."* means that if we could estimate the volume of faith, then one that would be similar to a mustard seed would be enough to move a mountain. A mustard seed is about 1 millimetre in diameter.

This shows us that faith is not a matter of volume, but of activation. If we were to illustrate what Jesus said, we could say this: the faith we have received is very small, but very powerful if we activate it. So a tiny millimetre of faith is enough to achieve even what you would never need (moving a mountain).

In the same way, if I fail to activate my faith, a tiny lack will be enough to not produce a positive result, and vice versa, if I don't have a result, it will be enough to activate a tiny dose of my faith to have a perfect result.

So it's very encouraging, if I haven't seen any results in one of my prayers, to know that I'll just have to activate a tiny measure of my faith, in order to have a positive result.

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Theories that say it takes a large amount of faith to deal with a large problem are wrong. If you could put faith in a nutshell, you would say that it is concentrated to the extreme, less than a drop is enough to overturn a mountain!

I remember when we were in our local church in France, where we spent about 20 years, there were members who had a reputation for great faith. Various ideas about faith were heard. These people who had a reputation for great faith were most often present at all the meetings, whether it was Sunday morning, Sunday afternoon, Tuesday evening, Friday evening, and sometimes other days of the week for prayer meetings. I particularly remember a very kind lady, who always formulated her prayers in beautiful phrases, with such well-chosen words. Mostly she used expressions found in the Bible. She used the Psalms a lot, and quite a few other passages that she quoted in her prayers out loud at the prayer meetings. I must say that I was particularly impressed by these prayers which sounded almost 'perfect' to me. At that time I thought that faith was mainly expressed in beautiful words in our prayers. So in turn I sometimes tried to quote passages from the Bible that I remembered when I prayed aloud to the whole congregation. More often than not I would pick out certain passages from the Bible and use them to try and sway God towards my cause. Sometimes I felt as if I had signed a contract with God and had to keep reminding Him of the terms:

"Lord remember! ... "

"My God, I beg you..."

"Father do not leave me..."

"Your Word says that you do not leave the oppressed..."

"Please come and increase my faith..."

"You say in your Word that you give grace to the humble, so I humble myself before you now..."

"You brought Daniel's three friends out of the furnace, so get me out of this problem!"

I could make this list way longer without any problem. I remember using all of these phrases and more, but looking back on it today, I had a thought in the back of my mind that made me uncomfortable. I just wanted to be like everyone else. I had the distinct impression that I was pushing God against a wall, so to speak. It was as if I had signed this contract with Him, and He was forgetful or deaf, and I had to keep reminding Him of His promises. It bothered me deeply, but I did it

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anyway because I didn't know any other way or any other wording.

We often heard in the teachings that we had to wait for God to come and if He had so decided, perhaps He would give us more faith. I thought, and almost all the others with me, that it was God who distributed faith in greater or lesser doses to the most deserving people.

We were taught in some ways that we might even have to suffer in the trial God sent if we wanted to have more faith in our lives. The more trials God sent us, the more our faith would increase.

But not many people were candidates for this kind of misguided treatment, for what is the point of living in suffering to remove some problems from our own lives on the one hand, if it is to add more problems of suffering? For more details on trials, see my study *“Trials, temptations and persecutions, do not confuse them”*.

Finally I was going in circles. The occasional erroneous teaching, coupled with the fact that I was probably too lazy at that time to study my Bible in depth for more than an hour a week, did not help me to understand that the gift of faith was not at all a “super faith” superior to that of others.

What a joy it is today to be able to understand that God has given exactly the same measure of faith to each of us. To understand also that He has even foreseen that some would have difficulty in activating their faith, and for this reason He has distributed gifts to brothers and sisters to help us use what we have already received. What a love!

It is now easy to understand that the gifts are in no way a superiority over your brothers and sisters, but on the contrary an opportunity to serve your brothers and sisters, helping them to exploit all the potential they have already received.

CHAPTER 5

HOW DOES FAITH WORK?

Before I understood how faith works, and before the Holy Spirit taught me, I found it very difficult to imagine faith. I couldn't figure out what it was.

Was it some kind of spiritual matter that we received?

Was it a supernatural force?

Was it something that we developed in ourselves?

In short, I was in total confusion about it.

But it's like many other areas of our lives, when we can't find a satisfactory explanation because our relationship with God is not what it should be, we end up putting the matter aside, moving on with our lives. Of course at that time my relationship with God was a selfish one, only self-centred. When I say self-centred, I mean that my main concern was for myself. 90% of my prayers were about my own life. I had not yet understood that the Gospel was there to transform me into the image of God, not just to improve my life. No one had ever told me that salvation was more than just a passport to heaven. No one had told me that faith was the compulsory link in my life with God, and that

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without that connection I couldn't achieve anything, either for myself or for others.

Often some Christians have this annoying habit of putting people in boxes or compartments. I have lost count of the number of times in the early years of my Christian life that I heard phrases like *"This one has a passion for souls!"* So with these kinds of phrases I thought that each person had assignments that God gave them. I thought that we were given a faith for certain areas in which God intended us to excel.

Not long ago, we were having friends over for dinner, and we were talking about what God was calling us to do. So in conversation I said that according to **Mark 16:17-18**, we are all called to spread the Gospel around us. And one of the persons there said to me, *"Yes, of course you say that because you are an evangelist"*. I told him that no, I am not an evangelist, and that just because I speak in the streets and pray for the people around me does not mean that I am an evangelist. I told him that I do what all Christians should do. I don't feel like an evangelist more than something else. This is just to show that often people put us in boxes with labels. This prevents us from using our faith properly thinking that certain areas of salvation are only for a part of Christ's Church. That is why when I did not yet understand what faith was, and thinking that God was not calling me to reach out to others, I no longer sought to know what faith could be. I had put aside this question unanswered in a remote corner of my memory, namely *"What is faith?"*

This is why today at TRGN, I consider it very important that all our teachings are easy to understand, profound and accessible to all. It is with good teaching that you can save decades of useless efforts. I really wish someone had explained to me what faith was at that time, it would have saved me a lot of time.

When I wrote above that God has already given us a measure of faith that is similar to each one, I understand that some may ask *"But when is this faith given to me? How do I know that it is in my possession?"*

This is a question that is unfortunately rarely addressed, and since people do not know in practice when and how this faith comes to them, they are usually a bit lost. As a result, they often adhere to the misconceptions we have already mentioned.

Faith is simply a way of thinking. It is not a substance, it is not received as something tangible.

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Faith is a sense of our spirit.

When we receive this measure of faith that God gives us, it is not a portion, it is not a measure that God takes from the spiritual world to give us. By this I mean that this measure of faith that God gives us does not come from a huge container into which He would scoop up the same amount for each of us. Nor is it a huge cauldron in which faith would bubble up, into which God would come and dip a measure to distribute it to each Christian. This might make you smile a little, but how many Christians have this kind of image in their minds, thinking that God draws faith from this vessel and throws it on the heads of His children.

Often certain stories in the Bible have a great influence. Many Christians read, for example, in the book of Revelation that angels pour out the wrath of God from golden bowls or also about those golden bowls brought before Jesus in heaven which are the prayers of the saints. It is important not to get caught up in the imagery of certain passages. It is not because God acts in a certain way in a given situation that He will act in the same way all the time. I will close this parenthesis and return to faith.

Faith is therefore nothing more or less than a way of thinking. Some may say to me *“Really? Is that all it is? Just a way of thinking?”*

Yes, faith is nothing more than a way of thinking.

If we look a little more closely, thought is at the origin of every action, every word, every attitude. Nothing can come to life without a prior thought. This thought will be in us, more or less obvious, more or less lengthy, but it will always be present. The thought is what gives birth to any change or affirmation in our life.

It is easy to understand now why God has given us a new way of thinking which is faith. With this way of thinking, faith, we have access to everything that God gives us. Faith is the limitless opening of the inheritance that God has already given us. By giving us another way of thinking, which is faith, God allows us to have universal access to the whole spiritual world.

It is because thinking is the source of all change in our lives that God wished to give us, not a portion of the equation, a portion of the chain, but total authority, freedom of movement and action so that we have a 360 degree angle of action.

When God created the earth and the heavens, how did He do it?

Did He use faith?

Yes of course God used His faith.

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Did God need faith?

Yes, we will see that God also uses faith for Himself. The only difference is that faith has always been natural for God.

In this process of the creation of the earth and the heavens, we will see that faith was prior to all things so that God could create the earth and the heavens.

Genesis 1:3-4 *Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good; and God divided the light from the darkness.*

Genesis 1:6-7 *Then God said, "Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters." Thus God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament; and it was so.*

Genesis 1:9-10 *Then God said, "Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear"; and it was so. And God called the dry land Earth, and the gathering together of the waters He called Seas. And God saw that it was good.*

Genesis 1:11-12 *Then God said, "Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb that yields seed, and the fruit tree that yields fruit according to its kind, whose seed is in itself, on the earth"; and it was so. And the earth brought forth grass, the herb that yields seed according to its kind, and the tree that yields fruit, whose seed is in itself according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.*

Genesis 1:14-15 *Then God said, "Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs and seasons, and for days and years; and let them be for lights in the firmament of the heavens to give light on the earth"; and it was so.*

Genesis 1:20-21 *Then God said, "Let the waters abound with an abundance of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the face of the firmament of the heavens." So God created great sea creatures and every living thing that moves, with which the waters abounded, according to their kind, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.*

Genesis 1:24-25 *Then God said, "Let the earth bring forth the living creature according to its kind: cattle and creeping thing and beast of the earth, each according to its kind"; and it was so. And God made the beast of the earth according to its kind, cattle according to its kind, and everything that creeps on*

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the earth according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.

Genesis 1:26-27 *Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.*

If God had to, and still has to, use faith, then faith is not an obstacle that God would put in our way so that things would be a little more difficult to obtain. On the contrary, faith is a springboard to seeing the supernatural fulfilled in our lives.

CHAPTER 6

IMAGINARY OR IMAGINATION?

Faith is the ability to imagine, from the spiritual world, a very real situation through my spirit, so that it comes into being in the earthly or tangible world in which I am.

We often tend to think that everything we imagine is a fairy tale. This is because the vast majority of people use their imagination only for utopian things. As a result, imagination is overused or reduced to its simplest interpretation.

Just as we have the ability to imagine with our soul, we also have the ability to imagine with our spirit.

Most people often confuse imagination with the imaginary. These two states are quite similar, but have different definitions.

Imagination is the ability to picture a real thing, using our thoughts. This real fact can then come to life depending on my decision and my involvement in it.

The imaginary is the conception of an idea, real or unreal, but its particularity is that it will always remain at the stage of thought. The imaginary never comes to life except in thought. The imaginary never comes to life in the tangible world.

We can say that the major difference between these two states is that one will

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eventually produce a tangible fact, and the other will always remain in the state of a thought. This is why it is important not to confuse imagination and imaginary. Both start from thought, but one will remain in the state of thought, while the other will go as far as an act, a word, etc...

Imagination and imaginary are therefore two different states, one stopping at the level of thought, and the other going as far as action.

We know that when we are born again, we have two entities capable of producing an imagination, capable of imagining, of expressing an idea in thought. These two entities are the soul and the spirit. For more details on the soul and the spirit see my study *"The Spirit, Soul and Body"*.

What is the difference between the imagination of my soul and that of my spirit?

To put it simply, I would like to quickly remind you that since we were born again, our spirit is perfect, it is in direct contact with the Holy Spirit. Our spirit is willing to follow what God says, it never sins.

The main characteristic of our soul is that it is weak. It finds it difficult to keep good resolutions, and it needs to have its thoughts regularly turned to God, encouraged by our spirit, in order to stand firm in the face of certain temptations. The Bible calls this process the renewing of the mind.

So these are the main differences between the personality of my soul and the personality of my spirit, if I may say so.

It is now easy to understand that our faith must start from our spirit and not from our soul.

I understand that sometimes you hear Christians talking about faith as something you can express about anything and everything. I have often even heard teachings saying that there is the faith of God and the faith that we can express ourselves. Sometimes we hear people say for example, *"I have faith in you"*. But the faith that the Bible speaks of has nothing to do with the faith that we can express about anything other than faith in God.

This is where you make the difference between faith that you express with your spirit and faith that you try to express with your soul.

So sometimes I may think I am expressing faith, but if I am trying to express my faith with my soul, then I won't see much happening.

In order to be clear, I will have to differentiate between my soul and my spirit. The two are often confused, as the perception of my soul and my spirit can seem

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very similar, especially if you have not been taught about them. For more details on this subject, see my study entitled *“Managing my whole being with my spirit”*. I can think with my spirit and with my soul, I can express myself with my spirit or with my soul. I can pray with my spirit or with my soul too, but the results will be very different.

Now we understand that distinguishing between these two entities is not always easy if we are not used to differentiating between them.

Of course we can do all these things I just said with our spirit or with our soul, but then some people might say to me *“Franck, if I can do all these things independently with my spirit or with my soul, then why am I going to bother making a difference between one and the other, if I can do the same thing with both anyway?”*

To this I would reply that yes of course, if I can do exactly the same things with my spirit as with my soul, then yes there would be no point in bothering to differentiate between the two. But I can certainly express the same things with my spirit or with my soul, but the result will be the opposite.

Why is that?

Simply because even though my soul is regularly renewed, it is still weak. Moreover, God communicates with me through my spirit.

Romans 8:16 *The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,...*

When the Holy Spirit speaks, He speaks to my spirit. Therefore, it is with my spirit that I must express my faith.

What will happen if I use my soul to express my faith?

Well, in most cases nothing will happen.

My soul is naturally inclined towards that which goes against God, i.e. sin. Should I therefore make this a fatality and hide behind this fact?

Not at all!

When I try to express a thought of faith with my soul, doubt will very quickly get in the way. This doubt will quickly come to make me abandon this thought of faith that I had decided to express by various means. This is why it is with my spirit that I must express my faith, and not with my soul.

We will come back to this point of doubt a little later.

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I think the area of the Christian life where people find it hardest to see growing success is the area of faith.

I remember as a young Christian having to accept the thought that faith doesn't elicit anything more from me, except to believe. Very often, when faced with a succession of failures, I would think that I had to do this or that in order to have my prayers answered. On top of that, some Christians I talked to sometimes told me that maybe I still had sins in my life, or that I didn't read the Bible enough. Of course it's good to have no sins in your life, just as it's good to study the Bible regularly, but just because I still sin regularly on the same things doesn't mean that my prayers are not answered. I have unfortunately believed this kind of nonsense for a long time, which has caused me to lose precious time in growing my life with God.

Should we therefore not be concerned about the sins in our lives, and not try to live in God-like holiness?

Not at all, that is not my point at all.

Entering into a holiness of life and sinning less and less is just the normal process of every Christian life, no one is exempt from it. But what I am saying is that it is faith that is the driving force and that will make our prayers happen, not our holiness of life.

Many Christians today have not yet understood this. They think that God waits until we are perfect, or rather until we have reached a level that they find satisfactory and that God approves of, before our prayers are answered. This kind of thinking is destructive, because if God were to answer our prayers because of a minimum of holiness in our lives, then hardly anyone would be answered in their lives. Christians who think this way go from failure to failure. Then these repeated failures produce more or less avowed frustration, and this frustration becomes like a screen between God and them.

It is easy to take a simple example to illustrate my point. I can't count the number of times I've seen Christians go out into the streets, into various places, to pray for sick people. They saw results, some people walked away healed. So the first reflex of most people who see this is to say that these Christians who prayed must have a holy life, and that God is pleased with all the areas of their life. Unfortunately, I have lost count of the number of times that some of these people who were praying in the streets and so on, have displayed their less than glorious lives on social media. These people obviously did not understand what a holy life meant. Yet these same people were seeing people healed in many of their outings. And clearly God was not okay with some areas of their personal lives.

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Am I saying that a life of holiness will not be an obstacle to a life of faith?

Not at all!

It is obvious that the more I live in a life of sin, the more these sins will eventually become an obstacle to the expression of my faith. But it is nevertheless possible to manage to activate our faith to a minimum without living a life of holiness.

Faith reacts to the fact of believing, holiness of life helps to activate more faith.

Faith is the one and only factor that brings our prayers into this tangible world. God has given us all the same measure of faith by His grace, not by any merit. No one can claim to have more than others by merit.

The results we get from expressing our faith are due to the fact that we simply believe, and not necessarily because God likes our lifestyle.

I understand that this may come as a surprise to many, but when you think about it, it is all based on undeserved grace. We are saved not because we are good, but because God loves us. In the same way, our prayers are answered because they are in accordance with God's will, and because we believe. This is why we can sometimes observe born again people, who obviously have not understood the harmfulness of sin in their lives, and yet have certain results in their prayers.

I must say that this is not common either, because in many cases people who do not care about sin and its harmfulness in their lives often find it very difficult to believe with faith.

But it can nevertheless happen in some cases that born again Christians who do not have the best example of life, manage to believe without doubting, and in spite of this obtain results, in healing for example.

I say this to break the myth that all those who have their prayers answered often are very spiritual people. Certainly this can be the case, but not always.

As I said earlier, when we go through salvation, at least in my case, I remember that my life was not a life of holiness, far from it. Yet God has approved of saving me. He accepted me as His son.

Did He do it because I had a good face, or because I looked nice?

No, not at all, but simply, apart from the fact that He offered me grace (as He does to all humans), it was because I believed in this salvation that I was able to obtain it.

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So if we sum things up, faith is not earned, nor is the answering of our prayers. My spirit is best placed to express the faith God has given me because it is perfect and never plagued by doubt. Faith is a way of thinking, which is at our disposal and can be used at any time. In this way of thinking, the expression of our faith will be directly linked to the expression of our imagination.

As I said earlier, the expression of our imagination has nothing to do with an imaginary expression. We have already started to talk about this point.

It is therefore more than important to use our thinking in a positive direction, in a sense that we will generate images that are related to what we are praying for. Using our imagination in a faith thought has nothing to do with dreaming. When we are in a thought of faith, we are evolving in the real world. The fact of imagining, that is to say, of picturing in my thinking my prayer coming into being, will help me to visualise the things accomplished. It will help me to visualise my prayer reaching its final and complete state.

Take the example of someone asking you for directions. The person comes to you and asks: *"Could you please tell me the shortest way to the station?"*

What will you do in this case?

You imagine!

You are going to use your imagination to picture this route. You are going to visualise in your thoughts all the steps of the route, and you are going to give verbally all the indications that you see in images in your thoughts. I simply want to show by this example that it is natural to use our imagination in the different areas of our everyday life.

Imagination is essential to help us keep our faith active. Using my spirit to create images will greatly help me to visualise, and thereby broaden the activation of my faith.

When I go every Saturday to our healing tent to pray for sick people and also proclaim salvation to them, many times in the evening when I am in bed, I think of all those people I prayed for. Then I pray again and proclaim healing for those who, for example, have not been able to have evidence of their healing. Often people have an illness that requires tests to show healing such as cancer, heart disease, depression, etc. When I pray for these people in bed at night, of course I proclaim their healing as a reality, but I use my spirit's imagination, I see them in good health, I see them with all their strength restored. I have prayed for separated couples in my bed at night as well, and I picture them together.

In the same way, when our three children were still in their teens and one was

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still a toddler, God showed me His plan for each of them. God showed me what He planned to do with them, how He planned to work with them in their lives. Today not all of them have entered into that plan fully, because the time has not yet come.

When I pray for our three children, on a regular basis for this matter, I use what God has shown me in prayer. My spirit reminds me, with the help of my imagination, how they will be used by God. Moreover I use my authority in Christ with faith to ruin the demonic strategy that satan would try to elaborate. But as far as our subject today is concerned, I see them walking in their plan, I see them with my spiritual imagination fulfilling God's plan for them.

For more details on our spiritual authority, see my study *"I take and use my authority"*.

I can certainly understand that some people might say to me, *"Franck, you are just using positive thinking. You are using images thinking that they will become true"*.

Yes, positive thinking uses images, but positive thinking has taken its idea from what the Bible teaches and has modified it to crowd out God. This is why we can sometimes confuse prayer of faith with positive thinking, but one has nothing to do with the other.

When I see images that God has already given me, when I use the imagination of my spirit to visualise a prayer fulfilled, it is not the product of human wishful thinking or hope. The difference is that these images are the product of what God has already said, or what my faith is telling me, and not the other way around.

Positive thinking creates a pictorial thought in order to bring about a conviction, but faith creates a pictorial thought based on a fact that already exists in the spiritual realm. Remember that the spiritual world includes our earthly world as I said at the beginning of this study. My faith allows me to see what is already established in the spiritual world, to image it in order to see it in our tangible world. These images that I will create in the thought of my spirit are not there to make me believe. On the contrary, they are the product of the fact that I already believe, which is not quite the same thing. So of course seeing images in my thoughts will reinforce the activation of my faith, but not trigger it.

1 Corinthians 2:5 *that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.*

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As we said earlier, it is important to imagine with my spirit and not with my soul. My soul, which would not be renewed regularly, will, because of its weakness, often rely on human wisdom.

I remember a few years ago I received a letter in the mail from the Ministry of Health offering me a free colon cancer screening. When I opened the letter, I discovered that there was a test kit with instructions for use and a letter explaining that a majority of men my age would usually develop colon cancer.

What would a person do if they didn't trust God and didn't know how to use their authority in Christ?

It is very easy to imagine!

That person will read the letter, and probably look at the leaflet that accompanies it. Then their imagination will start to run wild. They will start to see themselves having abdominal pain, and then they will visualise their body more deeply and start to see cancer developing.

At this point, some people will reject this thought, but others will continue to feed it. In either case, these people have used their imagination, they have let their soul produce images from their thoughts based on the wisdom of men.

For those who persevere in a path based on the wisdom of men, that is, outside of faith in God, they will continue to nurture this thought, they will believe it more and more deeply, they will then begin to act as if they have colon cancer. Panic, fear will take over their thoughts, and it's only a matter of time before there's a good chance that a real cancer will develop in their body.

What I am trying to show by this example is that our flesh in its weakness uses the imagination of thought for negative and harmful purposes for us. Because my soul is naturally weak and inclined towards what is tangible, it will have no trouble, if not regularly renewed, in creating images in my thinking that will result in illness as in the example we just took.

So when I went to our mailbox to pick up this letter containing this colon cancer test kit, I opened the letter and discovered the contents while walking back to our house.

My reaction was immediate.

It's about 30 metres from our mailbox to our house. But just before the entrance door, on the side of the house, there are two big wheelie bins. So I took this letter and the test kit and threw them in the bin and said, *"I am in perfect health, for the power of the Holy Spirit keeps every one of my organs in perfect condition."*

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I shall die full of days and not of disease, Amen!"

I refused with my faith the possibility of having cancer. I saw myself in perfect health, I imagined myself 30 or 40 years later in perfect health. I used my imagination and activated my faith in Jesus' name.

During those 30 metres or so when I had that letter in my hands, do you think the devil didn't suggest thoughts to me like: *"Look, you're getting old. It's normal to be sick sometimes at your age. You should be careful and take this test. And if you had cancer, don't you think it's good to treat it as soon as possible? So be reasonable..."*

Of course satan jumped at the chance to get me into this kind of thinking! He tried to make me visualise myself as sick, so that I would run to a doctor in panic to have this test done.

Often people who read my teachings contact me by email and say, *"Oh, you must really have faith, you must have a spiritual level where you have no problems believing"*. I often reply that just because I have certain results in my life and in the lives of those I pray for, it doesn't mean that everything is easy and without hindrance. I am tempted like everyone else, some demonic spirits suggest sinful thoughts to me like everyone else. But the difference is that I am less and less deceived by demonic lies, simply because I am moving forward and continuing to learn through my transformation into the image of God.

So this letter went from the mailbox straight into my bin. Imagining with my spirit was very important in this case.

Why?

Simply because my flesh, influenced by some demonic suggestions, would have created negative images in my thoughts if I had let it. It is because I saw myself in perfect health in the future, because I visualised this image which was at that moment the fruit, or the product, of my faith, that the demonic spirit that was trying to destabilise me was silenced.

As I said earlier, God often uses images to speak to His children. Of course, there is a trap that we must not fall into, that of taking images quoted in the Bible in order to apply them to our own lives. The books of the various prophets are full of this, but also the book of Revelation. Using my imagination does not mean that I have to take images from the Bible when I pray in faith and apply them to the subject I am praying about. To do that would be just as ridiculous as some people who take Bible passages out of context and proclaim them in their prayers. Using my imagination in a positive way as a result of faith activation is simply picturing my prayer fulfilled.

Especially in the Old Covenant, God often warned the Hebrew people not to make carved images, that is, statues of deities that did not exist, but were merely invented by men. This concept of graven images comes up quite often.

Habakkuk 2:18 “What profit is the image, that its maker should carve it, The molded image, a teacher of lies, That the maker of its mold should trust in it, To make mute idols?

If God warned the people not to shape images, it is because an image (apart from the fact of bowing down before the statue in question) will convey thoughts. An image that we have in front of our eyes regularly will, after a while, create and stimulate thoughts related to that particular image. In the same way today we can find the same kind of phenomenon with photos that people hang on their walls. The image is there to make us think about a person, a place, an event, etc... The image will amplify the thought, it will expand an idea, it will keep a given thought active in my immediate memory.

We could multiply the examples of the use of images in thought. This shows us that the fact of imitating a thought linked to a fulfilled prayer by using our imagination is an undeniable plus. If satan uses this process for evil purposes, it is because God used it long before him in a positive way. Therefore, we must not refrain from using our imagination when we pray in faith. satan will try in every way to make Christians believe that using their imagination with their spirit is a utopia, but it is in fact a powerful weapon against him.

James 1:23-24 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was.

Here again James shows us that an image is important. In this example the image helps us to remember. In the same way, the fact of imagining my fulfilled prayers will create a virtuous circle. My activated faith will activate my imagination, which in turn will create images. Then these images will complete the process by helping my faith to remain active. So it is like a loop that is created, and which will revitalise itself, replenish itself autonomously by keeping my faith and my imagination active in prayer.

In practice, things are very simple once you understand them. It is important in the first instance to know how to pray effectively, using our authority in Jesus Christ, and knowing the different aspects of prayer. For more details on this subject see my study “*And I see it come to pass*”. When we are comfortable with

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the different aspects of prayer, we can then add our imagination with our mind. It is no more complicated than when you were used to letting images be created in your memory in the past. Once you have formulated your prayer, remain in silence, let the imagination of your spirit work, and you will begin to visualise your prayer being answered. You will begin to see images being created in relation to the words you have just spoken in your prayer.

With time and habit, things will come up almost at the same time. I mean that when you pray with your faith activated, images will be added to your thoughts at the same time. Memorise these images so that you can play them back in your memory at any time. Memorise them so that you can contemplate them again, to keep this looping process that keeps your faith active.

There may be times when you hear or see an event that seems to be contrary to the fulfilment of your prayer. Again, visualising these images stored in your immediate memory will sweep away those events that seemed to compromise your prayer.

God has given us all the ability, all the skills to do this. But He will not do things for us. It is up to us to activate our faith and use our imagination.

Using my imagination with my spirit will also be an important asset in renewing my soul. My soul needs to be renewed regularly, it needs to be educated by my spirit. As I said before, my soul is weak, and I must treat it as a weak person. Its weakness will always remain, but it is nevertheless possible to educate it to be cooperative with my spirit.

We will not go into the details of renewing our soul in this study, as this is not our topic today. However, we can see the benefit of using our imagination to renew our soul.

CHAPTER 7

MY SOUL, MY ALLY

Without going into details, my soul can and must become my ally. This might seem impossible, I understand, if we don't have all the biblical and spiritual information. When I explain this fact, most people are in great astonishment. They think, *“How can my soul become my ally if it remains weak all my life?”*

If you are not familiar with the three entities of your person which are your spirit, soul and body, then I suggest you read my study *“Spirit, Soul and Body”*. Making my soul an ally is easily solved when you have the right method.

Imagine that your soul is a pierced bucket. Try to visualise a plastic bucket with 2 or 3 holes in the bottom.

You are going to fill the bucket with water, and of course you will immediately notice 2 or 3 water leaks in the bottom of your bucket. As I said before, our soul is weak and will remain weak throughout our life, it is a fact that we cannot

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change. In our pictorial example, our bucket will always have these leaks, it will be impossible to fix them, the water will always leak out. The only way to keep the water in the bucket, or the only way to keep the bucket full of water, is to keep filling it. In that case only it will stay full of water.

It is exactly the same with our soul, it is like a pierced bucket. This is where using the images created by my mind to saturate my soul will make a huge difference. In addition to all the renewal I will be able to bring about in my soul from my spirit, using images that come from my spirit, will cancel out other contrary images, which my flesh would try to give credit to.

The more I meditate on those positive images that are in tune with my prayer, the less the contrary images that try to linger in my soul will be able to stay active.

This process is very similar in practice to the one I just described for creating this virtuous circle.

When you pray, and the next time you try to put this into practice, when you let these images activate your faith even more, let these images also go into your reasoning, into your human thoughts. In doing this, the process of renewal of your soul will be strengthened.

With practice and perseverance, and when my soul is regularly renewed, it too will begin to want to express the faith coming from my spirit. Although my bucket remains pierced, it is constantly full of water. As a result my soul is saturated with biblical thinking and will react in line with the Bible as well. My soul is now no longer a ball and chain that I have to drag with me all the time, but an ally that, in spite of its weakness, is willing to do the right thing, in most cases.

It is now easy to understand that by reaching this stage of maturity, it will be much easier to activate my faith in humanly difficult situations.

If, for example, I am physically ill, it is my soul and my spirit that will be allied against the symptoms of my body, and not my spirit alone that will express my faith.

In the same way, if I pray for a person and it happens that I realise that certain circumstances are now contrary to the fulfilment of my prayer, my soul will not push back but will be my ally. It will go in the same direction as my spirit. In this case my soul is not a generator of faith, but it will not go against my faith coming from my spirit.

In this last practical example, if I am praying for one of my relatives, perhaps

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under normal circumstances I would tend to throw in the towel when faced with an unfavourable circumstance. But in this case, even if I witness a circumstance contrary to my prayer, I would remain calm and peaceful. This circumstance will in no way change my way of thinking. Immediately I will be able to see that person in my thoughts exactly as he or she will be at the fulfilment of my prayer. I will visualise them in the sense of what I have prayed for. Nothing will make me waver, nothing will make my faith in this subject recede, and no negative image will be able to remain in my thoughts for long, because the imagination of my spirit which will have saturated my soul is on my side.

CHAPTER 8

FAITH vs. DOUBT

We can now begin to see that faith is a powerful force. It is a way of thinking that, if used properly, can produce limitless results. Faith is that way of thinking that will give me a completely different lifestyle. It will change my priorities, my way of seeing things, of seeing the people around me, of seeing God. Faith will give me a self-confidence, a consideration of myself in relation to what God says about me. Faith does not make me shy, on the contrary, it gives me confidence in myself and in others, because I know the power of it.

We must therefore know how to use our faith, because faith has an enemy which is doubt.

In our Bible College, I explain to our students that faith and doubt are like two magnets in reverse.

Many of us had the opportunity to use two magnets as children. I remember once finding two bicycle dynamos. Younger people may not know what I'm talking about, but dynamos in those days provided electricity to the bicycle lights by turning against a wheel, so those lights could work. By dismantling these

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dynamos I was able to retrieve two magnets which I used to play with. It didn't take long to realise that the magnets could attract or repel each other. If you turned them one way they would attract, and if you turned them the other way they would repel.

Faith and doubt are like two magnets that repel each other. One pushes the other away, and vice versa.

When you think about it more deeply it makes sense. Faith is fuelled by an assurance, a conviction that none of my five senses can perceive.

In most cases, doubt is fuelled by a refusal of anything that cannot be confirmed by any of my five senses. Of course, there are also cases where doubt may arise because we cannot believe in something spiritual. But even in this case, what the doubt wants is often a confirmation from one of my five senses.

So we can see that doubt and faith are two completely opposite ways of thinking. What sometimes makes things a bit difficult is that doubt and faith can sometimes be found in small doses in the same thought.

James 1:6-8 *But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.*

We knew that faith is the condition for receiving everything that God gives us. We now know from James that doubt does not allow us to receive anything from God.

In this passage from James, the original word translated as “doubt” is the word DIAKRINO. This word gives among other things the notion of “*to distinguish by sight, to hesitate, to dispute*”.

I often say that a little faith is enough to obtain great miracles, but also that a little doubt is enough to prevent miracles. We will come back to this point further on.

Doubt is insidious, which is why most people who express it in prayer do not notice it most of the time. Apart from the fact that few Christians have a realistic view of their areas of improvement, there is also the fact that these same people usually fail to detect when doubt is creeping into one of their thoughts.

I had to learn to detect doubt in my thoughts, because at one point in my

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Christian life I was sure that I believed with faith. Yet I saw very little of my prayers come to pass.

Over the years I have come to realise that often the problem is that we think we believe, but in reality we do not. Without knowing it or without admitting it to myself, I had noticed in my own life that I had set a standard of belief, a level of belief so to speak. Then over the years, and by talking to people around me, I realised that I was not the only one in this case.

We think we believe, but in reality we don't really believe!

The passing of time is also a determining factor in the fact of believing. Again, a large majority of Christians think that believing means that we have to be sure about something for a few minutes only, and then it's over.

Whether it is doubt or faith, both will have to be carried to their fulfilment to triumph.

In other words, what I am trying to say is that if I believe, I must believe until I see my prayer answered. In the same way, if I doubt, it is only if I keep doubting to the end that my prayer will be unfruitful. This is to say that as long as I have not reached the end of the fulfilment of my prayer, I always have the possibility to change and believe by reversing things in terms of faith and doubt.

I think it is safe to say that believing is the most misunderstood area in the body of Christ. Many people believe until a circumstance comes along that shows them otherwise. But believing when all is well and all circumstances are favourable is easy, anyone can do it, there is almost no need for faith for that, because it is just common sense. But to believe when the circumstances are unfavourable, it requires faith. That is when faith is needed.

Often people have no trouble believing that God can answer their prayers, which is not where they have problems. But when those same people are asked, *"Do you think God will do it now?"* they have a very different reaction.

It is important to be aware that it is only when I am in a given situation that I will be able to really know whether I am capable of believing or not. In other words, it is very easy to listen to a teaching or read a study like this and think that you will be able to believe. I have found with time and experience that there is a world between listening to a teaching and putting it into practice. Therefore, only when I am confronted with a given situation related to a teaching that I have read or listened to, and I successfully overcome it by putting the teaching into practice, can I say: *"Yes, I have understood, yes, I have integrated that well"*.

It is interesting to see that in the Bible doubt is often opposed to faith.

Mark 11:23 *For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be removed and be cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says.*

This is a very popular passage among Christians and is often quoted.

Another version gives a little more detail:

Mark 11:23 (NLT) *I tell you the truth, you can say to this mountain, 'May you be lifted up and thrown into the sea,' and it will happen. But you must really believe it will happen and have no doubt in your heart.*

This shows us, as we said earlier, that doubt and faith are diametrically opposed.

There are certain situations where sometimes Christians do not understand what is going on. They pray about something, they have the clear feeling that they are expressing their faith, but they do not see anything happening.

In this case, doubt and faith oppose themselves, forming an equal force on both sides, preventing any movement on either side. When we are in the process of learning about faith, it is rare to be able to activate the full measure of our faith. And even with years of experience, very few Christians manage to always activate their complete faith in all situations. It may happen that we come to activate our faith, but at the same time, and for various reasons, we also come to express doubt. This kind of situation can be a bit confusing if we don't have the right knowledge about it.

So if I have the firm assurance that I have activated some of my faith and I see nothing happening, it is quite possible that I have also expressed doubt in one of my prayers. In that case it will be good to examine my thinking. I will have to try to analyse the way I think about it.

For example, if I want to pray for a job, I will take time to pray about it. In my thinking I believe that God wants me to have a job because I need it to subsist. I also know that God is all powerful and that He will not hesitate to create a circumstance by His Spirit so that I can come across my future employer. At first sight we could say that this is a prayer of faith. It is obvious in this case that I have succeeded in activating a certain amount of faith that is already within me. But if at the same time as I prayed, I think about the current economic situation in my country, if I think that although God wants to help me find this job, there

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are very few jobs available in my area or my field of activity, if I assume that many other people are also looking for work and that my chances of being hired are almost non-existent, then this is called doubt.

I am in a situation where I express faith and doubt at the same time.

When you think about it, this is not so uncommon among a majority of Christians. Many are divided in their thinking, they believe but they also doubt. They have assurance in one area of their prayer, but they also have doubt in another area of that same prayer.

In this case, faith and doubt oppose each other with equal force, thus blocking any progress towards faith.

Two forces of equal power are clashing in an opposite direction, which cancels out any movement. Therefore, in this case faith cannot prevail over doubt, and things remain as they are and my prayer is not fulfilled.

Unfortunately, many poorly taught Christians who are in a similar situation will blame it on God saying that He does not want to answer their prayers. They take as proof the fact that they have the clear feeling of having activated their faith, which is true, but they hide the fact that they have also activated doubt.

As a result, a whole host of theories, each more far-fetched than the last, have emerged:

- God does not want to grant me an answer
- It is not God's time
- I must have committed too great a sin
- God wants to teach me by leaving me like this
- God is putting me to the test
- The devil is on my back

This list could be extended, but these are the main arguments that are mostly falsely raised, whereas the problem comes from me.

Do not hesitate to analyse your way of thinking when you have to activate your faith. Explore your memory, check if you are not influenced by human circumstances that are contrary to what God says. Check that there are no “buts” in your thinking.

I often say to people who are in a similar situation, *“Listen to yourself”*. Our words are a perfect barometer in this case. Watch the words you use, the intonations of your sentences, they are a reflection of what you think, and what

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you think determines the activation of your faith. Of course it is not by changing the way you *speak* that things will change, but it is by changing the way you *think* in order to activate more of your faith.

Proverbs 18:21 *Death and life are in the power of the tongue, And those who love it will eat its fruit.*

We always have the choice to express faith or doubt, life or death, joy or sorrow...

Get into the habit of checking whether your attitudes and words are attitudes or words of faith or doubt, life or death.

It is also important to understand that this power of decision is strictly personal, God does not intervene. We have the choice of our decisions and reactions. It is my responsibility to generate faith or to generate doubt. It is also my responsibility to activate my faith and drive out doubt.

CHAPTER 9

MY LIFE CHOICES AFFECT MY FAITH

We might ask ourselves how we can chase away doubt effectively when we find that we are plagued by such thoughts. The Christian life is a moment-by-moment life, we do not activate our Christian life at certain times of the day and not at others. Nor do we turn our Christian life “off” at certain times and in certain situations in our daily lives.

When we choose to want to activate our faith successfully in all areas of our lives, then it is important to realise that everything I do, everywhere I go, everything I hear, the people I associate with, everything I look at, the way I use my time, will have a positive or negative influence on whether I can activate my faith in all the circumstances of my life.

In other words, if I want to have good results with my faith, I will have to make choices.

Often I see people teaching on this subject saying that the Christian life is a life of renunciation in the sense of frustration. There are many ways to renounce something. I would say there are two main ones:

- To renounce reluctantly, without having understood that we are doing the

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right thing or that it is a good thing for us.

- To renounce with joy, because our maturity tells us that it is a good thing for us.

The Apostle Paul gives us some guidance on this subject when he says this:

Romans 14:23 ...for whatever is not from faith is sin.

In sorting out the different areas of my life, everything must be a conviction on my part. Every decision I make must be the result of a conviction on my part.

The mistake that is often made is to make a list of different areas of life in general, and to make a rule applicable to all Christians. In this case, we only create useless laws and we put ourselves under a universal rule, which takes absolutely no account of the personality of each person.

Of course there are areas to be banned that are harmful to everyone, such as covetousness, envy, stealing, pornography, lying, manipulation, etc. But often we hear some people who will make their personal experience a rule for everyone.

For example, I once heard a pastor teach that a Christian should not go to the cinema to see a movie; I heard others say that a Christian should not dance at a family party. Simply because these people had decided to ban these things from their lives, so they imposed it on others. As a result, people are forced to act in a frustrated way at times, and in the end they are only pushed into sin, because they will do things without conviction (***Romans 14:23***).

I have sometimes seen people shocked at some of the advice I have given to individuals who have asked my opinion. One day I was with a Christian friend and I was talking to another Christian person who asked me what I thought about her smoking. This person asked my opinion on how to stop smoking. She said that on the one hand she wanted to quit, but on the other hand she couldn't. She had already tried to quit many times without success. And each time it was another failure. She said to me: "*What is your advice on this?*" I replied: "*Keep smoking!*"

I remember my friend next to me looking very surprised, to say the least. But he didn't dare to intervene.

Then I told him that until you really understand that smoking is bad for your body, until you understand that God created us and that we have a responsibility to preserve our bodies as best we can, it's a waste of time to try to stop smoking.

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So yes of course some people who are not born again do manage to stop smoking, without being Christian. Yes, that's absolutely true, but not everyone is naturally self-disciplined.

So I went on to tell this person to continue smoking, but that there was one very important thing to do.

"You need to focus on deepening your relationship with God, you need to focus from now on not on stopping smoking, but on knowing God. You need to know what He thinks of you, you need to know how He loves you, and you need to let His love flood you".

I went on to say that then, when she understands God's unconditional love for her, when she understands how important she is and how valuable she is, not just in the eyes of God, but truly priceless, then the urge to smoke will go away as it came and disappear forever.

This is how we move forward in our lives, how we sort out our life choices, and how we do things out of conviction and not out of obedience.

When we lived in France, I remember one evening when we were with my wife Christine. At that time we used to watch some TV programmes. One evening I said to her: *"You see, tonight we are watching television, but I am sure that one day we will not spend our evenings watching television. We'll watch Bible teaching or talk together to edify ourselves".*

Now, a few years later, we don't have a television, and we spend our evenings playing games, talking together, listening to teachings, talking about each other's lives on a spiritual level, or sometimes watching a film we have chosen. What would have happened if when I first talked to my wife about our evenings, I said *"Ok, now we are going to get rid of our TV, from now on, no more television!"* I think if I had done that, my attempt to get rid of television would have had a hard time with my wife, my children, and myself as well, because we just weren't ready.

But we let the Holy Spirit help us to grow, to evolve, to understand the important priorities in our lives, and one day we removed the television from our home out of conviction, with joy, without frustration, without regret.

To follow up on this example, some time ago we were given free access to some films on the internet. Sometimes we watch a film as I said, but we have a rule, which is: no blood, no nudity, no profanity and no violence. Some people will say that with such rules, it becomes difficult to find a film nowadays, which is quite true unfortunately. But these are rules that we have set because we have understood that what we watch, what we hear, may over time change our way

of thinking in one direction or another.

As I often say to people, we need to know what we want in life. We need to know where we want to go, what our goal is. I often use this example of a sportsman, because Paul also used it to talk to the Philippians. A sportsman will set a goal. To do so, he will have to make life choices, he will have to make food choices. But when it comes to a real top athlete, he makes these choices with pleasure, he is not frustrated.

Why is that?

Simply because the sport they practice is more important than these life choices. They have chosen to place the sport they practice much higher than certain areas of their life. As a result, they move forward and achieve their goal.

So we have life choices to make, and without those choices, it will be impossible to reach certain spiritual levels, it will be impossible to activate our faith sufficiently. Too often I see Christians who refuse to make these life choices because their flesh still dominates them. But often they are the first to ask to be prayed for because they are not able to activate their faith enough. Of course I am not talking about people who have just been born again, but people who have been Christians for many years. This is not the way Jesus intended to build His Church.

What we need to remember from this is that we must understand first and then act. We need to focus on our relationship with God, study good teaching, and enter into the joy of regular prayer. If you don't feel like studying, you haven't understood what the Gospel is about. If you don't feel like praying, you haven't understood who God is.

Jesus came to provide the universal solution to all the problems of humanity. If I refuse to grow in this area it is because I need to review what the Gospel proposes.

There is no point in trying to change, or trying to adopt a so-called 'Christian' attitude, if I have not received the revelation of "Who God is".

This revelation is available to everyone. The word revelation today has a somewhat exclusive connotation. It sounds as if revelation is only given to an elite, to a deserving class of people. But God wants to give this revelation of His person to all those who long for it. Don't be afraid to ask Him for it, He will be happy to reveal Himself to you through prayer.

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As we have already said, faith is trust. The more I organise my life through wise choices so that my soul is regularly renewed by my spirit, the more I am likely to grow in the knowledge of God. The more intimately I know God, the more I will trust in Him. And the more I trust in God, the more easily my faith will be activated.

God has given us all the faith we need, but it is up to us to organise our lives so that our faith can be activated as easily as possible. In other words, we have to manage our thoughts, and when we understand that many external elements can influence our thinking, then we organise our lives around that. This is one of the foundations on which my faith will be able to stand.

CHAPTER 10

MY FAITH IN ACTION

My faith must be seen!
It is not enough to say “*I have faith*” to have faith. My faith must be manifested. In many passages of the Bible we can see the faith of certain people. Let's look at some of them.

Mark 2:5 *When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, “Son, your sins are forgiven you.”*

It is a well-known passage where we see a paralytic man carried by four of his friends to Jesus. Not being able to enter the house where Jesus was, the four men decide to take their paralytic friend up to the roof of the house. Imagine four men trying to carry a paralysed person on a kind of stretcher on the roof of a house. The Bible tells us that the house was crowded and Jesus could not be reached through any of the doors or windows, so the roof was the only solution.

Several ropes must have been needed. There is also a good chance that these four men did not bring ropes with them, as they did not plan to go through the

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roof of the house. So they had to look for some ropes. Then the climbing must have been perilous, because the bed or stretcher had to remain horizontal so that the paralytic did not fall. In the same way, when the four friends lowered the bed through the roof, the bed had to remain horizontal so that the paralytic would not fall off either.

We emphasise these details to show that these people had to be tenacious. But in this case it was about getting their friend healed. These four men not only had to move their friend from one place to another, but their goal was to bring their paralysed friend to Jesus to be healed.

Do you think these four men would have gone to such effort if they were not sure that Jesus would heal their friend?

If they made all these efforts it was because their faith drove them to it, they firmly believed that Jesus would heal their friend. Their faith came alive in front of everyone. Their faith generated action.

It is the same for us today, our faith must not only be activated in our thinking, it must also be activated in our actions and words. My thinking is the source of my faith which will then be expressed in my words, my attitudes and my actions. Again, my words, my attitude when confronted with a certain circumstance, my actions, will be a perfect barometer to see if my faith is active in my thinking.

2 Corinthians 13:5 *Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves.*

Paul gave this valuable advice to the Christians in Corinth. Examination requires careful scrutiny. We are not talking here about skimming over things, but about looking deeply into them. To examine ourselves requires to put to the test in the sense of seeing the strength in the sense of steadfastness, to see the degree of presence of our faith. Notice that Paul does not say that we should ask God to reveal to us whether we are in faith. Nor is it others who should tell us if we are in the faith. It is not for a brother or sister to tell me whether my faith is active or not. No! That is our personal task. It is up to us to examine ourselves, to listen to ourselves speak, to observe ourselves act, to notice how we react to this or that situation. We must be objective with ourselves. In this way we can have a true view and especially know if we need to activate our faith more in a given situation.

Acts 6:5 *And the saying pleased the whole multitude. And they chose Stephen,*

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a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit,...

Stephen had the reputation for being full of faith. Do you think this reputation came about simply because he spent a lot of time praying, or because he had a deep relationship with God? Of course these things were the source of his reputation, but it was not because of this that people noticed that he was full of faith. Stephen had a certain way to speak and act and had certain attitudes as well that showed that he was full of faith.

I cannot say that I have faith, or that my faith is activated if there is no fruit to show for it. I cannot say that my way of thinking is activated by my faith if no one notices it by seeing me live.

If for example, I say that I am joyful, this joy must be seen. Imagine one of your friends saying to you: *"Today I am full of joy, I am really happy!"* If you then see this same person with a bowed head, a downcast look, or simply without a smile, you will say: *"But I thought you were full of joy today? I think you must be mistaken because it doesn't seem to me that you are happy at all"*.

Why would you have such an attitude and such words?

Simply because you know that joy is visible, you know that you cannot say that you are joyful without showing the fruits of it. Well, it is exactly the same with faith, it must be seen just like joy, just like sorrow, and many other attitudes.

You wouldn't believe one of your friends if he told you he was in great pain, if you saw him jumping up and down and laughing. Something would not add up somewhere.

The same is true of faith. That is why James says this:

James 2:26 *For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.*

James takes a very strong example. He compares faith and its external fruit to the body and the soul. There are no exceptions, just as a body without a soul cannot exist, neither can an activated faith without demonstrating tangible fruits. So there are no exceptions, and that is a very good thing.

Why is that?

Simply because I will have an infallible tool to ensure that my faith is activated or not. The outward expressions that I will show will be the perfect barometer of my activated faith. I will not need to look in many places, the simple fact of observing myself in my attitudes and my words, will reveal to me if my faith is activated in relation to a precise subject or not.

How do we discern an attitude of faith?

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What should be the signs that my faith is activated?

Unfortunately, many Christians are not aware of this. Often because of a lack of teaching, but also because they have not been surrounded by brothers or sisters who could show them what an attitude of faith is.

Often Christians who find it difficult to activate their faith can be a bit extreme in their approach to it. I have often seen people being carefree thinking that they are in an attitude of faith. It can happen that some Christians can be in an attitude of faith when they are simply in an attitude of carelessness.

The difference is going to be in the source of my attitudes on the one hand, and in having realised the situation I am in, or the situation I need to pray for on the other.

Having a clear understanding of the scope of the situation is important. Being aware of the risks if I pray for an illness for example, or any other consequences if I pray in another area, is essential. Some people are a bit like 'burying their heads in the sand'. They pray without having shown any faith, and try to forget about the subject of their prayer very quickly. Of course this will not be possible in all cases, but for example in the case of a deadline, in the case of a financial problem, in the case of an illness without pain or obvious symptoms. In this case carelessness may appear as peace, but it is not. We must be able to speak about the subject of our prayer not from a human point of view but from a spiritual one.

An attitude of faith will make me talk about my subject of prayer sometimes, and this same attitude will also generate a supernatural peace while the circumstances do not really allow it.

Carelessness will make me forget the subject of my prayer, so that it does not disturb me. But faith will allow me to speak about it with balance, measuring all the consequences while maintaining a supernatural peace.

Carelessness is a fruit of my soul while the work of faith is a fruit of my spirit. At first sight, the two may seem very similar, but they are very different.

When I am in an attitude of faith, I am fully aware of all the risks, all the consequences that can happen from a natural point of view, a human point of view, but I remain in peace and hope. Hope in the biblical sense is an expectation, a fruit of faith and not a mere wish as many think.

Some time ago a friend of mine, a pastor, came home feeling inexplicably really exhausted. Things got so bad that he decided to go to the hospital emergency room. There he saw a doctor, had various tests done on his body. Some time later, the verdict fell, he was told that he had cancer at a very advanced stage,

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and that he had about three months of life left.

What a shock!

In this kind of situation, you realise that priorities often change.

My friend has been in a healing dimension for a very long time, he knows the grace of God, he knows and practices what God has made available to us.

As I didn't see him for several weeks, I decided to ask his wife why I didn't see them together anymore. One day when I said I would go and talk to her, I saw him arrive at the local church we attended together. He had lost about 15-20 kg, he had almost no hair. Visually he was unrecognisable.

So I went to see him and that's when he told me his problem. He had chosen to undergo chemotherapy treatment along with using authoritative prayer to drive out the disease.

What struck me was that his attitude was exactly the same as when I had seen him a little over a month earlier: still cheerful, not at all down, not complaining, but very combative spiritually as usual when we talked together. His attitude of faith, the works of his faith were so strong that when he told me about his illness, he refused to name it because he said: *"This thing is not a part of me, it is out of the question for me to talk about it as if it were a part of my life and my person, or my body"*. He told me that with the first chemotherapy session, his immune system was at its minimum.

He did not ask for the whole church to pray for him, he did not ask for several Christians to unite in prayer for him. Yet from a human point of view he had 3 months to live. But he considered, with his wife, that the power that was in him was the same power that raised Christ from death, and that he had more than enough to get rid of this disease that was temporarily in him. I like this local church that we used to go to because you didn't impress anybody if you said for example, *"Yesterday I went for a walk, and in the street I prayed for three people and they were healed"*. Or: *"I took a taxi and I could talk to the driver and he got born again"*.

15 days later I saw my friend again, he had regained two thirds of his weight! He told me that despite the chemotherapy treatment which is supposed to put an immune system down, his immune system was back to 95% of normal.

When I asked him how he was doing, he said, *"I'm perfectly fine because I have a perfect God!"* But he was still undergoing treatment and the cancer had not yet completely disappeared.

In our discussion he said, *"Next month I'm invited to go and preach about healing in a church, and you know what? Well, I'll be happy to go!"*

He went to preach on healing with the obvious symptoms of chemotherapy

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treatment on him, but it didn't bother him at all because it was another opportunity for him to show the power of God and the results of an activated faith in a Christian's life.

At the end of the three months that the doctors had predicted he would die, he had instead regained his full strength and physical immunity. There was no trace of cancer left in him.

This is just one example of an attitude of faith.

Do you have to be a super Christian to be able to do this?

Not at all!

It is given to everyone.

We all have the potential.

One of the devil's goals will be to make you believe that it is impossible for you to act in faith. His only aim is that you should never activate your faith. He will do everything in his power to make you base your thinking on lies that say for example, that it is impossible for a Christian to show fruits of his faith under any circumstances.

For more details about the powers of satan see my study called *"The True Colours of satan"*.

Our attitude determines what is going on inside us, the way we speak and act is a mirror of our way of thinking.

Sometimes, manifesting our faith, showing the works of our activated faith, is not yet automatic. This often happens to Christians who are new to salvation, or at other times to those who have not received adequate teaching in this regard. Therefore, for those who are concerned, it will be necessary to crank things up, to create inertia so that things can become autonomous and natural.

In this regard, when I had just realized that I needed to enter into a transformation to become more and more like God, I had to deal with the kind of problem I have just described here. I needed some cranking in order to manifest the works of my faith.

Before I was born again, and for many years afterwards, I was a person who knew what he wanted. So far you may say, "What's the problem?" The problem was in the way I got what I wanted. On the one hand I was always turned towards others in a certain way. I hated injustice, and I would not have left an innocent person defenceless. But there was this need in my old nature to get everything I wanted quickly, and especially for my way to be adopted.

To do this I used manipulation, anger at times, but also lies. One day the Holy Spirit, seeing that I did not understand things by myself, had to call me to the

fact that all this had to stop urgently. It was then that I experienced for the first time what I call a cranking, so that the works of my activated faith could see the light. That day while praying I received confirmation of a phrase I had heard in a teaching. The Holy Spirit asked me to use this phrase and not to forget it. I must say that I had tried many times before to change, to abandon this kind of behaviour with good resolutions, but it did not last in time. In this teaching I had listened to the person said that *"you cannot expect to have results in line with what God gives you, if you act like the devil"*. This person went on to say that anger, impatience, manipulation, and all these things are rooted in an attitude similar to that used by the devil. In other words, she was saying that I could not expect to have the results that God promises if my attitude is based on that of satan.

During my prayer, this sentence remained engraved in me: *"I am Franck of the kingdom of God, I am part of the kingdom, and as such I do not act like the devil"*. I had received this sentence clearly in my mind during my prayer.

After I finished praying, I opened my eyes and went on with my day. A few days went by, and after a while I noticed that there was a mismatch between the time I prayed and how I was running my day. It was as if I was in one world when I had my eyes closed while praying, having a certain way of thinking, but in a completely different world once my eyes were open going about the various tasks of my day.

This kind of situation is a trap that I think all Christians have fallen into at one time or another. You are praying, you are connected to the spiritual world, you are focused on the person of God, on your own faith and on the different topics you are discussing. The same is true in praise or worship. This is not our topic today, but I mention it nevertheless because it is important to be aware of it. So we are deep into the presence of God, with our eyes closed, sometimes even feeling our spirit really active. But once our prayer is over, once we have opened our eyes and we are back to our 5 senses which start to take over again sending us a whole bunch of different information, what we see, what we hear, etc... all these things tend to come back to the forefront of our thinking.

Then after a while, this period of time will be different for everyone, we realise, or not, that we have totally forgotten our prayer. As I was saying, this is true for prayer, but also for praise and worship. We have a wonderful time in worship, and two days later a problem comes up and we start to panic again, or react badly.

In my case, I realised a few days after my prayer that I had fallen into this trap. My problem was that I was unconsciously making a distinction between the

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spiritual and the material world. When I prayed I was very much connected to the spiritual world, but when I finished, without realising it, I disconnected from the spiritual world and reconnected to the material world.

Some may say to me: *“But Franck, it is impossible to have your head in the clouds all day long! How can we stay in an attitude of prayer all day long? You have to live!”*

Don't worry, this is a question I asked myself for quite some time. Not finding an answer, I had put it aside until the Holy Spirit taught me about it. I knew that I had to keep the thought of the spiritual world in the course of my days. So I began to remember this phrase I had memorized in prayer: *“I am Franck of the kingdom of God, I am part of the kingdom, and as such, I do not act like the devil!”* I began to repeat this phrase to myself during my days, so that it would come alive. I had to get to the point where this sentence became as real as any information that any of my 5 senses could send me during my days. This sentence had to become part of the tangible world in which I lived.

So after uttering, or should I say proclaiming, this phrase more and more often during my days, it came to the foreground of my memory. Whenever I could say it out loud, I did so, and when it was not possible, depending on the situation, I said it anyway, but in my head. With this sentence of truth in my foreground memory, it became less and less difficult for me to remember it, and this truth began to take root in me.

Most people will say that at this stage the teaching is acquired intellectually, and that it should now be put into practice. However, to leave it there would mean eliminating the most important step to acquire and integrate into our lives. The Gospel has nothing in common with positive thinking. It is not by repeating things to myself all day long that they will necessarily come about in my life. What I am describing here has nothing to do with positive thinking, on the contrary, the Bible calls it renewing your soul.

This thought that I am a son of the kingdom and that my attitudes should be that of a citizen of the kingdom, was really starting to sink in. At that time things were not always going well in the relationships my wife Christine and I had. As a result, we were sometimes in conflict. At those times I tended to raise my voice, to be hurtful, in other words, not really a citizen of the kingdom to which I belonged.

I remember that during these times of conflict she would have to leave the house to go to work when we were still in the midst of an argument. Normally, I was unable to concentrate on my work, I would ruminate on my anger. I tried to calm myself down, but my thoughts of anger or frustration kept coming back.

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One day when I was in my car, I was thinking about one of these moments. Even then I had this thought embedded in me that I was a citizen of the kingdom and not acting like the devil.

I remember proclaiming out loud while driving my car, alone, *"I am Franck, I am part of the kingdom, and I am not acting like the devil!"* I repeated this sentence louder and louder, and the more I repeated it, the more certain angry thoughts came back. So I repeated it even louder, it was a proclamation, a declaration. There was really a struggle in my thoughts. On the one hand there was my flesh that needed to be renewed more deeply because it was filled with anger and frustration, and on the other hand my spirit that was proclaiming my true identity as a citizen of the kingdom of God. It was a battle within me, a real struggle.

There were several months where I had to concentrate on keeping my faith active, and the more I activated, the less my flesh manifested. I didn't need what some people call deliverance, nor did I need sessions where I was prayed for to be 'freed'. I knew I already had all the faith I needed. I had already received this identity of the kingdom of God, and I just had to put it into practice by faith. Of course at first it was not easy, but by faith, in just a few months I went from being manipulative, angry and a liar, to a calm and true person.

This is another example of an attitude of faith, it is another example of the works of faith.

CHAPTER 11

FAITH IS A WAY OF THINKING

As I said at the beginning of this study, faith is a way of thinking. We have just seen that faith must be able to be seen, because the Bible shows us that faith must necessarily produce acts, words and attitudes. Without these tangible signs, we cannot say that faith is present. This is why it is now easy to understand that faith will have to manifest itself in all areas of our life. When I enter into a way of thinking that is based on faith, then I will have to expect my words to change, my attitudes to change, my priorities to change. Faith is a way of life, it will now determine my daily life.

I have often noticed that faith is not very popular among Christians. It may seem paradoxical, but it is often the case that some Christians unknowingly look for a shortcut so that they do not have to use their faith. It is easy to see that the most popular teachings in local churches, and in any teaching ministry, are those that allow Christians not to have to use their faith.

It is really a very serious case in the body of Christ throughout the world that a majority of Christians will always try to find a shortcut so that they do not have to use their faith.

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These shortcuts are various:

- Systematically asking others to pray for me when there is nothing to stop me from doing so myself.
- Begging God to do something in my life.
- Trying to get others to do things for me.
- Thinking that if I am ill I must have someone to pray for me.
- Never or hardly ever pray for a problem to be solved.
- Seek a prophet if I need God to speak to me.

These are just a few of the very simple examples that are most common and found in the Church of Christ. These kinds of attitudes show that a person is not willing (consciously or not) to use their faith. If they do not wish to use their faith, then they are having difficulty using their spirit, for faith resides in our spirit as we have already said. If I seek to avoid using my faith, it is because faith is not an area where I feel comfortable.

If I favour my soul over my spirit, which is what happens when we use our soul instead of our spirit, then I will find that I am basing my prayers on the action of my soul and not on those of my spirit. If my prayers are based on my soul, then it will be impossible for me to activate my faith in this matter. Faith is a way of thinking that comes from my spirit. If I refuse to use the faith that God has already given me for the benefit of others, then I have a problem. If in my life all means are good to avoid having to activate my faith, that is to say as I said above, very often asking others to do in prayer what I can do myself, then it means that my flesh rules my being in this area.

If you can relate to any of these examples, don't be offended, don't feel accused, but instead take the opportunity to change things. If you accept to change things you will also change the results. You will no longer be someone who begs God, trying to get Him on your side in a selfish way. You will no longer be someone who hangs on the prayers of others to see your problems solved.

Decide today to learn to activate your faith, decide to learn to use what God has given you. Life is so much easier when you live in an autonomy linked to Jesus Christ.

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Faith is the basis of the Christian life, so it is more than important to decide to adopt this way of thinking that is faith. It will be impossible to live according to what God has planned for me if I do not decide to enter into this way of thinking that is linked to faith.

The Bible shows us in certain passages that faith is a decision. We no longer speak of faith to receive. It is not really about believing in the way we have described it so far in this study. The Bible calls this state "faith". It is important to know this state so that it is not confused with receiving faith.

Acts 6:7 *Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith.*

In this passage "faith" is the certainty of God's existence, the certainty that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is the truth. This shows us that 'faith' is the only way to God and that there is no other way.

Acts 13:8 *But Elymas the sorcerer (for so his name is translated) withstood them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith.*

Acts 14:22 *strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, "We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God."*

Acts 14:27 *Now when they had come and gathered the church together, they reported all that God had done with them, and that He had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles.*

All these passages describe that faith is the only access to God. Here faith is also a way of thinking as we have described so far, but with the difference that it is the only way to have a relationship with God through Jesus Christ. This access to God concerns Christians and non-Christians alike; we all have to use this access by our own decision.

This means that if you are born again today, it is because one day you have decided to use "faith" in order to experience the new birth. If you can consider yourself saved, it is because you have decided to firmly believe it.

This step of salvation by faith is quite simple to achieve and should be held as a firm conviction.

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Why?

Simply because none of your five senses can prove to you that you are not saved. None of your five senses can use an obvious situation or circumstance to tell you, *"You are not saved"*.

In other words, your flesh has very limited scope to disturb you in acquiring your salvation. This is why the vast majority of Christians, once they have the right teaching, have no problem with being saved and staying saved.

On the other hand, it is very easy to see from talking to people in Christian circles that they find it much more difficult to keep their faith activated in relation to a prayer they have made, rather than in the fact of being saved.

This shows us that in most cases it is the process of activating our faith that is problematic.

As I said earlier, you have had to believe and you have to keep believing that you are saved. This is something you do every day almost without realising it. You have acquired the fact of being saved and you no longer question it. And believing by activating your faith is the same thing, it is the same process. You will just have to learn not to consider your five senses as having priority over what God says in His Word, and what you have said in your prayer.

2 Corinthians 5:7 *For we walk by faith, not by sight.*

Paul uses the sense of sight here to define our senses. We could also say: "for we walk by faith and not by our five senses".

Faith and our 5 senses are really in opposition by definition. For a long time I wondered how to find the right balance with my faith and my 5 senses. I thought, *"After all, why do we have this flesh (our five senses), which keeps interfering with our faith?"*

After giving it some thought, and especially with the help of the Holy Spirit, I realised that God created us with our five senses. It is He who wanted to create us in this way.

It is a common misconception that when sin entered the creation through human beings (Adam and Eve), our carnal senses were changed. But on closer investigation, when God had this relationship with Adam and Eve before they sinned, Adam and Eve didn't need to manifest faith to have a relationship with God. They could see God, hear God, their carnal senses allowed them to have that relationship with God. After the fall and after sin intruded into creation, we can see that the relationship God had with humans did not just stop, leaving

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man in total disarray. Sin gradually gained ground, and it took hundreds of years to reach a situation where people could no longer see God or hear Him in person.

God spoke to Cain despite the fact that sin was already present in the creation. This shows us this progression in the decline of man's relationship with God.

As a result of this decline in man's relationship with God, faith then developed. Faith had become the only means of communication between God and man. Even though this relationship was not what it is today, it went through different stages related to the various periods of the Bible, called dispensations.

For example, before the Law, people like Abraham, Jacob, or Job, had a relationship with God based on faith that they themselves could decide to use. Later under the Law of Moses, there were different relationships that people could have with God. The prophets had a 'gift' to receive messages from God. While the people of God in general had a relationship with God based only on their own personal faith.

Then when the time of grace in Jesus came, faith took on an even different dimension. Today we are totally dependent on faith to have a relationship with God, but also to see our prayers fulfilled. Of course today God speaks through words of knowledge, or other means, but it is only through my faith that I will be able to accept these words and see them coming to pass in my life.

From this quick analysis, it is now easy to see that faith has been given by God in order to offer us a relationship with Him. He has given us the ability to use our faith to have a connection with Him. Since the connection has been cut off over time since the fall, God gave faith to enable us to have a new means of communication with Him.

It is important to understand that God does not play hide and seek with people. God did not enjoy being cut off from His communication with mankind. He would have much preferred to maintain a relationship with us as He had with Adam and Eve. It is not God who has changed the game, but humans. Sin has gradually stifled the human spirit. The soul has engulfed the spirit of man and sin has spiritually killed his spirit. Because the spirit of man is the only entity capable of having a relationship with God, any visual or audible communication with God became impossible.

Faith is a God-given rescue plan from sin!

It is important to understand the purpose of faith. It is not to make life difficult for us that God has provided the means of faith, but on the contrary to be able to maintain a means of communication with us. Faith is beneficial to us.

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Paul knew that faith is a process that we must enter into. Often some Christians think that Paul was talking about faith as something that wavers, or has a yo-yo effect. This passage is an example.

1 Corinthians 16:13 *Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong.*

From this passage, some have deduced that faith has its ups and downs, putting us in unstable positions. This is not at all what Paul is saying in this passage. The original word translated 'stand firm' is the Greek word STEKO. This word gives the image of a person standing firm. So it is not a question of having ups and downs, but rather of growing in the activation of our faith. If we look at another translation, it clarifies things a little more.

1 Corinthians 16:13 (AMPC) *Be alert and on your guard; stand firm in your faith (your conviction respecting man's relationship to God and divine things, keeping the trust and holy fervor born of faith and a part of it). Act like men and be courageous; grow in strength!*

This translation gives an additional angle of vision, by specifying to “*grow in strength*”. This shows us that activating our faith is a process. It is a growth in which we are engaged. God has intended that we should grow in the activation of our faith. Growth should be noticeable as time goes by.

So we have discussed earlier that our activated faith must be seen. My faith must be noticeable. We have seen that our faith must produce attitudes, words, etc., which will be the fruit of my thoughts.

In practice, and even if we know that all our words or attitudes are the fruit of our thoughts, I will nevertheless have to be vigilant about my words, my attitudes. Sometimes there may be a discrepancy between my faith, my attitudes and my words. If I find that I sometimes have a word or an attitude that is not in line with my activated faith, I will have to rectify myself. This is because my soul is trying to express itself over my faith, which comes from my spirit.

We sometimes have some teasing at home with our children. Of course, all three of them know that their faith must be in line with their words and attitudes. However, sometimes there are still little slip-ups in this area. We take this as a joke, because it is simply a matter of them sealing this habit of life and being careful with their words and attitudes towards their faith. So it happens quite rarely, but from time to time, that one of them lets slip a word that is not in

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phase with their faith. It might be something like: *"Oh, but I keep forgetting to do things, I can't help it, it's all me!"* Then, in jest of course, I reply: *"Fine, then let it be done to you according to your words!"* And then he immediately gets it together, realising that talking like this will only reinforce his point of improvement, and that this is not the way to activate his faith in order to change in this area. It is important to track our language, because it is often in small phrases, which can easily go unnoticed, that we sometimes express words that are contrary to what our faith says. These words, repeated year after year, will take root and become a normal state of fact accepted by my person. In this case there is no possibility of change. I will have to become deeply aware that this is a lie, and that it does not correspond at all to my identity in Jesus.

You may very well ask someone close to you to help you with this, if you feel concerned. To be very honest, sometimes I and my wife Christine still have words that may go unnoticed by most people, but are not in line with our faith. So we help each other with this. Sometimes we both come to the point where we say, *"Okay, let it be done to you according to your words!"* But as time goes by, we find that these kinds of mistakes are becoming rarer in our language.

CHAPTER 12

KNOWING GOD'S WILL TO EFFECTIVELY ACTIVATE MY FAITH

There is often another aspect of faith that can be misused. Who has never heard words of prayer like: “*My God, do as you wish*”, or “*Lord, do your will*”?

Over time, such catch phrases have become the preferred option when someone is unsure of how to pray. These words are often taken from the Bible, but put into a context that is not the original.

Matthew 6:10 *Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as it is in heaven.*

In this example, many people say that if Jesus said that we should say to God, “*Your will be done*”, then it is a good thing to do.

John 6:38 *For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.*

Here again, it is Jesus who speaks, teaching the crowd that has come to Him. In this verse, we see that Jesus is totally disregarding Himself. He confirms that He

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came to do God's will. So some people think it is a good thing to put aside their own opinions and needs and say to God in their prayers, *"Lord, just do your will"*. But Jesus had a specific mission on earth, which is not quite the same as ours. Of course we must strive to do God's will, but we are not in quite the same situation as Jesus.

Moreover, here Jesus said in other words: *"I came down from heaven to do what my Father asked me to do, not to do what my flesh wants to do"*.

Some may say that we too have to do what God has asked us to do and not what our flesh wants to do, which is absolutely true. But that does not mean that we should remain in an attitude where we do not express things with our spirit.

Acts 21:14 *So when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, "The will of the Lord be done."*

In this passage, Paul is with his friends. A man named Agabus, who was a prophet, comes before Paul. There he gives him a word about himself. Paul was going to be arrested in Jerusalem and a little later transferred to Rome where he would remain a prisoner. The reaction of Paul's friends is very interesting.

Paul knows that he has to go to Rome, he knows that it is part of God's plan to bring the good news to Rome, even if he has to be taken prisoner. But obviously his friends don't know what God's will is in this regard for Paul's life. So they try to persuade him not to go to Jerusalem so that he can avoid being arrested by the Jews.

Then Paul answered them this (**Acts 21:13**): *Then Paul answered, "What do you mean by weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus."*

It is clear now that Paul knows the will of God in this situation. He is not frustrated or afraid.

Paul's friends, who do not know God's plan for Paul, keep trying to dissuade him. This shows that they are still ignorant of this situation, despite what Paul has just told them. Here is what they say in (**Acts 21:14**): *So when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, "The will of the Lord be done."*

This is another example of Christians who do not know the will of God, and do not know how to pray saying, *"His will be done"*.

You might think that this is an example of a good reaction, but it is not. Paul's friends did not act in the best way here.

The same Paul will tell the Christians in Ephesus:

Ephesians 5:17 *Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the*

Lord is.

To use our faith in the best way, it is important to always know the will of God. Without this knowledge, and as I said above, some Christians will fall into the trap of not really seeking God's will, and simply saying, "*Lord, do Your will*".

What will such thinking produce?

First of all, it is important to realise that I can never activate my faith on a subject that I do not know. If when I pray I say, "*Lord, do Your will*" without knowing what that will is, then it will be impossible for me to activate my faith on that subject. Simply because I cannot have a firm assurance, without doubting, about a subject I do not know about.

You can never activate your faith without knowing the direction you should take. You can never activate your faith without knowing the thought for which you must have firm assurance.

When you think about it, it is obvious, but unfortunately it is not obvious to everyone.

I used to say that God prefers someone who sincerely and in good faith takes initiatives and who sometimes makes mistakes, to someone who refuses to take initiatives and prefers to remain in a passive attitude, without any action.

Why?

Simply because a person who sincerely takes initiatives will certainly make mistakes sometimes, but with time and maturity, will make fewer and fewer mistakes, because he will learn from his mistakes. Because this person acts sincerely, he or she will use these mistakes to grow. Over the years, this person will take more and more initiatives to reach the point where he or she is almost never wrong. It will take some time, but after a while there will be a noticeable change.

On the other hand, what will happen to the other person who never takes initiatives and remains in a passive attitude? After a while, will they have evolved?

No, unfortunately not, or practically not!

Their condition will remain the same as time goes by.

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This is why we should not hesitate to want to know the will of God when we pray.

Of course I am very aware that sometimes it is difficult to know God's will in certain exceptional cases. This has happened to me at certain times in my life. But in no case will I be content to remain in a passive attitude, and say "*Lord, do as You wish!*"

In this kind of situation, I will do everything I can to find out what God's mind is, what His will is. To do this I will try to see if my opinion of the situation I am going to pray about corresponds to what God says in the Bible. I will spend time asking the Holy Spirit to enlighten me, and ask Him to correct me if necessary. I will use my knowledge of the person of God. With all this, and in case I have not received a word from God on the subject, I will try to make up my mind with all these elements. Once I consider that my opinion is made, I will start praying in that sense.

At this stage I often realise later on that I had the knowledge of God's will in this matter. But sometimes it can happen that in spite of this you are wrong. If it happens that you realise that you have made a mistake and that you have prayed in a direction that was not God's will, remain calm and be assured, God is not blaming you at all. God will never reproach you for a mistake you have made in sincerely trying to move in the right direction.

Too many Christians do not dare to venture out because they are afraid of God's reaction.

If in this situation I have remained in a passive attitude, then I can be sure that nothing will change. But suppose I have made a mistake, if I have formed a wrong opinion that is not in line with God's will, then after a while the Holy Spirit will come, and if I remain receptive, He will show me that I have not taken the right direction.

The Holy Spirit cannot correct you in your thinking if you remain passive, if you do nothing. Don't be afraid of being wrong. This of course does not mean to do anything without reflection, but do not remain passive, go ahead after having done everything in your power to know the will of God. Then remain teachable, maintain an attitude where you let the Holy Spirit correct you if necessary.

There is a passage in the Bible that I often refer to in my own life, in terms of not standing passive, but rather taking initiative. To give us some context, Ben Hadad, the king of Syria, laid siege to Samaria, which resulted in a great famine in Samaria. There was a serious shortage of food. The prices of food were skyrocketing. People were paying 300 grams of silver for the head of a donkey,

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even though it was not usually worth much. Some of the Samaritan women had eaten their babies. The situation was catastrophic.

The passage I am talking about concerns four lepers. Their disease had already doomed them. They could have told themselves that they were going to die anyway because of their condition. They could not go to the city because their leprosy prevented them from having any contact with the people. They had a dilemma: if they stayed where they were, they would starve to death before the leprosy took them, and if they entered the city, they would be driven out, and there was no food left anyway. Especially if people had eaten their own children, you can imagine all sorts of things that could have happened to them.

So these four lepers decided not to stand by and wait for certain death. Here is their reflection in the passage below:

2 Kings 7:4 *If we say, 'We will enter the city,' the famine is in the city, and we shall die there. And if we sit here, we die also. Now therefore, come, let us surrender to the army of the Syrians. If they keep us alive, we shall live; and if they kill us, we shall only die."*

These four lepers therefore chose not to remain passive despite their situation in an apparent impasse. They chose to take a sincere and thoughtful initiative, taking the risk of making a mistake. They were not really sure of the direction they had chosen, but it was the best solution after much reflection. It may have taken them hours, or days, to think it through... But they went for it!

Here is the rest of their story:

2 Kings 7:5-9 *And they rose at twilight to go to the camp of the Syrians; and when they had come to the outskirts of the Syrian camp, to their surprise no one was there. For the Lord had caused the army of the Syrians to hear the noise of chariots and the noise of horses—the noise of a great army; so they said to one another, "Look, the king of Israel has hired against us the kings of the Hittites and the kings of the Egyptians to attack us!" Therefore they arose and fled at twilight, and left the camp intact—their tents, their horses, and their donkeys—and they fled for their lives. And when these lepers came to the outskirts of the camp, they went into one tent and ate and drank, and carried from it silver and gold and clothing, and went and hid them; then they came back and entered another tent, and carried some from there also, and went and hid it. Then they said to one another, "We are not doing right. This day is a day of good news, and we remain silent. If we wait until morning light, some punishment will come upon us. Now therefore, come, let us go and tell the king's household."*

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What would have happened if these lepers had stayed where they were, thinking that they were doomed to die anyway? So dying a little earlier wouldn't make much difference.

But they chose to take the risk of making a mistake after thinking long and hard to make the best decision. There was no question of them sitting around waiting to die.

These four lepers are often an example to me. I often think that if 4 lepers who were doomed to die decided to take an initiative in spite of their illness, then I should never remain passive in a prayerful context in order to activate my faith. I never say: *"Lord, do Your will"* without knowing it.

I am not saying that we should never tell God to do His will. On the contrary, I can say *"Lord do Your will"* only if I know what that will is. This nuance is very important, because many people think that we can tell God to do His will whether we know what that will is or not.

As I said earlier, it is impossible to activate our faith regarding a thought or direction of which we are not aware. But on the other hand, I can very well say to God *"Your will be done"*, being fully aware of this will. In this case I am not like Paul's friends, but I am like Jesus who said to His father in **Matthew 26:39** *"... nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will."*

In this case, Jesus knew perfectly well what God's will was. It was with full knowledge that He could say, in other words, *"I want Your will to be done, because I know it, and I approve it"*.

So there is a clear difference between asking God to do His will in the case where I know that will, and in the case where I do not know that will. The first example being a very good thing, but not the second.

In order to activate our faith properly, Paul encourages us to know God's will, and gives us valuable instructions on how to find out.

Romans 12:2 *And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.*

Reading this passage, it is difficult to say that it is not possible to know God's will for one area of my life.

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Before I can know God's will for my person, Paul shows us that there are a few conditions to be met. We hear very often in Christian circles: *"Do not be conformed to the present age!"* This phrase is often used to give way to the idea that the Christian life is all about prohibitions. But that is not what Paul is saying here. Paul's point is this: *"We must not think as the majority of people in society think. Most people live as if life stops after our physical death"*. Paul tells us to think beyond that. We need to think in such a way that we can enter and remain in a process of transformation, in order to become the image of God. This transformation can only take place by renewing our minds, that is, our souls. Then in this transformation, as our soul is renewed more and more, we will be able to discern what God's will is.

CHAPTER 13

FAITH AND JUSTIFICATION

There is a state we must enter into which is to understand and accept that we are justified. For a long time this word was like a riddle to me, I would hear that we are justified, I would hear about our justification, but no one could explain to me in detail what it meant.

I just wanted to know what God's justification could change in my life. Many times I got the same answer that we were justified because Jesus gave His life on the cross for us. But on the other hand, it was explained to me that if I sinned too much, then I would lose my relationship with God, even my salvation. So I thought that in that case I was no longer justified, and therefore this justification that God has given us could be taken away from me if I sinned. Of course today I have long since understood that all this is not correct and that it is not at all what the Bible says. I also understood a long time ago that until I understand the justification in Jesus Christ that is in my life, then it will be impossible for me to activate my faith for long.

I think all Christians have prayed at least once about something, only to realise

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a little later that they have committed a fault, a sin. Some will think that God no longer listens to them, others that God is disappointed and that He will not answer their prayer.

This is where we realise that understanding our justification is crucial. A person who has not properly assimilated this justification that we have in Jesus Christ, will be an easy prey for some demonic spirits who will not hesitate to suggest lies to them. *“God is very disappointed in your attitude, and you think he will reward you by answering your prayer? Do you really think that your authority is still active after what you have done?”*

These are thoughts that are suggested to us, and the demonic spirits that suggest them only have to wait for our ignorance of justification to do the rest. Satan will never force you to do anything, because he hasn't the power to do so. On the other hand, he will suggest lies to you, hoping that your ignorance on this subject will swallow these lies and that in the end he will push you to act in the direction of these lies.

In practice, you are praying about something, you know that you have to activate your faith. You check that the activation of your faith bears fruit that can be seen. Then you pay attention to your words, you listen to yourself so that you can rectify things in case a sign of weakness in your faith appears. But unfortunately, some time later, you make a mistake. You realise that you have committed a sin that is quite significant from a human perspective. If you are a person who is sensitive to the Holy Spirit and who has a good relationship with God, you will feel embarrassed about what you have done or said, as the case may be. You will feel rebuked, you will begin to feel the person of the Holy Spirit showing you that you have done wrong. He is not going to accuse you, He is not going to condemn you or belittle you, but He is going to lovingly point out your mistake so that you can fix it if possible, and above all so that you understand that it is not something you can do over again at all. In this kind of case, you never feel at your best spiritually speaking, which is quite normal. You don't feel down, but you are aware that you have messed up.

In this case, if we have not understood the nature of our justification, we are easy prey for Satan and his demons.

What will happen?

As I gave an example above, it will not be very long before a thought pops up in your soul. This thought will come from an evil spirit that will try to turn the fact

that you have been rebuked by the Holy Spirit into an accusation that will aim to paralyse you and bring you down.

1 Peter 5:8 *Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.*

This word of Peter is a perfect illustration of this kind of situation. Do not think that Peter was thinking of satan coming and tearing some Christians apart. No, things are often more subtle than that. He is looking for someone to devour, that is, someone who is likely to believe his lies and act ignorantly on those same lies.

So if you are easy prey in this area, and therefore your justification is not well rooted in you, you will think that God is accusing you. You will think that this thought that tells you that God is no longer listening to you because of what you have done, comes from the Holy Spirit who is expressing His disagreement with you.

Then because of your lack of teaching on this subject, you will let this thought work its way into you. And unfortunately it won't be too long before you start acting on this thought. This action will result in your underestimation of yourself, you will feel condemned. But since you will think that this is from God, you will not dare to say anything.

The next step in this spiritual decline will be to say to yourself something like: *"What is the point of trying to continue to activate my faith for this prayer if God is disappointed with me, if He is angry with me!"*

In the worst case, you will give up the prayer yourself. And in the best case, you will continue to pray, but your faith will have disappeared, and therefore nothing will happen.

Why will your faith be gone?

Simply because it is impossible to consider yourself unapproved by God, rejected or put aside, or having lost God's full attention to you, and at the same time have the assurance that He is blessing you in your prayer, have the assurance that your authority is as powerful as ever. It is impossible to activate your faith if you feel accused or condemned by God. And that is where satan has won the game.

Do you see satan's tactics in this kind of case more clearly?

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He sows a lie and waits for us to make it sprout because of our lack of knowledge. And in the end, we are the ones who scuttle ourselves.

Do you see the harmfulness of this?

Do you see the manipulation of which you are the target?

For more details on this subject see my study called *"The True Colours of satan"*.

If you recognise yourself in this kind of unfortunate example, here are a few tips on how to stop being deceived.

Romans 5:1 *Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,*

From the above passage, I see that the pattern remains the same. Like everything else God has given me, justification can only be activated in me by faith. Here again it is a question of faith. The first point shows us that faith is really that compulsory link between God and us.

The second important point Paul makes here is that justification brings us peace with God, we are at peace with God. This peace that Paul talks about will remove all condemnation, all accusation. We see that faith and justification form a virtuous loop, I am justified because I believe it, and I can believe that I am justified because I have understood that I am righteous before God.

One evening as I lay on my bed praying, I asked the Holy Spirit to teach me about the attitude I should have when using my spiritual authority. Often I had noticed that certain thoughts in my soul were interfering with my prayers and trying to stifle my faith.

In these moments of prayer, I like to take hours and hours, sometimes over several days, to analyse things. It is when I am searching that I turn things over from all angles so that the Holy Spirit directs me to understand and grasp the truth. I analyse in my memory certain passages of the Bible in all directions to get a good understanding. It is often when I am doing this that the Holy Spirit intervenes and gives me some keys to understanding.

That day I realised that there were particular areas where the effect of sin could be felt directly or indirectly in our lives. The Holy Spirit made me realise that I needed to dig into this area. I then began to list in my mind the different effects

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that sin could have in my life. The first major effects that came to mind were these:

- Sickness, any dysfunction of the body or soul.
- Wickedness.
- Lying.
- Resentment.
- Manipulation.
- Jealousy.
- Murder.
- Selfishness.
- Shyness.

I realised that all these things were linked to sin in man's life. That is, if sin had never existed on earth, all the issues on this list would not exist, and would never have existed, that was a certainty.

If I consider myself to be born again, that is, dead to my old life, and born to the perfect life of Jesus in me, then sin no longer has any effect on me. This is what the apostle Paul explains in his letter to the Romans.

Romans 6:6 *knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.*

I'm always stunned when I hear Christians say, "*Oh that's my old man playing tricks on me, my old man is having a hard time dying!*"

How can anyone say such things when the Bible says that this old man is already dead!

To say that his old man is still alive is to say that we have not been crucified with Christ, that our old life is not buried with Christ as the Bible says in many places. In the rest of this passage Paul explains that our old self has been crucified with Jesus at the cross, therefore sin has been destroyed in me, so I am no longer subject to sin.

Another translation gives us a slightly more airy view.

Romans 6:6 (TLB) *Your old evil desires were nailed to the cross with him; that part of you that loves to sin was crushed and fatally wounded, so that your sin-loving body is no longer under sin's control, no longer needs to be a slave to sin;*

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Sin has been reduced to total powerlessness in my life. Again it is only when I believe it, that I will begin to see the effects.

Romans 6:18 *And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.*

We cannot be slaves of two antagonistic things at the same time; that is, totally bound to one and the other at the same time, it is not possible. That is what Paul is making clear here in this passage.

Romans 6:22 *But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life.*

To be set free means here in the original: *"To be made free from the dominion of..."* Sin no longer has any dominion over me, it no longer has the power to enslave me, this is a fact that the Bible mentions again and again in many places.

So some people are going to say to me, *"Okay Franck, that's all well and good, but what about that passage where Paul asks who will deliver him from this body of death? How about the passage where Paul says that he does the evil that he does not want to do?"*

These passages can also be found in Romans:

Romans 7:24 *O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?*

Romans 7:18-21 *For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good.*

Reading these two passages literally, we might get the impression that Paul is complaining that sin is taking its toll on him. We might get the impression that there is nothing to be done, that sin is still present and alive in his person.

But if we look a little closer, we see that this is not at all what Paul is saying here. Let's look at the context of these passages together.

Paul is talking to Christians in Rome. Some of these Christians are of Jewish origin

and some are not. In this chapter 7, Paul is speaking to these Christians of Jewish origin, for he says to them in verse 1: “...for I speak to people who know the Law,...” In this whole chapter Paul is going to explain to these Christians of Jewish origin that the Law having been fulfilled by Jesus, a Christian is no longer bound to follow its ordinances, because these commandments have been engraved in their spirit.

He uses an example of a wife and husband in verse 2 to draw a parallel between the Law and the Christian.

Romans 7:2-4 *For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives. But if the husband dies, she is released from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband lives, she marries another man, she will be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from that law, so that she is no adulteress, though she has married another man. Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another—to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God.*

Just as a wife is no longer bound by marriage to her husband when he dies, a Christian is no longer bound to the Law because he has put on the life of Christ, because Jesus has put sin to death within us. When there is no more sin, there is no more Law. The Law having been fulfilled in us by our death and new life in Christ. Thus sin in us has died with our old nature, and we are resurrected by the life of Jesus which we have accepted in order to be born again.

We can see from this example the main context of Romans chapter 7.

Paul goes on to give a detailed description of the Law in relation to the sin that is now dead in us. He then describes this whole process of dying to our old self, and then putting on the life of Christ in us that frees us from the Law.

Then Paul goes on in verse 7 of the same chapter to make a comparison between the Law and sin. Among other things, he says that just because the Law no longer applies to us does not mean that it is bad. The Law is far from evil because it revealed the existence of sin.

Then he continues in verse 8 to show that if the Law no longer applies to me, i.e. if it no longer concerns the life of a Christian, then sin is also dead, for Paul says: “*Without the Law sin is dead*”.

Paul now enters into a description of the process of the destruction of sin in the

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life of a Christian. For this he will speak in the present tense, quoting himself, and describing the process of sin dying to make way for new life in Christ.

Romans 7:10-11 *And the commandment, which was to bring life, I found to bring death. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it killed me.*

In other words, the Law, which is good, sheds light on my sins and thereby condemns me to death. For because of this Law, I discovered that sin was in me, and that this sin produced the death of my person.

Here Paul is simply describing this process of bringing sin to light in the lives of men.

He goes on in verse 12 to say that the Law is a good thing, for it is through it that sin has been brought to light.

Romans 7:13 *Has then what is good become death to me? Certainly not! But sin, that it might appear sin, was producing death in me through what is good, so that sin through the commandment might become exceedingly sinful.*

Paul goes on to ask whether the Law was ultimately given simply to show us that we are dead.

Far from it, he says.

But the Law had to be given in order to expose sin.

Romans 7:14-15 *For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin. For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do.*

This is a first passage that is often misunderstood. Most people think that Paul is saying that sin is in him, and that it will remain there for the rest of his life.

But that is not at all what Paul is saying here.

If that were the case then this word would be in total contradiction with everything we have just seen since the beginning of this chapter 7.

Remember that Paul is describing the process of the condemnation of sin, and the process of the new birth that follows it. In the previous verse, Paul demonstrates the fact that the sin that gives us death is exposed by the Law. Here in these verses 14 to 16, he simply continues his exposition, saying that by the Law I am 'sold to sin', i.e. I have no escape, the Law has condemned me to death because of sin, and no one can change that.

In this context, Paul describes how and why sin works in me when I have not yet been born again: "... For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate,

that I do..."

Romans 7:16-24 *If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good. But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?*

Here Paul continues his description of a life where sin has been revealed by the Law. As a result the person realises that sin pushes him to do wrong. There is my conscience on the one hand that pushes me to do good, but my flesh infected by sin pushes me towards evil.

There is then this distinction of evil in me. I realise that sin has come to attach itself to me, which is why Paul says: *"it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me"*. He continues to describe a person who knows the Law, but finds that sin is trying to draw him into evil. But Paul comes to this conclusion: if a person has become aware of sin through the Law but has not yet experience the new birth, he will find himself in a dead end because he will not be able to do good when he wants to.

This person will therefore be obliged to make this observation: *"But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?"*

In other words, Paul is saying that it is simply impossible to get out of the effect of sin on your own. That is why He says, *"O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?"* He is describing a person who has just realised that without a Saviour it will be impossible to get rid of the influence of sin.

Romans 7:25; 8:1 *I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin. There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.*

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This passage now makes sense. In the previous verse Paul describes the fact that we need a saviour to get us out of the grip of sin, here he gives us the means: Jesus Christ!

So there is this fact: by our understanding we accept that the Law says that sin is in us, and when we happen to sin, then we succumb to the pressure of sin. But so that we can be free, even if we happen to sin, Jesus Christ in us, through the new birth, enables us to have no condemnation over ourselves.

This explanation shows us that Paul was simply describing the whole process of a person who knows the Law of God and finds that sin is in them, that they can never get out of it on their own, and that the Saviour Jesus Christ has come to offer us His life in place of ours, so that we can be spiritually free from sin. Being spiritually free from sin through the new birth will subsequently give us the potential to be totally free from sin through the regular renewal of our soul.

So Paul is not at all talking in this passage of Romans 7 about a state where he would not be able to get rid of sin in his daily life, quite the contrary.

Now that we have answered the question of why Paul spoke in this way, we can continue our analysis of justification.

Let us take up the passage we mentioned earlier:

Romans 6:22 *But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life.*

To be set free means here in the original: *"To be made free from the dominion of..."* Sin no longer has any dominion over me, it no longer has any power to enslave me, this is a fact that the Bible mentions again and again.

We were talking about the effect of sin which today has no hold on us. The whole of this non-exhaustive list mentioned above shows us that all these things no longer have any effect on us, simply because sin has been removed from our lives.

- Sickness, any dysfunction of the body or soul.
- Wickedness.
- Lying.
- Grudges.
- Manipulation.

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- Jealousy.
- Murder.
- Selfishness.
- Shyness.

Spiritually all these things and many others, have no life in me anymore. I say “spiritually” because many Christians can sadly say that they sometimes still manifest some of these things in their lives.

As I said before, this is not a utopia, but a reality: these sinful states are dead. It is the activation of my faith that will allow me to see it fulfilled in the tangible world.

It is not a question of making them die as we often hear, but rather of believing that they are already dead, which is not the same thing at all.

I am justified, and even if I happen to realise that I have sinned, I do not feel condemned at all, my faith is not affected by this error on my part.

If I wish to activate my faith in the best way, I must have a pure conscience, without any condemnation. I must understand that I am perfect in my spirit in order to activate my faith.

We might think that all this is a bit too easy. I sin, I am justified, I make a mistake, God does not condemn me and everything is fine.

In the end, I might as well take advantage of it and not make any more efforts! That's the problem, if I base my transformation on my efforts, it won't last very long.

God simply asks us to believe all this, to believe all that He has already given us and made us righteous. We are as righteous before God as Jesus Himself was when He was on earth.

Some will say that this is not fair, that God is wronged.

Yes indeed, but it is in realising this injustice that I will understand the kind of love God has for me. I will understand this unconditional love that He has for me.

I realise that God has declared me righteous, but also that He loves me unconditionally. These two thoughts anchored in me will be a serious help to activate my faith. This love and justification will give me confidence in God. Trust is a factor that greatly helps to activate my faith, because faith is based on trust.

Colossians 1:21-23 And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind

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by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight— if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the Gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister.

God considers you “holy”, He has chosen to see holiness in you. You are blameless and above reproach (**Colossians 1:22**), that is, without fault, “*above reproach*”.

Do you think that God is an old man with failing eyesight and that He sees us as such, but in reality you are not?

No, God sees us as we are. He does not see us as holy, blameless and above reproach, to please us. God has done everything necessary to make us so. His Son's life was the price paid for it.

Some will say, “*I don't feel like I'm holy, blameless and above reproach*”. You are as much as the fruit of the Holy Spirit is already in you. You are as much as you are saved.

Again we come back to the point: faith is still the compulsory link in this area, in order to see this in a tangible way in my life.

God makes it easy for us; there is not a different recipe for activating our faith in different areas, no, the method is always the same.

First of all, I have to make a firm decision to believe. At this point, the problem is not that I believe, or that I don't believe, or that I find it hard to believe, that's not the issue at the moment.

I simply have to decide to believe.

In the same way that a person decides to play a musical instrument when they don't know how to play, when they don't have any experience, the same is true for us when we decide to believe in an area where we had no experience. No matter how things go, the first decision to make is to believe firmly without doubting, without ever letting any circumstance or situation interfere with my decision. This is the foundation, the basis as I mentioned before, of any success.

I will have to be prepared for the fact that I will sometimes fail, it is far from mandatory, but it may happen. If I happen to commit a sin while I am in the process of activating my faith, I must remember that I am justified no matter what. It is quite possible that the Holy Spirit will lovingly correct me, without

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accusation, without condemnation but with firmness, so I will take advantage of His teaching to change things.

Remember that no one but yourself can force you to make the decision to stop activating your faith or to “throw in the towel”. It is not situations, it is not circumstances, it is not people, it is not persecution, it is not satan or any of his demons, it is not life in general that will force you to stop believing, for none of these things has any power. The final decision to believe to the end, without doubt, will always be yours. Always remember this fact.

I understand that sometimes certain circumstances or situations can be very difficult, I am not minimising this in any way, but nothing and no one, not even satan himself, can force you to give up activating your faith in a particular area.

Romans 8:38-39 *For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Faith is also the only way to perceive God. It is by faith that I perceive His love for me, it is by faith that I perceive His salvation in Jesus Christ for me. If nothing can separate me from this love received by faith, then in the same way nothing can force me to stop believing.

Always remember as an anchor firmly planted in your mind that God does not change His view of you based on your attitude.

There will surely be times when He disagrees with some of your choices, but His view of you, His deep love for you remains, no matter what. That is why you can say in any situation, “I am justified, I am a righteous person”. It is this same thought that you will have kept within you no matter what happens, that will help you to get up if you fall, and to get back up and believe again.

Galatians 3:24 *Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.*

Paul says here that through the Law we discovered that sin was attached to our person. This discovery enabled us to have a righteous position because we believed it when experiencing the new birth. I have been made righteous because God has given me the opportunity and because I believe it.

CHAPTER 14

KEEPING MY FAITH ACTIVATED UNTIL THE FULFILMENT

I have often heard people tell me that they had no problems with their faith, but yet they were not getting results in their lives. They were sure that their faith was not the problem, so they looked everywhere, trying to test all the other spiritual areas of their lives. As I talked with people, I noticed this quite often, and the cause was always the same.

The people I spoke with explained that they prayed with faith, and I could see that, at least from what they told me. When I talked with them a little more deeply, I could see that their prayers were being brought forth... but the result was not there!

As the conversations continued, I realised that these people believed, but not to the end.

When you think about it, it is not very complicated to believe when you are in a quiet place, your eyes closed, praying. I say "*not very complicated*" because once you have decided to pray about a subject, once you are in an attitude of faith in your thinking, this step is then acquired because you have managed to activate your faith in prayer.

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Many Christians often think that this is the end of the matter. After all, when we read the story of Jesus, we see Him praying mainly for cases where the outcome is almost immediate: illnesses, the dead being raised, words of knowledge, etc. So many read these kinds of passages regularly and think that faith stops when the prayer is over. Many times they pray with faith, then come to the end of the prayer, and they think that things are done and that there is no need to use their faith anymore because they have just done it in prayer. As I said, this is true when I pray about something and I can see at the end of my prayer that it is fully answered. But this is not always the case. And the problem is that when we don't get the opportunity to see our prayer answered for one reason or another, then many think that the right attitude is to stop bothering. But this is not the case!

My faith must remain active until my prayer is completely fulfilled!

There are many examples in the Bible of people who prayed for certain situations and the result didn't manifest yet at the end of their prayer. The most significant one, in my opinion, is the one found in Daniel's life.

To remind us the history and context, we are under the Law, Daniel who is a prophet, consults the scroll of the book of the prophet Jeremiah. There, while reading the prophecies, he realises that the people have not followed the words of the prophets. So Daniel decides to pray to God (***Daniel 9:3***).

As a result of his prayer, Daniel receives a word from God. By this word he knows that a calamity in the form of a war will come. But Daniel does not know more. He needs to receive more information in order to understand what this word means in its entirety. So Daniel decides to dedicate himself fully to his spiritual life. He eats only the essentials, maintains his body at a bare minimum in order to concentrate solely on his spirit. This lasted for three weeks.

Put yourself in Daniel's shoes for a moment.

Imagine the scene. You receive a word from God concerning a nation. It is not every day that you receive such a word, to say the least. So you would certainly be excited, but you realise after a while that you are missing quite a few details about this word. So you decide to pray, you don't go to work because you want to devote yourself totally to this prayer. You feed yourself on the minimum, you don't spend your time looking after yourself, you are totally dedicated to receiving this information that you are missing.

One day passes, then two, then three. 10 days go by.

What would be your reaction?

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What would be your decision, to continue or to stop?

Daniel continued, he had made a firm decision to go through with it, to prolong the process until he received the information he needed.

At the end of 21 days, Daniel was by a river, expecting with faith that God would answer his prayer. When that time comes, Daniel receives another vision in which the man he sees (whose description closely resembles that of Jesus in **Revelation 1:12**) gives him all the information he needs to interpret his first vision. We will not go into the details of this vision as it is not our subject, but what interests us here is what this man answers to Daniel concerning his prayer made 21 days earlier.

Daniel 10:12-13 *Then he said to me, "Do not fear, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart to understand, and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard; and I have come because of your words. But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days; and behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had been left alone there with the kings of Persia."*

Of course, things are different today in the spiritual world compared to the time of Daniel, because the cross has intervened. But we can still use this example.

The first striking fact is that from the moment Daniel prayed, 21 days earlier, his prayer was heard and taken into account. Yet he did not immediately see it fulfilled.

Too many Christians today think that God leaves millions of prayers unanswered in the spiritual realm. God answers prayers of faith instantly, which is a fact. He doesn't put anything on hold, He doesn't have an agenda that fills up like an email box with answers waiting to be sent.

Today the example of Daniel's prayer could be applied in various situations. It is therefore quite possible to pray with faith and not see the fruit of our prayer immediately. This may be the case sometimes, but not always.

Why is this so?

There are situations where other parameters than my faith may be involved in the accomplishment of certain prayers.

*I want to make a quick aside regarding two ways of praying with faith. I often make two distinctions in prayers. These distinctions are very important to discern because otherwise we will not understand how to pray effectively.

There is praying to God, whether it is through praise, worship, a question I am

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going to ask Him, an idea I want to express to Him. In these kinds of prayers, I am involved, and God is involved. We are in a dialogue, in a demonstration on my part and/or His. So whether it is with God, Jesus or the Holy Spirit, we are two people exchanging in prayer. We could say that this kind of prayer does not put me in a particular autonomy, nor in the expression of a particular authority. I mean that in this case I will not have to use the power of God's word in me.

In practice this kind of prayer might be something like:

"Thank you Father for putting your life into me, I'm so glad you decided to give me back everything I lost through sin. Thank you for designing a mission for me and giving me the opportunity to spread the kingdom wherever I go. Your love for me is so great, it is pushing me to become more and more like You, and I am very happy about that".

In this kind of prayer I will use my faith of course but not my authority for example. There are other examples where we need to use the power of God's word that is already in us through our authority. The Bible shows us in many examples that we have power, authority, rights that we need to use with the power of His Word in us. For more details on this subject see my study called *"I take and use my authority"*.

Again in practice, if I have to pray for a possessed person for example, it could be something like this: *"Demonic spirit, I command you to come out in the name of Jesus, let go of this person and come out for I proclaim him free in the name of Jesus"*.

Or if I am praying for an illness: *"Cancer, I command you to come out of this body in the name of Jesus, there is no more effect of sin and cancer, you have no choice but to come out"*.

Or if I have to pray in a time of drought: *"I command rain to fall from heaven. Clouds, the wind is blowing you this way, and I command you to let the water that is loaded in you fall in Jesus' name"*.

The major difference in this kind of prayer, apart from the fact that I used my authority, is that I am not addressing God. In the first example of prayer I have a dialogue with God, and in the other example I do not have a dialogue with God.

When I use my authority in Christ I am not addressing God, this is an important point to know.

I often hear people praying saying, *"Lord, I command this pain to go away in Jesus' name"*. That's not a bad prayer in itself, but said in that way, I'm not going

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to get the right view.

I have often seen Christians praying in this way, and I have noticed that for many it is just the result of a lack of confidence. They have not understood what they have been given: that powerful Word that lives in them and that they can use as if Jesus Himself were using it in that very situation. Because of this lack of confidence, they prefer to incorporate God, and in the process, leave all the work to Him.

Unfortunately, the results are often not forthcoming. So because of this lack of knowledge and confidence, they think that God is not working because the pain is still there. They have not understood that they themselves must use their authority with faith. And because they have not understood this, they then think that God has put their prayer on hold for some ridiculous reason like:

- This is not God's time
- God is allowing this suffering
- I must have sinned and God is angry with me
- Miracles are not really for today
- I have not received enough power
- God has not given me enough faith

That is why it is very important not to mix these two kinds of prayers. Of course, I sometimes say: *"Thank you Holy Spirit for your power through my hands"* for example. But I am very aware that it is me who uses my authority as a team with Him, not God who does the job for me. Therefore, if I don't see results, I don't blame God or a whole list of things other than myself. On the contrary, I will look within myself to see where the problem lies. Often I need to refocus in order to activate more of my faith.

It is therefore essential to make a clear distinction as to whom I should address when I pray, so that I do not make an error of interpretation that will lead me away from the truth and deprive me of a positive result.

I close my parenthesis on this subject.*

There are therefore cases where the delay in answering my prayer may be more or less long depending on certain parameters. But as I said above, God always answers instantly when all the elements, such as faith for example, are present.

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So there are situations where other people will be involved in my prayer. This is where we come close to the example of Daniel's prayer. If for example I pray for my parents to have an encounter with Jesus in their lives.

What will happen?

Will God wave a magic wand over their heads and force them to give their lives to Christ?

Of course not!

We know that God gives us a free choice which He never denies. Therefore, God by His Spirit will suggest to my parents thoughts in accordance with the Bible, with His grace, with the unconditional love of Christ for them. Then, it is up to my parents to follow, to adhere or not to these thoughts. God will never force them. Here again it is very important to understand what happens when I pray in this way. The final decision will always belong to my parents. That is why when I pray, some people will sometimes very quickly understand where the best option for their life is, so the answer will come quickly.

But sometimes other people will react with a little more delay to understand where the truth lies. In that case my prayer will take a little longer to be answered.

In the same way, if I need a car and I pray to receive it, will God arrive with a car from heaven?

Of course not!

God will suggest to a person to give me their car, or to give me the money in order so that I can buy a new or second-hand car. If I have activated enough faith, then the timing of my prayer response will be according to that person whom God directs to express their generosity. It is quite possible that this person will not respond quickly, or even at all. In that case God will have to suggest it to another person, who may also react either immediately or a little later. It is in these cases that my prayer may come into being with very different delays, but these delays are not at all caused by my more or less activated faith.

It is therefore important to remember this, so that if one day I find myself in this situation, I understand where the problem lies.

In the case of this car, for example, a person who does not understand how things work in the spiritual world will react by saying that God may not want to give him a car, or that it is not the right time, etc... Whereas the problem is quite different. If this person has a good knowledge of prayer at this level, he will rather say by faith something like: *"Thank you Father for this car that I am going to receive, I can see that it takes a while, so thank you for the person you are talking to so that I receive this car. Or maybe you had to prompt another person*

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because the first one didn't respond favourably. So thank you Holy Spirit for this person you are speaking to for me".

In the latter case, I have used my faith wisely, and because of that my prayer will come true.

This shows us that it is important to use our faith the right way, with regard to the subject in question. If in the case of this car I am not being taught correctly and I think that God is holding back my prayer for some reason, then I will try to believe as hard as I can that God will change His mind. I will focus, use my imagination, and proclaim that God is willing to give me this car. But all this will be a waste of time, because I am not using my faith for the right purpose or the right way.

That is why a good knowledge of God is very important in order to direct my faith in the right direction.

Therefore, as we said above, I will give myself every chance to believe until the end, until my prayer is completely fulfilled.

Hebrews 6:11 *And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end,*

This passage encourages us to believe until the end, until the completion. Faith is a solid hope that must be expressed to the end or it will not produce the expected outcome.

Here it is in another translation to give us different perspective.

Hebrews 6:11 (AMP) *And we desire for each one of you to show the same diligence [all the way through] so as to realize and enjoy the full assurance of hope until the end,*

I often say that in our world today, one of the greatest ills is that many people do not finish what they start. I am not talking about someone who is forced to abandon a project for various reasons, but about someone who gives up because of a lack of rigour, personal discipline, professional conscience, or love of a job well done. Unfortunately, this kind of attitude can also be found in the Christian world. This shows us that we cannot claim to have a satisfying Christian life if we do not have good attitudes in our everyday life, the two are closely linked. This phenomenon is mainly found in the life of faith. Faith requires that what is begun must be pursued to its total fulfilment.

So if I start praying for a situation, and for various reasons some of which we

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have already mentioned, I don't see anything happening, then two options will present themselves to me:

- I'm not going to pray about it anymore.
- I will continue until everything is accomplished.

In both cases I will have prayed fervently with faith, but in only one of these two cases will I see the outcome of my prayer. Simply because I chose to go all the way, to use my faith in the right way, with the right tools and to persevere without taking into account the time that goes by, but focusing on the expected result only. This is not a very complicated thing to do. To believe until the end is, as we said, a firm decision. To be persistent in believing to the end is a decision that some people will not find too difficult to carry out when it comes to praying. When I am praying, I am the one who has made the decision to pray. I am also the one who will decide to continue praying until the end or not.

There is a state that is like an “in between” moment of prayer. This state corresponds to all the moments when I am not praying exclusively for the subject in question. When I am working, playing sports, on holiday, with family or friends, or any other time when I am not sitting there with my eyes closed praying. It is during all these moments that my faith will be tested.

It is important to understand what tested faith means. We are often used to hearing the word “tested” to define a suffering that is inflicted on us. For most Christians, to have a tested faith would mean that someone's faith is under great pressure to suffer. But the word test simply means: “to verify the functional limits of something”.

A person's tested faith is not a faith that is in suffering, but simply a faith that is in full operation in order to highlight its limits.

This state that I call “in-between” represents all those moments when I am not exclusively praying. So when there are situations in prayer where things take time for various reasons that we have already discussed, I will have to continue to keep my faith activated until my prayer is fulfilled. When I am praying exclusively, it will be easy to stay focused. But often the problem arises when I have finished praying and I return to my daily's activities.

The apostle Paul said this:

1 Thessalonians 5:17 *pray without ceasing*

For years this verse had been calling out to me, and I wondered how I could put it into practice. It seemed so extreme. I had come to believe that this was a word that Paul had given for a Christian elite, people who would be kind of continuously connected to heaven and constantly disconnected from this world. It seemed to me at the time that it was impossible to put this advice from Paul into practice. Even if you stopped working, if you were not married, if you devoted all your time to prayer, there was still the problem of sleep. How can you pray without ceasing, that is, without ceasing while sleeping at night?

I had ended up putting this word down as one of the passages in the Bible that I thought impossible to achieve, and I tried to forget it quickly. At that time I was a young, inexperienced Christian, without much knowledge, and I must say that even the other Christians I knew did not have a satisfactory answer to this question. All the explanations I had been given could not fit the reality of the life we live in.

Then, many years later, I realised that the prayer life is rooted in our thinking, not in our words. So things began to make a little more sense in relation to this passage.

At that time I was experiencing a lot of problems with my faith in the sense that I was finding it difficult to keep it activated between the times when I was praying exclusively, and the rest of my days. It was like a yo-yo with its ups and downs. When I was praying everything was fine, but each time I interrupted for a few hours or a few days I felt like starting all over again in terms of activating my faith in that subject when I prayed about it again.

I remember thinking at times that I should pray without ceasing, and that this would solve my problem.

So I concentrated on my thinking. I can still hear the Holy Spirit saying to me: *"God does not hear what comes out of your mouth, but what comes out of your thoughts"*. It was a revelation for me that day. I had finally understood that when I prayed, it was not all about what I said, but about what I thought.

This is the main difference we can observe between the Law and grace. Under the Law of Moses, only actions were taken into account by God, but under grace things go further upstream, it is in our thoughts that things are taken into account. Jesus Himself confirms this in this passage:

Matthew 5:28 *But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.*

Since we are under grace, we can see from this passage that God takes into

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account what we think.

This is also reflected in our prayers, as I said earlier. That is why the fact of praying without ceasing, which we have mentioned, will be mainly on the level of our thinking. In order not to have these yo-yo effects in our faith, Paul tells us, we have to manage to pray without ceasing in order to keep our faith fully activated... So how can this be achieved in a practical way?

So I have to be able to keep my faith active when I'm praying and when I'm doing other things in my day. Let's take an example to illustrate this.

Imagine yourself, and I am aware that the readers of the TRGN studies can be from all social levels, from all countries, with very different lifestyles. So imagine you have decided to buy a car. You've thought about it, and you've been saving for many months. You have almost managed to raise the money to buy it, and now you know that in a few weeks, this car, which you have been thinking about for months, will soon be in your possession.

Have you noticed that during all this time you have been saving, the idea of this car was almost constantly in your mind? As soon as a conversation with your friends came up on the subject of cars, the image of this car was in front of every thought in your memory. But also when you were in the street, as soon as the same model passed in front of your eyes, instantly the idea of that car you were going to have would resurface before any other thought for a few moments. Sometimes you may have imagined yourself behind the wheel, where you would go, how it would feel to drive, etc.

Did you trigger this intentionally?

No, most of the time these thoughts happen by themselves.

So you have been meditating!

That is to say, you kept thinking about the car that would soon be yours. The desire and the joy were so strong that this thought did not leave you. You didn't just think about the car when you were saving money, no, you thought about it all the time. Any opportunity was good to automatically bring that thought to mind, and to look forward to having it soon.

Did you plan this?

No, not at all!

This is also true for any other subject: a dress, a house, a child who is going to be born, a person you are going to get married to, etc...

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Now think of a subject, like the example of this car, which has taken up almost all the space in your thoughts.

So you think of this example where for weeks, maybe months or even years, you have had this thought that has popped up without warning at every opportunity that has presented itself to you. Sometimes you have even provoked the activation of this thought, but at other times it has presented itself, activated in the foreground of your memory. At other times, you may have even dreamt about it at night, or the thought woke you up because it was so strong, and once you woke up it came to occupy all your thoughts, your memory.

The Bible tells us to meditate on the Word of God.

The term meditate often has an anti-biblical connotation among many Christians. The word is often associated with the occult practice of meditation, but the Bible speaks of it as a good thing, or as a bad thing. Clearly we can meditate on both good and evil.

Joshua 1:8 *This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.*

Meditating means acting in the way we were talking about earlier in relation to this example of a car or another subject that you would have chosen according to your life. I agree that the unglamorous image would be that of a cow ruminating. This example is often used in the French language to illustrate a person who keeps recalling the same thought over and over in his memory.

Psalms 77:3 (NIV) *I remembered you, God, and I groaned; I meditated, and my spirit grew faint.*

Meditation can also be harmful. In a negative sense, someone suffering from depression will meditate, but in a negative way. The same negative thoughts will be repeated over and over again. The action and approach are the same as in a positive sense, but only the thoughts here are negative, and they will produce negative attitudes as well.

Psalms 77:6 *I call to remembrance my song in the night; I meditate within my heart, And my spirit makes diligent search.*

In this example we can see that meditating positively can also sometimes, as I

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said earlier, happen to us during the night and wake us up from our sleep. I want to show by these different examples that meditating can be a good thing, and that God Himself recommends it in certain matters.

If, then, we now return to the subject of praying without ceasing, the method or procedure, if it may be so called, will be the same as in those examples we have just discussed of how to *meditate*.

To be very concrete, let's take an example that could affect and concern everyone.

Let's suppose that a member of your family is seriously ill. Because you are a Christian, you will pray for this person. You will probably find a quiet moment to isolate yourself, and then you will start to pray. You will feel your faith activate in your spirit. Then you will use your authority in Christ. You will stay there perhaps for a while, until you consider that you have prayed in faith. I would like to point out that time in prayer is not necessarily associated with success or not. We are all just different and need different lengths of time to activate our faith. Then when you have finished your prayer, you go back to your activities for the day.

This is where you need to keep your faith active. During your moment of prayer you have of course considered that this person in your family was healed by your activated faith. This is the thought I am talking about when I say that you will have to keep your faith active.

In the moments and days that follow, you will need to stay focused with the same activated faith.

In practice, you should learn to meditate on what you have received and proclaimed in prayer. The same goes for the example of the car or anything else. This person in your family must remain your priority. You must long for his or her healing; it is a matter of the utmost importance to you. Then, because the healing of this person has become of high importance, you will think about it at every opportunity without making an effort to do so. Your love and determination will remind you of this healed person. Sometimes it will be possible that the thought will not be screaming in you, but will just manifest itself to bring back to your mind this healing that is going to happen. It will then be your responsibility to act on that thought.

How to act?

In several ways, depending on the case...

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If, for example, you are walking past a hospital, and the thought of a particular person comes up, you might say something like: *"I am thinking of this healing that is going to take place, thank you dear Holy Spirit for your power is in his/her body to cast out this disease!"*

Perhaps at another time it will be one of your friends who knows about the situation, who will ask you about this person. You may take this opportunity to continue to activate your faith and say something like: *"I have been praying fervently for him (her), and I know that the power of God is restoring his (her) body, and I will see the effects very soon"*.

Another time you will be at home and you will walk past the room where you prayed for this person. There, the thought of that prayer comes to mind. It will be up to you not to "just think about it", but to act by faith. You will be able to proclaim this healing once again with joy.

In another situation, you may hear a programme on TV or radio about the illness you have been praying for.

Perhaps this time the information you hear about the disease is negative. You hear that it is incurable for example. This is an opportunity for you to proclaim the power of God that overcomes all kinds of diseases, and leaves no one sick. It is an opportunity to proclaim that God wants this person healthy, and that nothing can stop it in Jesus' name.

Every thought should be an opportunity to keep, and even activate your faith in this matter even more. The devil will try to make you believe that these are only opportunities to mope, to see the reality of life, to see only the human side. Do not let yourself be sucked into these thoughts.

Meditate in a positive way!

The thought of this healed person will come up more and more often in your memory because it has become an important subject for you.

You may be awakened at night, and your reaction will be to praise God for this healing before you go back to sleep peacefully without any stress.

This is how you will pray without ceasing, because this thought of healing will be in you ready to arise at any opportunity.

You will also follow through with your prayers, because your faith will remain activated throughout this process. You will not only believe when you have your eyes closed while praying, but because you will have carried your faith active into your days, then the result will not wait.

CHAPTER 15

MY FAITH AND ITS INFLUENCE ON MY BODY AND MY MIND

Faith is expressed in different areas of our lives. There are benefits that will be discovered when we begin to change our thinking to coincide with what God is saying through our faith.

One of these areas is our physical body. When I say physical body I include the body and the mind.

It is part of God's will for all His children that we are healthy. Faith is of course the key element when we have a physical problem. But there is a certain state of faith that we can easily acquire.

Before I experienced the new birth, and even years later, I was a person who wanted to plan everything. My motto was: *"Prevention is better than cure!"* I applied this in almost every area of my life. And when it came to my body, my health, I was very forward-looking. As soon as a symptom appeared in me, I rushed to my doctor. I thought that it would be much easier to cure a problem at the root with a treatment, than to wait too long and let it get worse. I also

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kept a close eye on my children very closely in this respect. As soon as there was something wrong with their health, treatment had to be given quickly so that their condition did not get worse.

At the beginning it was a good feeling. As I said, I applied this in my whole life. I remember my mother often saying: *"What's done doesn't need to be done anymore"*. That's why I was in favour of doing things as soon as possible so that, depending on the case, things couldn't get worse or degenerate. In my job, this was a plus for me, because I was often up to date with my tasks.

Despite the fact that I had been born again for many years, no one had taught me that God wanted us to be healthy no matter what. To this I should add that, like many, I did not like to suffer. But who likes to suffer? Nobody, of course! In any case, I seemed to have found a way to minimize the problems of suffering in my life, I had chosen to anticipate them. Whenever I could prevent a condition in my physical body from degenerating, I did not hesitate to take the lead. This was not necessarily a bad thing from a human point of view, but there was a better way.

I understood that we could avoid a lot of problems by our attitude. This was undoubtedly true, but what I didn't know was that there was a much better solution than that.

I had been a Christian for about twenty years, when while reading the Bible I began to be challenged by inconsistencies between what I was reading and what I was experiencing in my personal life. I was very challenged by the fact that I could read that faith linked to a certain spiritual authority could give impressive results in terms of healings.

I realised after a while that I was missing something important.

So I began to try to exercise my authority in Jesus Christ by praying. At that time our children were still young, and they were the ones who were sick more often than my wife or myself. I began to discover this authority through faith, by praying. This feeling of always wanting to manage everything by myself, of taking everything by the roots, began to give way to a certain trust in God. Today I realised that this trust corresponded to my faith, which was slowly becoming active in this area.

One evening our youngest son had a high fever. I had just come home, it was late. The doctors' offices were closed and we had no medicine with us. When my wife told me that our son had this fever, that evening I thought that if Jesus had commanded the fever in Peter's mother-in-law to leave her body and that fever left, then the fever in my son's body could not help but leave too. So I put

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my hand on his boiling forehead and said with determination, *"Fever, I command you to come out in Jesus' name!"* Less than 10 minutes later the fever was gone, his forehead was completely normal.

That day I began to understand that faith can also have a strong influence on the human body. We will not go into the details of how to pray for healings, as there is a whole study devoted to this. See my study *"Healing the sick is not an option"*.

Now, almost 15 years later, I have noticed that my faith has an influence on my body without me having to do anything special except activate it.

Of course, as I often say, I am still learning and improving, I am still learning regularly to activate my faith even more, and in many more circumstances. I still get sick sometimes, or injured in a minor way, and in those cases my body doesn't react at all in the same way as it did 15 years ago for example.

There are steps of faith that we acquire and which are a bit like safety stops on a lift. Once a level is engaged, it cannot be turned back. It is the same with certain steps of faith in our lives.

When you begin to realise the power that is in you, in your body, through your faith, certain thoughts will become engraved in you:

- *"The power of the Holy Spirit has entered every cell of my body!"*
- *"There is no longer any effect of sin in my body because the life of Christ has replaced mine!"*
- *"I am aging on the outside, but my body is not aging on the inside!"*
- *"My body is regenerated by the power of the Holy Spirit within me!"*

These kinds of thoughts will create in me what I call an activation of my faith towards a safety catch. The special thing about this kind of thought is that it will never step back. It has engaged, locked in, and can't go back at all.

I will therefore have integrated in me a thought that combines these 4 examples above. Because this thought has been acquired, my whole body will be involved in carrying it out.

In practice, as I said earlier, when I get sick or injured, my body will recover much faster. I have noticed this on many occasions. My body recovers its vitality on average three times quicker than it would have done before, without me having to pray. There is nothing exceptional about this. If I consider this thought that the body of Jesus is in me, and if I have definitely integrated it, what could be more normal than for my body to regain its capacities in a very short time.

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The goal is to make this thought a natural part of me. Every time I partake of the Lord's Supper in our local church, or more often at home before a family meal, I remember this thought, I remember that the body of Jesus is as if it were placed on my body. For more details on this subject, see my study called '*The Lord's Supper*'.

Matthew 26:26 *And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, "Take, eat; this is My body."*

It is in this kind of situation that it is important to understand and integrate that I have exchanged my life for Jesus'. Now it is His life, His body that is in me. Therefore, if I believe it firmly, my body will develop a faster than normal recovery capacity from illness for example.

Mark 5:29-30 *Immediately the fountain of her blood was dried up, and she felt in her body that she was healed of the affliction. And Jesus, immediately knowing in Himself that power had gone out of Him, turned around in the crowd and said, "Who touched My clothes?"*

The power of the Holy Spirit is in me, and it never stops working; it is the same power that is in action in the body of Jesus.

This woman came and touched Him, and the power of God in the body of Jesus passed into the body of this woman through her faith. In the same way today, the body of Jesus is in us, and it is up to us to activate this thought, to lock it in us, in order to believe and see that the power of God is at work in my body all the time.

So I have this possibility that my faith is working in me all the time in my body and in my mind. It will greatly increase my healing capacity.

Some may say to me, *"But Franck, I have always read in your teaching that we must always be healed on the spot. What is the point of having a supernatural healing ability in my body, if I can be healed instantly?"*

This is absolutely true!

However, just because it is said that it is God's will that all be healed does not mean that we will be 100% successful as soon as we begin to learn to pray for healing, even if we have already been given all the power and faith to heal any disease.

These same people may say to me, *"But Franck, are you telling us that when you pray for healing not all people are healed?"*

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Yes, that is exactly what I am saying!

There may be some in the world (and I wish there were), but I don't know of anyone who can say that he/she gets 100% results instantly every time he/she prays for healing since he/she started praying.

Does this mean that it is impossible to have 100% healings every time you pray? Not at all! That is not what I am saying.

I repeat many times in some of my teachings that the goal is to get 100% healings when we pray, as the apostles did.

Acts 5:16 *Also a multitude gathered from the surrounding cities to Jerusalem, bringing sick people and those who were tormented by unclean spirits, and they were all healed.*

But before this happens, there is a process of training, of learning, of personal transformation. I myself am still in this learning process as I write this study. That is to say, I sometimes pray for a healing and it takes a long time for it to happen. I do not claim to have all the answers to my questions today. I have not reached my goal, but I am getting closer every day, and I am on my way to that goal.

But in the meantime, I find from time to time, that when I pray for someone or for myself, things take time. That's why I felt it was important to address this thought of faith that needs to be locked in, and that will increase my healing capacity in a supernatural way.

If you are not able to activate enough of your faith in a situation, don't get discouraged. Everyone has been down this road, and I am still progressing along it myself. I am not frustrated, humiliated or disappointed, I am still in training, and I am making steady progress.

Remember that your faith is activated gradually, the more you practice it, the more comfortable you will be in thoughts of faith. You will understand that this world we are in is not the main one, but that our tangible world is itself managed by a spiritual world in which your faith gives you full and unlimited access.

It is therefore a definite advantage to live on a well anchored and stable thought of faith in relation to our own body and mind, because the effects are permanent.

CHAPTER 16

FAITH AND LOVE

There is an element that goes hand in hand with faith that can be found in many situations in the Bible. Faith and love are closely related, with love often being a driving force for faith.

Galatians 5:6 *For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love.*

Paul confirms this very important fact: faith works through love. In other words, without love there can be no active faith. Love is the basis of faith. This may come as a surprise because we are not really used to making the activation of faith conditional on love in Christian circles. Yet that is what Paul is telling us here.

If we think about it a little more closely, we will see that in all circumstances, behind the activated faith is love.

How did we receive the measure of faith that God gave us?

By what means has this measure been passed on to us?

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Ephesians 2:8 *For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God,*

Grace today is manifested in the unconditional love that God has for us. From this grace, salvation in Jesus Christ is offered to us. Faith is the means God has given us to take possession of this salvation given by this grace which itself is motivated by love.

The primary purpose of this salvation that is given to us is to enable us to become like God, to recover His image that we lost through Adam and Eve.

If God has given an equal measure of faith to all, it is motivated by His love for us. The faith we have been given is the manifestation of God's love for His children. That is why faith is linked to love. Without love there would be no faith. Without this inestimable value that God has for us, we would not have the possibility to express faith.

Faith is, as we have already said, a way of thinking, but before being given to us, it is God's means of communication with us. Faith comes from God, therefore it is imbued with His nature. God is love, it is His image, love comes from Him, and it is the essence of His nature: God loves. That is why faith cannot be separated from love, it cannot operate outside of love. Few Christians see faith through perfect love, yet it is through love that it has emerged into our world.

1 Thessalonians 1:3 *remembering without ceasing your work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of our God and Father,*

Paul mentions here some of the actions of the Thessalonian Christians; we can see that their faith was linked to their love. Other translations are even clearer on this point.

1 Thessalonians 1:3 (TPT) *For we remember before our God and Father how you put your faith into practice, how your love motivates you to serve others, and how unrelenting is your hope-filled patience in our Lord Jesus Christ.*

It appears that these Christians heard the Gospel in rather difficult times. But despite this, they used their faith in love.

Colossians 1:4 *since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of your love for all the saints;*

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Philemon 1:5 *hearing of your love and faith which you have toward the Lord Jesus and toward all the saints,*

In these other two passages below, love is always linked to faith.

2 Timothy 1:13 *Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.*

1 Corinthians 13:13 *And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.*

This shows us that faith cannot be properly expressed without love. Some may ask what love has to do with believing firmly without doubting. Love is upstream of faith, which makes it impossible to express or activate our faith if we are angry, frustrated, resentful, or annoyed, for example. This is a very important point to realise. Many Christians are sometimes in anger, frustration, resentment, or annoyance or something similar, and do not understand why they cannot get results through their faith. Faith has its source in love. Let us remember that faith was given by God, and God is love, He does not function otherwise than in perfect love. Therefore, faith cannot function except within the framework of love.

Have you ever prayed when you are angry, resentful, frustrated?

These things will stifle our faith, they will block our thinking and prevent us from focusing on activating our faith. Acting out of love does not necessarily mean that we are in an attitude that makes us feel contemplative, or a bit out of touch with reality. Love according to God is just the opposite. When we act out of love, we are stable, well-balanced, knowing the whole situation and having assessed it correctly. Love according to God is not an emotion, but a powerful, clear and stable feeling.

What Paul teaches us in the above passages is that being in an attitude of love ensures that we are thinking clearly and with a holy motivation. This then gives us every chance to see our prayer fulfilled.

Who has never been confronted with parasitic thoughts when praying?

I think we have all been confronted with this.

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In this case, we find that we very quickly lose our faith thinking. An attitude of love, of compassion, will position us in the heart of our prayer. We need to be focused if we want to activate our faith successfully, so exercising our faith in a purposeful, love-driven attitude will keep us in the centre of the right thought when we pray.

Some may ask, *“But how can I have an attitude that comes from love in all the instances where I will have to pray? How can I do that when I am praying to cast out a demon, or for a difficult situation at work or in my family, for example?”*

The answer is easy to understand. God is love Himself, it is His essence, His nature, everything He does, and everything He says is motivated by His love. Yet we can see God talking to satan, or even Jesus Himself talking to satan in the desert. God speaks firmly sometimes, but He remains love. It is the same for us who are born again. I can very well cast out a demonic spirit by acting with love for the person I am praying for. I can also pray for a problem at my workplace that may include people who are not favourable to me, while keeping my mind directed by the love that is in me. In the same way, I can pray for a family problem that affects me strongly, while maintaining the attitude of love that has become mine.

I can be in love and be firm.

I can be in love and be stable without wavering in my decisions. Any situation or circumstance that I can pray for will be able to be approached with a loving thought without exception. To think otherwise would be to say that God could not express Himself in certain areas. God Himself is love, He does not speak in any other way than in a loving way of thinking, so it is quite possible for us to always activate our faith on a loving basis of thinking.

This is a very important point to keep in mind if we want to be in tune with who we are in Christ. Everything we do must be motivated by a loving thought. Since faith is the compulsory link between the person of God and us, it must be activated in this context.

As I often say (we have already talked about this above), this is the great difference between the dispensation of the Law and the dispensation of grace. Under the Law, only actions were taken into account. But under grace, it is the thoughts preceding our actions or words that are also taken into account. That is why the area of faith is no exception.

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I am not saying that it would be impossible to see results from our faith if we did not have a loving thought motivating it, but simply that this loving thought is just as important as the activation of faith itself if we want satisfactory results. I have seen Christians praying for sick people without any love, just motivated by performance and pride, yet they sometimes got results. And this is where the trap lies. Just because I get a miracle doesn't mean I'm necessarily doing the right thing in terms of my faith. I can very well see miracles and not show any love for the person I prayed for.

A majority of Christians think that if the result is there it means that I am automatically and fully approved by God, which is a mistake. If God had to wait for us to be in an attitude of perfection in love to let His power work through us, then very few people would see miracles.

So it is possible to use our faith without being in an attitude or thought of love, which is why we sometimes have to ask ourselves the question: *“What motivates me when I activate my faith?”*

Not only activating my faith in an attitude of love is what God teaches us in His Word, but it is a guarantee to be in the best conditions to see our prayers fulfilled. Some may say to me: *“But Franck, if when I don't show love I can see results, then why add this fact of showing love?”* You would be right in your question, but not in your result. The Bible shows us that motivation is very important, we will receive rewards in heaven for our actions motivated by love. Everyone knows the words of the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 13 when he says that if I am not motivated by love, then I am like a clanging cymbal.

CHAPTER 17

FAITH IN MY IDENTITY

Faith gives us a power to create a circumstance out of nothing in accordance with the will of God. Faith creates as we saw when God made creation. Faith generates power through the Word of God, Jesus Christ.

But as we quickly mentioned earlier, there is another faith that the Bible speaks of as an identity. The passage below is interesting because it brings together the two notions of faith.

1 Thessalonians 3:7-10 *therefore, brethren, in all our affliction and distress we were comforted concerning you by **your faith**. For now we live, if you stand fast in the Lord. For what thanks can we render to God for you, for all the joy with which we rejoice for your sake before our God, night and day praying exceedingly that we may see your face and perfect what is lacking in **your faith**?*

In this passage faith is mentioned twice, but it has a somewhat different meaning in the two examples. The original word in the Greek remains the same, but this word (PISTIS) can have several notions.

So there is the faith we have been talking about so far in this study, which is a way of thinking, an assurance that our thoughts and words will come to pass.

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But the Bible also speaks of 'faith' as a way of being in our identity. This is the case when Paul says: *"... may see your face and perfect what is lacking in your faith"*.

So there are passages where the Bible speaks of faith as assurance, but also other passages where it speaks of faith as a lifestyle, in an adherence to a Gospel way of being.

Acts 6:7 *Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith.*

Acts 14:27 *Now when they had come and gathered the church together, they reported all that God had done with them, and that He had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles.*

Acts 16:5 *So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and increased in number daily.*

These three other passages are the same examples as the previous one. The faith referred to here is an identity: *"were obedient to the faith"*, *"had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles"*, *"the churches were strengthened in the faith"*.

So there is this other aspect of faith that we can adhere to or not; this aspect of faith is also a state that we enter into, and where we can evolve.

To adhere to faith is to change who I am. It is only voluntarily that I can enter into this state of fact. The new birth is the gateway to this. When Luke speaks of *'the door of faith'* in **Acts 14:27**, he is talking about the new birth, the opportunity to become like God, to regain the image that Adam and Eve lost.

When I experience the new birth I enter into a new identity, I enter into faith through the door of the new birth. I am then in a new way of thinking, because I am now thinking in a way that I have never thought before. Because I think differently, I will act differently, I will also speak and react differently. This is what the Bible calls repentance. For more details on this, see my study called *"The Repentance"*.

To come to faith is to change my identity, to become a different person. Just as we saw earlier in this study that faith without works is dead, I can only step into faith if I see that I am in a process of transformation.

Acts 24:24 *And after some days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, who was Jewish, he sent for Paul and heard him concerning the faith in Christ.*

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This passage from Acts shows us once again that the faith spoken of here corresponds to the access to God.

Faith is therefore that way of life that we enter into when we experience the new birth, in order to have a relationship with God that propels us into a process of transformation so that we become like Him, in His image.

There are different passages in the New Covenant that speak to us about faith. Some of them are sometimes more or less well understood and therefore more or less rightly applied. We will take a few passages about faith, which are not always well understood and applied.

Romans 1:17 *For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith."*

I can't tell you how many times I've heard people in various local churches, but also in Christian house groups, say: *"I live by faith"*, or *"I'm going to take this direction in my life by faith"*, or *"I'll move to a new job by faith"*.

What these statements have in common is that they all talk about faith, but none of them have an ounce of faith in them.

Why is that?

Simply because for the people who say these kinds of statements in general, they mean something like: *"I'm going in a certain direction in my life, but I have no idea where it's going to take me. I hope I'm not making a mistake, and that everything will turn out well"*.

This word of Paul to the Romans is often used for situations that have nothing to do with its context or meaning. The expression *"living by faith"* has often become an uncertainty today, which is in total contradiction with what Paul said when he uttered it.

Many think that living by faith means that we should live without possessing anything, almost without having anything of our own, living with what we can be given here and there.

Others, less extreme, think that *"living by faith"* in a certain area means that we have absolutely no idea what tomorrow will bring in that area. The common point is that both are uncertain about this.

But uncertainty is the opposite of faith.

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The epistle of Jude also speaks of a contending for our faith, or a fight for faith, in the same sense as we have just seen. We have already seen this passage, but this time we are going to talk about it in relation to this battle that it speaks of.

Jude 1:3 *Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.*

Jude 1:3 (GW) *Dear friends, I had intended to write to you about the salvation we share. But something has come up. It demands that I write to you and encourage you to continue your fight for the Christian faith that was entrusted to God's holy people once for all time.*

Here we are no longer talking about faith as a substance that gives us access to the manifestation of God's power in our lives. Faith is, in this passage, referred to as the lifestyle we have just been talking about. So there is a battle to keep your faith active in a lifestyle that corresponds to the salvation in Jesus that we have received.

This battle is the fight for your identity!

But who is going to fight me?

In most cases, it is ourselves who are fighting against ourselves.

We can hear all sorts of things about our new life in Jesus Christ. These are just a few examples of things we may hear from others, or sometimes from our own carnal thinking, or even from demonic spirits trying to suggest them to us so that we believe them:

- You say you are a son of God, but who do you think you are?
- You think you have received the same power as Jesus, but look at your life!
- The last time you prayed you saw a miracle, but this time nothing! You must have disappointed God!
- You are praying and you don't feel the presence of God like last time. God must not be listening to you this time!

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This list could go on for several pages, but everyone will be able to see what I mean, and perhaps relate to it.

Faith, here our new life style, our identity, is not dependent on circumstances. We will see this point a little later. This major point also applies not only to faith as an identity, a lifestyle, but also to the faith that unleashes the power of God in our lives when we pray.

Hebrews 11:1 *Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.*

Faith is an assurance, it has no uncertainty.

So I cannot say that on the one hand I live without really knowing what my next day will be like, and on the other hand say that I am in an attitude of faith. These kinds of words do not coincide at all with such behaviour.

When Paul says “*The righteous shall live by faith*”, it is not only about our life on earth nor is it about going through difficult times in our lives.

Faith is a victorious, strong, powerful, and sure attitude.

Often we can get a better view of the context when we look at what is written before and/or after a biblical passage. Let's look at what Paul says in the verses that precede this one.

Romans 1:15-17 *So, as much as is in me, I am ready to preach the Gospel to you who are in Rome also. For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, “The just shall live by faith.”*

We can see that Paul is talking about preaching the Gospel here. He wants to tell the good news to some people in Rome who have not yet been born again. So Paul gives a quick description of salvation in Jesus, and also specifies the type of people involved. He states that salvation is a power for the believer, the one who will have an activated faith about it. Then in verse 17, Paul quotes a word from the prophet Habakkuk.

Habakkuk 2:4 ... *But the just shall live by his faith.*

There are three passages that quote this scripture of Habakkuk in the New Covenant.

Romans 1:17 *For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith."*

Galatians 3:11 *But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for "the just shall live by faith."*

Hebrews 10:38 *Now the just shall live by faith; But if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him."*

All three passages use the same statement from the prophet Habakkuk. We can therefore consider that all three are in the same context of understanding. It is now quite clear that "living by faith" in these passages does not mean that we have to live in uncertainty. In this context "living by faith" simply means that salvation can only be acquired by faith. Only faith can bring a person to salvation in Jesus Christ. That is why it is written that the righteous, that is, the one who has experienced the new birth, can only receive salvation through faith. In other words, these three passages speak of the fact that salvation is obtained by faith alone.

Living by faith is therefore not a difficult and uncertain life circumstance, but living by faith is an access to salvation through my faith.

CHAPTER 18

MY ACTIVATED FAITH TRANSFORMS ME INTO THE IMAGE OF GOD

Who has never heard that faith comes from the Word of God!
I think a majority of you could say that you have heard Christians around you say that many times. Perhaps some of you have even said it yourselves?

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This was the case for me at a time in my life when I didn't understand how to manifest faith. I repeated what I heard around me in the Christian circles I frequented at the time. They said that if you wanted to have more faith, you had to hear the Word of God. Then they added that hearing the Word of God meant reading the Bible. I believed this for years. Then one day I took the time to check this passage in **Romans 10:17** in the original Greek text, and I could see that what I was saying was not quite right. Paul says exactly: *"So faith comes by hearing [what is told], and what is heard comes by the preaching [of the message that came from the lips] of Christ (the Messiah Himself)."* (AMPC), but not "...from the Word of God".

The day I realised that I was quoting this passage incorrectly, I said to myself that it was not so important after all, because Jesus is God anyway, so it did not make much difference.

However, today I know that it makes all the difference on the contrary. We mentioned earlier that in the Bible there are two definitions of faith, i.e. the word "faith" can have two meanings. If we go back to the few verses before **Romans 10:17**, we can read this:

Romans 10:13-18 *For everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord [invoking Him as Lord] will be saved. But how are people to call upon Him Whom they have not believed [in Whom they have no faith, on Whom they have no reliance]? And how are they to believe in Him [adhere to, trust in, and rely upon Him] of Whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without a preacher? And how can men [be expected to] preach unless they are sent? As it is written, How beautiful are the feet of those who bring glad tidings! [How welcome is the coming of those who preach the good news of His good things!] But they have not all heeded the Gospel; for Isaiah says, Lord, who has believed (had faith in) what he has heard from us? So faith comes by hearing [what is told], and what is heard comes by the preaching [of the message that came from the lips] of Christ (the Messiah Himself). But I ask, Have they not heard? Indeed they have; [for the Scripture says] Their voice [that of nature bearing God's message] has gone out to all the earth, and their words to the far bounds of the world.*

It is now quite easy to see from this passage that Paul is talking about salvation in Christ Jesus. When we read about faith in verse 17 of the same passage, it is not about faith that "believes" in order to receive, but about faith as a way of life that transforms us into the image of Christ through which we are born again.

Romans 10:17 (AMPC) *So faith comes by hearing [what is told], and what is heard comes by the preaching [of the message that came from the lips] of Christ (the Messiah Himself).*

So it is not a question of reading the Bible to increase our faith. Nor is it a question of praying to hear God in order to hear His words to increase our faith. It is not a question of listening to a teaching that quotes the Word of God (the Bible) in order to see our faith become more and more active.

So these things are certainly aids to activate our faith. Reading the Bible, praying, listening to good teaching, are important factors that will help us activate our faith, but that is not at all what Paul is saying here. It is important not to make the Bible say what it does not say.

If we take this passage in context. We know that it is about salvation in Jesus.

The fact that in **Romans 10:17** it says, “... and what is heard comes by the preaching [of the message that came from the lips] of Christ (the Messiah Himself).” and not “and what is heard is from the Word of God” is very important for understanding this passage. In the light of what we have just discovered, we can separate the passage of **Romans 10:17** into two parts in order to explain them.

Romans 10:17 *So faith comes by hearing,*

Thus faith is a way of life given by the teaching of Jesus Christ. This faith into which we enter by means of the new birth, cannot be activated in us only by what we will hear. The faith that saves me, giving me access to eternal life, can only be acquired by hearing the Gospel.

Then if we take the rest of this passage:

Romans 10:17 ... and what is heard comes by the preaching [of the message that came from the lips] of Christ (the Messiah Himself).

If I can hear the Gospel it is because Jesus preached it on the earth for 3^{1/2} years. That's why it is said that faith comes from what you hear and what you hear comes from the Word of Christ.

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It was not God the Father who came to proclaim the Gospel, it was His Son Jesus. So to change this passage by saying that “what is heard comes from the Word of God” could not coincide with its real explanation. It would not have been possible to understand this passage if we thought that Paul would have said that what we hear comes from the Word of God.

We must simply learn to activate our faith, not try to get more. We can see thousands of people reading the Bible without understanding it unfortunately, for various reasons. But in no way will reading the Bible without understanding it increase or activate a person's faith. Thousands of theologians, scholars in various fields read the Bible without understanding it in a spiritual sense, and for the most part this does not arouse faith in their being.

I must say that it was when I understood that the primary purpose of the Gospel was to bring about a transformation of my person that I began to see my life really change radically. Not that my previous experiences did not change anything in me, but it was only when I understood, accepted and put into practice this process of transformation to become the image of God, that I could see supernatural changes in my person.

For years, and despite having already been born again, I struggled with shortcomings, bad attitudes, trying to activate my faith without success. Things would get better for a while, and then an adverse circumstance would come along and scupper all efforts. That was my problem, I was trying to change through efforts of my own will.

By this I also realised that many times we may think we have changed through efforts or good resolutions, but in most cases it is not us that change, it is the circumstances of our life that have changed, which is not the same at all.

As I often say, it is only when you are in a given situation that you can have irrefutable proof that you have changed. If, for example, I am a person who still has certain problems with impatience, it is only when I am confronted with a situation where I have to be patient that I can be sure whether I have changed or not. In the same way, if I am still having trouble trusting God, and I often panic or lose my nerve, it is only when I am faced with a situation where I have to show faith that I will know whether I have changed in that area or not. There is no other way. Don't waste your time looking for others. Never trust your good resolutions, in the sense that they are not the end of things. A good decision is the beginning of a change, but it will never be a proof of my change. It is only when I am confronted with a given situation that I can see how much I have changed.

I often find the same problem with many Christians I meet. Most of them do not understand why they cannot enter into this transformation. Another significant number unfortunately do not know that the Gospel should transform us into the image of God. I believe this is one of the major problems of the body of Christ in the world. Of course not everyone is aware of it, but it is a big problem. If most Christians in the world were aware of the importance and opportunity, and even the duty, to become like God, then the Church would have a very different impact in the world.

Some may say to me, *“But Franck, what does all this have to do with faith?”*

Well, I would say that it is another aspect of faith that we are going to see now. It is through faith that I will succeed in becoming like God!

We will begin to see together the details of this transformation by faith into the image of God in which every Christian should be engaged. There is no one who has been born again who is excluded from this transformation.

The response I hear quite often when I talk about being transformed into the image of God, and therefore becoming like Him, is: *“But it is impossible to become like God, it is prideful to say that! No one can be like God. satan wanted to become like God and it was pride and selfishness that made him so!”*

Yes, that's true, but it's all in the motivation. satan was not a son of God, he was an angel serving God. Moreover, if we become like God, it is not of our own doing, but simply because God asks us to. We do not become like God to supplant Him, but to identify with Him, and to become love as He is love. Love is the image of God. The Bible itself asks us to become like God.

Let's take a close look at one of Paul's verses, for example. We will read this passage in three different versions in order to get a clearer picture.

2 Corinthians 3:18 *But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.*

2 Corinthians 3:18 (NLT) *So all of us who have had that veil removed can see and reflect the glory of the Lord. And the Lord—who is the Spirit—makes us more and more like him as we are changed into his glorious image.*

2 Corinthians 3:18 (BFC) *And we all, with unveiled face, continually seeing as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are progressively being transformed into His image from [one degree of] glory to [even more] glory, which comes from the Lord,*

[who is] the Spirit.

The first thing that is important to emphasise in this passage is that it concerns absolutely all those who are born again without any exception. No one who has been born again can say that he/she is not concerned by this message of the apostle Paul. So if you are reading this study and have been born again, this passage fully concerns you. When Paul says, “*We all...*” he is talking about all those who are born again.

Then Paul goes on to talk about a mirror, or reflection. He says that we behold the glory of God.

For years, and as a young Christian, I wondered for a long time what this verse of Paul's meant. My problem at that time was that I understood that I had to look at myself as if in a mirror, but what I saw was only my person, my face, I did not see the glory of God at all. This was until I understood, with the help of the Holy Spirit, that the goal for me was to become like God. For that is what this passage says: we must enter into a transformation in order to become like God. Of course it is not a physical transformation as such, although changing our way of thinking will often also affect our physical appearance sooner or later. But the primary goal here is to manifest the image of God in ourselves.

- *... beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord,...*
- *... can see and reflect the glory of the Lord.*
- *... continually seeing as in a mirror the glory of the Lord,...*

Why is it referred to as a reflection or mirror?

Simply because a reflection or mirror gives an image, but does not give the real person. You can see this in mirror maze sometimes where you have to guess where the physical person actually is, to differentiate between the real person and their reflections in the mirrors.

When you think about it a bit more deeply Paul really gave a perfect word and image when he talked about mirror or reflection. We are asked to look at ourselves as if in a mirror. When I am engaged in this transformation into the image of God, my face remains the same before or after my new birth. Therefore, the image of God in me is a reflection of who I am on the inside.

It is when I watch myself act, and listen to myself speak, that I am supposed to see the glory of God. It is when I look at myself in this mirror that I see my person

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reflecting who God is. At least that is what I am supposed to see.

This mirror allows me to keep the vision of my face, of my person, and thus to understand that this thought is not utopian, but that it is real. When I try to apply this word of Paul, I will not be surprised, nor will I say to myself that it is a utopia, because I will have understood what Paul says here: I see my person, my face, but my inner person reflects the glory of God, the image of God. So I'm not going to be confused when I try to see God through the reflection of my person.

Paul goes on to say that we are transformed.

- *...are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, ...*
- *...makes us more and more like him as we are changed into his glorious image.*
- *...are progressively being transformed into His image from [one degree of] glory to [even more] glory, ...*

This is where we realise that we must become like God. The image of God must be seen when I watch myself live.

What is the image of God?

The Bible says that God is love, which is His image, which is what characterises Him.

The three versions all speak of transformation. So for me it's about being transformed. Being transformed does not mean being reshaped. Transformed, here in the original Greek METAMORPHOO means: change of form, but also change of attitude. We are called to change our attitude, and in order to change our attitude, we must change our way of thinking.

We then see that changing our way of thinking corresponds to repentance.

- *...just as by the Spirit of the Lord.*
- *And the Lord—who is the Spirit—makes us more and more like him...*
- *...which comes from the Lord, [who is] the Spirit.*

God's glory gradually becomes mine, that is, I gradually become more and more like Him. I think like Him, and because I think like Him, I speak like Him, and because I think like Him, I act like Him.

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If we were to paraphrase this passage from Paul we could say this:

“Moses had to hide his face because of the glory of God upon him, but all of us who have been born again can look at ourselves without a veil, with our face uncovered so that His glory may shine forth. When we look at ourselves living, it is the nature of God that is manifested before our eyes. We become more and more like Him, for His image is in us by His Spirit. We are thus engaged in a transformation to become like our Father, in His image. Gradually we can see that we are thinking more and more like Him, speaking like Him and acting like Him. We go from glory to glory, from change to change, for this is the primary purpose of our identity as sons and daughters. God works in us by the power of His Spirit and enables us to experience this in this world”.

I used to say that this is the primary purpose of the Gospel in our lives, it is the primary purpose of the new birth.

Why?

Simply because when I am committed to this ongoing transformation, then everything else will automatically follow, without any effort on my part.

I can't count the number of people who have contacted me and who still contact me to ask how to give up this, or how to change that in their lives. My answer is always the same, I tell them not to focus on the problem, but on the transformation they have to engage in voluntarily. I have to say that I have never seen anyone who has agreed to engage in this transformation fail to get rid of any particular sin in their lives.

It is now easy to understand that when I am transformed, I no longer think in the same way. My priorities change, my tastes change, my interests change, my words change, etc.

So if I have changed in a particular area, becoming even more like God, will I have to make efforts to act like God in that same area?

Of course not!

Why not?

Simply because I will act according to what I now want to be, do or say.

If you like music, do you have to make an effort to listen to music?

If you like walking, do you have to make an effort to go for a walk?

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If you like to read, do you have to make an effort to pick up a book?

I could go on, just to show us that the Bible provides the perfect solution. There is no point in trying to change to go in a direction you don't want to go. It will only lead to frustration in your Christian life, and give you a false image of God your Father.

This transformation that Paul is talking about here is the basis of all success in our Christian life. In the light of the above explanation, we now understand a little better this other word of Paul to the Romans.

Romans 12:2 *And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.*

Many teachings even today take this verse to claim that Christians should not do what is done in our society. From this thought, it is wrongly asserted that a Christian should not do a whole range of things that are commonly done in our world. Even if this is true somewhere, these same teachings depending on who is teaching them, will develop lists of things not to do, not to say, places not to go, etc... But what is interesting is that these lists are sometimes radically different depending on who is teaching them.

When Paul says not to be conformed to the present age, he is not talking about not doing this or that. Paul is simply saying that a born-again person will have different attitudes to a person who is not born again.

Paul is not saying here: *"Don't be conformed to this world, and don't do this and that, don't go here or there, don't talk like this or like that"*.

Instead he says, *"Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect."* Which is not the same thing at all.

This word of Paul is in full agreement with 2 Corinthians 3:18.

Another version of **Romans 12:2** says this:

Romans 12:2 (MSG) *Don't become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You'll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognize what he wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you, develops well-formed*

maturity in you.

Paul confirms it again here, it is the transformation into the image of God that enables us to change our mindset, to become like God by thinking like Him.

The more I become like God, the more I will change effortlessly; the more I will think like God, the more I will witness a transformation of my person and reach levels that I could never hope to experience by my own will.

Now some people may say to me, *“Alright Franck, I've understood that I have to become like God, I've understood that I have to engage in a transformation to think like Him, this is all well and good, but how do I get there?”*

I often say that in the Gospel we often miss truths simply because we overcomplicate things. This is a problem I see very often. We tend to react humanly and think that because the goal to be achieved is great and powerful, then the means to achieve it must be complicated and difficult. Yes, this is true on a human level. If I want to become a top athlete, I will have to train hard, or if I want to acquire this or that skill in life, I will in most cases have to work hard. But that is not how it works with the Gospel. Of course it takes determination and maturity, but what we have to put in is not at all related to what we are going to get. This is simply because Jesus accomplished everything at the cross.

Am I saying that everything is easy and that we do not have to do anything to grow in faith?

Not at all!

But simply that the results we will gain from our transformation are not at all related to what we have to do to get there.

To succeed, to see powerful fruit in this transformation that Paul speaks of, it is faith that is the determining element.

Faith is the key to success in becoming like God. So this is another aspect of faith that we must use. In this area there is no choice because the Bible considers that the choice is given when Jesus makes us an offer on the cross. He or she who accepts this offer accepts to die in order to be reborn. This is not a symbolism, but a real death and birth. I won't go into details, because you can read my study on this subject called *“The New Birth”*. When I accept Jesus' offer at the cross, I accept to exchange my life for His. I accept to die so that He may come to live in me. As I said earlier, this is not a symbolism at all, but a reality.

Does this mean that I, as an individual, must die totally physically in order to enter into salvation?

No, that is not what I am saying.

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But what is certain is that when I accept to experience the new birth, I accept to enter into a transformation to become like God. Unfortunately very few Christians have received this kind of teaching when they were born again. Most of the time we hear the same things that say that we are sinners, that God had to give His Son for our sake so that He would die on the cross in our place, and that all we have to do is say, *"I ask you to forgive me for all my sins and I accept, Jesus, that you come to live in me"*. The new birth is reduced to a mere passport to heaven.

If that is all you have done to experience the new birth, don't get me wrong, you are saved if you have done it sincerely, but you have missed out on much of the benefit of salvation. Yes, you have inherited eternal life, but you have missed the point. However, in the following lines you will have the opportunity to rectify this if you feel concerned.

Everything God has given us is subject to faith. Salvation is the first of these things. It is because I believe that I am saved. In the same way it is because I believe that I am transformed.

Transformation by faith is a subject that is all too often sidelined in the Church. It is taught far too little, yet it is the foundation of any successful Christian life.

I used to say that when Jesus agreed to die on the cross for us, He did so in order to offer us to exchange His life for ours. It is in the next step that the major problem of many Christians lies. When we talk about the life of Jesus, we sometimes have a totally distorted picture of it. Many wrong teachings are responsible for this. The life of Jesus is said to be about not doing this or that any more. For others, it is a life of deprivation, for others a life of poverty, and for others it is a rather old-fashioned life that is very boring.

Because of such ways of thinking, many reject the life of Jesus in their own daily lives without really admitting it. They think that they must move from a life of freedom to a life of imprisonment. Yet the truth shows us that the exact opposite is true. The fact that some misinformed Christians impose on themselves a whole series of prohibitions thinking they are living the life Jesus proposes only adds to a rather cheesy image of the Christian life. As a result, many Christians, as I said above, reject the transformation that Jesus proposes. But at the same time they complain that they do not see the results in their lives that Jesus had and that we can read in the Bible we should have.

What may seem misleading is that it is quite possible to be born again and not be committed to the God-like transformation that Jesus offers. It is safe to say

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that there are unfortunately more born-again people who are not committed to this transformation than there are who are.

Let's stop for a moment to understand why Jesus proposes this exchange of His life for ours.

Why does He offer to transform us, and why is this transformation so important once we are born again?

No one went to school to learn to be mean, shy, envious, jealous, manipulative, and so on. Depending on the person, some of these things are unfortunately in us from the first years after birth. You don't teach a very young child who is not yet walking to envy another's toy, to hit to get it. These are attitudes that he does not learn but that are in him. No one has made him act like this.

This evil nature is in us from birth, no one is exempt from it, even if a young child will act more out of the reflex of his sinful flesh. We know that this is the consequence of Adam and Eve's choice to live their lives with their own conception of good and evil. This is what they chose to do when they ate of the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil. As a result, and as we said earlier, every living being with a soul is born already contaminated with this way of thinking. So of course we know that Jesus came to offer us salvation, and with it eternal life. But eternal life is only one part of salvation. If we do not decide to step into this transformation, it will be very difficult, if not impossible in some areas, to enjoy all that salvation offers.

When Jesus voluntarily died on the cross, He thus offered the possibility for all human beings to exchange their lives with His. This is why the Bible speaks of the "new birth". We agree to put to death our old self, to be reborn as a new person with the life of Jesus Christ in place of our old life. When we talk about the life of Jesus Christ, we are talking about the way Jesus Christ thought, His attitude, His way of speaking, His nature, etc.

The person I was no longer exists, the person I was is gone. That is what the Bible says in this passage.

2 Corinthians 5:17 *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.*

Most Christians know this passage by heart. It is often quoted in evangelistically oriented teaching.

One of the problems is that when most people experience the new birth, they

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do not see this passage fulfilled in their lives. There are sometimes small changes here and there in their lives, but nothing very radical in all areas.

Another aspect of the problem is that most of those who teach on this passage do so only in part. People hear that they are a brand new person, that all that is behind them is gone, dead and buried, but the vast majority will find that even after their new birth, their past is still there, their old way of thinking is still there, their attitudes are still there, and most of their faults are still there too. Faced with this sad fact, many have come to think, more or less openly, that this passage from Paul to the Corinthians does not really mean that what was there before is now gone. Some also think that it is only from a spiritual point of view that Paul speaks in this passage. The old things have passed away, but only from God's point of view. God would therefore consider that we are holy, spiritually speaking, but that as long as we are on this earth in this world, our past will still be alive, our old nature will still be alive.

Yet this passage is clear, Paul says that everything before our new birth has passed. But if you don't have a good knowledge of the Gospel, you may think that this is not really true. Yet the Bible is clear about this. Let's look at this same passage in other translations.

2 Corinthians 5:17 (NLT) *This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!*

2 Corinthians 5:17 (AMP) *Therefore if anyone is in Christ [that is, grafted in, joined to Him by faith in Him as Savior], he is a new creature [reborn and renewed by the Holy Spirit]; the old things [the previous moral and spiritual condition] have passed away. Behold, new things have come [because spiritual awakening brings a new life].*

The original word in this passage translated as “have passed away” is in the Greek PARERCHOMAI. This word gives, among other things, the notion of: *disappearing, perishing, a tangible action that advances in time and to which one can no longer return.*

So we are talking about things in our world that have passed away, a world that is subject to the passage of time. This statement of Paul is not a metaphor for an event exclusively in the spiritual world, even though we are also a new creature in the spiritual world.

Sometimes Christians unwittingly downplay the power of the new birth. They think that their past still has power over them in relation to their parents or other family members. So they get a lot of false ideas that some of their

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behaviours, their ways of thinking are directly related to some of their forefathers. As a result, they are slaves to their past, thinking that just because one of their relatives died of a certain disease, they too will get that disease. Or because one of their parents was involved in occultism, that this occultism is active on them. Others will think that because one of their parents abused them, that they have an abusive spirit on them.

This is not a new problem, Paul has been confronted with this kind of idea in the past. And he warns Timothy and Titus not to be trapped by such ideas.

1 Timothy 1:4 *nor give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which cause disputes rather than godly edification which is in faith.*

Titus 3:9 *But avoid foolish disputes, genealogies, contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and useless.*

Experiencing the new birth has the power to remove anything that our past might use in our thinking to disturb it, and make us act in this or that way. These genealogies that Paul talks about are just thoughts that lead nowhere, saying that our ancestors have some power over us, even after our new birth.

Here again, it is our faith that will make all the difference. As with salvation, for example, our past will be subject to the fact that I believe it died and was buried with Christ. Just as I have the choice to believe that I am saved, I also have the choice to believe, or not, that my past is dead and buried together with any effect it may have on me.

I can't count the number of born-again people I meet who tell me about the problems in their lives, believing that it comes from their past. They have not understood that their past will have the power in their lives that they will give it.

If I choose not to activate my faith to believe that all my past, all the influence of my family members on me is dead and buried, I will not be able to see it in my life. In other words, my new birth has killed my past, but only when I firmly believe this will I be able to see it in my life.

Does this mean that my past is not really dead, and that I will make it die by faith?

No, not at all!

My past has died at my new birth, but if I don't firmly believe it, then I will think and act as if it still has power over me. And if I believe that my past still has power over me, then I will simply let it influence me and act like it does.

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When we arrived in Australia, we rented a house right in the Australian bush. We had only been there a few days, and suddenly our youngest son called out to us: *“Dad, Mum, there's a big snake in front of the door!”* I remember saying to him, *“No, don't make jokes, there are no snakes so close to a house!”* But I went out to check anyway. In front of our doorway, I saw at that moment a rather large snake that must have been about 2.5 metres long. It was entangled in the massive bush of high canna lilies. Having just arrived from France, we were sure that this snake could be very dangerous, even deadly. So we acted exactly as if this snake was deadly, taking every precaution. In the end this snake was a python and was not deadly, but it could still bite. What I would like to illustrate is that when we saw this snake, we were sure that it was deadly and therefore acted accordingly.

The same is true for us when our past is dead. If I am convinced of this, activating my faith about it, then my past can no longer interfere in my life. But if I think that my past, or any of my forefathers, still has power over me, then not only will I think and act as if it has power over me, but I will also give full credit to satan when he comes to suggest thoughts in this sense. My past, some of my forefathers, the demonic lying thoughts, will impact my life and I will see the effects of an active past on me, even if it is dead. My point is that belief is a power, in every sense. Believing firmly that my genealogy, my past (even if it is dead) has a negative power over me, will bear similar fruit to that of a person who is not born again, who has a negative past that also has a negative power over him. In another sense, believing firmly that my past is dead and buried with Christ at my new birth, will be the condition to see it fulfilled.

This quick example shows us how powerful belief can be on a negative level. As I said earlier, I have heard from countless born-again people who have spoken to me about their pasts as something that is alive and still impacting their lives. It has plagued their lives sometimes for decades, simply because they have not yet understood that believing is the condition to see things come to pass. Their problem was that they thought exactly the opposite. Often they would say to me, *“But I will only believe that my past or my forefathers no longer have power over me when I see that I no longer have manifestation in my life”*. But they did not understand that they were in the situation of a dog trying to bite its own tail. They wanted to see in order to believe, whereas you have to believe in order to see things.

Now let's return to our personal transformation.

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But then why does Paul say that “*old things*” have passed away?

Paul is talking about a transformation that we must enter into, not a transformation that will take place in heaven after our death on earth, but a transformation that takes place here in this world during our life on earth.

Yes, all that was once is gone, all things old have passed away, and the old state is no more, which is an undeniable fact. But to see it fulfilled in a tangible way in our lives, we need to add our activated faith.

That is the heart of this process.

As with the death of our past, personal transformation into the image of God can only be achieved by faith. We can only enter into this transformation by activating our faith. This is why so many Christians miss the solution: they have not understood that faith is also the compulsory link to this personal transformation into the image of Christ.

This is also how salvation works in its full scope.

When we are saved, it is because we have accepted Jesus' offer at the cross to exchange His life for our own. The vast majority of Christians in the world have had no problem gaining eternal life by faith. They have had no problem believing that they will live in eternity with God.

Why?

Simply because the only sense that can persuade us that we have eternal life is our faith. None of our 5 physical senses can prove to us that we will live forever. The same goes for entering into our personal transformation, to believe that what is old is gone, has disappeared, has perished, no longer exists, we need to believe it. Without our activated faith in this area it is impossible to access and enter into this transformation.

Colossians 3:10 and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him, ...

This passage from Colossians could be confusing if not understood in the right way. When Paul says that we have put on the new man, some may think that when salvation gives us the opportunity to be transformed, it is a matter of making new out of old, if I may put it that way. We might say that “putting on the new man” is like putting on a new garment on top of the old one.

God does not make new out of old!

The original word translated as “put on” is ENDUO. This word gives the notion

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of “getting into...” In this process of transformation, we penetrate by means of faith into our new nature. It is not a matter of modifying my old self into a new one, but of being born again into a new creature.

Matthew 9:16-17 *No one puts a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; for the patch pulls away from the garment, and the tear is made worse. Nor do they put new wine into old wineskins, or else the wineskins break, the wine is spilled, and the wineskins are ruined. But they put new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved.”*

This is what Jesus Himself is explaining here when He says that you cannot put new wine into old wineskins, just as you do not put a new piece of cloth to mend a torn, worn cloth because it would tear the worn cloth.

The same is true of our new nature that we acquire in this process of transformation. God does not change our person, He creates a new one, and it is not the same thing at all. It would be useless to try to change over our old person, that is, by our own strength, or only by our own will. It is also useless to try to enter into a transformation by keeping our personality active, our way of thinking, and our way of seeing things. This is why the Bible says that we must absolutely be born again, that is, accept to die first in order to then make room for a new person in us.

Many people who experience the new birth are unfortunately not taught in the sense we have just described. They try to change by making something new out of something old, that is, they try to be a new person without putting their “self” to death first.

Before we talk about this process of death and new birth, it is important to understand that God has planned this transformation for all humans without exception.

Romans 8:29 *For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.*

This word of the apostle Paul is subject to many misunderstandings. Therefore, some people think that not everyone is eligible for the new birth, because God predestines people to salvation. Some think that God (according to His foreknowledge) has chosen some people and not others to be born again. Let's take a quick look at the context of this passage from **Romans 8:29**.

Romans 8:24-30 *For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? But if we hope for what we*

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do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance. Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God. And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.

Paul begins by saying that we are saved in this hope. This word 'hope' does not have the same meaning today in our everyday language as it did at the time it was used by Paul. Hope in the biblical sense is a firm assurance. When it is written that a person hopes about something, it means that he or she is convinced that what he or she says will happen. Hope in the biblical sense is therefore a certainty and not a mere wish. That is why in the definition of faith, the Bible speaks of things hoped for. Faith is the assurance of things that we are sure will come to pass.

Hebrews 11:1 *Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.*

The original word used in this passage in Hebrews and the one in Romans we have just seen above to define hope is the same. In the Romans passage where hope is spoken of, the original word is ELPIS which means “*a joyful and confident expectation*”. Then in the Hebrews passage, the verb to hope is used, which in the original is ELPIZO but has the same meaning as ELPIS in the previous passage. So Paul is talking about a firm and unshakeable assurance of our salvation, when he says that we are saved in hope. There is no question here of a wish or an uncertainty. Paul is saying in other words that it is by activated faith (hope) that we are saved. He goes on in Romans 8 to say that we do not yet see Jesus, so we wait with perseverance and certainty for that moment when we will be reunited with Him.

Then he goes on to say in **Romans 8:28** “*We know that God makes all things work together for the good of those who love Him and are chosen to be a part of His plan*”.

Who is called according to God's purpose?

This is a pretty simple question to answer.

God's purpose, or God's plan, is that all humans should have access to His image for eternity. Not just a few, not just some humans, but all humans without exception. God's purpose is that all humans be saved.

1 Timothy 2:3-4 *For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.*

So we can now easily understand that when Paul spoke of those whom God has predestined, he was speaking of all mankind without exception. God has predestined all human beings for salvation.

Does this mean that because God has predestined all humans to be saved, all humanity will be saved?

No, that is not what this sentence means!

Why not?

Simply because God does not force anyone, and even if He predestines all humans to salvation, not all will accept it. Salvation is acquired by the faith of the person concerned, through the grace of God. It is by free choice that we come to salvation in Jesus Christ.

God knows very well who will and who will not accept His proposal of salvation in Jesus Christ, but in His love for us, and to respect the free choice of each one, He acts exactly as if He did not know. This is why Paul goes on in **Romans 8:29** to say: *"For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son..."*

Who are those whom God foreknew?

Does God have the power to know some people and others not?

The Bible shows us in many passages that God is omniscient, that is, He knows all things without exception. He knows perfectly the past, present and future of every person who lived, is living and will live on earth. Those whom God has known beforehand concern all humans who have lived, are living and will live on earth. That is why in Romans 8 Paul speaks of *"...to those who are the called according to His purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son,"*

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We can say in other words: *“God who called all human beings to be saved according to His eternal plan, the whole human race whom He foreknew, He also predestined all of them to go through salvation in Jesus Christ so that they could enter into a transformation into His image”*.

We now know that God wants all to be saved, that all humans without exception can pass through salvation in Jesus. Unfortunately, not everyone will accept it, some will refuse it. God knows these people, He knows in advance who will accept and who will not accept this offer of salvation, but as we said above He acts as if He does not know, allowing these people until their last breath to change their minds.

With this quick clarification, we can now continue our research on the subject of transformation into the image of God.

We were saying that you don't make something new out of something old, that God doesn't offer to change us, but to make us new again. You don't put new wine in old wineskins, or a new piece of cloth on a worn-out garment, because the old couldn't stand the new. We are talking here in the sense of being a support, a solid structure.

That is why we need to go through a new birth.

CHAPTER 19

THE NEW BIRTH vs THE BAPTISM

Often this new birth is brought about in a somewhat erroneous way. We are told that from birth we are evil people, and that because we are evil in ourselves we need God to make us docile and gentle. This is a bit of a caricature, but in most cases this is what is presented to us.

The next step is to be baptised. For this we are told that someone has to dip us in water by full immersion. Then usually the person who baptises explains that when we are immersed under water it is a symbol to show that we die, and when we come out of the water it is also a symbol to show that we are a new person.

But the problem is that in 99% of the cases the person who comes out of the water will find that despite having been baptised they are still the same person. They have not changed physically or morally. It is difficult to activate faith to believe that I am a new person in this case. As a result, these person will begin to question the certainty that they have become a new person.

Most people say, *"If I am a new person, how come I am the same one? How come I still have the same character? How come I still have the same flaws?"* Then as the days, weeks and months go by, these people find that they don't really see a whole new person when they look at themselves.

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So we come to think that baptism doesn't really make us a new person. Of course we are immersed under water as the Bible says, but there is a serious discrepancy between what is explained to us and what we see.

The first thing to understand in order to enter into a transformation of our new person into the image of God, is to understand what happens when we are baptised. A quick study of some of the passages about baptism is essential to help us enter into this new birth through our fully activated faith. Entry into this process is again (like many other areas discussed in this study) linked to faith.

When the Bible talks about being baptised, we know that it is an immersion, everyone agrees on that fact. But when we look a little closer, we see that in the original Greek there are two words for baptism.

I remember years ago, the first time I checked this in the original, I realised that there were two words in the Greek to translate one word "baptised or baptism" into English.

One of the two original words is BAPTO: it gives the notion of a short or temporary immersion. For example, BAPTO is only found in 3 passages in the New Testament.

Luke 16:24 *"Then he cried and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.'*

Here BAPTO has been translated into English as 'dipped', so it is a short immersion.

Then there is this passage from:

John 13:26 *Jesus answered, "It is he to whom I shall give a piece of bread when I have dipped it." And having dipped the bread, He gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon.*

The word translated into English for BAPTO in this passage is once again 'dipped'. This is as well a very short immersion.

Finally, we can see:

Revelation 19:13 *He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God.*

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In this last example BAPTO has still been translated into English as “dipped”; one more time, this is a short immersion.

Then we find the second original word translated as baptised which is BAPTIZO. This original word is mentioned in at least 63 passages of the New Covenant. It therefore concerns the vast majority of the passages of the New Testament that speak of baptism.

The major difference between the word BAPTO and the word BAPTIZO lies in the duration of the immersion.

BAPTO means a temporary or short immersion, as in the examples we have just seen: a dipped finger, a dipped cloth, a piece of bread dipped in sauce.

The word BAPTIZO has a completely different meaning. It defines a permanent immersion, as for example a boat that is sunk under water and that will remain there without ever rising to the surface.

The notion between BAPTO and BAPTIZO is therefore very different. We can see that in all the examples in the New Testament where it talks about being baptised with water, it is the original word BAPTIZO that is used. This means that it is a permanent immersion. However, the vast majority of Christians speak of baptism as a short, temporary immersion in water. It is obvious that water baptism is best performed as a short, temporary immersion for those who are baptised, everyone agrees on this point. However, there is a problem somewhere, for it would seem strongly that baptism is not always what we think it is. Because of this, and if we have not fully understood what baptism represents, it will be very difficult to activate our faith in it in order to reap all the benefits of our new identity for example. Remember the statement we made about faith: *“I cannot activate my faith unless I understand how things work in the area where I need to activate it”*.

Why then did the various authors of the New Testament books all use the word BAPTIZO to describe the water baptism of a person who has just been born again?

There are only two options to this statement:

- People would have to remain under water in a permanent immersion when they are baptised. This is, of course, inconceivable because they would die physically during baptism.

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- Baptism by immersion, as the Bible describes it, is not what we believe.

It is of course this second option that is the right one.

So baptism is not always what it seems. Yes, baptism is symbolised by a short and temporary immersion under water, but this immersion is not baptism itself at all. It is only an image of it. Baptism, as the Bible teaches, is a total and permanent immersion. Baptism is a permanent experience of being immersed deep and permanently in the person of God through Jesus Christ. It is absolutely essential that I understand this in order to activate my faith and be in an unshakeable spiritual identity.

This is what the Bible calls baptism. Therefore, this immersion in God is symbolised by a short immersion under water, as John the Baptist gave us the example.

Now we understand why John spoke of baptism of repentance. Think with me for a moment.

John performed exactly the same form of baptism that we perform today when a person experiences the new birth. It is also exactly the same form of baptism in which Jesus Himself was baptised. Yet John was not talking about a new birth at all, He was talking about a baptism of repentance.

Did Jesus receive a baptism of repentance?

Not at all!

If Jesus had needed to repent, then He would not have been without sin, since He would have had to change His way of thinking. That is why we can safely say that Jesus did not need a baptism of repentance. Jesus needed to receive the powerful baptism of His Father's presence by the Holy Spirit.

So what do the people who were baptised by John the Baptist, Jesus being baptised by John, and those who have been born again and are being baptised since the cross have in common?

They all received the same form of baptism, they were all immersed in water in a short immersion, and came out straight away. So we can say that there can be the same form of baptism for a different reason, namely to be immersed in permanent repentance, or to be immersed in the presence of God in an equally permanent way.

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Thus, it is now understood that the baptism by immersion that the Bible describes is not the act of being temporarily immersed under water, but the fact of being totally and permanently immersed in a particular state.

We can find Jesus Himself speaking of a baptism, using the root of the word BAPTIZO which is BAPTISMA, to confirm to us that baptism, in 90% of the cases of the New Covenant, does not describe the action of being temporarily immersed under water.

Luke 12:50 (TPT) *But first I must be immersed into the baptism of God's judgment, and I am consumed with passion as I await its fulfillment.*

Jesus speaks here of a baptism with which He must be baptised. This baptism is not at all an immersion under water of course. Jesus is talking about the suffering He will endure when He is wrongly arrested and crucified.

Did Jesus say this because He was anxious to finish His mission on earth?

Not at all!

Jesus said this because He was longing for salvation by grace through faith to be available to all human beings.

Jesus said that He was yearning for this baptism to be fulfilled.

This is a first example that shows that the Bible can talk about being baptised without talking about a short immersion under water. This shows us that the original word BAPTIZO does not describe a short immersion under water as we see today in the water baptisms that are performed.

Jesus was speaking in the above passage from Luke of all that suffering with which He would be clothed until His death in this world. We can think of the baptism that Jesus was longing to have completed, as a woman ready to give birth to her child. She knows that suffering awaits her, but she also knows that she will be able to give life to her child.

So Jesus was looking forward to this baptism being accomplished, that is, to receive all this suffering so that He could give eternal life to those who would desire it.

So we are talking about a baptism of suffering in this passage in Luke 12 which we have seen above. Jesus was to be immersed in permanent suffering until His death.

BAPTIZO (BAPTISMA) here therefore means immersion in suffering, not immersion in the presence of God as we have seen in the previous examples.

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But then some people might say to me, *“But Franck, when the Bible talks about being baptised, doesn't it talk about being immersed in water and coming out immediately?”*

Yes, that's exactly what it says!

Some may also say: *“But doesn't the Bible tell us to be immersed in water and to come out immediately to perform baptism?”*

Yes, we need to symbolise baptism by a short immersion under water, because it symbolises the fact that we agree to put to death our old self and be born again through the life of Jesus. John the Baptist gave us the example of this, then Jesus, and after Him the apostles, and many Christians have followed this example in the Bible.

“But then why did you go into all this explanation about these two Greek words BAPTO and BAPTIZO?”

Simply because too many Christians today confuse baptism with being immersed in water and coming out of it straight away. For the vast majority it is the same thing.

Do this experiment and ask some Christians around you: *“Can you tell me what it means to be baptised according to the Bible?”*

Many will tell you that to be baptised means to be immersed in water and to come out of it saved.

Then other people will tell you that being baptised means that you die with Jesus when you are immersed in water, and that you rise with Him when you come out of it. And then another group of people will tell you that being immersed in water is baptism, and that this is conditional on being born again.

The fact is that these three ideas are not at all in line with what the Bible teaches. And that is the problem, very few Christians are well informed about what baptism means. Because of this, and as we said above, many who go through a baptism by immersion in water do not understand that often nothing special happens after this immersion. They have been told that being immersed under water and coming out of it will transform them, make them a new person, a new creature, but in most cases this is not what they see in their person.

Faith needs to intervene in this case, it needs to be that compulsory link.

Then, as we said above, they are often discouraged, sometimes frustrated without admitting it, and end up not believing in a transformation of their

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person to become in the image of God. The Gospel then becomes for them a simple means to obtain eternal life, and to have an improved life, while they are still on this earth.

Immersion in water is therefore only a representation of what we experience in our new birth. The biblical baptism that gives us access to the new birth is a permanent immersion in the person of God. This immersion can only be experienced by faith. It is because I will firmly believe that God comes to dwell in me, that I will see it fulfilled in my life.

We now understand that immersion under water, which represents this baptism, this immersion of God's presence in me, is conditional to salvation.

Of course if we have the opportunity to go through this water baptism, we must do so, but it is not this temporary physical immersion under water that saves us.

It is by faith that we are saved says the Bible, that is to say that it is by firmly believing and accepting the person of Jesus in me that I am baptised with His presence. It is because I have accepted to exchange my life for His that I am totally immersed in His person. God comes to dwell in me, I immerse myself entirely in Him, I am then baptised by my faith with a permanent and eternal baptism.

I am aware that this explanation of baptism is a little different from what we are used to hearing most of the time when we are told about Christian baptism by immersion, but this is what the Bible teaches us.

Understanding what true Christian baptism by immersion is will give us a radically different view of our relationship with God. On the one hand, I will understand that just because a person has been immersed in water in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, does not necessarily mean that he or she is saved. There are unfortunately many people who have gone through this physical immersion under water and who are not saved, simply because in many cases they thought that immersion under water without activating their faith was enough to be saved. On the other hand, there are also many people who, for various reasons, were not able to undergo this immersion under water and yet are saved.

I often say that this experience of being baptised into salvation is the action where my faith will be easiest to activate and keep active. This is simply because none of my 5 senses are able to prove to me that I am not baptised with the presence of God. No carnal sense of my person can intervene and say: *"No, I confirm that God does not dwell in your person!"*

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So there is not really anything tangible in me that can go against the faith that I have put into action to believe that God dwells in me. I often advise those who are new to faith to think about this. To think that they don't have too many problems accepting and firmly believing that not only has God come to dwell in them, but that they are saved for eternity. This gives them a blatant example that works, where their faith remains active on a fact they have not yet fully experienced. They are not yet in eternity, but they know that whatever happens they will be there after their time on this earth, there is no doubt about it. This shows them that they are able to believe what they have not yet fully experienced. They are able to keep their faith activated without wavering for years on a subject, which encourages them for other areas where they have to activate their faith. They have proof that they are fully capable, that they have the skills.

Being saved is great, it is a huge grace that God gives to all humans.

Ephesians 2:8 *For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God*

1 Peter 1:9 *receiving the end of your faith—the salvation of your souls.*

No good attitude can save us, no good resolution.

Faith is the one and only element that enables us to attain salvation.

CHAPTER 20

REGAINING A POSITION AND IDENTITY THAT WERE MINE

However, the Gospel is not there to simply give me a passport to heaven and only improve my everyday life!

Faith is involved in all areas of our Christian life. Our transformation into the image of God is part of it.

Being transformed is the heart of the Gospel!

I too used to think that being saved was about having access to eternal life, and having the rest of my life on earth significantly improved by God. I remember that these were more or less the only two assets of the Christian life that I could name. So my Christian life at that time was mixed with the fact that I would live for eternity without really knowing what that would look like, and the fact that I could call on God for help whenever I found myself in a situation where I couldn't cope on my own.

I remember many years ago, when I was a young Christian, I had a powerful motorbike that I used to ride to work. Since I was a child I had been fascinated

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by motorbikes and their power. One day when I came home from work I was riding my motorbike. At that time of my life I was a bit on the extreme side, so I bought the most powerful motorbike on the market. On a one-way road where I was driving quite fast, in a bend, a car came in the opposite direction; it had entered the wrong way by mistake. To skip the details, I ended up in an ambulance, conscious but in a state of shock. That day I remember talking to God in that ambulance and saying, *"God, if I get through this unscathed, I promise you I will never get on a motorbike again"*.

When I think back on it today as I write this: What a blackmail I was trying to impose on God!

At that time I hardly activated my faith, my Christian life was made of whining to God with *"I beg you... I plead with you... I cry to you..."* Everything was used to avoid having to activate my faith.

As I recently told a friend of mine, I had certainly been taught in this way, but on the other hand, I was too lazy to seek to know God with all my heart. I was too lazy to go to the Bible and study what the true Gospel was, the true good news of Jesus. All of this is to say that the primary culprit was me, not necessarily those who were teaching me in the local church I was attending at the time.

And do you know what happened?

I walked away without a broken bone, even though I had hit a car head-on at 120 km/h. Six months later I was in great shape.

And do you know what I did after that?

A few years later I was riding a motorbike again, albeit less powerful and of a different style... I had not even kept my own word!

How could I use my faith, use the word of God in me with authority and with faith, if I did not respect my own word!?

Whenever someone asks me how to get to the point where they can use their spiritual authority effectively, I tell them, *"Start by respecting your own word. Start making your word a sure thing, an unshakeable foundation: do what you say! That will be a very good start"*. I won't go into more detail on our spiritual authority, but for more details on this subject see my study called *"I take and use my authority"*.

Too many Christians still have these blackmailing attitudes with God. *"Do this for me and I'll do that for you"*, or *"Let me get out of this accident unscathed and I promise I won't get on a motorbike again"*.

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The Gospel is not a give-and-take relationship with God!

Things are not acquired by actions, but by faith.

We are not saved simply to spend eternity with God, but to become like Him. This is a concept that is unfortunately not taught very much because it is not popular. I see for example very often that if our TRGN ministry publishes a teaching on social networks that talks about receiving blessings, financial provision, healing, all these topics are very popular. But when we publish teachings about our personal transformation into the image of God, dying to self, humility or about the renewal of the soul, these kinds of teachings are at least 80% less successful. This indicates a huge lack of teaching on this subject in the Church of Christ around the world.

Most people think that entering into a transformation into the image of God is only a series of hardships, or frustrations.

Do you think that God would offer us to become like Him if it did not bring joy and happiness?

Do you think God would ask us to become like Him if it did not bring peace and well-being to our lives?

Some may say to me: *"But Franck, are you saying that dying to ourselves can generate joy and happiness?"*

Yes, that's exactly what I'm saying!

Let's look at it together...

In order to understand that entering into a transformation in the image of God is a good thing, I must first understand that God loves me in an unconditional way. In order to understand that God loves me unconditionally, I must believe it by activating my faith.

This transformation can only be achieved through my faith.

This shows us that faith is still the compulsory link to becoming like God.

Let us try to see together how to enter, and especially how to be transformed into this new person that I am.

The heart of the Gospel and the source of our relationship with God is found in the very fact of the possibility that He gives us the ability to become like Him. I

say *possibility* because God does not force anyone. It is enough to see how many Christians in the world are engaged in a personal transformation to become like God. Unfortunately we are talking about less than 20% of the Church of Christ in the world.

Paul expresses this fact when he writes to Timothy to give him some recommendations.

1 Timothy 1:5 (AMPC) *Whereas the object and purpose of our instruction and charge is love, which springs from a pure heart and a good (clear) conscience and sincere (unfeigned) faith.*

In the context of this passage, Paul is explaining to Timothy that he must warn certain born-again people that they are following a false doctrine that concerns generational lines. We have already spoken briefly about this subject, but we will see it here from another angle, and in more depth.

Paul therefore asks Timothy to give these people the true view of the truth of the Gospel. With this in mind, Paul says that the purpose of all teaching, or the primary purpose that the Gospel gives us, is to develop the love that God has come to place in us by His Spirit.

In other words, the primary purpose of the Gospel, which will open up all things in our lives, is to become love as God is love.

When the Holy Spirit comes to dwell permanently in us, when we are baptised (BAPTIZO) with His presence for an unlimited period of time, the first thing He brings to us is love.

Galatians 5:22-23 *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.*

Often Christians think that all these states mentioned in this passage are independent of each other. But it is one fruit and not 9 fruits. So of course, and this is what we teach at TRGN, these states are inseparable, we cannot say for example: *"I have love and joy, but I do not have peace"*. The Spirit of God comes to dwell in us with all His nature, it is our responsibility to activate it or not, with the help of our faith. Yes, if you are baptised in the Holy Spirit, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control, are already in you ready to be activated by your decision with your faith.

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Love is the first thing that is mentioned as part of the fruit of the Spirit in us. Being love is part of the essence of God. From being love, then, flows all good attitudes. Jesus Himself said that the Law is summed up in being love by loving your neighbour as yourself. Becoming love will put into action the potential I have received to make my flesh die. This is the transformation that every Christian should be engaged in: validating the death of the flesh and developing the life of the spirit. For more details on this subject see my study entitled *"Managing my whole being with my spirit"*.

When our children were much younger and still going to school, we had a family meeting every Friday evening in our living room. The five of us would sit on the sofas, and every Friday we would talk about the spiritual life of each of us. It was also a time for the children to say whatever was on their minds. We encouraged them to tell us what they were worried about, but also what they were happy about. Every Friday evening each of us could say, for example, what we would like to change in the family, in the attitude of others towards us. We always had a short Bible teaching which was given in turn by each of us. In these meetings we had a kind of brother and sister relationship in Christ, more than of parents to children.

In this process of renewing our flesh, we had at that time defined what we called "worksites". I remember talking to our two older children during these meetings, and they told us that sometimes they used bad language. In our house, we never tolerated any swearing, and our children always complied. But I had realised that day that two of our children were sometimes using coarse language when they were at school. Of course we explained to them why swearing was not acceptable, and harmful to our spiritual growth. All this is to say that we all had work in progress in our lives. For some of our children, it was about being polite. I remember that my work in progress at that time was, at my children's request, to be more encouraging to them when they did well. We all had areas of improvement to work on.

That's how it started for us; it was a first step where we became aware that we had to change in certain areas of our lives.

This is the first of the phases that we have to get into: to be aware that we have to change. We must not desire to change simply because we wish to please God, or to delight God. We do not bring joy to God, because God is already fully rejoiced with us. We do not bring joy to God because God is joy. Nor should we change because the Bible says so, or to have more blessings, or to receive more answers to our prayers. All these reasons are bound to fail sooner or later, if they are not generated by the real motivation we need to acquire.

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If we want to change, it is because we have become aware that we were created in the image of God, and that we lost this image when Adam and Eve disobeyed. So we want to regain this image in all the entities of our being. Our spirit is already perfect, and we understand that we need to align our soul with our spirit in order to activate the image of God that is in us. Our goal is to become like Him, loving as He is loving, because we know that we were created for this, and nothing else. We have understood that we must change in order to be able to enjoy our new person to the full. We understand that we must change so that the Gospel can be activated in us, and have the same results that we can read in the New Covenant by blessing our neighbour.

This awareness that we must change is validated in a firm decision on our part, and this decision can only be made by faith.

The good news is that faith is part of the fruit of the Spirit!

In ***Galatians 5:22***, Paul talks about the fruit of the Spirit, which he details in nine states. Some may ask how we can say that faith is part of the fruit of the Spirit, because it is not mentioned. Yes, it is true, faith is not mentioned in ***Galatians 5:22-23***.

However, when we study this passage a little more closely, we see that faith is indeed present in the fruit of the Holy Spirit which is in us.

In ***Galatians 5:22-23***, the original Greek text shows us the word PISTIS which has been translated as 'faithfulness'. The word PISTIS does give a notion of faithfulness, but its primary notion is faith. The synonyms that are given for this original word are:

- faithfulness,
- grace,
- certain proof,
- believe,
- conviction,
- believer,
- commitment.

Faithfulness is therefore only one facet of the word PISTI. It is easy to see that all these given synonyms have more of a faith-like notion rather than a faithful one. The essence of PISTIS is faith, not faithfulness. Faithfulness remains a consequence of faith but not its primary notion. The problem we often encounter is that translations are sometimes imbued with a way of thinking that is not always in line with what the Gospel teaches. I am not saying that

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translations are not good, but simply that sometimes we find a state of mind that is not entirely in line with what the Bible tells us. This passage is one of the most obvious proofs of this. But to reassure everyone, I think we have everything we need in the English Bible to reach the new birth, and even beyond.

In many teachings we find this notion of God giving more or less faith to some and others. We are told that we must ask for more faith, or that God sometimes sends more faith to some and not to others. I will not go into this subject any further because we have already talked about it in this study.

If faith is part of the fruit of the Holy Spirit that dwells in us, then all those who have received the fruit of the Holy Spirit have also received faith from God. When Paul mentions this fruit of the Spirit in us, he is not talking about more or less faith, but about faith in its entirety without any consideration of quantity, or that it is divisible. As we have already said above, faith is not partitioned when we receive it. We receive faith in its entirety. If you have received the Holy Spirit within you, then you have also received all the faith you will need for your entire life on earth. Faith is indivisible, no need to ask for more, we have all received faith in its totality. We just need to learn how to activate it.

We can see, for example, that some English translations of **Galatians 5:22-23**, such as King James and The Passion Translation, include the word faith instead of faithfulness. This does not necessarily mean that the English translations are superior to the French translations.

Faith is therefore a facet of the fruit of the Holy Spirit within us.

In this transformation in which we are engaged, faith is therefore an essential part of achieving a successful outcome.

After all, we might ask, "But why do I need to be transformed? Why do I need to enter into this transformation to become like God? After all God has regenerated my spirit, I am perfect in my spirit, in heaven only my spirit will be kept, I will have put on a new body... so why bother with this transformation? And anyway almost no one teaches about entering into this transformation into the image of God, so why should I care about that? God sees me as perfect in spirit, He has forgiven all my sins, past, present and future, so since I am forgiven, why bother trying to be transformed into His image?"

I often say that if you don't understand something, then you can't put it into practice in the right way. If, for example, I don't understand why I should stop sinning, then all my attempts will sooner or later end in failure. Or if I don't

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understand the benefit of becoming more and more holy in my thoughts, attitudes and words, then I won't get very far in this area.

We will try to understand together why this transformation is essential to our Christian life. I would even say that without entering fully into it, it is impossible to grow either spiritually or in my daily life.

There are several important reasons for entering into this transformation into the image of God. If we go back to the beginning of things, we realise that God had a will to create the human race in His image. That is, to be like Him, to think like Him, to be in full agreement with His way of thinking.

Genesis 1:26 *Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."*

Genesis 1:27 *So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.*

When it is said that God created man and woman in His image, it does not mean that they were a carbon copy of God. The word translated as *image* in Hebrew is TSELEM. It gives a notion of shadow. We can say that we were created as a shadow of God. He created us in His inner likeness, but not necessarily in His outer likeness. A shadow will mainly draw the outlines, the thicknesses. We are not in the image of God from an external point of view, as a shadow reproduces contour and volume. We are made in the image of God in His nature, not down to the smallest 'visual' detail of His person. For example, God does not have a body of flesh as we have one.

If we go back to what happened in the Garden of Eden, we can see that Adam and Eve were in this perfect image of God. But what does it mean when we read that Adam and Eve were in the image of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit?

The answer is quite simple.

Adam and Eve were like the shadow of God, voluntarily modelling all their thoughts on those of God. What God thought, they also thought. Their priorities

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were modelled on God's, their nature was modelled on God's. It all came down to the way they thought.

When Adam and Eve both decided to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, they made the decision to no longer have their thoughts aligned with those of God. They made the decision to think for themselves and to become autonomous in their priorities, in their perceptions of things, in their way of thinking. From that moment on, it was no longer God who would be the reference for their thoughts, but themselves. The man and woman then entered a way of thinking dictated by their own decisions based on their five senses.

From now on it is the man and the woman who will decide (on the basis of their own views of things) what is right and what is wrong. God is therefore no longer the reference for determining what is right and what is wrong.

This is why it is said that Adam and Eve ate from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. They are now the only ones to decide what is good and what is evil, because they have their own knowledge, and their own ways of applying it.

So Adam and Eve lost that relationship they had with God.

Why did they lose it?

Simply because they chose not to take God as a reference for their lives. As a result, they are now left to make their own decisions, suffering the consequences of their choices.

This is why the Bible speaks of repentance. Repentance means “to change one's way of thinking”. In all the passages that speak of the new birth, repentance is at the forefront. For more details about repentance, see my study called “*Repentance*”.

Thinking for ourselves has spiritually “killed” our spirit. Our spirit is the entity that converses with God. Adam and Eve used their spirit to sustain their relationship with God. From the moment they chose to determine right and wrong by themselves, their spirit died, suffocated by their soul which at that moment became the one that would determine what is right and wrong, itself fuelled by the 5 senses of the body.

To regain a relationship with God, we first need to change our thinking so that God becomes our reference in all our thoughts. We need to repent (change our way of thinking), deciding that God will now become our reference, the One on whom we will rely for every decision, to model ourselves back on His nature.

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This is why the Bible tells us to repent.

Most of the teaching we hear in most cases says: *"You sinned, you made God angry, because of you Jesus had to suffer and die on the cross, so show some gratitude, repent and be converted!"*

What a mistake!

The truth is that we are sons and daughters who have lost our identity, our way home, and we need to regain that by bringing our thoughts back into line with God's.

When we have decided to change our thinking (repent), then we need to remove all our past. We need to reset all counters to zero, to permanently remove everything we have ever experienced up to that day of repentance.

The only way to do this is to die and be born again. We will all die one day or another and leave this world, so that was not the problem. So you had to have the power to be reborn into a perfection in order to get back to the same relationship that Adam and Eve had before they decided to sin, before they decided to think for themselves. So we needed a model, another human being who could show us that perfection through His own life on earth. We needed a human being who had a perfect life in every way, and who was willing to exchange His life for ours so that we could be reborn perfect.

It is easy now to understand a little better the discussion Jesus had with Nicodemus:

John 3:4-16 *Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit." Nicodemus answered and said to Him, "How can these things be?" Jesus answered and said to him, "Are you the teacher of Israel, and do not know these things? Most assuredly, I say to you, We speak what We know and testify what We have seen, and you do not receive Our witness. If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things? No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up,*

that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

Nicodemus did not have the spiritual insight that Jesus used to try to make him understand the necessity of the new birth. So Jesus replies “... *unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God...*” In other words, Jesus tells him that everyone who is physically born on this earth from the womb (born of water), must also be born from the spirit. All those who are born into this world must have their spirit regenerated by God, otherwise they cannot enter the kingdom in heaven.

That which belongs to the flesh will always remain flesh, that is, our flesh can never enter the kingdom of God, for it is forever contaminated by sin. That is why our spirit, which is eternal, must be reborn, come to life again.

Jesus continues His explanation to Nicodemus by telling him that He alone came down from heaven in order to give us this opportunity to be born again (*No one has ascended into heaven except the One who came down from heaven, the Son of Man who is in heaven*). He is the One and only one able to offer all humans a gift of His perfect life. He is the perfect spirit, who gives His life in exchange for ours.

Then, continuing His explanation, Jesus mentions Moses who raised this snake in the desert.

I have long wondered how people could be healed of snake bites by looking at a snake stuck on the tip of a wooden stick. (**Numbers 21:8**). I always had this ready-made image in my mind of a snake healing. After all, the Hebrew were being healed by looking at this snake, so I naturally thought that this snake had the power to heal them. But I knew that the snake represented evil, the accuser, satan, so this image could not fit with such an explanation. I wondered how the serpent, which symbolises satan, could have the power to heal. So as I thought about it a bit more, I came to believe that this snake did not represent satan. But the problem was that the only person with the power to heal is Jesus. I could not conceive that this snake could represent Jesus on the cross. I knew that the stick represented the cross, but why a snake instead of Jesus?

Then one day I heard a brother, whom I value, explain to me the purpose of this image of the snake on this wood. The wood represented the cross, the snake represented satan, so far I was right. But where I had not gone deep enough was on why satan was on that cross.

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My mistake was to think that this snake was in a position to heal, and this is what prevented me from moving forward in understanding this image. That serpent on that wood represents satan defeated and devastated, deprived of power on the cross. When Jesus died on the cross, all the sin of humanity was nailed down with Him, and with it satan himself.

The sight of satan defeated, powerless, in front of these Hebrews, healed them of these bites. It is a picture of Jesus defeating satan, making a spectacle of him and triumphing over him. The sight of satan fallen beforehand and defeated, healed them of their bites.

It is at times like this that we realise that having well-grounded brothers and sisters in the study of biblical texts is essential. We come to complement each other.

So now if we go back to Jesus' explanation to Nicodemus, Jesus announces that just as satan was on that piece of wood through the image of that snake, Jesus Himself should also be hung, crucified on that cross in order to be able to defeat satan and give us that access to new birth.

And Jesus ends with the famous phrase, popular in Christian circles, *'For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life'*.

In other words: God loves us so much, He has so much affection for humans, that He did not hesitate to come Himself in the form of a man, by means of a conventional physical birth after 9 months of gestation like any other human being, in order to organise His own sacrifice to give us a life and an image of His person that we had lost.

All this transformation we have been talking about so far, including the new birth through which every person must pass when he or she agrees to exchange his or her own life with that of Jesus, can only be acquired through our faith. Faith is again the compulsory link in order to achieve this transformation into the image of God.

We therefore need to regain something we have lost, not to gain access to something we are not. We need to regain a position and identity that we have lost, not to take possession of a position, an identity that is alien to us.

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We might think that this is giving a little too much importance to what after all is not very important. But on the contrary, to think that we have to appropriate something that we have lost changes everything, because we have full ownership of it.

CHAPTER 21

BEING TRANSFORMED INTO THE IMAGE OF GOD

As I often say, we are not former sinners whom Jesus came to pull out of the mire of sin. We are sons and daughters who need to take back what they have lost, and find their way home. God gives us the opportunity through Jesus, and by means of faith, to regain a position and identity that was ours and that we had lost. We get back what is ours, we get back our true nature, our true person.

Paul describes our position very well in his letter to the Romans:

Romans 8:19 (TPT) *The entire universe is standing on tiptoe, yearning to see the unveiling of God's glorious sons and daughters!*

The fact of acquiring this thought, which shows us that we are creatures of God who are regaining a position that we had lost, will change our perception of things. We will no longer be strangers to this new birth, this transformation into His image, but we will understand that we are only returning to a nature that was ours from all eternity. It is therefore very important to see this new person we are stepping into as a return to the source, as a return to what we have been from the beginning.

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In this perspective, we are aspiring to manifest all the fruit of this transformation into the image of God.

But in practice, how do I use my faith to see this transformation?

The process remains the same as we have described in this study from the beginning.

If you have already been born again, consider:

How did you go through this new birth?

How did you get into this new life?

When you realised that Jesus was offering you this opportunity, you simply believed it, made a decision to accept it and manifest it by saying it out loud to Him. So you made a firm decision to experience the new birth.

The same goes for entering into this transformation into the image of God. I may disappoint you, but just because you have been born again does not mean that you have automatically triggered this transformation into the image of God. There are unfortunately millions of Christians in the world who have experienced the new birth, but have not entered into this process of transformation into the image of God.

That is why this entry into this process is very important in order to be able to recover all that we lost in the fall of Adam and Eve.

So, as with everything concerning my faith, I have to start by making a firm decision and say: *"I have understood and I realise that a lot of my thinking, a lot of my attitudes and words are not in line with those of Jesus. I have realised that the new birth does not automatically give me a new nature without first making a firm decision. That is why from now on I make this firm decision to change, to become like God, like Jesus. I want to enter into this transformation process in order to experience 100% of my new birth, 100% of my new person. I want to return to the person God created, to live and accomplish what I was created for. Thank you Holy Spirit for helping me in this process, I am relying on You to make us a strong team to get there. In any case, we will get there, Amen"*.

This is of course an example, not something that should be repeated. I'm just giving this example to help you understand what this is about.

Some may say to me: *"But Franck, how can I know if I have already entered into this transformation into the image of God?"*

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It is very simple!

There are two ways to know.

If you have entered into this transformation to become like God, to think like God, to act like God, then you should know, because you must have made a firm decision to do so. Just asking the question shows you that you have not entered into it.

Another way to know is to observe yourself living.

Can you say that you have seen radical changes in the way you think, live, speak and act recently?

Do people around you regularly point this out to you?

Can you say that you no longer recognise the person you are today, and that you have the distinct feeling that you are not at all the same person as before?

Can you say that you are able to observe this change persisting over time as you move forward in your life?

If you can't answer "Yes" to these four questions, chances are you haven't entered into this God-like transformation, or at least not in the right way.

Don't get me wrong, I'm not saying that you are not saved, nor am I saying that you don't have a relationship with God, with Jesus or with the Holy Spirit. I am simply saying that you are only enjoying a very small part of what God has made available to you through Jesus Christ, and which is described in the Gospel. You will not be able to enjoy or experience all that you read in the Bible in terms of results, in terms of changes, if you do not step into this personal transformation into the image of God.

This is why we see millions of Christians in the Church of Christ throughout the world who do not live what the Bible describes when it speaks of the Gospel. As a result, these people base their own experiences on the circumstances and situations of their personal lives. They base the transforming power of the Gospel on what they experience. Many teachers take up this kind of thinking. This leads to teaching the idea that the Gospel is simply a passport to heaven in case you have a fatal accident.

Never use your own experience to define what the Bible says. Let the Bible speak for itself, and do not interpret it according to what you experience in your life.

We need to enter into this transformation into God's image as much as we need to be saved. Once I have made this firm decision to enter into this personal

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transformation, this is where my faith must come in. We will detail how to activate our faith, and how to keep it activated in practice, so that everyone can do this successfully.

I have not always lived in a process of personal transformation into the image of God. I experienced the new birth when I was 22 years old. It was in Australia in the city of Brisbane. A few months later I returned to France to continue my life. I stayed about 20 years without knowing that I could enter into a transformation that would revolutionise my life and the lives of others. No one in those 20 years told me that I could become like God. No one came to me to tell me that there was more to receive than just salvation.

It was through my study of the Bible texts, through my prayers to understand what I was reading, that I gradually came to understand that there was much more to being a Christian than just being saved. The Holy Spirit taught me, He also put some people in my path who helped me to understand better. But I still remained in this ignorance for more than 20 years. This has not prevented me from entering into this transformation, and I still regularly see profound changes in myself and in my life in general.

By this I mean that it is never too late to enter into your personal transformation. There is no point of no return in this area.

The day I firmly decided to enter this transformation, it didn't go smoothly, there was some turbulence. Despite the fact that I had made this firm decision, my "self" did not always agree with this decision to change. There were times when I felt like I wasn't moving forward, and times when I even felt like I was going backwards. I had to learn to really make my new identity a natural thought.

I had to educate my soul!

This may sound a bit abstract, but we all have to go through this step of educating our soul.

Romans 12:2 *And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.*

"The renewing of our minds", this is an expression that is often used but is little understood.

To renew our mind is to educate our soul. A soul that is not renewed, or that is not educated, will have great difficulty in expressing the faith that comes from

the spirit, and much less in keeping it active. We will come back to this point a little later.

How do I educate my soul?

The apostle John is quite clear on this subject:

1 John 4:20 *If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?*

Without going into great detail, John is simply saying that our talk is directly related to our actions. In other words, John is telling us that loving God makes us change, loving God causes us to have different attitudes, loving God enables us to act differently.

This is exactly what we are looking for here: to change our attitudes. In order to love God we must first understand how much and how He loves us. The same John tells us in the previous verse:

1 John 4:19 *We love Him because He first loved us.*

This means that we can only love God if we have understood and experienced His unconditional love for us.

In order to change my attitudes, I must therefore love God, and in order to love God I need to know and understand how much and how well He loves me.

Loving God in return for His unconditional love for me will generate trust in me, and my trust in Him will generate faith in God. We have already touched on this point of faith being linked to trust previously.

We can see now that things are beginning to take shape as to how to proceed.

The more I understand how much and how God loves me, the more I will realise the full extent of His unconditional love for me, and the more I will change my way of thinking, and thereby my attitude. The challenge is to realise more and more deeply my self-worth, through the understanding of His unconditional love for me, through what Jesus had to pay. Realising my value is not very difficult, just look at what God did when He organised His own sacrifice, in the person of Jesus, on earth in my honour. Jesus' sacrifice is a reflection of my worth. My person as well as yours, whoever you are, whatever you have done or said, is as valuable as the person of God Himself.

Often people think that this kind of teaching that promotes our value, obscures the sin in our lives. They think that because of this we will minimise sin and its

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effect on our lives. But this is beside the point that God loves us for who we are, not for what we do or don't do. God loves us because we are His creature, He has made us, and He wants us back exactly as He created us in the first place.

Loving us unconditionally, loving us for who we are and not for what we do or don't do, does not mean that God will always agree with us or with all our decisions. God loves us unconditionally, but that does not mean that He is, or will always agree with our choices, attitudes or words. There will be times when He disagrees with us because we have chosen the wrong solution, but His love for us remains exactly the same, unchanged. God can disagree with us, and still love us in the same way. This is a state that we must also acquire in our transformation into His image in relation to our neighbour.

What we have just described is the first thing we must integrate in ourselves in order to enter into this transformation into His image. It is the thought that comes straight away after our firm decision to enter into our personal transformation.

It is impossible to experience and integrate God's unconditional love within us until we accept the fact that He loves us for who we are and not for what we do or do not do. It will also be impossible to activate our faith properly and generate good results in this transformation until we accept this fact.

Some Christians find it difficult to believe by faith that God no longer imputes our sins to us. I have noticed that the problem is often that they see God as human. Most people love others for what they will get in return. Of course this is not a general rule, but we hear, for example, *"I love you! And you, do you love me?"* Or sometimes: *"I did this or that for him, and he didn't even thank me"*, or *"She offended me, and she didn't even ask for forgiveness!"* All these attitudes show that we expect something in return for our love, friendship or consideration, and therefore we have placed our identity in others and not in God.

God does not operate in this way. He does not need our love, or our consideration. This is not to say that He does not appreciate when these things are manifested, but simply that He does not need them for His balance. God is love and He does not need the love of others, He is love Himself, He is saturated with it, filled with it all the time, it is impossible to add to it, for He is the source of love.

This personal transformation, which every Christian must enter into, gives us the possibility of becoming like God, of being love as He is love. God is therefore able to give His love, to be love towards us without expecting anything in return.

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If, therefore, we compare God's thoughts with those of a human being, we will never be able to see Him as He is, and consequently we will not be able to have the right vision of His person.

God loves us without expecting anything in return, only for who we are!

When we begin this process of transformation, it is not uncommon (as it happened to me at the beginning), that we react humanly to it, directed by our flesh.

Let us realise that for decades most of us have been used to giving in order to receive something in return. It is not always conscious, but if we are objective with ourselves, we see that this has often been the case: we expect a return every time we have shown love in any form.

But when we understand that God does not work that way, that He simply loves us without expecting anything in return, things are different. It becomes easy to understand that God loves us without return. It becomes easy to understand that when we are born again, there is nothing we can do to make God love us more, or to make Him love us less. He loves us unconditionally, and there is nothing we can add to or take away from that.

This notion of God's unconditional love for us is very important because it will give us the right way of thinking to activate our faith in this regard. There is nothing we can do or say to receive more consideration or approval from God. In the same way there is nothing I can do or say to deserve this transformation into the image of God. It is a grace that God gives me, I do not need to earn it. No one would be able to meet all of God's standard of holiness in order to earn and have the opportunity to become like Him. Only one has managed to do so: Jesus Christ. It is because I have agreed to exchange my life with His that I am now in a position where God is giving me this opportunity. To try to do anything to deserve to enter into this transformation would be to say that Jesus did not perfectly fulfil all of God's standard of holiness through the Law that God communicated to Moses. When Jesus said on the cross, "*It is finished*", it meant that there is absolutely nothing to add to His ministry on earth, that there is nothing to add in our lives to have a stronger or more powerful access with God.

Unfortunately, I still see many Christians who have not yet understood and accepted the unconditional love of God. They feel obliged to add to it, to "do" in order to receive. If they fail in one of their attitudes or in one of their words, they think that God is angry with them, or at best that He is very disappointed with their attitudes. As a result, they have the same reaction as Adam and Eve when they became aware of their sin: they hide.

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They are afraid to pray, they are afraid to go back into the presence of God. There is a guilt that takes hold of them, which prevents them from continuing a normal relationship with God. This guilt is a demonic lie.

Romans 5:18 *Therefore, as through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life.*

It is easy to see that this kind of attitude of hiding, of cutting ourselves off from this relationship we have with God, is not in line with what God wants in the relationship He has with us.

Paul tells us in the above passage that through one offence all humans have received condemnation. That offence is of course the disobedience of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Disobedience can only produce condemnation. In other words, sin can only produce condemnation. Some will be more or less sensitive to it, but the condemnation is there nonetheless.

Romans 8:1 *There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.*

But when we are justified, that is, when we have agreed to exchange our lives with Jesus. When we have agreed to believe that we become perfect because He was perfect throughout His life on earth, then there is no condemnation. And if there is no more condemnation, then there is no more sin.

How can I have my sins imputed if I no longer have condemnation upon me?

How can I feel condemned if my past, present and future sins have all been forgiven?

God has removed your condemnation!

I often hear the same argument: *"But then if I am perfect, if God has forgiven all past, present and future sins, let's go ahead and do whatever we want! There's no holding back!"*

Paul dealt with this subject when he wrote to the Christians in Rome.

Romans 6:1-7 *What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the*

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likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin.

Paul has just described in Romans chapter 5 that all our sins are forgiven, that there is no condemnation for those who are born again. But after these words, and for those who may not have understood him well, Paul now clarifies his thoughts in chapter 6 of the same letter.

"...Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?

In other words: "Should we take advantage of the fact that all our sins are forgiven to do whatever our flesh wants, sinning without restraint?"

"Certainly not!" writes Paul.

Then he goes on to say: "How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."

In other words, Paul is saying that if we have truly understood Jesus' sacrifice for us, if we have truly understood that we have given our life of condemnation to Jesus and taken His instead, then we have agreed to become like Him, then sin is no longer a need or a pleasure for us, but we are free from it, we reject it.

Paul continues saying: *"...For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection..."*

"United together" means we are the same person: we have the same way of thinking, which will lead to the same way of acting. We are the same person with Jesus through the conformity of His death, because we have integrated His person into our own, because we have entered into this personal transformation into His image. His death enables us to receive Him in us. And if we have received Him in us, we have received His resurrection, that is, His perfection, the cancellation of our condemnation.

So if Jesus is alive in me, I cannot take pleasure in sinning simply because I know I am already forgiven.

"...knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin."

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We are not talking about a person who will sin inadvertently. We are talking about a person who knowingly says to himself or herself, *"I like to do this, I know it's a sin, but I enjoy it because I know that God has forgiven me anyway."* In this case, chances are that such a person has not understood what the new birth means.

The apostle Peter is very clear on this point, being forgiven of all our sins is no excuse for sinning without restraint.

1 Peter 2:16 *...as free, yet not using liberty as a cloak for vice, but as bondservants of God.*

The more I realise that God has forgiven all my sins, the less I will sin. The more I realise that I don't have to do anything to receive all this forgiveness to have all this condemnation removed from my person, the more I will make sure that I don't sin anymore. A desire for holiness will then grow in me.

Does this mean that from that moment on I become perfect in my thoughts, actions and words?

Not at all!

But it does mean that I have entered into a process of transformation to become more and more like God, in order to think like Him.

This shows us, as we said earlier, that it is impossible to enter into this process of personal transformation into the image of God by being condemned every time you realise that you have sinned. That is why you need to have the right view concerning sin in your life.

So to love God I need to understand that He loves me with this unconditional love, one cannot go without the other.

It was when I understood and accepted this unconditional love in my life that I was able to love God in turn, and through that, progress in my personal transformation. I began to change, to manifest my new self out of love, not out of obligation or resigned obedience.

A friend of mine often says: "We sin far less when we know God's unconditional love for us than we would have done if we had tried not to sin using all our strength".

In other words, we sin even less when we do it out of love than out of obligation.

It is in your best interest to know and understand more and more the unconditional love that God has for you, because this love will cause you to act

in return to give you a sense of holiness that will cause you to stay further and further away from sinning.

You will no longer stop sinning because the Bible says so, but because you will have understood your true value, your true identity. So you will be able to move forward in this transformation with real pleasure, and without effort.

CHAPTER 22

IT IS MY RESPONSIBILITY TO ACTIVATE MY FAITH

Understanding, knowing, and accepting God's unconditional love for you requires our faith!

God is not going to come in person and hug you tightly and say with tears in His eyes, *"I love you more than anything, my child!"* Such a scene will never happen. No one on earth has seen God. Some might say that Jesus came to earth, and that Jesus was God in the form of a man. Yes, that is absolutely true, but Jesus came over 2000 years ago. Therefore, no one today can say that they have seen Jesus in the flesh. That is why we need to use our faith to hear from God, to believe what He is telling us in our spirit. The Holy Spirit can speak to me about God's love from every angle, but if I don't agree to believe and put into practice everything He tells me, then nothing will change in my life. That is why activating my faith in this area is essential. Activating my faith is my responsibility.

The process remains much the same, it is my responsibility to make the decision to believe what I read in the Bible about it. It is my responsibility to believe that God loves me for who I am, not for what I do or don't do. It is up to me not to allow myself to be polluted by false thoughts that may come into my memory.

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It is up to me not to let myself be influenced in the wrong direction by certain circumstances in life that might try to make me believe that God does not love me unconditionally. It is up to me to sort out what I read, listen to or watch, so that my faith is not affected. As I often say, everyone receives the consequences of their own decisions. Of course in this whole process, the Holy Spirit help me get there, and He is more than happy to lead me, if I ask Him. But the Holy Spirit will not do anything without my agreement to let Him do it.

When you have to change your way of thinking in a particular area, you may sometimes already have an opinion on that particular subject. If, for example, you hear, or rather read for the first time, that God loves you unconditionally, you may already have an opinion about this. Perhaps you thought that God was angry, or at least very disappointed with you, when you committed a sin. Therefore, you will have to abandon this way of thinking if you want to enter into the truth.

What I would like to show by this example is that when we have to adopt a new thought, we often have to abandon our preconceived idea on the same subject, which was already rooted in us. To be a little clearer, if I want to adopt a new idea, I need to accept the fact that I have been wrong about it until now.

Some may say that this is obvious, but I have met many people who, because they did not want to give up a false way of thinking, could not move forward into the truth because they could not accept a different thought about the same subject, since the first, opposite thought, was already present within them. In order to believe and activate my faith in the fact that God loves me no matter what, I need to be ready to give up what I have believed until now.

As I often say, the Holy Spirit is there to help me succeed.

It's not a big problem if you want to change your thinking but can't. The Holy Spirit within you is only too happy to help. If you let Him work in you, He is more than able to help you think the right way.

Psalms 139:2 (NIV) *You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar.*

This is the first step in activating my faith. As I said a moment ago, the process is pretty much the same for all the opportunities where I will have to activate my faith. Give yourself time to change, also take time to ask God to show you and help you understand how He loves you.

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Once I start to feel comfortable in the fact that God loves me unconditionally, I will be able to go a little deeper in my transformation. I know now that even if I sometimes slip up in some area of my life, His love remains the same, it doesn't waver one millimetre.

The more I understand the core of God's love for me, the more I will identify with Him. This is one of the signs that I am on the right track.

In our TRGN Acts Bible College, I often use this example to explain how we can identify with God.

There is a well-known phenomenon that is often found in our societies. In a slightly extreme example, it is called *fans*. These are people who will identify with another person. Very often these people have an almost unlimited admiration for a particular person, usually a very famous person. As a result, over time, and depending on the personality of each person, we can see that this person will eventually have developed an identification with the person they admire. Without going into too much detail, this kind of attitude can also be found in the field of music, sport, religion, and in many other fields, but these are the main ones.

What all these people have in common is that they have a fascination, a desire to be like the person they admire. More rarely, you can find this kind of case in a relationship between a teacher and adult students, in a couple, or even between a pastor and his trainee: the same mimics, the same voice intonations, the same expressions, the same gestures, etc...

I am not an expert in human relations, but I have often seen, and still see, this kind of reaction in many people. This makes me think that this behaviour is in some way, a human reflex.

In our relationship with God, the same is true, but the motivation will be quite different.

The more I understand God's love for me, the more I will be moved, fascinated and honoured by it, and the more I will love Him in return.

As we said earlier, loving God back will not change anything about Him, but it will change a lot about us. By loving God in return, I will come to hold Him in high esteem, His person will become more and more important in my thinking. I will honour Him, praise Him, admire Him, and as a result I will begin to identify with Him. The only difference from our previous example will be that I will not seek to abandon my person in some way to resemble another, but I will simply develop the new person that I am, into His image.

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This process of identification then takes place automatically in our relationship with God. The more I love Him, the more I admire Him, the more I will want to look like Him, think like Him, speak like Him, act like Him. This phenomenon is in human nature, and I believe it was created by God. Even if Satan has managed somewhere to make it into something that only glorifies man, and subjugates other people, this process, or reaction, was created by God so that we can identify even better with Him.

This thought of identification will help me to move forward in my personal transformation into His image.

So, basically, as a fan, I will think about God many times during my day, I will not just have a moment of prayer every morning in my bedroom, or in my car on the way to work, or when I give thanks for my breakfast; I will not only have these times, but many more during my day.

My first thought will always be to identify more with Him.

If I am working, studying, there will be times when I will think of my loving Father, for example, and I will say, *"Thank you Daddy for loving me so much, I continue to be transformed a little more into Your image every day"*. This thought is always in the forefront of my mind. These kinds of words only take a few seconds, and I think that's what Paul called "praying without ceasing" in broad terms.

1 Thessalonians 5:17 *pray without ceasing,*

Expressing my faith at every opportunity given to me!

My transformation will then become my priority over all other things.

How will this work in practice?

Throughout my days, no matter how busy I am, there will be many circumstances that remind me of the transformation I am engaged in. I will begin to change my attitude towards my fellow man. I will love people instead of ignoring them, be more patient, considerate, not look at myself first, and many other things that are consistent with God's nature. People often ask me how to become like God and enter into this transformation? I tell them: *"Start by making a firm decision, and then look at how Jesus acted in the Gospels. Look at how Paul, Peter, John, or James acted, and do the same"*. In the end, there is nothing complicated about it, but often when people have problems putting it into practice, it is because they want to find what suits them, and they don't find it. No transformation into the image of God can take place in me until I have accepted, and firmly decided by faith, to put my old self to death.

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In my personal journey of transformation, when I entered the beginning of this process a few years ago now, I had made this firm decision to change, to let go of everything that was holding me back in my spiritual life. It was then that I realised that opportunities that might normally go unnoticed became obvious. When we are at the beginning of our journey, we don't normally need anyone to show us what we are doing wrong, or the things we need to change in our attitudes or words. And if not, God will remind us by His Spirit. But in most cases, we know very well, and we realise by ourselves that we have responded badly, that we have reacted inappropriately, that we have missed an opportunity to help, that we could simply have done better in relation to another person, or in a given situation.

It is also in these cases that it is very important to understand that God is not judging me, that He is not angry with me, but that He will certainly not agree with my attitude. However, He will remain encouraging and say something like: *"OK, you messed up, we're not going to dwell on this all day, don't stay in a negative attitude, get up and move on, you'll do better next time if you stay a bit more focused"*. Or: *"Look, you didn't really react in the best way. You could have shown much more love and interest in this person. Remember next time that you have the potential to do much better than that"*.

As I said, everything that usually went unnoticed in my day became glaringly obvious. Have you ever decided to buy a new car? Or have you ever wanted to buy a new pair of shoes, for example?

If you pay attention, you will notice before you make your purchase, that you will start to see the same model of car that you have planned to buy on the streets much more often than usual. Similarly, you will find that you will look at the shoes of passers-by much more often, and if your model is popular you will see them on the feet of many more people than usual.

This shows us that our thinking remains focused on what seems important to us, what we have chosen to put our priority on at the moment.

The same applies to our personal transformation. If my priority is to be more and more transformed into the image of God, then I will have no trouble seeing many opportunities in my day to change my attitudes.

In this whole process I have just described, it is imperative that my faith remains active and that I keep in my thinking the image of the person I am in the kingdom of God:

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I am a son/daughter of the King of the universe, and the King of the universe loves me more than anything. He has allowed me to be born again in order to become a son/daughter of the kingdom. As a result I received all the privileges that go with my new person like:

- to be seated on the same throne as Jesus, having been given the same authority as Him...
***Ephesians 2:6** and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,*
- to give me all that God possesses in the kingdom...
***Colossians 3:1** If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God.*
- to see me perfect and blameless, pure and in full accord with God...
***Colossians 1:21-22** And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled²² in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight—*

This is what keeping my faith active is all about. Often we think that having faith is something complicated, but the Gospel is simple. Keeping my faith activated in this area will simply mean to be steadfast on these three statements of Paul quoted above for example. No matter what my soul may tell me, no matter what circumstances may show me, no matter what others tell me, no matter what I may read or listen to, I must not in any way alter my way of thinking which is based on these three passages of the Bible (which are not exhaustive of course).

It is a habit of life. The firm decision I have made will gradually take root in me. I will change the way I talk about myself because I will simply see myself as God sees me. Not that I will fall into narcissism, but I will simply no longer see myself as a former sinner trying to stay afloat as best I can until the day I join God in His kingdom. I will see myself as a son/daughter who is in the process of changing, of learning my new position, my new identity, and of putting it into practice in my daily life and that of my neighbour.

Keeping my faith active in this case is simply staying grounded in those thoughts that show me who I am now, and what my position is in the kingdom of God. My active faith will tell me that I am perfectly capable and that I will succeed.

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Often we think that faith is complicated.

I remember when I was a young Christian, the subject of faith seemed to me to be something for the initiated, for those who had a strong and powerful relationship with God. It is true that sometimes faith is presented in this way, but this is not the best approach to faith.

Faith is simple, and it should remain so.

Because many Christians have difficulty with faith, because many Christian leaders also have difficulty with faith, so many have made it something difficult and almost inaccessible, when it is not at all the case. We often hear that faith is difficult to maintain, that almost no one can manifest it, or that only in rare cases can we see the fruit of it. This is not entirely untrue, but it is not because most Christians have difficulty with faith, that faith is something difficult to manifest.

I repeat, faith is simple. It is a mistake to make your own experience a biblical rule. If you find faith difficult, it is because there is a very good chance that you have misunderstood it.

We often feel that faith is like something we have to create ourselves.

If you were to picture faith, most people would picture it as something very heavy to carry, or something that you would have to push, or move with some difficulty. I had fun asking a few people this question, and the images of faith that I was given were, for example, parachute jumping, or being on a roller coaster. All of these images have one thing in common, which is that you can't really control the situation easily. Whether you're pushing something very heavy, trying to move a huge, heavy, bulky object, whether you're in the air on a parachute or in a cart on a roller coaster, all of these situations don't really give a connotation of peace and confidence.

That's the problem, many Christians see faith as something that is difficult to master, that you have to like steer in a certain direction. But faith is not like that. Faith has nothing to do with something that we cannot control, or that we have to push beyond our strength to make it progress.

As we say, faith is a way of thinking that will bring about a firm decision that is in accordance with God's will. Once this firm decision is made, everything is done. It is not necessary to make superhuman efforts or feel out of control to keep our faith activated.

In order to keep my faith active, I will simply have to keep this firm decision that I have made beforehand. I will simply have to hold the position of thought that I have firmly taken. Keeping my faith activated means staying in the same position, in the same thought, simply keeping the same course. I don't have to move, I don't have to change anything, I just have to stay in the thought that I

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determined when I made that firm decision.

From this angle, the vision is quite different.

I am no longer striving almost beyond my capacity to move a situation, circumstance, or whatever the subject my faith is activated on, but I just have to remain in a still attitude by staying in the same thought that motivated the activation of my faith in the first place.

So of course sometimes the enemy will not hesitate to create circumstances that will try to change my perception of things. He will not hesitate to suggest to people around me that I should abandon my faith. All these tactics exist and are used every day all over the world by satan and his demons, but they can make me think only what I will accept to think.

The image could be given as a person who is clinging to a lamppost in the street during a storm with a strong wind. The aim is to stay where I am. I don't need to try to move forward, I just need to stay there and not move, to keep my mind on my faith. I have been given all the strength I need to hold on tight, the Holy Spirit has given me all the ability. I have received all the power He has to help me not to let go. No one, without exception, can force me to let go.

In the practice of this image in relation to the activation of faith, no one can force me to change and abandon this firm decision that I have made by activating my faith. I am then the only one in control, I am the only one who has the power to give up or to continue. God does not ask me to go forward or backward, but simply to stay where I am, that is to say, to remain in this thought of faith that I made at the beginning.

You see, faith is not an effort as in making a movement in order to move forward, but rather a firm and definitive immobile posture that I must maintain.

In this case, the feeling is not the same at all, I know and understand that keeping my faith activated is simply to stand on the same thought, and not to try to reason in thoughts that are more and more difficult to grasp.

To keep my faith activated, I just have to stand still, without changing my thoughts.

Very often when we have a problem of faith, it is because we have changed our mind, we have changed our thinking, we have not kept the firm decision that we made initially. When I realise that I don't have to do anything extraordinary, except to stick to my original thought, things will be much more accessible and easy.

As I said before, no one can force you to change your thinking, no one can force you to say, *"I decide to stop thinking this way with faith in this or that subject in my life"*. You and I are the only people who have the power to change our

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thinking. All we have to do is not let ourselves be trapped or side-tracked by circumstances, situations, or the talk of other people. The situation is exactly the same as when the serpent changed Eve's mind and she decided not to stick to her original thought of not eating the fruit. It was Eve, and Eve alone, who decided not to stick to the decision not to eat the fruit. The same is true for us today. Standing firm is the key to success.

CHAPTER 23

MY TRANSFORMATION INTO THE IMAGE OF GOD SETS ME FREE

Our world is based on making people change their minds. Almost everything around us often tries to make us change our minds: buying a more or less expensive item, buying a subscription of some kind, buying clothes, etc. I'm not saying that these things are bad, but simply that in our societies, almost everything is done to try to make us go in a certain direction. As a result, people are more and more used to giving in, to changing their minds about a good and firm decision they had made beforehand. So when they work on an area where their faith is involved, sometimes they find it difficult to stand firm to the end, on a decision in line with what God says. Those who get results with their faith are people who know how to be consistent and persistent to the end, and stay on thoughts that are in line with what God says. Steadfastness and perseverance are not ways of being that come naturally at our birth, they are personal choices that we have to make.

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Some time after engaging in this transformation into the image of God, and because we learn little by little to keep our faith activated on this subject, we realise that the more we advance in this transformation, the more we have this sensation of being free.

But you will think, free from what?

Free from myself, and free from others!

It is an effect of my transformation by faith. To be free from myself is to no longer allow my flesh to manifest its shortcomings which are the opposite of God's nature. To put it simply, to be free of myself is to no longer be a slave to my carnal part, my soul. No longer letting myself be trapped by a bad mood, bad reactions or anything else generated by my flesh. Often in our societies, we think that being free means doing what we want when we want. But this kind of thinking is a demonic delusion. Such a person is on the contrary imprisoned by his desires and carnal reactions. To be free is, on the contrary, to be able not to give in to what my body or my unrenewed soul tells me to do.

In practice, to take just one example, to be free is not to decide to drink in order to be drunk, but on the contrary to be able to not drink because I know that being drunk would prevent me from keeping control of myself, which is not a good thing.

To be free from others is to expect nothing in return from my neighbour. I give to my neighbour because I am becoming more and more loving, and it doesn't matter if I receive something in return or not. It doesn't change who I am, nor my attitude, nor does it change my mood. I now get my mood from God, not from the circumstances of my day, created by the life around me or by others. This works for good and bad. My mood, my joy, my peace, should not depend on or be based on what happens to me during my day that is good or bad.

I decide to change, I decide to take the full potential that God has already given me, and I keep my faith activated about it.

Freedom from others means no longer being at the mercy of my flesh that demands attention, love and recognition. All these things I have now in my identity, I have all these things in God and I have them fully. Therefore I no longer seek to acquire them through others or the circumstances of my day. Now I have all these things in God. I have become love, I am filled with gratitude, joy and peace.

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This does not mean that since I have been transformed I will refuse the love of others and their attentions, but it simply means that I am no longer dependent on them for my well-being. Of course when I have the opportunity to get a return for loving or helping someone, I will appreciate it, but in no way should it be conditional on my mood and well-being.

Being free from others is the condition for living the fullness of the Gospel in my life. The Gospel brings us freedom from sin, but also from all the consequences that sin can have in our lives.

This is what Jesus said in:

Luke 4:18 *“The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, Because He has anointed Me To preach the Gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives And recovery of sight to the blind, To set at liberty those who are oppressed;*

John 8:36 *Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.*

The Gospel is there primarily to set us free, to remove that imprisoning effect of sin within us, and to set us free from our selfish and self-centred thoughts. Faith is the means God has made available to us to get rid of a certain way of thinking that sin has imposed on us.

Thought is at the centre of all things, it is the origin of all actions, all words and all attitudes. The human being is so created that he generates a more or less rapid, more or less profound, or more or less conscious thought, in order to bring about an action. So thought is always present where we need to act.

Luke 19:8 *Then Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, “Look, Lord, I give half of my goods to the poor; and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold.”*

It was because Zacchaeus changed his way of thinking that he radically changed his attitude. He let faith produce repentance in him, and repentance produced tangible changes in his life.

As I said earlier, it is important not to reduce faith to a way of thinking that will only give me access to blessings, and meet material, physical or moral needs. Faith goes much further and deeper. It is a new way of thinking that will also transform me and make me the living result of the new person I have become through Jesus Christ.

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What has brought Lucifer into a deep change is that he has changed his way of thinking. Today he has become satan the accuser, and what differentiates him from God is selfishness. Indeed this is the major difference between God and satan: God is naturally turned towards others being love, and satan is naturally turned towards himself using others to satisfy his selfish plans to the extreme.

Often when I say this, people respond by saying that selfishness is not the source of satan's thinking. They think that selfishness is after all just a nasty little flaw, but nothing serious. However, when we look a little closer, we see that selfishness, being self-centred, is indeed the source of satanic thinking because it is exactly the opposite of the thinking of God. Self-centredness, egoism, is the source of all relational evil on earth. If we were less self-centred and more focused on others, then the world would be a very different place. I am speaking for myself as well, because I am not free of thoughts where I am still too self-centred instead of being more focused on others. I am not yet perfect in this area, but I am making sure that I am moving forward very regularly without pausing. We all have the potential to achieve this by activating our faith. What caused Lucifer to become satan was to put himself before God, to think only of himself, trying by all means to take the place of God.

In our world, selfishness has become the main consequence of sin. Humans contaminated by sin have gradually immersed themselves in selfishness.

Faith gives me the opportunity to break out of a sin-inspired pattern in order to remove selfishness from my life.

In the personal transformation into the image of God, in which every Christian should be engaged, it is faith that will enable me to break out of this state of selfishness in order to release my new identity. Our world has made selfishness almost harmless. Being selfish has become a small flaw in our societies, but nothing very dangerous. It has even been disguised sometimes with two words called "personal ambition", which then has become a positive thing in our world.

Yet selfishness is a scourge that often prevents the Gospel from advancing in the world.

CHAPTER 24

TRAINING MY SOUL TO SUBMIT TO MY SPIRIT

In order to move forward in my transformation into the image of God I will have to see myself as God has chosen to see me: according to the truth, according to His criteria and not according to criteria that are inspired by our tangible world. As I said earlier, when I began to move forward in this transformation, I had to go through moments when I had to repeat to myself all day long who I was since my new birth.

Why?

Simply because it was not yet engraved in my way of thinking. I knew who I was intellectually, I had the knowledge of who I was, but I needed to activate much more of my faith in order to engrave my new person in the image of God once and for all in my soul. The Holy Spirit regularly confirmed who I was, but my soul, in its weakness, needed to take that thought in.

Romans 8:16 *The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,*

If you find yourself in this situation, the Holy Spirit is the person you need.

My spirit does not have a problem with faith, it is my soul that sometimes does. That is why the whole process starts with the Holy Spirit regularly confirming to my spirit who I am: a child of God with all that this entails. Then my spirit will take charge of renewing my soul so that it integrates this thought. And finally, it is up to my soul to decide to use the faith that is already in me. I remember repeating a few key phrases to myself throughout my days. I will share with you some of them that I used according to the situations in my life and the circumstances I was going through at that time. These phrases are only given as examples:

- I am Franck, from the kingdom, and I do not act like the devil does.
- I am the son of the King of the Universe.
- I am not in expectation of love, for I am love.
- Anger is not part of me, for I am part of the kingdom.
- The kingdom is also my kingdom.
- I am a stranger on this earth, for my kingdom is in heaven.
- Because God loves me, then I love people.
- I am a new person, the old Franck is dead, I don't know him anymore.
- Joy and peace are part of me, and no one can take them away.

These are some examples of phrases that I used to establish, to seal my new person, my new identity. I proclaimed these examples of phrases all day long, and every time a circumstance in my day reminded me that I was engaged in a personal transformation into the image of God.

When I say this, I have had people tell me that this sort of thing is a bit like positive thinking. But I often reply that it is positive thinking that has copied part of the faith process. I won't go into that because we talked about it at the beginning of this study.

I used all these phrases and more to help me keep my faith active. And I must say that it worked very well. It worked so well that I still use this kind of "method" today in many different areas where I need to keep my faith activated.

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I have done nothing more than meditate on what God says about me. And that is exactly what you need to do if you are in the process of personal transformation: meditate, dwell on what God says about you.

Meditating is the same as going over and over certain thoughts. If we were to take an opposite example in its outcome, we could cite the case of a person who is depressed. A person who is depressed will meditate, but in a negative sense: they will dwell on a problem. When a person suffers from depression, they will think about the same things over and over again, often during the day as well as much of the night. The same ideas, the same thoughts come up again and again in the memory. These thoughts become almost obsessive in the sense that they are present almost every moment. The person then “turns” them in all directions in their head; they dissect them in a negative sense, which will generate other negative thoughts, but also more and more stress, fear and dread.

This is certainly a negative example, but meditation in the positive sense is identical in form to meditation in the negative sense: we will think about the word that God has given us, or about what God says about us, about passages in the Bible that we have read. Sometimes we will be awakened in the night and think about it again and again, and then proclaim these truths often out loud. This is what the Bible calls meditating on the word that God gives us.

Joshua 1:8 *This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.*

Psalms 1:2 *But his delight is in the law of the Lord, And in His law he meditates day and night.*

Psalms 63:6 *When I remember You on my bed, I meditate on You in the night watches.*

Here the original word translated as “meditate” or “ponder” is HAGAH. This word gives among others the notion of: to say, to think, to celebrate, to announce, to publish, to speak, to proclaim.

It is therefore important to meditate on what God says about us, much like the examples of phrases above, which I proclaimed during my days.

The more I exercise my soul to receive words from what God says about me, the

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more my faith will be activated.

Saturating my soul (my intelligence) with these phrases, allowed me to engrave these truths in my mind. It is then only a matter of time before my soul accepts all these truths for granted. Remember when you were in school, or for those who are still in school, how did you learn a lesson? You repeated it over and over again until it became natural in your memory, until it was engraved in you.

The more I bathe my mind in truths about myself that come from God, the more these truths will permeate my faith and become obvious and natural until they become unshakeable in me.

Today these few examples of the sentences I gave above have become unshakeable in my thinking, no one could change my mind in this area. The activation of my faith worked well, and still works very well in this area.

As I often say, our soul is not our enemy, it is not dirty and constantly attracted to "the mire of sin". It is certainly contaminated by sin, but once we are born again, the Bible does not speak of our soul in terms of being constantly filled with sin, seeking only to wallow in debauchery, and do the very opposite of what the Bible says. If this were true, then we could never see Christians like Paul, Peter, James, John, or many other Christians of our time living according to what the Gospel teaches. Their souls would be constantly sinning.

Yet we can read in the various letters of Paul, Peter, James or John, that their lives were truly dedicated to the Gospel.

Does this mean that they never made mistakes in their Christian lives?

Certainly not!

Have you ever seen Christians today who have a life truly dedicated to the Gospel?

Have you seen Christians today who have powerful results because of their commitment?

Yes, of course there are such people all over the world, not enough, but there are some.

So if our soul was constantly focussed on evil, if our soul did not know how to do anything but sin, then we would not see Paul, Peter, James or John having lives with powerful results as they did throughout their lives. Nor would we see Christians in our time having a powerful personal transformation result.

If our soul was only turned to evil, as it would not know how to do anything else because it is contaminated by sin, then no one would be able to get powerful results in their life. Everyone would be sinning all the time because their souls would be in sin constantly.

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Some advocate that because of this, there is a constant struggle between our spirit and our soul, and that our soul can never comply towards the good.

Well, if that were true, no one would be able to do good with their soul on a regular basis. But clearly that is not what is happening in the world. I know people who are not born again who are able to do far more good than others who are born again. This shows us that our soul, especially when we are born again, is able to obey towards goodness, because it becomes mature.

The Bible simply says that our soul is weak. We must therefore treat it as a weak person, not as our enemy. I must help my soul in its weakness to have fellowship with my spirit.

It is quite possible to renew my soul so that it becomes my ally. Thus my faith will be activated much more easily. If my spirit and my soul both come to be in good harmony, then it only remains for my body to be in tune with my spirit. In this case it will be much easier for my spirit and soul to direct my body in the right direction.

Matthew 11:29-30 *Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."*

Our transformation is not painful, at least not the way God designed it. This is a thought that has been with me all the time for years: *"My transformation is designed to be gentle and light!"*

Of course, sometimes I have had situations where this was not the case and I felt that my soul was resisting. But in these cases, I kept telling myself that the problem was with me, because my transformation was designed to be smooth and light. In faith it's the same, sometimes you think you don't see things happening and that it's hard to see fulfilments. But faith is simple. As with my transformation, my faith must evolve in a gentle and light way. If it doesn't, then I am the one who has to change something in my way of thinking, and therefore of doing things.

It is very important to regularly renew my soul because it is when my soul is in a good thought that it will accept to activate the faith that is in me. Even if the faith that God has already given me is in my spirit, my soul must still accept the activation of my faith.

What would happen if my soul did not accept the activation of my faith for a specific matter in my life?

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Well, in that case, my soul will generate doubt and thoughts contrary to those of my faith. It will rely on my 5 senses to generate thoughts that will go against what my faith says.

Let's take the example where I decide to pray to enter into a transformation in the image of God because I have understood that this is essential for me, and for my neighbour. Now suppose I realise that I need to give up certain attitudes in my life, such as often cutting people off, for example. If my soul is well attuned to my spirit because I spend time renewing it, saturating it with what God says in His Word, and what He says about me, then I will have no problem activating my faith. But if I have not renewed my soul regularly, then in that case, my soul will revert to its original way of thinking. My soul will no longer be based on thoughts from my spirit, but on thoughts coming mainly from my 5 senses. As a result, my soul will be overwhelmed by thoughts like: *"People cut you off anyway, so if you do it sometimes it's not so bad"*. Or, *"If I don't cut people off, then I'll never be able to say what I want to say!"* Or: *"Anyway, we're all like that in the family, my father cuts people off, my mother too, so why change that? And I've tried many times to change and I couldn't, so let's drop this ridiculous idea"*.

So many thoughts that will come from my flesh and will generate doubt. We saw at the beginning of this study that one of the characteristics of doubt is that it makes faith recede. This is why it is essential that my soul be in a position where it is the ally of my spirit, and not in a position of constant weakness. In this kind of case, it is a decision on my part that will say, *"No, I choose to activate my faith, and I refuse to listen to all these thoughts coming from my flesh, I decide to activate my faith no matter what my flesh may say"*. It is with these kinds of words that my faith will be activated and my soul will be renewed. The more it is renewed, the more mature it is. The more mature it is, the more inclined it will be to rally to the side of my spirit.

The great thing is to realise that God does things perfectly. This area of our renewed soul is no exception in God's perfection.

There is a stage that I will be able to pass in the renewal of my soul by faith. When I can get good results in this area in my daily life, then I am ready to move on to that next step which will give me another dimension.

When I begin to see that my soul is rallying to my spirit because it has understood with maturity that this is by far the best thing, then there is like a crest to pass that will take me to the other side, to another dimension of thought. I then begin to realise that I am changing my attitude, and that my faith is allowing me to see changes in my everyday life. I then enter into a gentle and smooth transformation, as we have briefly discussed above.

In this same process, where I will see that I am more and more transformed, I will start to be happy with these changes, to appreciate their fruits. I will then realise the benefit of the transformation that has taken place. Attitudes, words, behaviours have changed in me.

As a result my soul will grow in maturity. It will experience all the benefits, all the blessing of becoming a little more like God, in His image. From this maturity, and because I appreciate not only in my spirit but also in my flesh the good results of my change, my soul will feel more and more comfortable in these changes.

This may sound a little meaningless, but it is what is happening. My flesh is quite capable of growing in maturity, and willingly aligning itself with my spirit.

Matthew 11:29-30 *Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."*

The problem is that in many cases we are taught that it is a waste of time to try to change our flesh. Of course, as I said before, our flesh will always be weak. But our flesh can grow in maturity despite its weakness.

In this case my flesh is like a person who does not have much skill in a given area. This person will have to work beyond the normal to produce results similar to a person who has skills, but he will eventually succeed.

The same is true for our soul, it is by teaching it maturity in Christ, by saturating it with thoughts from the Gospel, that it will gradually enjoy its transformation. When we speak of transformation, it is at the level of our soul that this transformation must take shape, our spirit is already perfect.

Therefore, when it is renewed, my soul will begin to feel that the interaction with my spirit is much more pleasant and powerful. So I will come to the point where my soul is constantly renewed. As a result, my soul will rally around my spirit. Because I will renew my soul very regularly, it will in spite of its weakness become the ally of my spirit.

In everyday practice, this will bring about a radical change in gentleness and lightness. I will no longer allow myself to be drawn into thoughts contrary to what God says. I will no longer succumb to ways that in the past imprisoned me. I will no longer be a slave to my carnal reactions. I will no longer struggle as hard as before against my flesh, for it is becoming mature.

If we were to imagine this process, we could see a bucket full of water that is

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pierced, which is next to another bucket of water that is not pierced. The bucket that is not pierced represents my spirit filled with the presence and power of the Word of God, and the other bucket that is pierced represents my soul also filled with the presence and power of the Word of God. As long as the pierced bucket is regularly filled, there is no difference with the bucket that is not pierced. Both remain full, because the first is regularly supplied with water.

I am not saying that my spirit is similar to my soul, but simply that the more my soul is renewed, the more it will have desires in line with my spirit. It is in this case that my soul has become the ally of my spirit. Then the transformation becomes smooth and flowing.

CHAPTER 25

FAITH vs. MY 5 SENSES

In order to enter into this kind of process, it is faith that is still the compulsory link. Much of the renewal of my soul will depend on believing without doubt what God says about me, what God has already given me, the position God has put me in as a result of my new birth.

It is my responsibility to believe that my flesh will gradually come to terms with my spirit through its maturity.

God often hears these kinds of questions:

“Lord, how far can you go in changing my life? How far can you go in the transformation of my person?”

The answer will always be the same:

“How far are you willing to believe my child?”

What I believe determines what I see, what I believe without doubt determines what I will experience in my life.

Believing in the biblical sense implies that nothing around me, nothing I see, nothing I hear, nothing I think, nothing I feel can interfere with what I believe

with my faith.

This is where the problem often lies, we make the decision to believe, but gradually, and especially if things take time to fall into place, then we get caught up in what we see, hear, feel or think.

Psalms 94:19 *In the multitude of my anxieties within me, Your comforts delight my soul.*

Another translation says this:

Psalms 94:19 (TPT) *Whenever my busy thoughts were out of control, the soothing comfort of your presence calmed me down and overwhelmed me with delight.*

The Bible shows us through these passages, and through many others, that finding ourselves faced with thoughts that are contrary to those we had previously developed, is a choice that will present itself to us.

Who has never been faced with such a dilemma?

We make a firm decision, this decision is supported by our faith, and some time later, opposite thoughts begin to emerge. The causes of these thoughts will be generated by various circumstances. In the vast majority of cases, these conflicting thoughts will be generated by one or more of my five senses, but also by the weakness of my flesh which will try to generate also weak thoughts.

When we are not correctly taught on this subject, the difficulty lies first of all in giving the right place to our 5 senses.

This is a point where many Christians have difficulty because they have not understood the order of priority that should be given to their five senses. There are often two extreme reactions from these same people. One is to think that our five senses are always in line with our thoughts of faith, because after all it is God who created our five senses. The other reaction is to think that our 5 senses come from the flesh, and that they will always be wrong since our flesh is contaminated by sin anyway. The truth is that both of these reactions are equally wrong, although there is some truth in each.

We are going to see how to bring balance to them.

Our 5 senses were given to us by God when we were created. We therefore need these 5 'sensors' to provide us with information from our body in our everyday life. Seeing, hearing, touching, tasting and smelling are sensations that we need. But the problem is that since humans have been contaminated by sin, their soul,

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which analyse the data from these 5 sensors (our 5 senses) in our bodies, tends to overstep their remit. The 5 senses of my body always give me the same information, which is good. But when this information reaches my soul, which is the entity that generates my thoughts, it is often badly analysed because of the weakness of my flesh. For more details about my soul and my spirit see my study *"Spirit, Soul and Body"*.

For example, if I have shocked and offended someone by my actions and words and then asked for forgiveness but that person refuses to forgive me and decides not to have any more relations with me, then I will decide to pray in order that relations with that person can be restored to normal. First of all, I will do everything I can to show this person that I have changed in the long run, to show them love. But I will also decide to pray with faith that this situation can be brought back into a peaceful and loving relationship.

I will therefore pray by activating my faith according to the whole process described in this study so that the Holy Spirit will help this person to understand that not forgiving is like keeping poison in ourselves that eats away at us little by little and prevents us from growing spiritually and physically.

If one day this person agrees to talk to me again in an everyday conversation, one of my five senses will show me that this relationship is improving, and I will be happy. But I'm not going to base my joy on what my soul is analysing from that conversation. Even though this is a reason for joy, I'm not just going to start rejoicing over what I've just experienced with this person because they agreed to talk to me for a while. No, I'm supposed to rejoice in faith when I start praying about this situation. So of course this conversation will confirm my joy, but it will not be the source of my joy.

Why should I do this?

Simply because it is not my five senses that are able to give me the status of a situation. It is my thought of faith when I have prayed and continue to pray with faith.

Therefore, if one day I see that this person, with whom I start to have small encouraging exchanges, does not speak to me anymore, and if the information that my 5 senses send to my soul were true and that my soul this time transforms them into thoughts that will go against the thoughts of faith that are in me, then in this case, and because I will be in the habit of taking as truth what my soul analyses from my 5 senses, I will be saturated with thoughts showing me that the relationship with this person is no longer in a perspective of

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improvement. Because I usually take for granted what my soul tells me in relation to my 5 senses, I will be invaded by thoughts of doubt. Doubt will then set back my activated faith.

This is why it is essential that my peace, my joy, what I believe about my prayers, be based on my thoughts of faith and not on what my soul will analyse by generating erroneous thoughts because of what one or more of my 5 senses will communicate to it. My 5 senses are useful to me, but I must put them in the correct order of importance and priority. In no case should a thought from my soul related to one of my 5 senses take precedence over what I have decided to believe beforehand with my faith in prayer.

Remember that God will only be able to go as far in your life as you will let Him go, by faith, without relying on what your five senses can tell you.

"How far are you willing to believe my child?" ...

CHAPTER 26

THE SPIRITUAL WORLD AND THE MATERIAL WORLD ARE LINKED

As I entered into my personal transformation, I realised that there was often a world between praying in particular times when I am contemplating God, when I am in His presence praying to Him, praising Him... and letting myself be transformed.

If I had to give a practical explanation I would say this:

“When we pray alone, quietly and peacefully, we are in a spiritual mood, with our eyes closed, we are in a special disposition. Most of the time we have our eyes closed, we are no longer in the tangible world, because we have created this spiritual atmosphere around us. This whole spiritual atmosphere and disposition are real, but different from our tangible world, from the world we live in”.

Why is this so?

Simply because it stays in your mind. When you pray it stays in your thought. The disposition you are in is also in your mind, and that is a good thing.

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A large majority of Christians find it difficult to make the connection between the thought of prayer where good dispositions have been put into practice, where they have sometimes made good resolutions in faith, and in the fact of transposing all this into the tangible world, into the course of their days.

Most Christians have problems in realising in a practical way what they have decided in faith. What they have experienced in prayer must be brought to life in the tangible world, in their everyday lives. They find it difficult to make the connection between the spiritual and the tangible, or the spiritual and the material. Yet without this link nothing can come about in terms of transformation in our lives. Often these same people tend to wait for God to come and transform them, but God will never do it directly. It is the activation of faith that transforms, because faith produces action and change. This is why the Bible says that faith without works is dead.

James 2:20 *But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?*

That is to say, I can only verify that my faith is real if I see that I produce actions in my life in line with this thought of faith. Faith must always give rise to at least one, but usually several actions.

God will only help me to accomplish what I myself have decided to trigger in my life in terms of transformation. Simply because it is up to me.

That's why it's up to me to create that link between the spiritual moment I can have while praying and the "return to normal life" if I may say so, when I'm done praying and I'm back in the world I'm in and living my days normally.

I have often found in the past that I would activate my faith when I prayed, but a few hours after finishing my prayer, what I had decided in prayer with faith vanished into thin air, or went into oblivion. I couldn't assimilate my times of prayer in faith into my day in general.

I had come to think that I really needed to keep a connection between the times I prayed and the times in my day when I was supposed to act upon those prayers with faith if I wanted to have better results. Many times I would just forget, get caught up in the circumstances of my day. I found that I was forgetting what I had decided in faith because I was in the spiritual world when I prayed, and I was in the material world the rest of my days. It was as if I had an on/off switch that allowed me to go one way or the other, but not to combine the two at the same time.

I came to the conclusion that I had to be much more aware during my days,

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much more focused on the spiritual world than I was. I had to combine the two worlds at the same time: living in the physical world that we are in, and at the same time being very aware that I was also in the spiritual world that includes our physical world.

When we understand that the world we live in is part of the spiritual world, things become a little easier. Indeed, when God created our solar system, which is tangible, which is governed by the passage of time, in which we are at the moment, He did so from the spiritual world. Without going into details that are not our subject, we can say in simple terms that our physical world is part of the spiritual world. It is like a bubble from the spiritual world that God created, in which He put our whole solar system, and of course our planet. This bubble containing the physical world is a part of the spiritual world, it is fully part of it, because it is included in it.

So you can't really say that there is the spiritual world on one side and the material world on the other. From this point of view, we see things differently. We realise that we no longer have to separate the spiritual world from the physical world, the two must remain linked. Satan wants us to separate these two worlds in order to treat them separately. But such a way of thinking will only keep us on one side or the other, and we will find it difficult to transpose our prayers into the practice as we live our daily lives.

I often advise people who find it difficult to connect the spiritual and the material worlds to pray with their eyes open. It helps us when we are in this process to learn to connect the spiritual and the tangible world, so that we can see the transformations of our person taking place. Praying with my eyes open, connected to the spiritual realm by spending a moment with God, Jesus or the Holy Spirit, will keep me with one foot in the physical world, so to speak.

As a result I will keep the spiritual and the tangible together. I will then see the physical world I am in as part of the spiritual world. Looking around me will help me to realise that God's creation is also part of the spiritual world. The spiritual represents my relationship with God, my conversations with Him, my actions from my position in the kingdom of God. The tangible represents the putting into practice of my personal transformation into His image in a concrete way in my everyday life.

Then with practice and maturity, you will find that no matter which situation you are in, the link between the spiritual and the tangible will always be active in you. You will no longer consider two spiritual and tangible worlds, with one on one side and the other on the other, but one spiritual realm including this

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physical realm. You will then naturally, and more easily, put into practice throughout your days what you have declared with your faith activated in prayer. You will begin to see God through creation in every moment of your day. This is simply because you will have integrated this thought from a very practical point of view into your days, into your everyday life.

Therefore you will always have the thought in front of your memory of what you have decided, declared, proclaimed by means of your faith activated in prayer, also during your days. Thus it will remind to continue to put into practice these thoughts acquired in prayer in all your attitudes and words.

You will then have created a permanent link between your spirit and your soul. This permanent link goes both ways. Things will no longer remain at the level of your spirit only, and rarely be put into practice by your soul.

There is then a chain in your person that you will have created that goes from the moment you receive something from God, or proclaim it in prayer through your spirit, to the moment you put it into practice (with your faith activated), through your soul in your everyday life.

The Bible calls this renewing our soul. Renewing your soul is not just staying at the level of thinking, making good resolutions as many think. But renewing my soul is starting from my spirit receiving (by various means) directions, information from the Holy Spirit, to integrate them into my soul which will then put them into practice in my daily life. Renewing my soul must result in a tangible and noticeable change in my life, and not stop at the level of thought. The renewal of my soul must generate actions and words. My soul is only renewed when a word, an action are manifested, thereby generating a transformation of my person into the image of God. But this also works for any prayer we may have formulated.

This applies in prayer as I have just described, but also when you read or listen to a teaching for example.

When you listen to a teaching, there is the time when you hear information from that teaching, and you agree with it, you find it very good. And there is the phase where you put what you found very good in that teaching into practice in your daily life.

If we dig a little deeper, we find that there is a gap between the two.

Most Christians often stop at the first step. They listen to a teaching, find it very good, approve of it, accept it with faith, and sometimes even think that it would be a perfect word for someone close to them. But they rarely take the next step

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of integrating this teaching in a practical way into their own daily lives, in order to generate a transformation of their person. Just ask most people on Thursday what they heard taught in church the previous Sunday. The vast majority will not remember.

We also need to create a link between what we listen to or read in terms of teaching, and how we can put that teaching into practice in our daily lives. Too many people listen to and read large amounts of biblical teaching, spending hours sometimes, but they don't see the changes that should have been triggered by those hours of listening every week.

The whole process of linking the spiritual with the material, as described above, is also applicable when we listen to or read a teaching. If I agree with a teaching, if I find it relevant, if I think I have something to learn from it, then that teaching must produce practical changes in my life. If not, then I will have to create that link that will have to be between my spirit and my soul, to be able to see the practical application in my everyday life of what I have read or heard.

The advantage in the case of a teaching is that sometimes I will be able to listen to it several times in order to better remember its content. This is not always possible, but when it is, it is worth doing. In any case, it is important to remember what impacted me in a teaching so that I can meditate on it in the way we have described a meditation, and then put it into practice.

There is often a big gap between hearing a biblical thought in a teaching and integrating it into our daily lives. I think it is important to point out this fact, because we will see that in its application it is also a matter of faith.

It is therefore important to realise that there is a link to be created between our evolution, our words in the spiritual, and our practical transformation in the tangible, i.e. in our everyday life. This is so that my faith can go all the way through its process, and end in tangible actions and words.

James 1:22 *But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.*

As I said earlier with a bit of humour, sometimes you hear a biblical thought in a teaching and think, *"Oh, that would be a perfect application for my wife/husband, or someone I know!"*

But it is much rarer that we say to ourselves: *"Yes, I think I need to hear this word because I need to put it into practice in my life, and to change a few things in me".*

I can't count the number of times in the past that I've listened to a teaching from

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the Bible and I've said, *"Yeah, that's really relevant, that's a good thought that we all need to learn. But anyway, I think I've applied this in my life for a long time"*.

When, for example, I started to understand that I had to go deeper in my spiritual life, that I had to have concrete changes in my attitudes: I didn't have a realistic vision of myself at all. I was not objective about myself. I thought I was putting into practice in my everyday life certain ways of living, but in retrospect I realised that I was not really in tune with what I had acquired spiritually and renewed in my soul.

For example, when I heard that God is love and that we must also be love like Him, when I heard that we must love our neighbour as ourselves, in my mind it was something I was already doing. I remembered then that I loved my wife, I loved my children, I loved my friends, and that was enough for me to think that I loved my neighbour and that I was love as God is love. I had my own definition of myself which in many areas had nothing to do with reality. I also had my own definition of loving my neighbour. So when I listened to some of the teachings, I thought, *"Yes, that's really good, but I'm already putting it into practice in my life"*.

As I matured, I realised that it was possible to deceive myself when listening to a biblical teaching. It was only when I realised that I was not going deep enough in certain areas that I was able to rectify this problem.

So sometimes there is a huge difference between listening to an idea, and realising that you need to integrate that teaching into your daily life.

I have spoken to many Christians who say that they do not understand why they regularly listen to or read hours of biblical teaching and do not see anything concrete change in their lives.

In this case it is important to have the right reaction. I was talking about maturity in my case, because maturity will help me to be able to say something like: *"It is quite possible that I am not listening or reading properly. I need to go deeper and realise what I am hearing or reading. From now on, I will be more vigilant and ask myself whether or not I have really integrated what I have just heard or read in a teaching into my daily life"*.

This is the first step in order to enter into another angle of our personal transformation. At this stage, spiritual maturity gives me the necessary humility to be honest enough with myself, and sometimes to realise that I thought I was practising certain aspects of the Gospel, but I am clearly not.

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As I said above, the first time I was honest enough to accept that I didn't love my neighbour as I thought I did, it opened up other perspectives.

In this case, faith works the other way around, if I may say so. Often we are used to using our faith for something we want to receive, and which we have conceived in our thinking. But in this case, I am going to have to use my faith for something that God tells me through His Spirit. I will need to believe what the Holy Spirit is telling me about myself. I will need to believe that the light He is shedding on my present condition, or on a situation that concerns me, is true and real. That's why I was saying that faith here is going to have to work the other way around, and that's not always that easy in the first few times anyway because you step off your pedestal.

If it is sometimes a bit difficult to believe what we wish to receive, it is also sometimes difficult to believe what God tells us about ourselves. Obviously it's always a discovery, because if I was aware of it and had accepted a fact about myself, then God wouldn't need to pick it up. So there is this other angle of faith that will allow me to believe and receive what God is telling me.

We often think, wrongly, that faith is only active so that I can receive what I express, but faith is also present in me so that I can receive what God expresses about me so that I believe what He says to me, even if I don't feel it's that important.

If we go back to the example where I was listening to teachings about loving my neighbour, in practice things happened in the following way:

As we said above, maturity is the first step. Without a minimum of spiritual maturity, I would not be able to accept my condition. If a person wants to get well, he or she will first have to accept the fact that he or she is ill. Until you can say, *"Yes, I have a problem"* or *"Yes, I am sick"* I will never be able to heal. Why am I going to try to heal if I consider myself not to be sick? In the same way, until I accept that I am learning and that I must improve, I will not take into account what the Holy Spirit is telling me about my self-improvement. Maturity gives me a real view of myself, with the improvements or changes I need to make. In this case maturity is accompanied by humility.

To sum up, we must be objective about ourselves, not having a too high or too low view of ourselves.

Romans 12:3 (NLT) *Because of the privilege and authority God has given me, I give each of you this warning: Don't think you are better than you really are. Be*

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honest in your evaluation of yourselves, measuring yourselves by the faith God has given us.

If the opinion I have of myself is too high then it will be impossible for me to grow.

Why is this?

Simply because if I have too high an opinion of myself, then I will not feel the need to reach this or that level, because I will think I have already acquired that spiritual level. Why would I seek to acquire what I think I already have? That is why it is very important to have the right vision of our condition, to be objective about ourselves in order to accept to grow when we need it.

I remember that things did not happen in two days. The Holy Spirit must have been gently nagging me for many months. Of course we are all different in our personalities, so it is not necessarily good to always take the example of others. So it took me a few months to accept that I was the way I was, with my areas for improvement. Some may only need a few weeks, and others more than a year, or even several years in some cases. As I said at the beginning of this study, I should not hesitate to seek help from someone I trust who can help me see what I cannot see about myself.

CHAPTER 27

ACTIVATE MY FAITH IN VIEW OF MY TRANSFORMATION

In my journey, once I had a better vision of myself, once I accepted the fact that I had to improve in certain areas, I had to activate my faith in this regard. This is another step we have to take.

We are now entering the subject of interest in this study: activating my faith in order to improve myself.

As we said earlier in this context, I am going to have to operate or activate my faith in a way that I am not necessarily used to doing.

This is something that many Christians struggle with, as it involves accepting and believing what God says about me. But often when God speaks to me or when I read in the Bible what God says about His children (which certainly includes me), these words sometimes do not agree with what I can see about myself. In other words, when we find out what God says we are, it is not really what we can see about ourselves.

It is important to know and accept our potential in Jesus Christ because if we

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don't, we will not only find it difficult to step into it, but also difficult to believe it.

If we continue with our example given above, the Bible shows me that I must love my neighbour as myself.

Do you think that if God asks me to love my neighbour as myself that I am somehow not capable of doing so? That I don't have the potential, the ability?

If God asks me to do something, it is because I am capable of doing it. Otherwise God would be a liar. How can He say "Love your neighbour" if we are not capable of doing it?

Mark 12:31 *And the second, like it, is this: 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."*

The reason the Bible places such a strong emphasis on loving your neighbour is because loving your neighbour is directly related to the nature of God. As we said earlier, the major difference between God and satan is that God loves humans because He is love, and satan loves only himself because he is self-centred.

Galatians 5:14 *For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: "You shall love your neighbour as yourself."*

This passage makes it clear that all of God's Law, all of God's standard of living is based solely on love. Loving my neighbour will position me in thoughts, attitudes and words that will always be in line with God's nature.

James 2:8 *If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbour as yourself," you do well;*

When James speaks here of the *royal Law* he is referring to the deep nature of God. In the original text, the royal Law is in other words the attitude by excellence, an attitude approved by God.

The original Greek word is NOMOS, which gives this notion of a rule, a law or a work that God approves.

This shows us, among other things, that loving our neighbour is one of the foundations of the Gospel.

It is quite possible that we accept the fact that we have to love our neighbour, but at the same time we realise that we cannot do it alone. This was my case, when I was in the process of being transformed into the image of God. I

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remember thinking to myself: *"It must be really good, but I'll never make it"*. But I didn't let that thought get to me for long and dictate my conduct. It seemed a bit unattainable, and too beautiful at the same time. I simply accepted that loving my neighbour was a good thing. I told myself that I would have very little chance of succeeding, but nevertheless I retained the idea that it was surely a wonderful thing to experience.

At that time I must say that I was still someone who was occasionally rather obtuse. I liked to be right, even if I was sometimes wrong. At that time I was at the beginning of my process of dying to myself.

Today, and with hindsight, I think that at that time, the fact of willing to love my neighbour, even if I didn't have the feeling of succeeding, nevertheless put me in a frame of mind that pushed me to continue in this process.

Then my faith started to kick in. I began to believe that if I couldn't do it, then the Holy Spirit would make sure that I could. Not to do all the work for me, but to simply give me what I needed to get there.

At this point in the progression, faith becomes essential. If I don't believe that I already have the potential to do it, it will be impossible for me to receive supernatural power from God.

If you are like me in my early days, and you are thinking, in relation to some area of your life, that you will never get there or with great difficulty, do not be discouraged. Just let that little thought tell you that if the Holy Spirit helps you, then you will get there. Don't look any further for the moment. Just hold on to that thought that if God helps you by His Holy Spirit, then you will make it. Let that thought take root in you first. Let time be your ally.

Often the devil tries to put pressure by pushing us to move quickly. This is one of his main tactics: *"Hurry up because the opportunity will pass, hurry up because otherwise you won't be able to reach the next step"*. All this kind of thinking is a lie. Even if it is true that sometimes, and in certain situations of our life, we should not delay, satan will always try to put pressure so that Christians do things in stress without going into depth. So don't let such lies get to you. If you happen to think *"I can't do it, I'm not making any progress in my Christian life, not much is changing, I don't manage to believe in order to activate my faith..."*, don't let the difficulty overwhelm you. Don't be overwhelmed by all the change you still have to acquire. Take it one step at a time, and move forward without stopping.

Our children can say that in their youth they often heard this word from me: *"It*

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doesn't matter how fast you progress in your Christian life, the main thing is that you keep going". I told them this many times.

God will never pressure you to use your faith, He will never force you. But He is always there to help you when you ask Him.

So let this thought sink in: *"I can't do it alone, but if God comes to help me because I'm going to activate my faith, then sure enough, I'll make it"*. Don't worry for the moment about whether God will come to you or not, just stay with that thought.

Then you will find that with time, with meditating on that thought, then it will become more and more real to you. You will come to a point where you will be eager for God to come and help you make this change in your person. At that point, you will be ready to receive all of God's help.

This is the time to turn to the Holy Spirit and say something like: *"Holy Spirit, I know I have to change in this area, I know I can't do it alone, but I can't wait for you to come and help me do it, and for us to start this work together"*.

The day you address the Holy Spirit in this way, be sure that He will be most happy to help you get there.

As I said earlier, this is when you will find that your faith will begin to be activated. It is at the thought of knowing that the Holy Spirit is happy to help you that your faith will begin to activate. You may doubt it, so don't hesitate to ask Him to show you His joy in this.

I often notice that when a born-again person comes to God for help, the main problem that makes it difficult for that same person to activate their faith is that they are not absolutely sure that God has the desire to come and help them.

Only when I am sure that the Holy Spirit is happy to help me move forward, to help me become a better person, to become more like God, will I have no problem activating my faith in that particular area.

Most people who are don't dare, who are reluctant to take the plunge when facing an interlocutor, have this kind of reaction because they are not sure what the interlocutor thinks about the situation.

Sometimes you hear: *"What if he doesn't agree?"* Or: *"But what if she doesn't want to do this for me!"* And also: *"Maybe he doesn't want to help me!"* These are all thoughts about a person that may or may not be true. This is sometimes understandable, but in any case, the best way to find out is to ask the person you are talking to.

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At the beginning of this study, we said that faith works with trust. We won't come back to that, but what I mean is that without having the certainty that God is standing with me in a certain area, I won't be able to activate my faith in the right way, without doubting.

But I have good news for you, God wants more than anything to help you move forward to become more and more like Him.

Think about it for a moment...

That's why God saw fit to arrange His own sacrifice on earth for you and me. Do you think God would have said, *"Okay, I gave my life voluntarily. I came to remove the eternal condemnation that was hanging over all humans. I agreed to die crucified and to take all the sin of humanity upon myself. But you see, to come and help you, to come and help you change, no, sorry, you're asking a bit too much of me"*?

Do you think God would utter such a statement?

Do you imagine Him saying such words?

Of course not, that would be incoherent and ridiculous!

The Bible says that God does not change, He is not in one mood one morning and another the next. God is constant. No circumstance or situation has the power to change His mood.

Some may say to me: *"Yes, but Franck, what do you do about all these passages of the Old Covenant which speak of God's wrath, etc... Has God changed between the Old Covenant and the New?"*

No, because the Bible says that God does not change, His nature remains the same. God is and will always remain love. Between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant it is the circumstances that have changed, not the nature of God. God may have acted differently, mainly under the Law and under the Grace, but His nature remains the same. For more details on this subject see my study entitled *"The Personality of God"*.

I close this parenthesis to continue by saying that if God gave His life through Jesus, it is not to let us down when we need Him. We are no longer under the Law where people often had to pay for their faults. Your faith will greatly depend on your ability to understand and accept that God loves you unconditionally. It is not your actions, attitudes or words that determine His love for you. It is your person, the person you are, that makes you exist, that makes God love you, and nothing else. I insist on this point because it is crucial for our faith to be activated easily.

CHAPTER 28

DRIVING DOUBT AND LIE OUT OF MY THOUGHTS

I often say that my relationship with God is almost improper. I don't deserve anything, but I get everything anyway.

When you find that you are able to activate your faith so that the Holy Spirit comes to help you in this process of transformation, let that faith grow and become more and more active, taking root in your thinking.

In practice, the first thing to do is to banish all false thoughts that your flesh, or that certain demons may try to suggest to you. We spoke briefly about untruthful thoughts a little earlier, but this time we will stop there to consider it for a moment.

I have often noticed that in order to succeed in chasing away untruthful thoughts, many Christians do not go about it in the best possible way.

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I can't count the number of times I've talked to people who tell me that when they are confronted with these kinds of problems, they chase these thoughts away throughout their day. But with this kind of method, you quickly end up with a worse situation than at the beginning: the thoughts come back increasingly. So the more they chase them away, the more these thoughts come back. It's a vicious circle that never stops.

You quickly notice that chasing these thoughts all the time, or at least very regularly, only feeds these same thoughts. I understand that it may seem nonsense to say that praying all the time to drive out bad thoughts only feeds them and therefore increases the magnitude of those very thoughts, but that is what happens.

Can we say then that certain ways of praying will sometimes, and only in certain cases, make things worse?

Yes, that is exactly what I am saying!

As we said at the beginning of this study, the whole challenge of our faith lies in our thinking. It is in my thinking that the success of my faith activation will be played out. That is why it is at the level of thought that satan will often try to ruin things.

Who has never made a decision to believe in a particular area, who has never said, *"I'm going to start praying about this or that in my life, and I believe I'm going to make it, I believe I'm going to see it come to pass"*?

I think a lot of us have said that, and then some time later have given up because of certain thoughts. Whether it's about our personal transformation, certain situations that we would like to see changed in our lives or in those of our loved ones, etc... We have all had, and probably still will have to deal with thoughts that try to stifle our faith.

Remember, when satan came to speak to Eve, what did he say to her?

"Did God really say...?"

Paul found himself in similar situations where the Christians he was teaching had been lured by thoughts of lies. The problem is not new, this shows us that satan continues his stratagem, because too many Christians still today, have not understood how to drive away these kinds of demonic thoughts of lies.

2 Corinthians 11:3 *But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.*

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In matters of faith we always have a choice with two options:

- I choose to be guided by what God says, through my faith.
- I choose to be guided by what my feelings and emotions tell me.

There is no third option. Any decisions I make about my thinking will always be based on one of these two options. We are led either by our faith or by our feelings and emotions, there is no other possible alternative.

So satan still uses this old tactic of sowing doubt in people's thoughts. Doubt drives out faith, so it is imperative that I do not allow doubt to creep in. There are thousands of different deceptive thoughts that satan and his demons use to deceive people and in particular Christians since this is our subject. But we are going to focus on thoughts of doubt. We will see how to get rid of these thoughts effectively. I want to specify that all bad thoughts, whether they are of doubt or other, can be efficiently chased away by the means that we are going to see now.

Then, if praying regularly against an evil thought only feeds that thought, how do we get rid of it?

Of course, in this case, authoritative prayer is the best thing, but we simply must not allow ourselves to be trapped.

In practice, when I realise that a thought or thoughts of doubt that go against what I have decided to believe by activating my faith, pops into my memory, I will have to cast out these thoughts.

There is a rule that the Bible gives us:

John 12:46 *I have come as a light into the world, that whoever believes in Me should not abide in darkness.*

Psalms 18:28 *For You will light my lamp; The Lord my God will enlighten my darkness.*

John 8:12 *Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "I am the light of the world.*

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He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life."

No darkness can stand in the light!

I myself fell into this trap years ago, where I spent my time casting out evil thoughts from my memory. All I was doing was stirring up these thoughts like silt in a lake, without finally being able to get rid of them. Light drives out all darkness. Light has the power to drive out all evil thoughts.

If you notice an evil thought in you, a thought that tries to make you doubt, or conveys other lies, God has given us an authority in Jesus and it is of course good to use it.

Don't hesitate to take a stand. Concentrate carefully, weighing every word you say. Be convinced by your faith of what you are going to say. Then you can use all the authority you have received in Jesus Christ, and command that thought to disappear in Jesus' name.

Once you have done that, considering that you were perfectly concentrated and being sure of everything you said, there is no need to come back to it. This is why I said that you must prepare yourself carefully and be well aware of everything you are going to command in Jesus' name.

If you think that you cannot activate enough of your faith, it is not a problem, renew your soul on this subject, and use all that you can, give yourself completely, put all your energy into it!

It is quite possible that after this prayer of authority and faith, the evil thought will disappear. However, I know of more cases where they resurface some time later than where they no longer give any sign of life. This is simply because I know more examples of people who find it difficult to use all the faith they have already received, than of people who manage to command with faith without wavering.

There are unfortunately more people who have difficulty activating their faith in the Church of Christ around the world than there are people who have managed to use their faith powerfully and effectively. Many blame this on the fact that faith is difficult, but as we have already said, this is a profound error. This fact is simply due to at least two main factors:

- One is that few people receive good teaching on this subject.
- The other is that very few people are willing to spend the time necessary to learn to use their faith.

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As I often say, there is unfortunately a widespread mentality in the Church in general that pushes people to look for the “quick fix”. Everything in our society is becoming faster and more effortless.

Are you sick?
Take this pill!

Are you hungry?
In a few clicks on the internet your meal is delivered within 10 minutes!

Want to eat a hot meal?
Put it in your microwave!

We could go on for many more lines. These things are not bad, but they have over time created bad habits for some people. There are still, however, people who know the value of patience in their personal growth.

A farmer will know how long it takes to get fruit, vegetables, eggs, etc. to mature. I am not saying that it is wrong to live with the times, especially in the “developed” countries, quite the contrary. But it is important not to get caught up in the speed at which most of our societies function today, and to transpose this into our spiritual lives.

Growth takes time, and so does learning to activate your faith!

Take time to grow, take time to learn, take time to be successful in your prayers of faith.

Choose not to be, or no longer to be, part of the majority of the Church in the world that is struggling to grow, and that does not always live the Gospel as a power in every sense of the word.

I close my parenthesis, to continue the explanation of this process in order to drive out the bad thoughts that try to undermine our faith.

Once you have considered that you have prayed with all your faith without doubt, there is no need to repeat your prayer. Of course, this doesn't mean that you can't go back to it two or three times if you consider that you can do better in activating your faith. But once you have reached this stage, there is no need to pray again in this way.

At this level, it is now time to enter the light, it is now time to spread the light.

What does it mean: *Light drives out darkness?*

What does it mean: *Darkness is only the result of the absence of light?*

It is very simple, Jesus said that we are the light of the world.

Matthew 5:14 *"You are the light of the world..."*

If we are the light of the world, then we are the ones who can bring light everywhere we are, but also in all our thoughts. That is why all you have to do is shine your light!

What does it mean to shine your light?

When we are born again, God has put His Spirit within us. The more I manifest the presence of the Holy Spirit in me, the brighter I will shine.

What does this mean in practice?

When I have therefore considered that I have prayed with authority, I will enter into an attitude where I will position myself in supernatural rest.

For more details on this subject see my study called *"Now sit down and watch"*.

We are not going to repeat all the terms of this study here but we will see some of them from another angle.

When we are in this stage where we have considered that we have driven out this bad thought, we can shine our light to make the darkness disappear, that is to say here, to remove bad thoughts, or doubts.

The goal now is to no longer bring up this thought, to no longer mention it, to ignore it. Even if this thought tries to come back, ignore it, don't give it any more credit. Don't give it your attention. Instead, focus on the person you have become. The more it will try to re-establish itself, the more you will have to focus on what God has done and is doing in your life, on what God says about you.

satan will always try to get us to focus on where he wants to take us. It is up to us to understand this tactic and not to be manipulated.

Romans 13:12 *The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light.*

Often we think that the weapons God has given us are for fighting to cast out demons from a person, to cast out the enemy from a situation in my life or the

life of someone I am praying for. Yes, of course these things are true, but the weapons that God has given us are also to showcase who we are. Light is a weapon. Declaring who we are, what God is doing in us as well as our praise to our Father, are weapons, for they declare the power of God that is over our lives. There is no need in this stage to say things like: *"I cast you out in the name of Jesus, you have lost, you have no right to come and suggest lies to me, etc."* Such statements would only give more credit to the opponent. Moreover, they will only remind you that you are fighting against thoughts that you are trying to banish from your memory, whereas you have already won. So it will have the opposite effect.

Take out your weapon which is light, this light consists in remembering and declaring all that God is to you, all that He has done and is doing for you, all that He has given you, all the transformation that He has allowed you to see in your person so far.

Ephesians 5:8 *For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light.*

Before your new birth you were in darkness, often without knowing it. Now decide to walk in the light. Decide to focus only on what God is doing with you as time passes. Declare His unconditional love for you, praise Him, thank Him, in short, verbalise your identity. Then you will use the light, and you will be a child of light. To shine the light that is in me is no more and no less than living through the nature of Jesus Christ that is in me. To shine the light that is in me is to manifest God's nature, His way of thinking, to declare my identity in every situation or circumstance of my daily life.

You may not be able to declare all this because you are not convinced? Then there is no better time to activate your faith in this matter, go for it, stop hesitating!

This is the practical change that the Bible teaches us should bring. Focus on God in difficult times so that His person floods all my thoughts. Then no thought of lies can remain for long. I have experienced and still experience it often, shining my light is something I use very often in my daily life. Getting into this kind of attitude is a faith activator. When you decide to enter this way of thinking, you will find that your new way of thinking will give a boost to your faith activation. Of course, you will still have to decide for yourself at the beginning to activate your faith, but once you have made this decision, it is a supernatural force that will push you forward.

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Chances are that you will not be able to focus 100% on your first try. This does not mean that it is impossible. I have seen people who on the first attempt have been able to enter into this diffusion of light, disregarding all evil thoughts, and let their thoughts focus on God. This is not the majority, which is why I was saying that chances are you will not be 100% focused the first time.

If this happens to you, don't be discouraged!

You are learning, and it's not a big deal if you couldn't fully concentrate properly the first few times.

I remember when the Holy Spirit taught me this, many years ago now, it was a winter evening. The next day we were to start our first day at the market with our healing tent. That evening I had caught a cold, I had a fever, my joints were aching. In short, I was not in good shape at all. I knew that the next day I had to get up at 5am and be fit at the market to pray for the people who would come to our stall. But I have to say that things didn't start in the best way on my first day.

I remember lying on my bed with a headache probably related to the fever. I had two options that night:

- Deciding to cancel my attendance at the market for the next day.
- Deciding that whatever it takes, I will be at the market the next day.

What do these two options have in common?

Both are the result of a personal decision. No one can force you in either direction. Remember that it is always your decision to activate your faith or not.

So I ordered this fever to leave my body in the name of Jesus, drove out all the symptoms of this cold as well. But I have to say that after a while the symptoms were still there.

Recurring thoughts kept coming back into my head saying: *"You want to pray to heal people and you can't even heal yourself. Look at you! Tomorrow you will be even worse, and you won't be able to do anything, cancel everything now!"*

Faced with all these thoughts, each one more deceitful than the other, and seeing that my condition was hardly improving, I remember saying: *"Holy Spirit, I know that Your power is in me, I know that You are in me, but I don't understand, I don't really know what to do, because I have already prayed for my healing"*. I understood that proclaiming prayer after prayer of authority for my healing was useless because I had already prayed with faith. So I asked the Holy Spirit for help, telling Him in other words: *"Please explain to me what I*

should do in this case, because I don't know what is going on".

Then He simply said, *"Focus on me!"*

My flesh then reacted through my soul saying, *"I want to focus on You, but I need to heal!"*

I then had to make a choice, to let either my flesh or my spirit speak. I had to make the choice to activate my faith, make a firm decision not to let go, and listen to the teaching that the Holy Spirit was giving me at that time. Faith is a choice, not an attitude that falls upon me by some phenomenon. I chose to use my faith.

So straight away my spirit took over and I began to let go of those negative thoughts and the symptoms I was experiencing. Of course I still had a fever, I still had a headache and a joint ache, but I remember making every effort not to let the symptoms overwhelm me.

I was lying on my bed, and I started thinking about God, thinking about His love for me, and then I got into an attitude of gratitude. *"Thank you Father for Your love for me. Thank you for giving me Your Spirit. Thank You dear Holy Spirit for living in me, and for unfolding Your power. I praise you Jesus for without You none of this would be possible."*

It was in these kinds of sentences that I began to surrender, doing my best not to let the pain of the symptoms catch up with me.

It's not an on/off action but a progression. At times I was grateful, adoring, letting my light shine, and at other times the pain would return, so I would focus even more on my position as a son of God.

Then little by little, the light took all the place, and these negative thoughts disappeared, suffocated by my gratitude, my praise to my Father. I then fell asleep, and the next morning the fever had disappeared, I still had some very slight aches and pains, but they disappeared during the morning.

So that day I entered into this attitude of letting my light pour into a situation in my life. Now, many years later, it has become a habit, a way of life. And I wouldn't go back for anything in the world.

Don't think that praise, or expressing gratitude to God, or shining the light that is in me, is an act that changes God towards me, or changes the way God will value me. Don't think that God changes His attitude because of your praise, your gratitude, or your light shining through the way you live. I'm probably going to upset some prejudices a little bit, but praise, worship and thankfulness do not change God's attitude towards me, do not change God's favour towards me at all. When I am praising God, thanking Him for who He is, what He does for me

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and for so many others, it is my person that is changed and not His. God does not change, He is perfect, He is complete, He lacks nothing, and He does not bless me because I praise Him, worship Him, or thank Him. I have seen very few Christians understand this, but it is a great truth, God does not act towards us according to our actions. We won't go too deeply into the details of this subject, but what we can say is that praise, worship, the gratitude that we sincerely express to God have a power over us first and foremost. When you praise God, you change. This praise that you express transforms you, it changes your way of thinking, and it transports you into a deep and powerful ecstasy. This state you find yourself in creates a sense of well-being that nothing else can match. In this well-being, in this expression of love that you give to God, a trust then begins to grow or strengthen between you and Him. Then when trust is acquired, it will produce faith. We mentioned at the beginning of this study that faith is based on trust. This is why the fact of meditating on our gratitude to God will build a foundation of trust that will be able to welcome our faith.

We often hear whole teachings or books about the power of praise, where praise, worship, gratitude are presented to us sometimes as something magical, which gives us access to blessing. We are mainly told how to enter into true praise, but at the end we still don't really know what is happening spiritually. It is not clear whether this praise changes God, whether it changes His view of His children or not.

Our praise, our adoration, our gratitude do not change God's attitude towards us!

God already loves us with unconditional love, and nothing can change that. The Bible says that God already loved us when we were in darkness.

Romans 5:8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

God loves you for who you are, not for what you do or do not do!

God does not change His attitude or His way of thinking towards us, that is a fact. When I am worshiping, it is me who changes, not God. Praise is not a magical action to make God lean one way or the other. God is not an egomaniac who feels a lack of gratitude and waits for His children to praise Him so He can give them what they need.

Praise and worship will change me, not God!

In order to enter into complete trust with God and to activate my faith, it is important to know Him from every possible angle. There are sometimes passages of Scripture that, when misinterpreted, become doctrines, and a majority of Christians sometimes do not even think about the deeper meaning, but simply “swallow” what they are being fed through various teachings. One of the most concerned passages is this one:

1 Peter 5:6 *Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time ...*

Many Christians see God in the wrong light because of this passage. They think that God likes to humiliate us. They think that we must live wormlike lives where we are nothing but sinners who should be thankful to have a stern look from God on them from time to time.

In order to maintain a solid trust with God, in order not to waver at every adverse circumstance in my life, it is important to maintain a good understanding of His person. This passage is one of those that could lead to misinterpretation, and thus prevent us from activating our faith easily.

In this passage from **1 Peter 5:6**, when Peter says to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, he is not talking about putting ourselves down, thinking that the more we allow ourselves to be crushed the more God will consider us. Peter is simply talking about returning to our natural state. Sometimes we may think that humbling ourselves under the mighty hand of God means that God's hand is putting some pressure on us. Humbling ourselves is a voluntary act, not to be confused with humiliation inflicted on us by someone else.

If we look at the original text, “humble yourselves” has been translated from the Greek word TAPEINOO. This word certainly gives the notion of humbling oneself, but in the sense of a soul that loses its pride, i.e. returning to our initial state before the fall. Humbling ourselves under the hand of God is to take back our condition as sons and daughters in the image of God, leaving aside all the effects of sin, and thus no longer letting our soul rule our being.

Secondly, the original word translated as “under” is HUPO. Even though HUPO has been translated here “under”, Hupo also means “through”. In this sense if we take Hupo translated by the preposition “by”, then this passage makes sense:

*“Humble yourselves therefore **by** the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you”.*

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And finally, in the original of this passage, the original word translated as “Hand” is the word CHEIR. This word gives the notion of “a hand that digs, or a means to...”

We now understand a little better the meaning of Peter's sentence in this passage. It is not a question of being crushed by a powerful and heavy hand, but rather of putting our flesh to death with the help of God's hand on us to help us do so. In other words, we could paraphrase by expanding this passage as follows:

“Humble yourselves by the means God has given you. He dwells in you by His Spirit, He has given you the means to put your flesh to death by faith. You can become humble in the image of God as He is humble. His hand is not a pressure on you, but it is a protection under which you can take refuge. Thus, and when you are in this dimension of humility and transformation into the image of Christ, into your true identity, then God will be able to lift you up when you enter heaven for eternity. Do not try to carry your problems any longer, for Christ took everything for you at the cross. Act on your faith”.

This is a quick analysis of a biblical passage that simply shows us that it is very important to study a text before drawing conclusions too quickly. It is an analysis that anyone can do today with the help of the internet. For more details on how to analyse a biblical passage, see my study called *“How to study the Bible”*.

CHAPTER 29

UNDERSTANDING WHAT IT MEANS TO “GIVE MY LIFE TO GOD”

It is therefore very important to know God so that I can enter into a relationship of trust with Him. The more I know Him, the more I will trust Him. The more I trust Him, the easier it will be for me to activate my faith.

Since I was born again, I have agreed to give my life to God. Thousands of Christians say these words: *“Yes, of course, I have given my life to God”*. Truly understanding what it means to *“give my life to God”* is another essential area to use my faith and activate it easily.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 *Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.*

We speak many words, but we do not always realise their full significance. When we are born again we agree to exchange our lives with Jesus’ life. We had a life

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contaminated by sin, but He had a perfect life without any sin. Jesus offered us the opportunity to take our life and give us His instead, which is why we speak of our life being redeemed.

So if I have given my life, it no longer belongs to me. I live in another life that has been given to me: Jesus' life.

That is why Paul says in this passage above, that we no longer belong to ourselves. Understand that the person you were before you were born again is dead, no longer exists. You are now part of the kingdom of God. We will not elaborate on this point of the kingdom of God because we have already addressed it earlier. However, it is important to understand what happened when I agreed to exchange my life with Jesus.

Do you think God would have been willing to come to earth in the form of a man and allow Himself to be insulted, ridiculed, beaten, and finally, from a tangible point of view, executed, then in addition to all that take upon Himself all the sin of the whole earth in all its forms... if He did not love you?

Would you have considered doing all this for someone you didn't value?

Would you have agreed to do all this for a person who is not of great value to you?

Now do you think you could refuse a legitimate request from such a person?

This gives us a tiny glimpse of God's motivation when He decided to come and save us through Jesus Christ. It gives us a hint of our true worth, of the way God loves us.

It also gives us an insight into God's motivation and willingness to answer our prayers.

God has made certain commitments to us:

- God wants us always healthy
- He wants us our basic needs to be taken care of
- He wants us safe
- He wants us to become like Him, in His image

There are of course many other things you may need to pray about, but this is simply to show you the main areas where God wants to work in our lives, but He will not do so without our agreement by faith.

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What I am trying to explain is that God has every reason and every possible motivation and determination to want us to succeed in our lives according to what the Gospel teaches. This thought must become engraved in you through your activated faith. There are some points that need to become 'indisputable' in our thinking. In this way we will avoid many problems: some where we would find it difficult to activate our faith, or others where we would tend to believe untrue thoughts that would be contrary to what we have just mentioned. We must have unshakeable certainties. There must be areas in our lives where we must be inflexible about God's intentions for us.

If, for example, you think that God may be allowing a disease in your body in order to "educate" you, or for any other reason, then you will never be able to activate your faith properly in order to see a healing miracle.

Why?

Simply because you will always have a thought of doubt, which some demons will be more than happy to support in your thought, which will say to you for example: *"You want to pray for this disease?... and if it was God who allowed this in your body?..."*

With such a thought it is impossible to activate your faith properly. That is why it is essential to have unshakeable beliefs based on what the Gospel teaches us, engraved in us, so that nothing and no one can overturn them.

These are the supports on which my faith can take root and become more and more stable and powerful.

CHAPTER 30

USING MY IMAGINATION IN MY PRAYERS

The way we pray is important, but sometimes we can overcomplicate things.

Many times in my Christian life I have heard people say to me: *“When you pray, you have to be very specific, you have to be precise in what you ask for, otherwise there is a good chance that you will not get it”*. Or other such advice saying: *“You don't receive in your prayer because you haven't gone deep enough into the details!”*

Some Christians take their own experiences and turn them into biblical doctrines. For example, a person prays for a car for weeks and sees nothing happen. Then one morning they pray for that car and they get the idea to describe the car as they would like to have it. They might say, *“I would like a blue car, with velvet seats, and a leather steering wheel”*. Then as they continue to describe it, they will start to visualise the car in their mind. This car will become

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more and more real to them. Details will start to appear in their imagination, in their memory. They will visualise their future car in an increasingly precise way in their memory.

We spoke at the beginning of this study about the power of imagination in prayer. So this person will have an image of his future car in his mind that is more and more detailed. Then some time later, the car arrives. They are given a car as they had imagined and declared in their prayer. The colour is right, and all the other details are right.

So in this case, some Christians will turn this experience into a biblical rule. They will conclude that if we want to have our prayers answered, then we must be as specific as possible when we address God. They think that God is waiting for us to place our order for our answer, and that we should give as much detail as possible about the thing we wish to receive. As a result, we come up with some ridiculous thoughts that as long as we don't give all the details then God can't do anything. We hear things like: *"It's normal that your prayer is not answered, it's because God is waiting for you to give Him more details, He wants to know exactly what you want!"*

In another area, such as healing, we sometimes see the same kind of mistakes. Sometimes a person prays for the healing of another person, for example. Let's say it's a knee pain. Then the person praying will say: *"Knee, I proclaim you are healed in the name of Jesus! Pain, I cast you out now in the name of Jesus, Amen"*. But nothing happens, after a while the pain is still as violent.

Then the person praying will say another prayer like this one: *"Knee, I declare healing on you, ligaments, tendons, muscles you are healed, and I command the cartilages to return to their place, in the name of Jesus, Amen!"*

Then after a few seconds, the pain is gone.

Then the person who had prayed would deduce a rule that he would apply in all prayers for healing, saying that it was necessary to know the origin of the pain and to name the organs in order for the prayer to be successful.

This is called making a biblical rule from personal experience. This way of doing is disastrous because it will lead to statements that are more ridiculous than the other ones. In time, many Christians will simply apply these fleshly rules, without even knowing why. Sometimes you get to the point where you hear people asserting rules without even knowing where they come from.

Of course I am not saying that it is not good to be precise in our prayers, or that it is not good to know the physical problem of a person for whom we are about

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to pray. I myself have sometimes, and still do, named organs, body parts when I pray for people. I also sometimes pray by being specific in my prayer. All this is not a problem. The problem is when you think that if you are not specific then everything is ruined, that no prayer is going to come to pass, or at least with great difficulty.

The Bible shows us that the only criterion for answered prayer is our faith. It is your faith that carries the power of God from the spiritual world into the tangible world in which we live.

Hebrews 6:11-12 *And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end, that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.*

Going back to our previous examples of detailing the car you want to buy, what happens in most cases in relation to these two examples we have just given?

In the first case where this person starts to describe this car, they will start to visualise it. As we said, they use their imagination. Then these images that they generate in their thinking are going to be faith activators. The simple fact of having detailed their future car, generated images that served as a foundation so that their faith could have a support to lean on. As a result, this person (often without really being aware of it) has activated much more faith, he has generated a confidence, helped by these imagined thoughts.

In the other case where a person prays for healing, the background is the same. The fact of projecting themselves to where the problem is in this knee, and naming certain parts of it, has given them (also without really realising it) images, concrete thoughts on which to base their faith. Thus, the same phenomenon is set in motion, the faith finds a base on which to cling, and it becomes more and more active. It is not only doubt that takes advantage of certain opportunities to become active and settle down, faith works in the same way. As soon as your faith finds fertile ground, it will engage in it, sometimes you will be fully aware of it, and other times, due to lack of knowledge, you will be much less aware of it.

This is why we should never make a rule out of what we experience in our personal lives. The Bible must always confirm any spiritual statement we make.

So we might ask: *“Should we really pray with details?”*

If you can, yes, but if you can't, it's not a problem at all. As we have just said,

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generating pictorial thoughts helps our faith to take root in a particular area. We already talked about this at the beginning of this study so we won't go into it again. It is simply very important not to have reactions that go entirely one way or the other.

Many times I have prayed for sick people. There have been many cases where I have prayed normally, I mean without giving specific details in my prayer as to what the person was suffering from. Then while I was still praying, the Holy Spirit showed me that the ailment was coming from such and such an organ, or part of the body. In this case I team up with the Holy Spirit and with the information He has just given me, I am going to be very specific in the rest of my prayer. My point is simply that we must have balance in all things. Not jumping to conclusions, and creating ridiculous rules is one, but being open to whatever the Holy Spirit may show me, even if it seems to go against what I usually experience, is another.

Let's be serious for a moment, do you really think that God is not aware of all things?

Do you really think that God doesn't know everything that goes on in your thoughts?

Do you think He doesn't know exactly what pain is affecting a person?

Of course God knows all these things, He is omniscient.

1 John 3:20 *For if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things.*

So detailing things in my prayers is not necessarily a criterion for success at all. God loves you and He wants to see your prayers in accordance with His will come to pass.

Giving details is also often a palliative to ease our conscience, to reassure us of the outcome of our prayer. Who hasn't heard lengthy prayers with dozens and dozens of details about the situation for which we pray? We can hear, for example:

"Lord, you see our brother, he has been suffering for so many months. Lord, come to his aid, you have seen that he is in hospital and that only few people come to visit him. God, look at how much he is in pain, I pray that his illness will be healed, amen!"

Of course not everyone prays like this, but this is just to give an example of

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people who sometimes give a lot of details in order to “fill in” their prayers. Often these same people think that if they don't pray for at least a few good minutes, then the prayer will be much less powerful. The details of the prayer are there to ease their own conscience, to give them a reason for God to answer their prayer.

As we said earlier, God knows all things, and He does not need you to tell Him what He already knows. God does not need to be coaxed or manipulated. The Bible calls this vain prayers.

Matthew 6:7 *And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words.*

Unfruitful prayers are prayers that will not have the expected effect. It is your faith that will make all the difference in your prayers, not arguments or details that will strike a chord with God so that He will eventually give us what we ask for.

There is a passage that is often used as an example to support ridiculous theories that we must lay the whole situation before God and that we must insist on it as much as possible in order to be granted our prayers.

Luke 18:6-7 *Then the Lord said, “Hear what the unjust judge said. And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them?”*

This passage is in most cases truncated; only the first part is given as an example. If we only read verses 6 and 7 of this passage, it will be very difficult to get the full context and therefore understand what Jesus meant when He gave this example.

The first thing we can safely point out is that we cannot compare God with this unjust judge. It is impossible to think that Jesus, in this passage, is talking about God when He cites the story of this unjust judge.

Why is this?

Simply because first of all God is not iniquitous. An iniquitous person is a person who is seriously unfair. An unfair person will be very unjust in his decisions, he will not be fair at all.

Do you think Jesus could describe His father in this way?
Do you think Jesus has such a view of His Father?

If this were the case, then we would have to cross out of the Bible all the words that Jesus spoke to describe God His Father who is also our Father. This one passage alone understood in this way, could not possibly coincide with all of Jesus' other statements about His Father.

So here is the context the Bible gives us for this parable:

Luke 18:1-5 *Then He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart, saying: "There was in a certain city a judge who did not fear God nor regard man. Now there was a widow in that city; and she came to him, saying, 'Get justice for me from my adversary.' And he would not for a while; but afterward he said within himself, 'Though I do not fear God nor regard man, yet because this widow troubles me I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.' "*

The context that the Bible shows gives us valuable clues as to who this judge is.

- He does not fear God
- He does not love his neighbour
- He refuses to do his job correctly
- He does justice for the sake of peace

Again, do you think these 4 points of description fit with the nature of God?
The answer is easy in this case, this judge can in no way be compared to God.

So, simply because we see that this poor widow comes to insist on this judge, we deduce that we must insist when we pray to God.

There is a phrase at the beginning of this passage that can be confusing and lead us into hasty and erroneous conclusions.

Luke 18:1 *Then He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart...*

It is a fact that this parable Jesus gave is to show us that we must always pray

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without slackening. But the point of Jesus' teaching is not at all to use the example of this unjust judge to represent God.

Let's look at this parable in its entirety.

Luke 18:1-8 *Then He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart, saying: "There was in a certain city a judge who did not fear God nor regard man. Now there was a widow in that city; and she came to him, saying, 'Get justice for me from my adversary.' And he would not for a while; but afterward he said within himself, 'Though I do not fear God nor regard man, yet because this widow troubles me I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.' " Then the Lord said, "Hear what the unjust judge said. And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them? I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?"*

We can now explain the real meaning of this parable from the beginning.

We now know that this judge is a judge who is not a commendable person. We cannot take a good example from him.

This widow is therefore the person we should take as an example to help us to pray without slackening.

Luke 8:3-5 *Now there was a widow in that city; and she came to him, saying,¹'Get justice for me from my adversary.' And he would not for a while; but afterward he said within himself, 'Though I do not fear God nor regard man, yet because this widow troubles me I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.'* "

This widow was tenacious, to say the least. At no time did she give up. Yet for a long time the circumstances were unfavourable for her, because this judge refused to grant her what was her right. Everything seemed to be falling apart around her without her being able to get what was rightfully hers.

But this widow did not give up, she held on to a conviction. She held on to a belief that she would eventually get what she was asking for... And she eventually won her case.

Did she win because that judge ended up being fair because of this woman's tenacity?

No, not at all!

If this widow won her case, it was only because of her tenacity, it was because

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of a thought similar to a thought of faith that she pondered, meditated on over and over again in relation to this situation, that she won her case.

It is at this point that Jesus gives His teaching on faith, which is often quoted without being properly understood.

Luke 8:6-8 *Then the Lord said, "Hear what the unjust judge said. And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them? I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?"*

This is faith we are addressing and nothing else. The teaching that Jesus gives us is not about insisting, or trying to put pressure on God so that He will agree to satisfy us. It is faith, and only faith, that Jesus is talking about.

The original text has no punctuation, neither in the Greek nor in the Hebrew. That is why it is important to see who we are talking about in verses 6 and 7.

... Then the Lord said, "Hear what the unjust judge said. And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them?..."

When it is written "... *though He bears long with them?...*", it is the judge who is spoken of here, not God.

If we were to paraphrase this passage we could say: "...*Hear what the unrighteous judge says. And will not God do justice to His elect who cry out to Him day and night, and will this judge delay them?...*"

"*His own elect, who cry out to him day and night*" refers to this widow who was coming before this judge. There is no question of crying out to God, but Jesus is simply referring to this widow who was coming before this judge. This does not at all mean that we should cry out to God day and night; Jesus has simply used an example to illustrate His teaching.

Then Jesus ends by saying:

Luke 18:8 *I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?"*

Here the "He" refers to God. We could say in this verse 8: "*I tell you, God will avenge them speedily...*"

We reach the heart of Jesus' teaching in the second part of **verse 8**:
"...Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?"

Jesus shows us in this last sentence that it is faith that is the determining factor in praying without slackening. I will only be able to pray without wavering if I activate my faith, and especially if I keep it activated.

This parable of the unjust judge shows us that faith is still the compulsory link in order to pray without wavering.

If I pray without slacking off, what will happen?

I will find that my prayers will come to pass.

Why?

Simply because I will have gone through the process of faith, I will have kept my faith active, unchanged until the tangible fulfilment of my prayer.

It is very important to be able to analyse what the Bible says. This example we have just discussed about the unjust judge shows us that we can quickly come (if we do not have the right method to study the Bible) to erroneous deductions that push us into equally erroneous theories. These incorrect deductions will then push me into attitudes that the Bible does not teach, or into thoughts that will put me in difficult situations.

CHAPTER 31

WHAT DOES GOD DO WHEN I PRAY IN FAITH?

In order not to be trapped by deductions contrary to what the Bible teaches, one of the keys is to get a clear understanding of how God works towards us when we pray in faith. The first thing to understand is this:

God is not behind every prayer you pray!

I understand that this is a concept that might seem a bit crazy to many Christians or even to non-Christians, but let me explain how our prayers work.

First of all, if we look at nature around us, we can see that God has created processes, automatisms. For example, in order for a plant to grow, God has created a process through His Word, so that when a seed is put in the ground, sunlight floods it and water is added regularly, then this seed will develop into a plant or a tree, depending on the type of seed.

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Is God behind every seed that sprouts and grows on earth today?

Is God there and commanding each seed to develop into a plant according to its nature?

Of course not!

The creation is alive, it has become self-sufficient according to what God commanded it to produce at creation.

Romans 8:19 *For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God.*

Romans 8:22 *For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now.*

No one can deny that the whole creation around us is alive, in the sense that it is self-sustaining when the conditions set by God are met for growth to take place.

Genesis 1:11 *Then God said, "Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb that yields seed, and the fruit tree that yields fruit according to its kind, whose seed is in itself, on the earth"; and it was so.*

Genesis 1:12 *And the earth brought forth grass, the herb that yields seed according to its kind, and the tree that yields fruit, whose seed is in itself according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.*

When this creation first came into being, it was God who initiated the first growth through His Word, and through that same Word this growth has now been going on autonomously for over 6,000 years. God has created a process in the growth of creation that is self-sustaining.

In the same way, do you think that God is there with His angels to take turns night and day, and make the earth turn on itself?

Of course not!

The earth now turns on its own as a result of the Word of God that was applied to it at creation. Today God no longer intervenes in the rotation of the earth.

Some facts now support this. Human genetic manipulation of creation, for example in food, often goes against what God created in the first place. Many of these genetic manipulations result in outcomes that are not always healthy for humans in terms of food.

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The same kind of thing happens with animals, with insects.

One day I was talking to someone who was a research scientist and who worked for a large French group. This person was telling me that he and his team had to find a way of dealing with parasites that were forming on fruit trees. They had noticed that a certain species of ladybirds loved these parasites, they would eat them when they came into contact with one of these fruit trees.

But they had a problem, the ladybirds didn't stay on the trees for very long, they regularly flew off to somewhere else. So they started to think that they could change the development process of these ladybirds. I'm not a scientist so I couldn't explain the whole process of their modification, but to make a long story short, this person told me that they managed to modify some of the genes of these ladybirds so that they could be born without wings. They had modified what God Himself had created.

Do you think that if God was behind every ladybird that came into the world, He would have somehow made Himself available to these scientists and said, *"Okay, make all the changes you want, and let me know when you're ready so I can start multiplying these new ladybirds!"*

This is of course completely inconceivable.

God created this process of development in the ladybirds and He does not go back to it. God has given the stewardship of the earth to humans and He does not go back on this word. That is why people today can sometimes play sorcerer's apprentice and change what God has created, without God's intervention.

The same is true with humans, for example.

Is God behind every human being that comes into the world?

I would say that if this were the case, then God would make some huge mistakes sometimes!

God created the process of human multiplication over 6,000 years ago and He doesn't go back to it.

Does that mean that if you are about to welcome a newborn into your family and the doctors have told you that there is some kind of problem with the baby, then God is going to say to you, *"Sorry guys, I created this process through Adam and Eve, and I'm not going back to it. I can't do anything for you!"*?

Surely not! God is always ready to help us when we pray.

What I mean is that there is a process in place for the multiplication of humans

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and for all creation, and that these processes are now self-sustaining because of the Word of God that has been spoken over them. But this does not mean that God will not intervene if people pray in faith, to solve a problem that has arisen. I quickly mention that when a problem arises in a process that God has created, it does not mean that this process is imperfect. On the contrary, it was perfectly created, but the fall, and many other parameters, are involved in these problems today. For more details on this subject, see my study entitled *“Trials, temptations and persecutions - do not confuse them”*.

There are therefore processes that God has created on earth that are autonomous on the one hand, and subject to human administration on the other. God has made no exception in the area of prayer and the authority He has given us.

Now we come to the important point that I would like to develop with you. I said a few lines earlier that God is not behind every single one of our prayers. You are probably now beginning to see a little more clearly where I was going with this.

In the same way that God created processes through His Word, He has given us responsibilities, which also function independently. As sons and daughters of God, we have received His Word within us. All those who are born again and baptised in the Holy Spirit have received all the power of God's Word in them.

Romans 8:11 *But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.*

The power that raised Jesus Christ from the dead is also in us. Jesus is the Word of God, and when His Spirit dwells in us, then the Word of God also dwells in us. God has given you His Word, He has put it in you in a permanent way. It is the same Word that He used to create all creation. It is the same Word that God still uses today to bring things into existence.

Do you believe that God sent His Word into you in the person of His Holy Spirit to come and rest in us?

I am caricaturing things a little, but we know that if the Holy Spirit has come to dwell in us permanently, it is not for a holiday, but to be active.

Therefore, we can say that we have all the active power of God within us.

Romans 8:32 *He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all,*

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how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?

God has put all His power in you, but that power will always be subject to the activation of your faith.

Are you beginning to understand a little better now why God is not necessarily always behind each of our prayers, ready to intervene?

So with this Word we have authority. This authority has no limits. As I often say, the only limit the Word of God will have in us is the limit we put on it. I will not go into the details of our spiritual authority, for that you can consult my study called *"I take and use my authority"*.

There are therefore many cases where it is our responsibility to use this Word that is in us. In a majority of the cases where the word "ask" is used in the New Covenant, it is the original Greek word "AITEO". This word certainly gives a notion of asking but also of commanding. For more details on this subject see my study entitled *"The 'Let' of the Bible"*.

There will be situations in our lives where we will have to command things: command situations to change, diseases, evil spirits, etc.

If we take some examples from the Bible, we can see that Jesus used His own authority when He prayed. He was always in collaboration with God His father.

Matthew 8:13 *Then Jesus said to the centurion, "Go your way; and as you have believed, so let it be done for you." And his servant was healed that same hour.*

Matthew 8:16 *When evening had come, they brought to Him many who were demon-possessed. And He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were sick,*

Mark 4:39 *Then He arose and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Peace, be still!" And the wind ceased and there was a great calm.*

So we can see that Jesus does not address God in His prayers. We will mention only three of them just to give an example. It is obvious that Jesus is addressing the 'problem' directly.

At other times and in particular circumstances, Jesus addressed God directly. One such example can be found here:

John 17:1-14 *Jesus spoke these words, lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said:*

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“Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You, as You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him. ³ And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do. And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was. “I have manifested Your name to the men whom You have given Me out of the world. They were Yours, You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word. Now they have known that all things which You have given Me are from You. For I have given to them the words which You have given Me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came forth from You; and they have believed that You sent Me. “I pray for them. I do not pray for the world but for those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours. And all Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine, and I am glorified in them. Now I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one as We are. While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your name. Those whom You gave Me I have kept; and none of them is lost except the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled. But now I come to You, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have My joy fulfilled in themselves. I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.

In this example Jesus is addressing God His Father, but the nature of His words is different. It strongly appears that Jesus is speaking or having an exchange with God. He is not asking, commanding, or ordering anything of God. Jesus is in a prayer, a deep discussion with His Father. We see here a prayer of agreement between Jesus and His Father.

We can see that there are at least two ways of praying with faith. In one we use the authority that Jesus has given us, in the other we address God in cooperation and agreement on a specific matter.

If we now come back to what we said earlier, when God establishes processes that are autonomous, we can see that every Christian has received the same authority, the same power in his words if he adds his activated faith.

Luke 12:32 *“Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.*

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God has given us His kingdom. Sometimes we hear that God has made us citizens of His kingdom, which is true, but if we stop there, we miss a significant part of the truth. God has given you His kingdom: you also own it. Since your new birth you are officially a co-owner of the kingdom of God and all that is in it.

One of the many effects of this is that God has given you authority over all diseases, over the elements, over creation, or over any situation or circumstance on earth and in heaven.

When I explain this, some Christians sometimes think, *“Great, if I have authority over all things, and over all situations, then I will be able to use that authority from time to time for my own personal aspirations, and to satisfy my flesh.”*

Some have not understood this, but it does not work that way. Unfortunately, there are often those who think they can use the authority in Christ for their carnal needs, but they soon find that it does not work. They then conclude that they have not received such powerful authority after all. They end up giving up or putting that authority on the back burner.

On the other hand, there are those who think that they are not worthy enough to have received such an authority. So they will try to use it, but since they are not convinced of their new identity in Jesus Christ, their faith will have great difficulty in being activated. As a result, they will find it very difficult to see successful results. So after a few failed attempts, they conclude that they have not received authority based on their faith, but on their works. Instead of focusing on learning to activate their faith, they will focus on producing good works. This is not a bad thing in itself, but producing good works is not what helps us use our authority.

When God gave us the authority, the power of His Word, He gave us the ability to use it as He uses it.

I said a moment ago that God has given us His kingdom, and His Word comes from the kingdom. So if the Word of authority that God has given us comes from the kingdom, it can only be used within the framework of that same kingdom. Therefore, if a person were to say to himself that it would be nice to be able to use this authority for the selfish needs of his flesh, he would soon be faced with the truth: the authority we have functions perfectly within the framework of the kingdom of God. Therefore, if a person were to try to use that authority for personal glory, to get rich on the back of others, or to satisfy a grudge or anger towards another person, it would not work.

The authority in Jesus Christ that is in us will only work in two cases:

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- One will be on the condition that my faith is activated in this regard.
- The other will be if my motive is in line with the values that the kingdom advocates.

Do you understand now why God has given us His kingdom?

Simply because only a person of the kingdom, that is, who thinks like one thinks in the kingdom, will be able to use the authority of the power of this Word to good effect. This is what the Bible teaches us when it speaks of sons and daughters of God. A son or daughter thinks like His Father. It is in this sense that we are sons and daughters of God, beyond the fact that we have inherited the kingdom.

Now let us come back to the processes that God created in creation and in our life on earth. It is now easy to understand that there are going to be many areas in my prayers where I am not going to turn to God, but I am going to use the power of that authority that He has placed in me.

Acts 3:6 *Then Peter said, "Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk."*

Acts 16:18 *And this she did for many days. But Paul, greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." And he came out that very hour.*

In most cases where we are called to pray, we will use our authority. Authority doesn't just work for diseases, but as we said before, for many other things. Whenever you are sure of the direction to take in your prayer, you can use your authority. God has established this authority over you as an autonomous process that works powerfully on all things.

In this light it is now understood that since God has established these processes of authority, as He did in creation for example, we are then faced with our activated faith, as well as our kingdom-oriented thinking. We are in a situation where we are autonomously using what God has already given us, so God does not intervene in this process. The whole process is already perfectly established, it works perfectly, and there is no loss of power. The data at stake is my faith and my determination to get there.

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It is very important to understand this whole system of processes. If for example you think that when you pray with authority, God is behind you to answer your prayer or not, what happens if your prayer is not answered?

If you think that God is there waiting to answer your prayer but nothing happens, your first thought will be *"God didn't answer me"*. Then the devil will take advantage of this false thought in you to add others: *"Look, God didn't even answer you, you must have committed sins"*, or *"God didn't answer you, maybe He's disappointed with you, maybe you didn't do your best to please Him"*.

You see, thinking that God is behind all your prayers will cause you to think that He is the reason for the failure of that prayer when it is not answered. Thinking that God gives me what I command in prayer on the spot will, if I am not yet mature in my faith, lead me to think that He does not want me to get what I have prayed for.

On the other hand, if you have the right way of looking at things that the Bible teaches us, if you have understood the whole process of the authority that you have already received but your prayer does not succeed, you are not going to incriminate God. You will not think that God has refused to answer you. In this case you will know that if your prayer according to kingdom thinking has not succeeded, it is because you have not activated your faith enough. So if you have a minimum of spiritual maturity and determination to succeed, you will redouble your determination to learn to activate all the more your faith.

Many times some Christians blame their failures on God, when it is they who need to learn to activate their faith more.

Understanding how things work in prayer will prevent you from going around in circles, waiting mistakenly for God to change His mind about your prayer.

Some may say to me: *"Franck, all that you say is good, but why then does it say that Paul asks Christians to pray for him?"*

Ephesians 6:19 (NIV) *Pray also for me, that whenever I speak, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the Gospel,...*

Colossians 4:3 *... meanwhile praying also for us, that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in chains,...*

2 Thessalonians 3:1 *Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may*

run swiftly and be glorified, just as it is with you,...

These three passages are just some of the examples where Paul asks for prayer for himself or his companions. We might wonder why Paul asks his brothers and sisters to pray for him when he obviously has no problem with his faith and has received the authority of Christ in him.

These three examples take place in different communities. So the people involved are not necessarily in the same frame of mind. But nevertheless Paul asks them to pray for him and sometimes even for his companions.

Some people might say that Paul had a slump because he was persecuted, in prison, that he suddenly found it difficult to activate his faith. But if we read the passages following and preceding these three examples, we see that Paul's way of speaking does not indicate any kind of dejection. On the contrary, and as usual, he is encouraging, teaching, exhorting with power through his words and speech.

It is therefore not the right explanation to say that Paul experienced at least three times a decline in the activation of his faith and his motivation to proclaim the Gospel.

When we read these three epistles Ephesians, Corinthians and Thessalonians, we see that it is rather the members of these communities who have certain problems in their Christian lives, not Paul.

But then why would Paul ask people who obviously have some spiritual problems to deal with to help him in prayer?

I would like to say first of all that it is not necessarily a problem to ask your brothers and sisters in Christ to pray for you, but it is simply not the best thing in all cases. We are not going to go into the subject of prayer because it is not our subject. We can just quickly say that God has given us all the same thing, without any exception of people. We all have the same spiritual potential. However, we must learn to use what God has given us. In this respect, not everyone will be at the same level of experience. It may happen that one person asks another to pray with them. The reason I say "*with them*" and not "*for them*" is that it is very important. Too many Christians rely on others. This is a statement that you often hear me make, for those who know me. It is not wrong at all to ask for help, but that does not mean that when we are in a position to pray we should rely on others. Such an attitude will block any growth in me. Of course, there are times when we are not able to pray ourselves for various reasons, and only in this case, we should of course, and if we have the opportunity, get help, but this should be temporary.

So when Christians ask me to pray for them, I always answer that I am not going to pray for them, but with them. This empowers people on the one hand, and encourages them to develop in a growth dynamic with the other person, on the other hand.

Now let us see why Paul asked these Christians to pray for him. The Bible does not say what Paul was thinking when he asked this, but we can get a good idea. When I started to study these three passages on the subject of asking brothers and sisters in Christ to pray, I was for a long time stupidly stuck on words that Paul said in these three passages saying:

Ephesians 6:19 *Pray also for me,...*

Colossians 4:3 *meanwhile praying also for us,...*

2 Thessalonians 3:1 *Finally, brethren, pray for us,...*

Even as I continued to read the rest of the passage, it was the fact that Paul asked to pray for himself and sometimes for his companions that lingered in my mind. I wondered for days why Paul was asking for prayers for himself and his companions. It didn't make sense to me, knowing a bit about Paul's life, the kind of person he was, from his various writings. Paul was not the kind of person who complained or asked for support. On the contrary, he encouraged others all day long, so it was inconceivable that he could have doubted himself and asked others to pray for him. Then as I asked the Holy Spirit to show me why this was, and as I thought about it regularly, a few days later, while continuing to study these passages, I realised that I was getting stuck on a point that was not the main point at all.

Paul did not ask to pray for himself personally. He did not ask to pray for his personal life, for personal concerns. When Paul asked the readers of his letters to pray, it was to make them participants. Indeed, Paul asked to pray that the Gospel would be proclaimed boldly, that God would be glorified, that was his only concern. Yet he is in prison, locked up, and certainly not in a very comfortable lifestyle. But Paul makes no mention of any of this; all he cares about is that the Gospel goes forward. So we are not in a situation where Paul is complaining, asking Christians to pray for his condition. On the contrary, Paul is autonomous in this respect and knows how to manage his own life.

It is therefore to make these Christians of Ephesus, Colosse and Thessalonica

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responsible that he speaks in this way, to include them in this great work of the Gospel. He wanted to make them participants in this great adventure.

If Paul was so preoccupied with his personal condition that he reached the point of asking a whole community for help three times, we could think that this situation, if it was real, would have been very important for him. So we can easily assume that he would have mentioned it long before he reached the end of his three letters. Paul mentioned these requests to pray for him and his companions at the end of the letters he wrote. This does not correspond with the attitude of a person who would have such problems that he would call for help from several hundred brothers and sisters.

Because of a misunderstanding of these three passages, many Christians have deduced (helped by teaching that is not always balanced) that as soon as we are in a difficult personal situation, we should call on as many Christians as possible for help. From this, these same people have concluded that the more people pray, the more powerful the prayer will be. But the Bible shows us in many of the places we have mentioned throughout this study that what makes our prayers powerful is our activated faith.

So what does this tell us?

Is it wrong to ask brothers or sisters to pray for personal needs?

Not at all! But only under certain conditions.

If I am a person who has only recently been born again, or who does not have much experience, then of course I can ask for help from a person whom I have judged to be strong in the faith. One person is enough, there is no need to contact several people; there is no point. So I may be a young Christian in the faith, or a long-standing Christian who has just discovered how to activate my faith, in which case it is not wrong to ask for help, but it must remain temporary. It is not normal, for example, for a person to ask for help in prayer for years without making any progress in this area.

Paul therefore included his brothers and sisters, he made them concerned with the cause of the Gospel, not with his own personal cause. This was his sole purpose, not a request for personal help.

CHAPTER 32

THE FIGHT OF FAITH...?

There is another area where the fight of faith is spoken of quite often in Christian circles. It was the apostle Paul who spoke to Timothy about this fight.

1 Timothy 6:12 *Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, ...*

2 Timothy 4:7 *I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.*

Some Christians may think that the fight of faith is a battle that has to be fought in spiritual places against demonic spirits, or other evil creatures. But this is not quite what Paul was talking about in his two letters to Timothy.

When we look at the original word translated “fight”, it is the Greek word AGON. This word does not give a notion of fighting against an enemy, but rather a fight to win a prize: a race, an athletic contest in a stadium, or a competition. So this fight of faith that Paul is talking about here is not a fight against the

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powers of darkness at all. It is a fight to keep our faith activated. This fight is a striving, in the sense of a competition with extreme zeal in order to keep our faith activated. This is what is meant by the word *fought* or *fight* quoted in these two passages, which are translations of the same word in Greek which is AGONIZOMAI.

So it is a question of keeping our faith activated, because we have to strive to achieve it.

But why is there a striving, and where is it?

It's simply because many circumstances in our world will often try to prevent us from keeping thoughts of faith.

The basis of faith, its backbone if you like, is not based on what I can see or hear, but on what God says. We have developed this point earlier.

Sometimes people build their faith on their own experiences. The problem with this kind of attitude is that it is often done without our knowledge. People who pray for the sick and who regularly see miracles for example, will sometimes base their faith on these miracles. They have faith simply because their previous prayers worked well. Or even a person who bases their faith on particular visitations of God. Sometimes you experience a strong relationship with God, you feel it in your whole body and in your mind at the same time. These are great moments, and sometimes we can base our faith on such moments: *"God has been manifesting Himself in a powerful way lately, so I know that God is with me, that He is listening"*. Or: *"I have seen miracles lately, healings of incurable diseases! So I know that God is with me and will do it again"*.

What a mistake!

But unfortunately, sometimes the powerful manifestations of God in our lives are not always present. In the same way, sometimes healings are not always happening.

Does this mean that God chooses to work sporadically in our lives?

Not at all!

But it simply means that we are not always at our full, or 100%, faith potential on the one hand, or that we are not always disposed to receive His omnipotence over us in moments of visitation on the other. There will be times when we are unfortunately not always well disposed to receive from God. And if we base our

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faith on what we experience, then on those days when the supernatural experience is not there, our faith will plummet.

These two examples are simply two illustrations, but there are still many areas in our relationship with God where we can fall into this trap of feeding our faith with supernatural or tangible experiences, and not with what God says.

CONCLUSION

I feed my faith with what God says, not with what God does in my life in a supernatural way.

Does this mean that I should not be encouraged by the supernatural manifestations of God in my life?

Not at all!

These manifestations are very good things, and they will encourage me to continue, but they should not be the source of my faith. If one day for some reason I don't see a manifestation, my faith should not alter.

I have prayed for sick people and seen a multitude of instantaneous healings. There have also been times when I have prayed for sick people and seen no healing. When I have not seen healing, it has not affected my faith thinking at all. I didn't say to God, *"What is going on? Have you forsaken me?"* On the contrary, my words were: *"Father, I've missed somewhere, but I don't understand where. Show me Holy Spirit, teach me so that I understand where I need to change something to have a good result"*.

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I don't have all the answers to my questions yet, as I am still learning in the area of my faith, but one thing is for sure, no circumstance will be able to cause my faith to waver.

Am I a super Christian for this?
No, not at all!

But I simply decided a long time ago that the circumstances of my life do not have the power to make me change my thinking about my faith.

My faith is not activated because everything went well last time, but because I am a son of God, and I have received the authority of Christ in me by the power of the Holy Spirit, which is very different. It is only for this that my faith remains activated, not for what I will see when I pray, however beautiful and powerful the experiences may be.

The only source of my faith must come from God and not from the situations or circumstances, good or bad, that I will experience in my daily life.
Faith must remain the fruit of what I believe and not the fruit of what I experience.

A tiny bit of faith is enough to succeed, just as a tiny bit of doubt is enough to fail. The faith we need to succeed is tiny in any case. As Jesus said, the value of faith similar to a mustard seed is enough to trigger supernatural situations beyond our needs.

This is a thought that still encourages me very often.

Remember that Jesus spoke of faith as a mustard seed, you only need to activate a tiny part of it to see beautiful things happen in your life and the lives of others.

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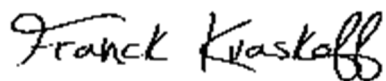
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You are blessed.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Franck Kvaskoff". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.