

“Fight the Good Fight of Faith”

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From Glory to Glory



Character development is said to be the most important work ever entrusted to human beings. During the next hour, we will explore both our privilege and our responsibility to become Christ-like in character. Join us now for this powerful time of personal renewal as Pastor Stephen Wallace takes us "From Glory to Glory."

Good evening friends, and welcome; so good to have you. It's a privilege to study diligently together with you every evening the most important work ever entrusted to human beings; and what is that? "Character building." You know, as we approach the end of this course, it's going to be very important to have that statement memorized. Maybe we ought to run through it? **Education page 225:** Everyone quickly reaches for their "cheat-sheet" here. Try it by memory; quote: **"Character building is the most important work ever entrusted to human beings; and never before was its diligent study so important as now."**

My friends, I hope that that simple truth has been inculcated into your minds, and that you will be duly motivated to continue the study of the principles of Christian character development. Please know that when we get to the end of this seminar together, we will not have exhausted the topic. We may have exhausted you studying the topic, but we have not exhausted the topic. In fact, we will only have just begun, and I hope that you will be so convinced regarding the import of further study that you will use this seminar as simply a launching pad, a catalyst to stimulate further personal study; and by the way, there's one thing that I've been meaning to tell you that just came to mind. I want to exhort you to **be good "Bereans" {Acts 17:11}** as well, and what do I mean by that? Paul commended the Bereans because they did what? They checked him out! They checked him out; and my dear friends, if the apostle Paul... if it was appropriate to check him out, I assure you, it's all the more appropriate to check this poor mortal out. God knows that I have tried my best to share the truth and only the truth, but I am the first to acknowledge that I am not infallible. In fact, I am acutely aware of the very real possibility that I have misunderstood the truth. So I want to encourage you with my whole heart, to study and validate what you have heard. If it does not check out, don't embrace it, and please do me the favor of helping me see wherein I have misrepresented the truth.

But bless your hearts, when you call or write or email, please have something more than your opinion to share with me, okay? We're all entitled to our opinions, but when it comes to the truth, we need something a whole lot more substantial and dependable than human opinions. Do I hear an "amen"? {Amen} That's why I've been trying so hard to share with you, not my own theories and concepts on this topic, but rather what saith the Lord; and as I've said before, I'll say again: I speak with authority on this topic precisely to the degree that I am not the author of my words, but Jesus is. He alone has true authority, and I plead with Him as I prepare, and as I approach this privilege and responsibility of leading out in the study of His Word. I plead with Him for the guidance and direction of the Holy Spirit because we are dealing with vital and sometimes very controversial truth, and my greatest fear is to misrepresent the truth, for two reasons: First of all, Jesus is the Truth; God forbid that I misrepresent my Lord. Secondly, it is by the truth that we are set free and sanctified, and if the truth is misrepresented, then its power to liberate and make holy is compromised; and God forbid that I should do that.

So before we proceed, what must we pause to do? Pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit. I need God's Spirit inditing my every word, and you need God's Spirit as you study His Word with me.

My Father in heaven, in the name of Jesus Christ, the Lord our Righteousness, we come before You this evening, first of all rejoicing and giving You thanks for the privilege of membership in Your family, and for the way that You care for us, Your children. We thank You for life, and we thank You that we can come to know it abundant and eternal in Jesus Christ; and we pray that we might come to know Christ better tonight, whom to know is life eternal. By the power of His Spirit, guide and direct my thoughts and words. May I rightly represent the truth. Please don't let me say or do anything that would misrepresent the truth; and Father God, what You're able to communicate through this poor earthen vessel, may it find receptive hearts and minds, and may it change lives. Please, Lord, give us more than just an intellectual exercise tonight. Give us a life-changing experience. Make us more like Jesus. In His name we pray. Amen.

Sometimes it's necessary to **back up** a little bit and take a look at the forest again. We've been looking at some trees. We have been dealing in the last several studies with **our cooperative role in character development**:

- We've come to recognize that it is, in essence, learning to **keep the heart with all diligence.** {Prov 4:23} {Lesson 17}
- We have come to understand that the goal of the governance of the mind is indeed to be **bringing** how many thoughts? ...**every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.** {2 Cor 10:5}
- Then we proceeded to recognize that naturally that's impossible. In fact, naturally we can't even bring one thought. Why? "**The carnal mind is enmity against God; it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be.**" {Rom 8:7}
- Therefore, we all came to understand that we need to get a new heart,
- And we allowed **the law to drive us** and **the Lamb to draw us** to the foot of the cross {Lesson 20};
- And we cried out with David, not only for forgiveness for our sins, but we said, "**Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew right spirit within me.**" {Ps 51:10}
- At that point, and only at that point, are we able to govern the mind. Only the heart that has the law of God written upon it can be kept with all diligence.
- But even such a heart requires all diligence to govern. Why? - because of the remaining, though no longer reigning, opposition factor called "the flesh."
- We must daily do battle with evil, **the inborn evil of the natural heart**, to use terminology of inspiration {RH May 4, 1886 par.7};
- And that evil is comprised primarily in old habits and hereditary tendencies; and for this reason, the opposition factor may be significantly more or less intense depending upon what particular set of old habits and hereditary tendencies we have to contend with;
- And we noted in that study, "**The Flesh Lusts Against The Spirit,**" {Lesson 21} that the battle continues **from the cross to the crown.** {RH, November 29, 1887 par. 12}
- At that point, we got significantly diverted into a very interesting theological question, and that was regarding the condition that God's people must gain, the experience they must have, if they are going to be able to pass through the time of trouble without a Mediator; and that, which turned out to be a three-part study, we just concluded last night. {Lesson 22A-23}

Are you all back on track now? What I want to do with you tonight is to come, once again, to recognize this opposition factor, and especially come to understand how we can and must overcome it.

The title of our study tonight, "**Fight the Good Fight of Faith.**" {1 Tim 6:12} Such an important study, and we have so much we need to address. So we're going to have to roll up our sleeves and go to work. Are you ready to do that? I need a little enthusiastic response there. Are you ready to do that? {Yes} Your silence frightens me. Great Controversy, page 425. Let's use this to kind of recap and then we will take it from there. **Great Controversy, 425: "Those who are living upon the earth when the intercession of Christ shall cease in the sanctuary above are to stand in the sight of a holy God without a mediator. Their robes must be spotless, their characters must be purified from sin by the blood of sprinkling. Through the grace of God and their own diligent effort..."** Please note the combination. **"Through the grace of God and their own diligent effort, they must be conquerors in the battle with... evil. While the investigative judgment is going forward in heaven, while the sins of penitent believers are being removed from the sanctuary, there is to be a special work of purification, of putting away of sin, among God's people upon earth..."** Pause. That's the time in which we are living right now, my dear friends, the time when this special work needs to be going on. Reading on: **"When this work shall have been accomplished, the followers of Christ will be ready for His appearing..."** Pause: That's coming soon. Do I hear an "amen"? {Amen} Reading on: **"Then the church which our Lord at His coming is to receive to Himself will be a 'glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.'" {Eph 5:27}** I want to be a part of that church. Are you with me? {Amen} "A glorious church."

What, by the way, would be a glorious church? Use your key, your exegetical key. It would be a church that reflects the character, the glory, of her Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ; and she must be **without spot, wrinkle, or any such thing.** My dear friends, she must have gained the victory in this battle against evil. She must have learned to be an overcomer. Do I hear an "amen"? {Amen} ...and if we're going to be a part of that church, that's what we must learn to do. We must learn to conquer this opposition factor called evil. Can we? Yes, we can! Here's a precious promise: **"You will conquer."** Can you say "amen"? {Amen} But promises are conditional, aren't they?

I need to read the condition. It's found in **Testimonies, Volume 5, page 513.** It's two-fold; please note it. **"If you fight the fight of faith with all your will power... you will conquer."** The promise is "you will conquer;" what is the condition? You must learn to "fight the fight of faith with all your will power." Do you want to conquer, my dear friends? Then what must you learn to do? "Fight the fight of faith with all your will power;" and **we've just outlined the content of our next several studies.** We must learn how to "fight the fight of faith with all our will power."

Tonight, let's focus our attention on how to fight the fight of faith. Now, the enemy that we must conquer is evil. It's two-fold: it includes Satan, the author of evil, but particularly self, that inborn evil of the natural heart. What is the evil we must conquer? Satan, the author of evil, and self, that inborn evil of the natural heart - to use an inspired description of the flesh nature or the old man.

Now, let's take a look at both of those. First of all, Satan, **1 Peter 5:8-9: "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him,"** how? **"steadfast in the faith..."** My dear friends, to overcome the author of evil, we must learn how to fight and win the good fight of faith. We must learn how to remain steadfast in the faith. Amen? {Amen} That's how we resist the author of evil. **Christian Education, page 114: "Believe that He is ready to help you by His grace, when you come to Him in sincerity. You must fight the good fight of faith. You must be wrestlers for the crown of life. Strive, for the grasp of Satan is upon you; and if you do not wrench yourself from him, you will be palsied and ruined. The foe is on the right hand, and on the left, before you, and behind you; and you must trample**

him under your feet. Strive, for there is a crown to be won. Strive, for if you win not the crown, you lose everything in this life and in the future life. Strive, but let it be in the strength of your risen Saviour.” Amen? My dear friends, without Him, we can do nothing. But **we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us, {Phil 4:13}** and that includes **fighting and winning the good fight of faith {1 Tim 6:12}** against the author of evil, Satan.

But please understand, that of these two dimensions of evil that we must contend with in our Christian warfare, our spiritual warfare, the worst enemy, the one to be feared the most, is self. It is self, that inborn evil of the natural heart. **Testimonies, Volume 3, page 106: "The warfare against self is the greatest battle that was ever fought."** ...the greatest battle that was ever fought... **Review and Herald, March 5, 1908: "We have no enemy without that we need to fear."** Pause. Isn't that interesting? **"We have,"** what? **"no enemy without that we need to fear."** Isn't Satan an enemy that we need to fear? My dear friends, the good news is that Satan has been defeated. Amen? {Amen} Remember we went to Golgotha? ...and what is Golgotha? "- the place of the skull." We have a mortally wounded enemy. Amen? When the cross dropped into that stony pit on Golgotha, that serpent's head, that serpent of old called the devil, was what? It was crushed. Amen? ...and the only thing that can give him power over us, is if we fail to see, understand and personally believe in, and accept the truth as revealed in Christ and Him crucified.

He said, **"You shall know the truth, and the truth shall,"** what? **"...set you free."** {Jn 8:32} And for those who come to the cross, and recognize

- the truth regarding the character of God,
- and the truth regarding the consequence of sin,

the truth sets them free and Satan's power is broken; that's how his head was crushed.

But my dear friends, it's that heart of unbelief, that resides within us, that we need to fear; and it's that inborn evil of the natural heart, that is naturally inclined to buy in to the devil's lies; that we need to fear; and when we overcome enemy number one that resides within, we overcome its ally in the process. Amen? ...and who is the ally of the old man? - Satan and the kingdom of darkness.

Back to our statement: **"We have no enemy without that we need to fear. Our great conflict is with unconsecrated self. When we conquer self, we are more than conquerors through Him who has loved us. My brethren, there is eternal life for us to win. Let us fight the good fight of faith."** When we fight and win the good fight of faith over the inborn evil of the natural heart, self, we are more than conquerors. Why? Because we not only get the victory over the enemy within, we get the victory over the entire kingdom of darkness without. When you conquer the ally that resides within the camp, you conquer the whole kingdom of darkness in the deal. My friends, how important then for us to learn to fight and win the good fight of faith.

The good fight, why is it a good fight? Well, because we have, first of all, an infinitely powerful and loving Lord who has fought and won this battle in our behalf; and with Him on our side, we cannot lose the battle. Amen? {Amen} We cannot lose the battle. The only way we can lose is if we abandon our Lord and Savior. **Romans 8:37: "Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who,"** what? **"loved us."** Loved us so much that He paid an infinite price to gain victory for us, and enable us, by His grace, to gain victory ourselves. You see, He loved us so much, my dear friends, that He not only fought and won to set us free from the penalty of sin, He fought and won the battle to set us free from the power of sin. **Please don't forget that, to set us free from the power of sin.** He loves us too much to leave us tyrannized by our old man and its ally, Satan. Praise God that His grace is sufficient to set us free from the tyranny of that inborn evil of the natural heart.

This battle, how long does it go on for the Christian? How long? It goes on throughout the Christian experience here on planet earth. **"From the cross to the,"** what? **"crown there is earnest work to be done. There is wrestling with inbred sin; there is warfare against outward wrong. The Christian life is a battle and a march."** *Review and Herald, November 29, 1887.* We've noted that before, but please recognize that the entire span of the Christian life on planet earth is a battle.

But what kind of battle is it? Is it a physical battle? No, it is a spiritual battle. It is a battle to conquer the mind. It is a battle to control the thoughts. Note how clearly Paul speaks of the spiritual nature of this battle in **2 Corinthians 10:3-5: "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the,"** what? **"the knowledge of God."** Where do you have knowledge? - in your mind; and what is the goal of this battle? Last line, **verse 5: "bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ."** Clearly it is a spiritual battle, and it is a conquest, a battle to gain control over the thoughts, to the point of what? "Bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ."

Now in the Greek, as we've noted earlier, that verb that's translated, "bringing into captivity," is in the present active tense. That means it's something that must be ongoing and continual. Why? Because my dear friends, there is a tendency for our thoughts to be captivated by and indulge the inborn evil of the natural heart, those fleshly lusts that war against the soul. We have a natural tendency, even if we manage, for the sake of maintaining, you know, a good appearance, a good facade, we may manage to keep from indulging fleshly lusts at the level of behavior, but so many of us in the privacy of the mind, where we think it's all right to do so, we indulge fleshly lusts. But my friends, if that's the case, we are not fighting and winning the spiritual battle. We are only fighting and winning a carnal battle to keep the lid on our behavior.

Ours is a spiritual battle; it is to govern what goes on up here, where only you and God know what's happening. Are you with me? Please understand the battlefield that the Christian is fighting on, it's between the right and the left ear. It's for complete victory over our thoughts. That is the spiritual battlefield, and our weapons are mighty to gain the victory there.

What is the weapon? The primary offensive weapon in the Christian's armor? It is called the what? The sword. It's the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. It's the precious promises and truths of God's Word; and with these we are to break down all of those... How does he put it? **"Arguments... and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God."** The devil's lies, those erroneous philosophies that are based upon the deception of Satan must be broken down, and our minds must be reprogrammed with the truth, in order for us to truly gain victory in the realm of our thought life; and again, the objective is to be bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. **Faith I Live By, page 124: "Besetting sins must be battled with and overcome. Objectionable traits of character, whether hereditary or cultivated... should be firmly resisted and overcome, through the strength of Christ... Day by day, and hour by hour, there must be a vigorous process of self-denial and of sanctification going on within;"** "...going on," where? "within." **"and then the outward works will testify that Jesus is abiding in the heart by faith... There is a heaven, and O, how earnestly we should strive to reach it. I appeal to you... to believe in Jesus as your Saviour. Believe that He is ready to help you by His grace, when you come to Him in sincerity. You must fight the good fight of faith. You must be wrestlers for the crown of life."**

My friends, please notice that this crown of life that we are to be wrestlers for: we are not wrestling in order to earn eternal life, we are wrestling in order to be fit for, and be entrusted with, eternal life. This has nothing to do with merit or works. This has nothing to do with earning eternal

life. This has everything to do with getting ready to enjoy it. **You remember that careful study that we did, and that distinction that we made.**

Before we can be entrusted with eternal life, my dear friends, we have to come to the place where we are, for the love of Christ, through with sin! Amen? Because you see, character isn't changed when we go to heaven. We take our character with us, and what is character? - our thoughts and feelings; and so if we are still clinging to sin in the realm of our thoughts and feelings, we don't have a character that's fit for eternity or that can be entrusted with eternal life. I just need to reiterate that truth, because I don't want you to think that this is righteousness by works, not at all. This is work, but it's not meritorious. It's **faith that works by love** for the purpose of what? {Gal 5:6} Purifying the soul that we might be fit citizens for heaven. Please keep that clearly in mind.

Now, in this spiritual battle, what are our orders, fellow Christian soldiers? What does our Prince Immanuel, who's at the head of our army, command us to do? **Romans 6:12**, It's pretty simple: **"Therefore do not let sin, what? "reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts."** Please notice, we are not being exhorted to keep... ..to not let sin remain in our mortal bodies, we're being exhorted to not let it what? ...reign; and by the way, the very fact that we are exhorted not to let it reign, is a very clear indication that it still what? ...remains, obviously. Why would we have to struggle to keep it from reigning if it wasn't there?

Remember, when we are born again, we have what? ...two natures. The spiritual nature reigns, but the carnal nature still what? ...remains; and our battle, our spiritual battle, is to keep that carnal nature, that flesh nature, from what? ...reigning; and what determines whether it reigns or not? **"Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body that you should," what? "...obey it in its lusts."** If we are obeying, if we are fulfilling the lusts of the flesh, that still remains, does it just remain? No, it what? It reigns. **"Know ye not that ye are servants of whom ye serve?"** he says in the very same chapter, just some verses later.

So that which determines, my dear friends, whether or not we are fighting and winning this spiritual battle, is whether or not we are obeying the lusts of the flesh, fulfilling them; and please know that they are first and foremost fulfilled where? ...between the right and the left ear, in the privacy of the mind, and this is why we cannot determine that we are successfully fighting and winning this battle just because we keep ourselves from doing wrong things. Do you hear what I'm trying to nuance for you here? You can be managing, with ego motivation, to refrain from doing wrong things that would tarnish your reputation, but you're still indulging them up here in your thought life, in your imagination, in your fantasy; **and if you are even indulging them up here in the mind, sin reigns.** Do I hear an "amen"? {Amen} It reigns. So please understand the necessity of learning to fight and win this battle at the level of our thoughts and feelings--got to underscore that. This is a spiritual battle, my dear friends; it is a spiritual battle. **Review and Herald, May 3, 1881: "'His servants ye are to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey.' If we indulge anger, lust, covetousness, hatred, selfishness,"** Pause. Where do we indulge anger, lust, covetousness, hatred and selfishness first? Where? - in the mind, in the mind. **"If we indulge anger, lust, covetousness, hatred, selfishness or any other sin, we become servants of sin. 'No man can serve two masters.' If we serve sin, we cannot serve Christ."** Please don't play games with yourself on this one. **"The Christian will feel the promptings of sin,"** Who will feel the promptings of sin? - the Christian. Why? **"For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit; but the Spirit striveth against the flesh, keeping up a,"** what? **"constant warfare. Here is where Christ's help is needed. Human weakness becomes united to divine strength, and faith exclaims, 'Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!'"** {1 Cor 15:57} My dear friends, it's a battle, it's a constant conflict, but it's the good fight of faith. Faith exclaims, "Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!" But I've got to back up here and just underscore a point again.

If sin reigns, if we serve sin, who doesn't reign? – Christ; and my dear friends, if Christ doesn't reign, He's not Lord; and if He's not Lord, He's not our Righteousness. Please, please be real honest with yourself on this. What's His name? - the Lord our Righteousness. **Remember we studied the inseparable nature of that name? {Lessons 14 A&B}** You can't claim Him as your righteousness and reject Him as your Lord. This is precisely why **the robe of righteousness cannot cloak any cherished sin.** If you are choosing to let even one sin reign, you are not letting Christ reign, and He is not Lord; and if He's not Lord, He's not your righteousness. Are we all clear on that? Please be honest with yourself on that.

Now, this fight, what is it called? It's called “the good fight of faith,” ...of faith. My dear friends, do you know how to fight the fight of faith? I insist that if we are going to be victorious, if we are going to conquer this opposition factor, of the author of evil, and, most importantly, the inborn evil of the natural heart, we have got to learn to fight and win this fight of faith. But I also insist, that if we are going to learn to fight and win the good fight of faith, we have got to understand, for starters, what faith is, don't we? We've got to understand what faith is. Now, bless your hearts, that may sound like a pretty basic and fundamental issue, and maybe you might think, "Why are we concerned about whether or not we understand what faith is? Of course, everyone knows what faith is." Do you really? Do you know what faith is? What is faith? I'm expecting someone to give me the key text definition; and what is the key text definition for faith? **"Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Hebrews 11:1** Next question; I obviously know what faith is. What does that mean? "...the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Have you ever tried to work that through? What does that really mean? Sure, that's what faith is, but what does that mean? "The substance of things hoped for the evidence of things not seen." What is faith, my friends? You know, we often get into circular reasoning on this. When someone asks us what faith is, we say that's "trusting God;" and then if they ask us, "Well, how do you trust God?" we say, "Well, you've got to have faith."

You know, this reminds me of a story. A pastor, he had the practice of testing whether or not his sermon had been clearly understood, by hurrying to the back of the church after he had preached, and finding the first child and asking him questions regarding the sermon. Because he figured that if the children understood, you know, the adults probably could have too; and so he had just delivered a marvelous sermon that he'd really worked hard on, on faith, to make it very clear to his congregation what faith was; and so with eager anticipation, he hurries out to the back, he stops the first child, a little boy, and he says, "Excuse me, son. After listening to the pastor's sermon, can you tell me what faith is?" ...and the little boy, without hesitation said, "Yes, pastor, that's easy. Faith is believing something you know isn't true." The pastor winced and he realized that he had to go back to his study and work on that sermon again. But you know, a lot of us have that kind of subconscious thinking in our own minds. Faith is believing something we know isn't true. It's almost as if faith is kissing your brains goodbye and jumping into oblivion, and believing that something is going to catch you. No my friends, please don't go there.

What is faith? What is faith? Well, first of all let's recognize that faith is inseparable from the Word of God. Did you hear what I just said? Faith is what? Inseparable from what? ...the Word of God. Note **Romans 10:17: "So then faith comes by,"** what? **"hearing, and hearing by the Word of God."** Can you have faith without the Word of God? Not real, saving faith, no. Note our text from which we take the title of this study, **1 Timothy 6:12, "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on,"** what? **"eternal life..."** But please notice, how is it that we have life abundant and eternal? **John 6:63, "...The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life."** So my dear friends, please know that faith must lay hold on the life-giving Word of God. Are we all together? What must faith do? It must **hear, believe and receive** the life-giving Word of God, and proceed to act on it.

Now, let's illustrate this, please; work with me on this. One of the best ways to define faith is to illustrate it. Who is it in Scripture that is used as the classic illustration for true faith? Abraham, good; **Romans 4:3. "Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness,"** correct? Now that is a quote from the Old Testament story. It's recorded in Genesis 15:6; and of course, the Old Testament is written in what language? Hebrew. **"...and he believed in the LORD; and He counted it to him for righteousness,"** is what the original story says in Hebrew; and my dear friends, there's a precious insight to be gained by looking at the original language. **The Hebrew word that is translated "believed" is the word "aman."** Did you catch that? What's the Hebrew word that's translated "believed"? "- aman." What word do you hear there? "Amen." We get our expression, "amen" from this Hebrew word, "aman." What does "amen" mean? So be it... let it be... so be it. My dear friends, please, please get the insight here. What is faith? Faith is the response, "So be it," when we hear the Word of God, the life-giving Word of God. Let's work with Abraham. What did God tell Abraham with His life-giving word? He said, **"I have made you the father of many nations."** {Gen 17:5} Remarkable, especially when you consider the fact that Abraham was about 100 years old. Now, tell me, if Abraham had decided to respond to God's Word on the basis of human reasoning, and on the basis of human sensory input, as he looked into that still lovely, but very wrinkled face of Sarah, how would he have responded to God's statement, **"I have made you the father of many nations."** How would he respond if he'd operated on the basis of human reasoning and human sensory input? How would he have responded? *"No way, God, it can't happen."* *"No way, it's not going to happen, it's too late."* *"Where were You back a long time ago when it could have happened?"* But my dear friends, after a very mistaken righteousness-by-works attempt, known as Hagar; and it's remarkable to me that Scripture says that Abraham didn't doubt; he doubted enough to take that wrong track to try to make God's Word come true, didn't he? But please recognize that Abraham said, in response to God's remarkable proclamation, that he would be the father of a great nation, he said, *"Aman,"* he believed. In other words, he said, "So be it." Are you following this? He said, *"So be it."* How could he say such a thing? Because he knew, please understand this, he knew that the One who spoke to him had power to bring into reality that which He declared. You see, that's no ordinary word, the Word of God, is it?

“By the Word of the Lord were the heavens made and all of the host of them by the breath of His mouth {Ps 33:6}, for He spake and it was.” - *"done"* is added in the Hebrew... In the English translation, the word *"done"* is added. In the Hebrew it simply says, **"He spake and it was."** **"He commanded and it stood fast."** That's no ordinary word, the Word of God, is it? There's creative power in God's Word to bring into reality that which He declares, and Abraham knew that the God who told him he would be the father of a great nation, had power within His Word to make it happen. Do you understand this? This is an essential part of faith. He knew that God had power within His Word to bring into reality that which He declared; and so what did he respond by saying? "So be it; let it be in my life. Let it be in my life." ...and as the passage goes on to say, **Romans 4:21: "...and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was able to,"** what? **"perform."** You see, Abraham believed that what God said He had the power to bring into reality; and that was faith that was accounted unto him for what? - righteousness.

Now, please understand... let's recap here. Please understand what faith is from this illustration. Faith, first of all, hears the Word of God. Are you following this? Faith does what? It hears the Word of God, and it believes that what God says, He is able to perform, to bring into reality. Why? Because it's not just an ordinary word, it's the Word of Him **who spake and it was, who commanded and it stood fast.** {Ps 33:9} It's the Word of God who said, **"Let there be light and there was,"** what? **"light."** {Gen 1:3} So knowing that He had power to bring into reality that which He declared, he also gives God permission... faith also gives God permission to make it happen in our own life. Did you get those three things? It hears God's Word. It believes that God can make happen what He declares; and thirdly it what? ...gives Him permission to make it happen in your own life.

My dear friends, that is faith. But there's a fourth thing, there's a fourth thing it does. True faith, it proceeds to act on that Word, knowing that God will give us the power to obey that Word. Please don't miss that. **"Faith without works is,"** what? **"is dead."** {Jas 2:20} You've got to take it to step four. Did you get those four steps?

- Faith hears God's Word.
- Faith knows that God has power to bring into reality that which He declares.
- Knowing that, faith consents that God make it happen in our life;
- And fourthly, faith proceeds to what? Act on it, knowing God will give us the power to carry out His will in our life.

Did you see that? Do you understand that? You see, there's something Abraham had to do to act on that Word, didn't he? Bless your hearts, at the risk of being indiscreet, Isaac was not immaculately conceived. Abraham had to act on that Word. But he knew that God had the power to take his "dead" body and give it life! Amen? ...and to do the same for Sarah's womb. You see, faith believes that there is life power in the Word of God, and it acts on that, trusting God to give that life power, and enable us to carry out His will in our lives. Do you understand what faith is now?

Now, what I want to do is take that principle and apply it to how we fight and win the good fight of faith. Quickly: What are we commanded to do? As far as this opposition factor called the flesh is...? ...this inborn evil of the natural heart, capital S-i-n? We are commanded not to let it what? ...reign. **Romans 6:12: "Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body that you should obey it in its lusts."** Now, how are we going to obey that command? - by what? ...by faith. Now, what word must we hear, believe and say "amen" to, and act on if we're going to obey that command? Well, please notice that the command begins with the word, "therefore." It begins with the word what? ...therefore. Whenever you use the word "therefore," what does it signal? - a conclusion; correct.

I remember when I was just in elementary school, in remedial reading class. Yes, I had to take a remedial reading class, and my teacher was trying to explain to me the word "therefore;" and I'll never forget it; she said, "Stevie, whenever you come across the word "therefore," you need to ask yourself what it's there for." I've never forgotten that. Isn't that interesting how things get embedded in your mind? ...and she went on to explain that it's there for a very important reason. It's a signal that tells you that what is about to follow is in conclusion and it's based upon what has just been said.

Now, please note this command to keep sin from reigning is a what? ...a conclusion. I ask again, where must we go to hear God's Word and say amen to in order to obey the command by faith? Wouldn't we go to what has been said just before the word, "therefore?" Doesn't that make sense? Yes, good. Now, work with me: Romans chapter 1, Romans chapter 6, excuse me. **Romans 6:1: "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?"** Very interesting; what does God's Word tell us? We have died to sin, therefore we don't need to what? ...live any longer in it. Can you not see that if we really believe that we died to sin, we could keep sin from reigning? How can a dead man reign? Are you with me?

Okay, help us, Paul: how, where, when did we die to sin? Listen, he does; he explains it, **verse 3: "Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His,"** what? **"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."** Now watch, I want to enact **verse 5. "For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection."** What did I just enact? - the ordinance of baptism. How many are baptized here? I think that's everyone. Did you

understand the profound spiritual symbolism in that ordinance? This, by the way, is why we baptize by immersion. Sprinkling doesn't make the same profoundly significant symbolic statement, does it?

When you allowed the pastor to lower you into the baptismal font, what were you symbolically stating to the on looking witnesses? ...and by the way, inspiration tells us that **the Godhead, the three persons of the Godhead, are present at every baptism, and witnessing every baptism-- awesome Witnesses. {FLB 146.3}** Amen? What were you saying to these witnesses when you allowed the pastor to lower you into the baptismal font? You were saying that you were choosing to accept Christ's death to sin as your own; and you were choosing thereby to **reckon yourself** what? ...**dead to sin; {Rom 6:11}** and you were symbolically saying that by allowing the pastor to bury your old man; and the baptismal font became a tomb for the old man. Amen?

My friends, praise God that's not the end of the ceremony. Amen? If that were the end of the ceremony, baptism would be terminal, wouldn't it? We not only identify by faith with a crucified and buried Savior, we identify by faith with a what? ...a risen Savior! {Amen} ...and that's what you are symbolically saying when you allow the pastor to what? ...raise you up again. But you now rise up a what? ...a new creation, a new creature! Your old man is dead and buried. **The baptismal font, which is a tomb for the old man, is a womb for the new.** Amen? ...and you are born of the water, and born of the Spirit. ...born to do what? ...**to walk in newness of life. {Rom 6:4}** My friends, praise God for the ordinance of baptism. Amen? ...and what is it our privilege of knowing thereafter? Verse 6, **Romans 6:6: "Knowing this, that our old man was,"** what? **"crucified with Christ,"** ...to what end? **"...that the body of sin might be done away with,"** watch out, **"that we should no longer be,"** what? **"slaves of sin."** Why do I say "watch out"? Well, it almost sounds like at baptism the old man is what? He's eradicated, he's gone, no longer a problem, no longer an issue. Is that the case? No, it isn't; and we're going to have to understand what Paul means as we continue after a short break. Would you stand for prayer, please?

Father in heaven, thank You so very much for helping us as we study to understand how we can fight and win the good fight of faith. We've got to understand what faith is, and then we must understand what Your Word says that we can say "amen" to, in order to fight and win this intense spiritual battle over the opposition factor of the flesh, that inborn evil of the natural heart. Please continue to be with us as we continue to study, in Jesus' name. Amen.