

**"SITTING ON TOP
OF THE WORLD"**

**GUIDELINES FOR
SUCCESSFUL LIVING**

By Ken Chant

ISBN 1 875577 26 2

PUBLISHED BY KEN CHANT MINISTRIES

COPYRIGHT 8 1993

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED WORLDWIDE

PREFACE

There is one thing wrong with most success books: they are usually written by successful people, which at once invalidates them for the average failure! Now, I don't know whether you could call me successful or not; perhaps it is better to say that like most people I have had moments of gloom and of glory, of trouble and of triumph. Often my responsibilities are greater than my resources, and my problems greater than my strength. I suspect that your story is much the same.

Anyway, force of circumstances has compelled me to apply the principles of faith you will find here. And they work! I have faced the bleak prospect of an empty pocket and frustrated dreams, only to lay hold of the promise of God in prayer, and to find a miracle of divine supply. Poverty has been turned to abundance, failure has been turned to success, defeat has been turned to victory.

I know many other people who have enjoyed the same marvellous transformation. I trust that you will too.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION vii
 PUNCH-DRUNK SAINTS!

CHAPTER 1 1
 FIG TREES AND MOUNTAINS

CHAPTER 2 11
 SINGING IN THE RAIN

CHAPTER 3 19
 SITTING ON TOP OF THE WORLD

CHAPTER 4 29
 PROFESSORS - BUT NOT ABSENT MINDED

CHAPTER 5 41
 "CHEER UP, MEN!"

CHAPTER 6 49
 LEAP BEFORE YOU LOOK!

CHAPTER 7 63
 LIVING DOGS OR DEAD LIONS?

CHAPTER 8 73
 REMAKING YOUR WORLD

INTRODUCTION

PUNCH-DRUNK SAINTS!

Like a man with a headache (he doesn't want to get rid of his head, but it hurts him to keep it) many Christians find their Christianity is a problem to them rather than a joy. They cling to Christ because they know that he alone holds the key to eternal life; but in the meantime they are enduring rather than enjoying, undergoing rather than overcoming, existing rather than truly LIVING in Christ!

What is the answer?

John tells us: "*This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith*" (1 John 5:4).

The last chapter of this book (which you can read first, if you want to) will explain this all-conquering faith. But you will find in the earlier chapters an exciting introduction to dynamic living in Christ. So read them all! And understand that Jesus meant exactly what he said when he declared, "*I am come that you might have life, and that you might have it MORE ABUNDANTLY!*" (John 10:10).

Berton Braley pictured the builders of the Panama Canal singing -

*"Got any river they say isn't crossable?
God any mountain that can't be cut through?
Who has a job for this Panama gang?"*

Those remarkable men used machines and muscle to carve away mountains. But Christ spoke about a different method.

CHAPTER 1

FIG TREES AND MOUNTAINS

The United States Army Air Force has a slogan: "The difficult we do immediately: the impossible takes a little longer." Now, without wanting to detract from the sterling qualities of the American airmen, one can't help but feel that this boast is a little exaggerated. But there is no boast in the words of Christ, only sober fact, when he claims, "*Nothing is too hard for God*"; and, "*With God, all things are possible.*"

Let me show you what this means to you.

One day when Jesus was walking to Jerusalem, he felt hungry. Seeing a fig tree by the side of the road he went over to it, hoping to find some fruit. He was disappointed. The tree was covered with leaves, but there was not a single fig on its branches. So Jesus spoke to it: "No fruit will ever grow on you again." The men who were with Jesus thought this was rather strange behaviour, but they held their peace and waited to see what would happen. Imagine their astonishment when they saw the next day that the whole tree had begun to wither! But Jesus replied: "*I tell you, if you have faith, and do not doubt, you will not only be able to wither a tree, but also to say to this mountain, 'Be removed, and be thrown into the sea,' and it will obey you; and nothing shall be impossible to you. And all things, whatever you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive*" (Matt 17:20; 21:18-22).

Do you realise what this means? Christ is offering you the miracle-working power of God. He is saying that God is willing to act on your behalf and to bring you into a life of continual victory. But to find this victory you will need to do four things:

YOU MUST BELIEVE IN THE ABILITY OF GOD

What is the ability of God? Limitless! How remarkable, then, that so few people think about God's power. Let me ask you: When did you last wonder about just how much strength God really has? When did you last ask yourself just what can God do?

Most people think of the power of God only in a vague or abstract way. To them, divine power is something you sing about in a hymn; it belongs only to the realm of theology. They have never discovered for themselves the strength of God; they have never felt his touch.

It is important to think of the power of God in a personal sense, to have a real inner awareness of what God can do. Jesus felt this when he taught, "With men, many things are impossible; but with God all things are possible!" Do you think Christ made this statement only to bring forward a pretty new doctrine? Hardly! The Lord was speaking from the depths of his personal experience of his Father's power; and he was endeavouring to show that YOU can share this experience!

Paul spoke of this personal awareness of the power of God: "*I pray that you may understand the exceeding greatness of his power to us who believe*" (Eph 1:16-20). He hoped for two things: that you might KNOW the enormous ability of God; and that you might know that all of this ability is directed toward YOU. In other words, when the Bible talks about the power of God, it does not do so in order to provide a nice point for scholars to debate, but to show what the Father is willing and able to do for you.

Right now, today, while you are reading these lines, the power of God is dedicated to YOUR DELIVERANCE - and by faith you can meet this power. To have the touch of God on your life is the greatest thing on earth, it is worth everything you possess; yet it will cost you nothing but faith. In an effort to feel the hand of God upon them, or to sense his presence with them, countless people in every generation have made fearful sacrifices. They have torn themselves with hunger and cold., they have crawled across continents on their hands and knees, they have walked on red hot coals, they have thrown their own children into the flames, they have renounced all their possessions to live as paupers, they have endured frightful hardship and torment - but all in vain, for the touch of God cannot be bought. A man says, "Show me how I can reach God, and I will give you everything I own!" But the Lord asks only for your faith: "His power is to us who BELIEVE!"

YOU MUST KNOW THE WILL OF GOD

Jesus said, if you have faith you can throw a mountain into the sea. Obviously this matter of moving mountains must be qualified - we can't go around shifting hills all over the place just to suit our own fancy! The key is to act in harmony with the will of God. By faith you can remove whatever the Lord shows you he wants removed. A Chinese lady thought she would act on this promise. She had a fine home overlooking a lovely valley; but much of the view was obscured by an ugly outcrop of rocks. She decided to ask God to remove them. But as soon as she had prayed she opened her eyes, looked at the rocks, and said with exasperation, "Just as I thought, still there! You see, she had not really expected the rocks to go; she had not prayed in faith. Nor could she, for she was not sure of the will of God.

John expressed this when he wrote: "Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God; and whatsoever we ask we receive of him" (1 John 3:21-22). Our hearts condemn us if we are unsure of the will of God, for then we feel presumptuous, selfish, even sinful, in our requests. But if we know that what we are asking is in harmony with God's will, then we can pray with confidence, certain that we shall receive what we ask.

Here are some ways by which you can discover what God wants to do for you:

THE BIBLE: In the pages of Scripture there are hundreds of divine promises that reach out to your deepest needs - of pardon, healing, love, inner

peace, companionship, personal victory, eternal life. Whenever your particular problem is covered by a specific promise of God, there is no longer any doubt about what God wants to do for you. God is as good as his Word. What he has said he will do, he will do for you. Faith is simply accepting this.

The Bible itself says, "There hath not failed one word of all his good promise which he hath promised"; and again, "Prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts." The promise of God can be trusted, because it has been tried. A young laboratory technician became a Christian, and began to read his Bible during his daily lunch break. One of his associates poked fun at him, asking, "Do you know when the Bible was written??"

"No."

"Well then, do you know who wrote it?"

"No."

"Well, if you don't know when the Bible was written, or who wrote it, how do you know it's true?"

The young Christian thought for a moment, then replied, "You're a mathematician. Do you know who wrote the multiplication tables, and when they were written?"

"Of course not!"

"Then how do you know they're true?"

"That's a ridiculous question - because they work, of course."

"Well," said the young Christian, "that's exactly how I know the promises of God are true - they work!"

PRAYER: Sometimes we are faced by a need for which we can discover no actual promise in the Bible. In a case like this, seek the will of God in prayer. He is well able to speak deep in your heart and to reveal his will to you. (See Isa 30:21; Col 3:15; James 1:5) It is said that Oliver Cromwell, during the dark days of his conflict with the royal forces, would often gather his officers around him for a time of prayer. They would sometimes continue in prayer for two or three days until, as they quaintly expressed it, "a door of hope opened" to them. Through prayer they expected God to show them his will. Prayer will bring you the same divine guidance and inner assurance.

COUNSEL: "In the multitude of counsellors there is safety" (Prov 11:14). If several people who are competent to advise you on a given matter, and who are spiritually mature, agree on the advice they give you, it is probable that this advice will be in harmony with the will of God.

CIRCUMSTANCES: Often the arrangement of events, or the development of our circumstances, will make it plain which way we should go. One "door" will open, another will close. But you must be truly willing for God to order your life as he chooses. Not like the swaggy who decided he would let the fall of a stick determine which way he would go at each crossroad. He threw the stick in the air, and set off in whatever direction it landed. All went well until he came to a crossing where one road was bitumen and the other rough gravel. He tossed the stick, and it pointed to the gravel. He tossed it again, with the same result. And he kept on tossing it until it landed along the bitumen road. He obeyed the stick only when it pointed the way he wanted to go. Are you like that with God?

YOU MUST USE YOUR FAITH

God has given you faith. You can use your faith for a miracle. Your own faith, if you will use it, will bring you the miracle you need!

But what is faith? It is not some kind of mysterious substance which you must somehow pull out of the air. Faith is simply assurance, a complete certainty that God will do exactly what he has promised to do. Plainly then, the great enemy of faith is doubt. Hence Jesus said, "*If you have faith and DOUBT NOT, you shall say to this mountain, 'Be cast into the sea' and it shall be done.*"

Now people are guilty of the kind of doubt that paralyzes faith when

È they waver in their expectancy of a definite answer to their prayer, "*When you pray,*" said Christ, "*believe that you HAVE received, and then you shall receive*" (Mark 11:24).

È they listen to the reasonings of natural man who says that the day of miracles is past, and that God will not do for us today what he did for people in Bible days. Millions of people have sung the hymn "What he's done for others, he'll do for you"; but how many of them have really believed it?

È they observe symptoms and circumstances more than the word and promise of God. Regardless of how things appear outwardly, if you have God's word concerning a matter, cling to that word; refuse to be shifted from it; boldly maintain that what God has promised must come to pass.

What causes doubt? Simply lack of the Word of God. A soul starved of the Word of God will doubt. But a heart well nourished and full of the mighty promises of God will run with faith. Faith, the Bible says, comes from hearing the Word of God (Rom 10:17). The Word of God is a living thing; it is "*quick*" and "*powerful*" (Heb 4:12); by its "*great and precious promises*" we can escape every bondage and joyously enter a more abundant life in Christ! (II Pet 1:14).

Tony had injured his back in an accident. To ease his great pain, he was given repeated doses of pethidin (which at that time was apparently thought to be non-addictive). When it came time for his discharge from the hospital, he was found to be addicted to the drug. He obtained a prescription for it, but as the months went by he craved ever larger doses. Gradually his life decayed as pethidin became the centre and soul of his existence. He sought medical advice, but without effect until a Christian doctor suggested he could find freedom only with the help of Christ. This suggestion led Tony to approach me. He was broken destitute, desperate - but willing to put himself in Christ's hands.

At first there was little change in his condition, and several times in those first few weeks I had to rush to him when he took an overdose of pethidin and fell into a paralytic seizure. To prevent him from swallowing his own tongue and choking to death, his wife had to force a spoon into his mouth, which often severely lacerated his mouth. But gradually, as Tony absorbed the promises of God, and as faith took

hold of him, he mastered the drug, until the day came when he could cheerfully testify that Christ had set him completely free of pethidin. It was a marvellous victory. He and his wife have now gone interstate, and I have lost contact with them. I can only hope Tony is still holding fast to the victory he gained through faith in the mighty promise of God.

YOU MUST WELCOME CHRIST INTO YOUR LIFE

There is only one source of a miracle from God, and that is Christ. Many people try to find a power beyond their own in one of the strange cults and preternatural philosophies that abound in our time. "Miracles" from these sources may appear good for a while, but in the end they lead to death. Only to Christ has God given divine power. In fact, to Christ has been given ALL POWER (Matt 28:18). Others may usurp temporarily something of the power of Christ, but eventually the Lord resumes his dominion. If you would discover the power of God, which holds only healing and life, you must look to Christ.

And if you would discover Christ, you must come to Calvary.

Calvary is your guarantee of a miracle of pardon - for on the cross Christ bore the penalty for your sin.

Calvary is your guarantee of a miracle of healing - for on the cross Christ carried away your griefs and your sorrows.

Calvary is your guarantee of a miracle of victory - for on the cross Christ defeated every power of darkness.

Calvary is your guarantee of a miracle of supply - for on the cross Christ was made poor, that you through his poverty might gain the riches of God.

Calvary is your guarantee of a miracle of resurrection - for on the cross Christ met and defeated death, and opened a doorway for you to step into eternal life.

It is all yours if you will receive Christ into your life and release your faith in the wonderful promise and power of God.

With their faces pressed to the steaming windowpane, millions of children have plaintively sung. "Rain, rain, go away; come again another day!" Many of us have similar feelings about temptation. We wish it would go away. Or do we?

CHAPTER 2

SINGING IN THE RAIN

Some years ago I read a snippet of wisdom which forever speaks the genius of its anonymous author:

"Temptation is the thing we crawl away from hoping it will overtake us!"

Are you like this? Do you find yourself all too responsive to temptation? Or are you like the person described by Shakespeare, "unmoved, cold, and to temptation slow"? Sadly, most people are more likely to echo the candour of William Beckford, "I am not overfond of resisting temptation." Or perhaps Lord Darlington's lament comes even closer to the truth: "I couldn't help it. I can resist everything except temptation!"

Actually, there are two ways to get rid of temptation. The first: yield to it. I don't intend to say any more about this; no doubt you know all you need to know about yielding. The second: master it by faith. The first will gain you temporary pleasure and a lasting hangover. But the second will bring you exhilarating joy, deep self-respect, and the glory of God. Let me tell you more about this second way to handle temptation.

FASCINATING FASCINATIONS

We live in a world that is full of temptation. On every hand there are people and places, objects and influences, which entice us away from the will of God. John Galsworthy once complained. "Life's one long temptation," and no doubt you would fervently agree. Certainly you have been tempted; and just as certainly, you have fallen before its blandishments. Still, before going any further, it may be as well to explain the meaning of the word "temptation." The Bible uses the word in two ways: temptation is enticement to evil, and it is also testing under trial. So temptation can consist of something (or someone) luring us way from God and into sin; or it can consist of the opposition and trouble that springs up in the way of us all. So, in one way or another, we are all very much concerned with this matter of temptation!

Probably the most arresting statement in the Bible on this subject is found in Paul's first letter to the Corinthians:

"There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above what you are able; but will with the temptation make a way to escape that you may be able to bear it" (10:13).

This passage leads me straight on to the next thing I want to say -

DON'T FEEL SORRY FOR YOURSELF!

One of the most prevalent faults people fall into when they are facing temptation is the feeling that they are on their own, that no one else has ever had quite the same problem. It is amazing how many people feel sorry for themselves when they suffer some moral or spiritual onslaught. They moan about their fate, declare that God has treated them unfairly, and spurn those who offer them comfort with, "It's all right for you to talk. You don't know what it's like!" But the Bible cuts away all this nonsense and asserts: "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man."

What does this mean?

It means that whatever temptation or trouble comes your way, it has been experienced and overcome by thousands of other people. No matter how strong it is, no matter what effect it seems to be having on your life, no matter how unique you might think it to be, it remains true that your temptation has been met and mastered by others before you.

It means also that all temptation is adapted to human experience. You will never have to contest with any temptation "but such as is common [belongs] to man." You will never feel the bite of a temptation strong enough to shake an angel! In other words, the Tempter is compelled by God to keep temptation on a human level. He can't bring against you the immense forces by which he led many of the angels to rebel against heaven. Therefore, since temptation is channelled into human experience, it can be overcome by human resources. If you will take hold of the weapons God himself has given you, you will find that no temptation is beyond your power to resist and defeat.

TAKE HEART - THERE'S A WAY OUT!

Whenever we are faced by temptation, says Paul, there is one unchanging factor we can rely on. What is it? Simply this: GOD IS FAITHFUL." Now, if you look about you, you will see three ways in which God is faithful -

God Is Faithful in Allowing Temptation.

This may seem a strange thing to say, but it is true. People blame temptation for their faults and follies. But this is foolish, for no temptation by itself has power to lead anyone astray. Temptation can cause us to do wrongly only when we welcome it and allow it to take a stranglehold upon our souls.

Shakespeare wrote: "Tis one thing to be tempted, another thing to fall." And James wrote: "*Blessed is the man*" - let me repeat that - "*BLESSED is the man that endureth temptation, for when he is tried he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him*" (1:12). Far from destroying you, temptation should serve to confirm you strength, to toughen the fibres of your moral character, to bring forth the grace and goodness of God in your life.

A vivid illustration of this is seen in the parable of the two houses (Matt 7:24-27). The same stormy wind and raging flood fell on them both; one stood, the other collapsed. The gale brought out the strength of the first house, and revealed the weakness of the second. The difference lay in their foundations, the substance they were built on. The ruined house was not destroyed by the gale but by the shifting sands on which it was built.

So it is with us. Temptation will prove our strength or expose our weakness. Don't blame temptation if you fall - the fault lies within yourself.

Or look at it this way: the water which dissolves sugar will harden concrete; the oven which melts butter will stiffen clay; the fire which burns paper will purify gold. The difference in each case is in the nature of the substance involved. So, the effect of temptation on your life will be determined by the nature of your faith and of your walk with God.

The Bible says, "*Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways and be wise*" (Prove 6:6). Now being something of a sluggard myself, I have obeyed the scriptures and have often sat dreamily watching the ants go about their business. I can't say that I've learned the lesson I was supposed to learn, but I have noticed other things. For instance, an ant will struggle along with an enormous piece of straw until it comes to a crack in the ground. To the ant that crack is a vast chasm. But he is not dismayed. Getting behind the straw, the ant will push and manoeuvre until the straw bridges the gap; whereupon he walks safely over, grips the front end of the straw again, and struggles on. He makes his burden a bridge to the other side. So can you!

God Is Faithful in Limiting Temptation

"God will not suffer you to be tempted above what you are able!"

There's a statement that should get you shouting with excitement! Here is a fact to inspire you with vast confidence! God will never allow any temptation to go beyond your ability to master it. There has never yet been a person tempted above the point of his true endurance. As fast as temptation piles up against you, so the Lord will lay in front of you whatever you need to rise over it. If you have yielded to temptation, it is not because you had to, but because you allowed yourself to yield. But if you will accept that God will never permit the devil, or any person or circumstance, to put pressure upon you beyond the resources available to you, you will have laid a sure foundation for a life of constant victory.

Another of the wonders of the insect world is why a wasp ever allows itself to be caught by a spider. sometimes you can see a spider advancing on a wasp, while the wasp stands poised for flight. Yet its wings remain still, and the wasp stands transfixed by some kind of

fatal fascination. Suddenly the spider springs, and in a moment the wasp is stunned and wrapped in a silken prison, to be consumed at leisure. Why didn't he wasp soar away to safety? I suppose because its eye was fixed on the spider instead of on the blue sky above. We are often the same. God has made it possible for us to "*mount up with wings like an eagle*," if we choose. But all too often our gaze is riveted on the problem facing us instead of being fastened to the ability of God to deliver us.

God Is Faithful in Making a Way of Escape.

"*The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation*" (II Pet 2:9). The devil is not permitted to fully hedge anyone with trouble - always an opening must be left. In every trial God ensures that there is either some course of action you can take for liberty, or some inner resources you can lay hold of that will keep you personally victorious. Paul said that the Lord will either "*make a way of escape*" from the temptation altogether, or he will plant within you sufficient strength to enable you to "*bear it*" without defeat.

But this divine aid won't just appear of its own accord. You must actively reach out for it. Like Peter, when he felt himself sinking beneath the waves, you must cry, "*Lord, save me!*" Sometimes God will answer this cry by direct intervention; but other times he will answer by simply showing you the way out. This is where you need to learn how to listen for the voice of God. People often fail to find "the way of escape" simply because they won't stay still long enough for the Lord to show them. Isaiah gives you this promise: "*If you leave God's paths and go astray, you will hear a Voice behind you saying, 'No, this is the way; walk here'*" (30:21, Taylor)." But to hear the voice of God you must listen; and you must learn to recognise his voice when he speaks. You need to cultivate an "ear" for the divine whisper.

A friend of mine in New Zealand who used to play in a symphony orchestra told me about a remarkable incident. One of the musicians was a piccolo player, and in this particular score he had a very insignificant part. He became weary of the long rehearsal and decided to rest for a while; so he only pretended to play. At once the conductor stopped the whole orchestra, and demanded to know what had happened to the piccolo! Despite the thunder of the other instruments, he could hear that tiny note. I think we can develop the same kind of discerning ear for the voice of God.

Have I helped you to triumph over temptation? I hope so; and if I have, then you won't have to plaintively wish any more "rain, rain go away." On the contrary, you'll be out there "singing in the rain!"

"I'm sitting on top of the worrrlld...", the crooner warbled with arms outstretched, and all the bobby-soxers (as we called them then) shrieked and swooned. The song was "top-of-the-pops" when I was a teenager. You might guess how old I am now; but it doesn't matter, so long as this chapter helps you to get out from under, and to get up on top!

CHAPTER 3

SITTING ON TOP OF THE WORLD

"*Why doesn't God do something?*" Have you ever heard someone voice that complaint? When people speak like this, they mean that life has gone out of control; their problems have taken over, and they lack the ability to reassert their authority. So they want God to step in, seize the reins, and guide them back to health and prosperity. They are like the boy who had just heard his Sunday school teacher tell the story about Elijah's fiery chariot. "Wow!" said the lad next to him, "I'd be afraid to ride in a chariot like that!" But he replied, "I wouldn't, not if God was the driver!"

Now there is an exciting thing: this cry, "Why doesn't God do something?" is one that heaven hears. For in your hour of need God is willing to do something for you. In fact, even better. God has already answered your prayer. He has already acted on your behalf. You say, "Why doesn't God do something?" But the Lord answers, "I already have!"

You see, the great central declaration of the Bible is that God has already acted on your behalf through Jesus Christ. Long before you were born, before even time began, the Father knew the burdens that would come your way - burdens of guilt, worry, sickness, and death, that are too heavy for you to carry. And he knew you would cry for his help. So he acted. He sent Christ into the world to die on your behalf, and on your behalf to rise again from the dead. Now, in Christ, you can find the ability of God that can release you from every infirmity and bring you into a new dimension of abundant living (John 10:9-11).

Let me show you some of the things God has already done for you through the incredible work of Christ.

GOD HAS ACTED IN CHRIST TO RECONCILE YOU TO HIMSELF

Here lies your greatest need; for until this matter is settled the Lord can do nothing to help you. "*Reconciliation means that you were God's*

enemy because of your disobedience to his law" (Rom 5:9-10); but Christ came, and he suffered the whole penalty of the law in your place. He died for you, so that you might be brought back to God. God is no longer your enemy; he is your friend!

But it takes two to tango! No matter how earnestly you proffer someone your friendship, if they spurn your extended hand all of your love will remain frustrated (Prov 18:24). To have a friend you must be friendly! The Lord has done his part. It now remains for you to be sorry for your wrongdoing, to turn to the Cross, to receive Christ as your personal Saviour, and to accept the total pardon and reconciliation of your God. As the little girl explained: salvation is saying to Jesus, "Come in, and shut the door behind you!"

When you do this, you will suddenly be conscious that an enormous load has been lifted from your life. You will have an inner awareness that you have been set free by the power of God to live at perfect peace with him (I John 5:9-12). And there is an added bonus! All at once you will find a new joy in your relationships with your neighbour, and a new calmness and unity within yourself.

To a prostitute who bathed his feet with scalding tears of regret and shame Jesus once said, "*Thy sins are forgiven, go in peace.*" Two marvellous words: "forgiven" and "peace." Forgiven by God, and peace within yourself! A short time ago I was interviewed on a radio talk-back session. One of the questions asked was this: "It may be find to talk about being forgiven by God, but how about the problem of living with yourself if you have committed some horrible crime?" I answered by pointing out that when a person accepts Christ as Saviour, God so acts in his life that the "*old nature*" is crucified and cast away, and he becomes a "*new creation*" in Christ (II Cor 5:17).

We may indeed feel deep revulsion for things we did before we discovered Christ, and there may even be need for us to make restitution to those we have wronged. But within ourselves we can still enjoy sweet peace, because that "old man" (who has sinned) has already suffered the ultimate penalty - death by crucifixion at Calvary - and we now see ourselves as completely new people! (See Romans 6:6-11.) This "*new man*" cannot feel guilt for the deeds of the "*old man*"!

So personal victory begins here: knowing that God has already achieved complete pardon and restoration for you at Calvary. The work is finished! Your greatest need has already been met! But you must accept it by faith. Unhappily, many Christians have a "two-letter" religion instead of a "four-letter" one. Their emphasis is all the time "do" - as they attempt to create victory by their own struggles. But the real solution is to say "DONE!" - to know that Christ has already mastered all of your enemies, and that you need only to seize this magnificent conquest. The battle is not yours, but God's - and he won it years ago!

GOD HAS ACTED IN CHRIST TO GIVE YOU A WORLD TO ENJOY

This world does not belong to the devil, it belongs to God! True, the Bible does say that Satan is "the god of this world." But this means only that Satan is master of the world system, the social order in which we live. When the devil tempted Christ in the desert, he offered to give him "all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them." Satan claimed authority over the empires and governments of men, and, to a certain degree, the Bible states that he does have this authority. But there is no doubt that the universe at large belongs wholly to God. The

Bible says: "The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof." And again: "The mighty God, even the Lord, hath spoken, and called the earth from the rising of the sun unto the going down thereof...every beast of the forest is the Lord's, and the cattle upon a thousand hills!" Many similar passages could be quoted. Altogether, they mean that the Lord gives the earth and all that it contains to his own people to enjoy. In fact, only when you come into fellowship with the Creator can you truly find happiness and satisfaction in his creation.

G. Wade Robinson understood this when he wrote:

*Heaven above is softer blue,
Earth around is sweeter green,
Something lives in every hue,
Christless eyes have never seen;
Birds with gladder songs o'erflow,
Flowers with deeper beauties shine,
Since I know, as now I know.
I am his, and he is mine.*

This is what Jesus meant when he said, "I am come that you might have life, and that you might have it more abundantly." What is life? Simply an accumulation of the experiences of living: eating, drinking, sleeping, working and playing; laughter and sorrow; family and friends; the city and the countryside; the sea and the mountain; the soft wind and the crashing thunder; a sweetheart's whisper, a baby's laugh; sunrise and sunset; all these things. Life is also that unknown force within us, the breath of God, that makes us alive; it is that vital force which enables us to make dynamic and intelligent contact with the world around us. As Jesus used it, it is this force MORE ABUNDANTLY - enabling us to know all the riches of living, to enjoy to the full every experience, and to have an indissoluble link with eternity.

All these treasures are no further away than the cross, where Christ "*became poor for your sake, that ye, through his poverty might be rich*" (II Cor 8:9). And the cross is no further away than your own faith! "*Look unto me, and LIVE!*" is the invitation God gives you (Isa 45:22). If you are not truly alive perhaps you are looking in the wrong direction - like the hiker who asked how far it was to a certain village, and was astonished to be told, "About 25,000 miles." "That's ridiculous," he blurted. "No, it's not," was the reply, "not if you keep going the way you are. But if your turn around, it's about half a mile!" Perhaps you need only to turn around, and to start looking at God rather than your problem, and a new life will be yours.

I will never forget the experience of a young husband who came to me some seven years ago. His marriage was breaking up, and he and his wife were both sick. He had lost all interest in life, and was longing to find something that would put new meaning into his daily round. In sheer desperation he cried out, "God, if you really exist, show me how I can find you!" Two days later, a stranger suggested to him that he attend our chapel. He felt this was something of a miracle, an answer to his prayer, so he and his wife came, heard the good news about the love of God in Christ, believed it, and accepted him as their Lord. What a change! Within a few days the breach between them was

mended; love and peace came into their home, and, as a result, happiness and health. He now has a fine and satisfying job, a delightful family, and an ongoing experience of answered prayer and of abundant life in Christ. Never doubt it for a moment - God wants to do the same for you!

GOD HAS ACTED IN CHRIST TO GIVE YOU VICTORY IN EVERY CIRCUMSTANCE

The Bible teaches that sin and temptation, trouble and bondage, disease and death, are all products of the kingdom of darkness. Jesus said it is the devil ("*the thief*") who comes to men and women to steal, to kill, and to destroy their health and happiness. But Christ came to "*destroy the works of the devil*" (I John 3:8). He said of the people who were "*oppressed by the devil*" that he had come to heal them, and to bring them exhilarating triumph over every infirmity (Acts 10:38; Luke 13:16-17).

So when trouble and temptation fasten themselves on you, and you feel like crying out, "Why doesn't God do something?" - remember that he has done something. He has acted in Christ! He sent Christ into combat with the dark powers, and he triumphed! The Bible says that on the cross Christ "*spoiled principalities and powers, and made an open show of them, triumphing over them*" (Col. 2:15). Then, having won a superb victory, Jesus surrendered himself to death that he might at last smash this dread enemy also, by rising again from the dead three days later!

And now, seated once more, "*on the right hand of the Majesty on High*" (Heb 1:3), the risen Lord is waiting for you to claim his victory on your own behalf. If you can believe it, and lay hold of the invincible promise of God, there is overwhelming triumph for you over every binding habit, there is total victory for you over every crippling disease, and there is mighty conquest for you over every work of Satan!

You must understand, though, that the promise is only as good as your appropriation of it. Many years ago an Indian soldier who had served well in the British Army was discharged and given a certificate which guaranteed him a government pension for life. He was an illiterate and superstitious man, and thought the certificate was a kind of magic charm. So he placed it in a little box around his neck, and failed to present it to the proper authorities. Years later he was reduced to beggary, and he came to a mission station seeking relief. The missionary noticed the box, and on asking what was in it, discovered the certificate. You can imagine the chagrin of the soldier when he realised that during all the time he had been begging and barely able to stay alive, he had been carrying a promise that could have kept him in comparative comfort.

How many Christians are just like that! They are carrying in their pocket "*the exceeding great and precious promises*" of God, by which they can escape all the corruption "*that is in the world*" (II Pet 1:4), yet they remain defeated and miserable because they never do bring these promises to God in faith and demand that they be fulfilled!

GOD HAS ACTED IN CHRIST TO GIVE YOU HOPE IN HEAVEN

Everyone who believes in the Lord Jesus Christ has a marvellous promise of abundant living right here and now - but even more thrilling is his promise of a place in the coming kingdom of God. We have a wonderful hope of a glorious tomorrow (John 14:1-3). Now this is not just "pie in the sky when you die." It is not some kind of pious panacea for a life of dull drudgery now. On the contrary, only those who know where they are going tomorrow can live with value today! If there is no resurrection, no future destiny, no ultimate purpose, then all of life is reduced to a meaningless cycle of endless futility (I Cor 15:16-19,32).

However, lying before every true Christian is the certainty of resurrection from the dead when Jesus comes again (I Cor 15:16-26,51-54). As the apostle Paul said, we who believe live with excitement "*looking for that blessed hope, the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ*" (Titus 2:13-14).

This satisfying hope puts purpose into every activity and sense into the whole business of living. People who lack this hope cannot help but sink eventually into deep pessimism and frustration. If this present existence is all we can hope for, if death is the only goal facing us, what a terrible mockery human endeavour would be. But thank God, the resurrection of Jesus Christ is our guarantee that this life is not the end, only the beginning! I am told that the motto of Spain used to be "Ne plus ultra" - "Nothing more beyond." They reckoned Spain was the last point west. But then came Columbus. A new world was discovered. And the motto was changed to "Plus Ultra" - "More beyond." Have you written "Ne plus ultra" over your life? Take hold of Christ and you will be able to knock out the "ne"! Life in Christ is wonderful now; and there's more beyond, there's more beyond!

You Say, "Why doesn't God do something?"

Friend, he has done something! He has already acted on your behalf! And in Christ you can now find the answer to every problem of life. He is the answer to the past, to the present, and to the future. There is no difficulty or need that can come your way for which Christ is not adequate - either to remove it, or to give you strength to hear it or to master it. Believe it then! Wait no longer! Let him solve the problem of your past, let him give you victory now, and let him secure your future. Then you'll really be sitting on top of the world!

"Kinquering Congs their titles take," said Canon W.A. Spooner, announcing a hymn in New College chapel, Oxford, in 1879. He became a classic example of "the absent-minded professor." Some of his other unwitting witticisms: "Let us drink to the queer old Dean" (a toast to Queen Victoria); "I remember your name perfectly, but I just can't think of your face!"

It is pardonable to be absent-minded in the world of academe; but never in the realm of faith.

CHAPTER 4

PROFESSORS - BUT NOT ABSENT MINDED

*I know not whether laws be right,
Or whether laws be wrong;
All that we know who lie in gaol
Is that the wall is strong;
And that each day is like a year,
A year whose days are long."*

So wrote Oscar Wilde in "The Ballad of Reading Gaol." Is that how you feel? Hemmed in? Stifled? With no way of escape? Well, there's a way out. As Lord Darlington said: " We are all in the gutter, but some of us are looking at the stars!" Which is only another way of expressing what Paul wrote long ago: "Consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus" (Heb 3;1).

Now that is one of the most vital sentences in the whole Bible concerning prayer and the miracle-working power of God. It tells us that God has chosen Christ to be our APOSTLE and our HIGH PRIEST. As our Apostle, Christ has been given mighty power to act on our behalf, to meet our every need, and to bring to us that good news of the Father's kindness and love. As our High Priest, Christ has been given the right to make a sacrifice on our behalf and to intercede for us before the Father's throne.

Now perhaps you didn't realise it before, but you need an apostle and a high priest! You need someone who can reconcile you to God. And you need someone who has power to break the chains of death that so sorely bind you. Christ has this power. He can loose you from every bondage, and He can restore you to fellowship with the Father. He can do these things because God has made him your heavenly Apostle and High Priest.

But there is one vital condition; the scripture says that Christ is the Apostle and High Priest of our PROFESSION. This means simply that Christ will act as your Priest and Apostle only as you make a right confession of faith. In other words, the things you SAY are the key to this miracle-ministry of Christ.

If you make a good "profession" - that is, a spoken word of faith - Christ will act on your behalf. But if your profession is wrong, then heaven will most likely remain silent, and there will be no answer to your prayer.

FAITH HAS LIMITLESS POSSIBILITIES

The rightness or wrongness of our believing, and of our faith-confession, is something we must all face. The Bible warns against the results of wrong believing, and it places urgent emphasis upon the need for right believing. It is vitally important that you learn how to have faith in God, and how to rightly use your faith. The scripture says, *"Without faith, it is impossible to please God, for he that cometh to God must believe...."* Plainly then, if you want to please God, you must come to him in faith.

And what is this faith? It is an unwavering conviction *"that God is, and that he is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him"* (Heb 11:6). And this inner conviction must be supported by a spoken confession of trust in Christ - as the Priest who gives us access to the Father, and as the Apostle who has power to work for us all of the Father's will.

The things that this kind of faith can achieve are unlimited! Many times the Lord Jesus Christ spoke of the enormous potential of faith in God. He said: *"All things are possible to him that believeth!"* And again: *"Nothing shall be impossible unto you!"* And again: *"Verily, I say unto you, If you have faith, and doubt not, you shall say unto this mountain 'Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea,' and it shall be done....And all things whatsoever ye ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive"* (Matt 21:21-22, etc).

You will notice that the Lord did not say, "Whatever you ask in prayer you shall receive." He said, "Whatever you ask in prayer, BELIEVING, you shall receive." It is believing, or faith, that makes all the difference between prayer that moves mountains, and prayer that simply beats the air!

Faith is the only key that will unlock the resources of the living Christ, our glorious Apostle and High Priest in the heavens. When he died on the cross, Christ took upon himself all of your sin, sickness, and failure (Isa 53:4-6) Then he rose from the dead; and now he is the Mighty Conqueror. And having triumphed over man's chief enemy, death, he is able to overthrow every other enemy that faces you. He can set you free from every sin or habit, from every disease or fear, and finally, from the grave itself. But FAITH, and faith alone, can bring you personally into contact with this matchless ability.

THE POWER OF YOUR OWN FAITH

Here is the great thing: your own faith can bring you the miracle you need. If you have faith, you will get the result you desire. Faith without result is impossible - like a flame without light, or snow without cold, or love without joy. Faith obtains! Faith possesses! Faith moves the hand of God! Faith captures the promises of God and makes them work! And real faith is always known by its profession. Faith is bold to speak. Faith is always eager to affirm its confidence in Christ, to say what God says, and to declare that the promise of God will come to pass.

However, many people are really afraid to commit themselves to the promise of God. They are like the boy who saw Blondin wheel a barrow across Niagara Falls on a tightrope. When Blondin asked the crowd did they think he could safely wheel a man across, the lad shouted, "That'd be easy for you, Mr. Blondin!" But when Blondin invited him to sit in the barrow, he turned on his heels and ran off as fast as he could go! Are you like that? Do you say glibly enough that nothing is too hard for God; but when it comes to the point of climbing onto the promise of God and calling out cheerfully, "O.K. Lord, off we go!" does your heart fail you and make you draw back? It takes courage to believe God. But there is no other way to a miracle.

Some years ago my wife and I were told that it was impossible for us to have any more children. We had a blood incompatibility, and after several miscarriages my wife was told by her doctor that her life could be endangered if she attempted another pregnancy. The doctors wanted to operate on her to preclude any further risk. My wife refused, and we went away to pray for further guidance.

About that time I came across an article in a magazine, by the well know American surgeon, Dr William Standish Reed. In this article Dr. Reed gave advice to a young couple who were in just the same position as we were. He said to have faith in God, to go ahead with another pregnancy, and he advised the husband to lay hands on his wife every day and to pray with authority against the build-up of any dangerous antibodies in his wife's blood. What happened to that young couple in America I don't know. But I do know that my wife and I decided to follow this advice - and our second son Eric is the result. Not one antibody developed in my wife's blood, and she was fit and healthy during her whole time. Her doctors were utterly amazed! What actually happened? We both had an inner witness that it was God's will that a child should be born to us, and that both my wife and her baby should be well in every way. So we gripped hold of this promise, and every day boldly affirmed our expectation that it would be fulfilled - and it happened as we believed. We ignored all other evidence, and considered only Christ, that great Apostle and High Priest of our "profession" - and we gained a miracle of answered prayer! If you have a promise from God, your faith has power to do the same for you!

AUTHORITY AND DOMINION

The Lord said, "*Let them have dominion...over all the earth*" (Gen 1:26-28). This decree gave to man the power and authority to govern every living thing. The whole creation was to be subject to Adam's command. Something of what this authority meant was shown by Jesus when he (the "last Adam") walked on the water, hushed the storm with a word, fed a vast crowd with only a few loaves of bread and a couple of fish, rode an untamed colt through a tumultuous crowd, and so on.

But man sinned. He disobeyed God. He became an enemy to God. The divine mandate decayed. Instead of being a conqueror, man was conquered - by sin and sickness, by deserts and jungles, thorn and briar, by storms and earthquakes, flood and fire. Being separated from the only source of limitless power, man was confined to his own small resources. From being the master he became a slave - bound by his own physical limitations, by his fears, and, above all, by death and the judgment that will follow (Heb 9:27).

With enormous effort, and through the use of science, medicine, and law, the human race has managed to regain some of this lost dominion. But the over-all picture of humanity is still one of a race sick, dying, defeated. And so long as unbelief endures, this scene will remain basically unchanged.

Christ came to reverse this bondage, to give back our dominion, to restore to us all that sin and Satan had stolen. He said, "*I am come that you might have life, and that you might have it more abundantly*" (John 10:10). He achieved this by giving his life as a ransom for our lives. His death on the cross paid the price for our sin. And his resurrection has made available all of the immense ability of God to loose us from every fetter, and to make us "*more than conquerors*" in every situation!" (Rom 8:37-39).

But the key to victory lies in your own faith, and in the proper profession of that faith. You must declare your confidence in the mighty promises of God. You must lay hold of those promises and make them a reality in your own experience. As the scripture says; "*This is the victory that overcometh the world, EVEN YOUR FAITH.*" And this world-defeating faith is faith that is nourished on God's promise and released by a bold profession. By faith you can regain the mastery lost by Adam. Faith can make you triumphant in every circumstance. Nothing can discourage, or defeat, the man or woman who is resolute in faith!

ABUNDANTLY VICTORIOUS

A little girl said to her mother one morning, "Mummy, aren't you happy?" "Of course I am, dear." "Well," said the child, "you haven't told your face yet!" And that's what a lot of Christians are like. They go around looking as though the world is on top of them, and not them on top of the world! In fact, it has come to the place where the community has developed a stereotyped picture of Christians as the most cheerless, dull, and dreary people on earth. Like the man who approached one of his work-mates and demanded, "Charlie, you say you're a Christian?"

"That's right."

"Then I don't think you're a very good one!"

Charlie was rather set back by this, and enquired, "Why, what have I done to spoil my witness?"

"Oh, it's not that so much. You're a decent chap. But you go around warbling and whistling all day, not a bit like a Christian's supposed to be!"

Well, whatever may be said of the rest of the community, every Christian should most certainly be living a strong, vibrant, dynamic, joy-filled life. The Bible standard for the Christian is this: "*In that day shall the Lord defend [them]; and he that is feeble among them at that day shall be*

as David; and the house of David shall be as God, as the angel of the Lord before them" (Zech 12:8). This is a graphic prophetic picture of the great deliverance and defence the Lord offers us today. It declares that the very weakest of God's people should be as David of old. And as for the strongest - they should be like the mighty angels in their confidence and authority!

The scripture tells you: "*Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.*" Here is a command, not to ask for strength, but to receive strength. Not to ask, but to act! Accept it as true that the "*power of his might*" is already yours. He says to you, "*I give unto YOU power over ALL the power of the enemy*" (Luke 10:19). Believe it! Know that you do have dominion. If you are a believer in Christ, then all of the victory of his resurrection is yours by right. His triumph over sin, sickness, Satan, fear, circumstances, death, is YOUR triumph. Appropriate it by faith, and make it real in your own life.

Mark these exciting statements: "*If God be for us, who can be against us? Thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph... I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me... Strengthened with all might according to his glorious power.... You are complete in him.*" All of these declarations from the Bible are true of every Christian. But you must accept them as true. You must put yourself into the promise, and say, believing it, "This is true of ME!" your faith in the promise, especially when you profess it, will bring into your life all of the power that lies in the promise. This is what Jesus meant when he said, "*You shall know the truth, and the truth will set you free!*"

A lady came to me some years ago, on the verge of total mental collapse. It seems that when she was a child her father used to punish her by locking her in a broom cupboard, with the result she developed a terrible fear of the dark. Over the years this fear had slowly grown, until she could not bear to be left alone, even in a room with the light on. She told me, "When I am alone, I get a dreadful feeling that someone is behind me, trying to strangle me. And the only way I've been able to retain my sanity has been to stand with my back pressed against a wall - in this way I've been able to convince myself that it was quite impossible for anyone to be behind me."

Time and again her husband came into a room to find her standing hard against a wall, trembling with fright and exhaustion. Under the pressure of this continual torment, she was slowly going to pieces. She had become afflicted with asthma and eczema, she was paralysed down one side of her body, and she was losing her grip over her mind.

I was able to show this lady and her husband the way to life in Christ, and how to use their faith in God. I told them the same things you are reading in this book. And you can guess what happened. They did accept Christ - they trusted him to act as their High Priest, and to reconcile them to God. Then they trusted him to act as their Apostle and to work in might power to deliver them. And he did. She was delivered from her spirit of fear, and completely healed of the asthma, eczema, and paralysis (which of course, were only the products of her fear).

It would amaze you to know how many people there are who suffer in ways similar to this lady. I could fill this whole book with testimonies from people who have been set free as she was - because they saw Christ as their Apostle and High Priest, and boldly professed their faith in him.

UNDERGOING OR OVERCOMING?

Jesus said, "If you have faith, and doubt not...you shall say unto this mountain, 'Be thou removed...,' and it shall be done...and nothing shall be impossible unto you" (Matt 21:21-22; 17:20).

Notice, Christ commanded us to SAY, not to PRAY. There are times when what you say is more important than what you pray. There are times when, instead of praying to God, you should face the mountain of life and speak to them with the authority of God. The Lord said, if you can say in faith to a mountain, "Be removed!" it will be done.

Here, then, is a spoken word of faith giving the "professor" absolute dominion over every circumstance. Here is the confession of faith that electrifies heaven, and moves Christ to act at once in your behalf as Apostle and High Priest! Nothing is impossible to those who can speak out the command of faith. Peter and John acted on this principle when they commanded the crippled man to stand up and walk (see Acts 3:6-8). You will probably say, "But they were apostles; I can't do what they did!" But Peter and John specifically disavowed any personal power or holiness, and insisted that this mighty miracle was wrought solely through faith in the incomparable name of Jesus Christ. It was linked with a spoken word of command and could perform a miracle in Bible days; that same kind of faith, expressed in the same way, will do the same today!

You can remake your world! Just learn that Christ will act in response to your "profession" - your word of faith. The one qualification is that faith can exist only in conjunction with a specific promise of God (I John 5:14-15). Faith must be based on God's revealed will. But if you have a promise from God, then believe, and speak, and it will be done!

Some people are undergoers; others are overcomers: it is faith that makes the difference. Some are swept along by the tides of life; others, like Jesus, walk right through the storms and are unmoved by them. The difference is faith. Some believe, and please God by their believing - to them is given an abundant supply of heaven's resources. Others are filled with anxiety and doubt. By their lack of faith they are really calling God a liar (I John 5:9-10). No wonder they receive nothing from the Lord! (James 1:6). The Bible warns: "*Without faith it is impossible to please God.*"

So stir up your faith. Throw off doubt and unbelief. God will do what he has said he will do. He only waits for you to dare to believe it, and to begin to speak and act accordingly. Be bold to believe! Your believing will bring you a miracle! Mark it well: "*ALL THINGS ARE POSSIBLE TO HIM THAT BELIEVETH*" (Mark 9:23).

There are two ways to wake up in the morning. One is to groan, "Good Lord, morning!" The other is to laugh, "Good morning, Lord!"

CHAPTER 5

"CHEER UP, MEN!"

Philander Johnson penned the immortal words which have even since been the dismal motto of every pessimist: "Cheer up, the worst is yet to come!"

Now it is an extraordinary thing that nineteen centuries ago Christ made almost the same remark; but he gave it a little twist that changes it completely. And since then, the saying of Christ has been the motto of every Christian optimist. This is how Christ put it: "*Here on earth you will have many sorrows; but cheer up, for I have overcome the world!*" (John 16:33; see Kenneth Taylor's "The Living New Testament.")

So let me ask you now; Are you one of those people who can get their faith working for them only on Sunday, while the rest of the week they are swamped by the world and its woes? Then here is a message for you that will show you how to live a life of continuous faith, and how to greet each morning with joy - even if you know the worst is yet to come!

THERE'S TROUBLE AHEAD!

The first thing we all have to accept is that none of us can go through life without conflict. In the words of the old version, Jesus said emphatically, "In the world ye shall have tribulation." This world is a troubled place, broken by sin, hurt by disease, dominated by Satan, antagonistic to the Christian (John 3:19). We may not be "of" the world, but we are certainly still "in" it; and being in the world we are touched by it, and come into conflict with it. This conflict takes many forms: severe temptation, disease, fierce persecution, satanic attack, the heart-breaking ruin of all we have laboured to build (remember the story of Job).

Unhappily, when many Christians suffer these onslaughts, their first instinct is to cry out in despair, and to feel that somewhere they must have failed God. It seems to them that such attacks can only mean they have lost their faith. But Christ is telling us that we should view life's troubles as an exciting challenge to use our faith for a miracle of deliverance! After all if we never come into collision with the forces of

this world, how can we ever discover the unequalled thrill of answered prayer, or experience the mighty hand of God moving to meet our need? When the Lord allows trouble to come your way, you should see it as a signal to lay hold of his promise, to believe, and to seize the victory in Christ. It is your opportunity to witness just what great things God can do!

DON'T BE AFRAID!

Fear is a potent force. Jesus gave it equal strength with faith when he said, "*Fear not, believe only!*" It is impossible to have faith while you hold to fear, for fear countermands faith. Before you can "*believe only*" you must discipline yourself to "*fear not*."

Two reasons make it vital to be rid of fear. First, fear is an open door to the trouble you are trying to escape. the Bible says, "*Fear hath torment*." In other words, fear will attract disaster just as certainly as faith will attract victory. Through the channel of fear the very things we are afraid of gain open access to our lives. To his terrible cost, Job discovered this, and the words were wrung from his lips, "*The thing which I greatly feared is come upon me, and that which I was afraid of is come unto me*" (Job 3:25). Troubles will face us in this life: BUT THEY CAN MASTER US ONLY IF BY FEAR WE WELCOME THEM.

Second, so long as you allow fear to possess you faith will have no room in which to work. Fear is faith's greatest enemy. But you can overthrow your fears by unmasking them. Be honest with yourself. If you are afraid, acknowledge it. The only fears faith cannot conquer are those that remain hidden. So face your dread - sin, temptation, sickness, financial failure, persecution, moral defeat, unemployment, death, loneliness - confess it to God. You will then be able to sing with David, "*I sought the Lord, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears*" (Ps 34:4).

A missionary had come to a certain place and had to spend the night there. He was offered a bed to share with a man whose skin was covered with the blotches of a suppurating infection. The missionary's first reaction was revulsion. But he quickly rebuked his fear, and with a smile accepted the offer. Just before falling asleep the two men prayed together, and they awoke in the morning to find a marked improvement in the infection. Not only did the missionary remain free of the disease, but within a short time the former sufferer was also cured! The missionary had faced his fear, banished it, replaced it with faith, and gained a miracle.

FIND PEACE IN CHRIST

In the first part of our text Jesus said, "These things have I spoken unto you, that in me you might have peace." "In the world" we shall find tribulation. But "in Christ" we find peace. What is this peace? Is peace based on recognition of Christ's perfect knowledge of all things and of his presence in every situation He knows the way; he has been there himself; he has forewarned us what to expect; he has overcome the world and can lead us safely through it.

The great enemy of this peace is panic. A speleologist protected himself against losing his way by playing out a line of cord as he explored the depths of a cave. Suddenly his light failed, and the sunless dark clamped itself around him. He placed the ball of cord on the ground while he tried to repair the light, but his efforts were in vain and he decided to return to the surface. He bent down to retrieve the cord - but it was not there! Apparently it had rolled away. As he began to feel around, the palpable blackness pressed upon him, and he soon lost all sense of direction. Gradually his self-control decayed into panic, and then into terror which cost him his life, for he fell while frantically scrabbling to escape. When friends came to rescue him they found him already dead. Panic, not the cave, had killed him. I have had a glimpse of the horror this man experienced. Some years ago I was touring a cave in New Zealand when the light went out. The total blackness was fearfully tangible. But a momentary twinge of panic that seized me was never allowed to develop. Why? Because there was a guide right beside me! I had no doubt that he would get me safely back to the surface.

So it is with a Christian in the world. In the dark hour of trouble we know that Christ is with us. We are not alone. We have a Guide who is greater than the enshrouding gloom, who can throw on the lights and make us masters of every situation. There is no room for panic in the person who is standing in the peace of Christ!

There is a lady in my church who once suffered continually from claustrophobia. She trudged many weary miles to avoid the nightmare of travelling in a bus; elevators terrified her; and even with all the windows open she could barely tolerate riding in the family car - which made driving rather miserable in winter. But she came to the Chapel, heard the good news about Christ, got a touch from the Lord, and now she is free! In fact, she drives her own car, with the windows closed! You see, Christ really meant it when he said he had come "*to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, to set at liberty them that are bruised*" (Luke 4:16-19). Whether your problem is mental, moral, spiritual, physical, financial, or "*whatsoever*," Christ is the answer (Mark 11:24).

I know a Dutch lady who learned how to find peace in Christ and freedom from an unusual phobia. She was seized with terror whenever she heard an ambulance siren, and she remained trembling and frightened for hours afterwards. She knew her fear was irrational, but try as she could she was not able to control it, and her health was being slowly undermined. Her future was bleak until she came to the Bible, gripped hold of the promises of God, found peace in Christ, and totally destroyed that tormenting fear by the power of her own faith.

What God did for these people he can do for you. What is your enemy? What are you afraid of? Is it some binding habit? sickness? the devil? persecution? death? failure? or the judgment of God? In Christ you can find peace and victory, for he has overcome the world and all that is in it.

THE VICTORY OF FAITH BEGINS WITHIN YOU

Five times the phrase "*be of good cheer*" occurs in the Scripture, and each time in seemingly impossible circumstances. Christ spoke these words to a paralysed, pain-wracked man, lying on his bed (Matt 9:2); to the disciples on the raging sea of Galilee (14:27); to the persecuted church (John 16:33); to Paul while he lay in chains (Acts 23:11); and Paul himself spoke the same words to the terrified people on board a

sinking ship (Acts 27:22,25).

So, in the face of tormenting disease, violent death, imprisonment, natural disaster, and bitter conflict with the world, God says "*Be of good cheer!*" What does it mean? Simply this: before you can hush the storm outside you must hush the storm inside. The victory of faith must be applied to your own heart before it will have any effect on the world around you. Every miracle has its beginning within yourself.

Before the prison chains are broken, or the raging seas are calmed, you must start cheering, raising your voice in the shout of faith. The ear of God remains deaf to the sound of complaint, to the pale voice of fear, or to the bitter murmuring of unbelief. But when the cheerful acclamation of faith rings above the sound of battle, heaven leaps to startled attention, and all of its divine resources are at once dispatched to bring victory.

There is no avoiding this fact: the Bible demands that in every circumstance we should praise God; and the promise is given that in praise our faith will contact God and create a miracle of deliverance. "*Thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel. Our fathers trusted in thee: they trusted, and thou didst deliver them*" (Ps 22:3-4).

STAND IN THE TRIUMPH OF CHRIST

Jesus declared, "*I HAVE OVERCOME THE WORLD.*"

Why did he say this? To boast of his own accomplishment? Hardly! To describe a benefit he had gained for himself? No! To describe a benefit he had gained for us? Yes! If Christ has gained victory over the world, it was not done for heaven's advantage but for ours. He came and fought our battle for us, gaining a mighty victory into which he now invites us to enter by faith.

Christ overcame the world in his life - for he resisted all temptation and remained without sin (Heb 4:13). Also in his death - for no man was able to take his life from him, but he laid it down willingly (John 10:17:18). Also in his resurrection - for though his body was dead in the grave, he was able to raise it up again, thus showing the triumph of the spirit over the flesh. Also in his ascension - for here the victory of heaven over earth was displayed, and eternity is shown to be stronger than time.

Now this incredible triumph is laid open for us! You can draw on this conquest every day. Let Christ's whole body take the place of your sick body. Let his strong hands supplant your weak hands, his brave heart your trembling heart, his mighty arm your feeble arm, his pure mind your wavering mind, his peace your fears, and his mighty faith your unbelief!

Be of good cheer! For Christ has overcome the world, and by faith you can appropriate his total victory to yourself. By him you too can overcome!

"Look before you leap?" Jesus once asked a question which shows there are at least some occasions when this ancient proverb should be altered...

CHAPTER 6

LEAP BEFORE YOU LOOK!

Do yourself a favour. Put this book down, take up your Bible, and read the exciting story found in Matthew 14:22-23. It will challenge your faith!

If I asked you what is the most startling aspect of the miracle of this story, your answer would probably be the miracle of walking on water. This was certainly an amazing feat. But there is another part of the story which is even more astonishing....

The tiny fishing boat was being tossed like a pebble beneath crashing breakers on a beach. Tortured by the whipping mast, the rigging screamed in the gale and seemed as though it would part at any moment. The raging wind tore at the sea, and the disciples were drenched as wave after wave cascaded over their boat (John 6:18). Frequent fingers of brilliant lightning leaped across the angry sky, revealing the despair etched on the faces of the toiling men. Peal after peal of ominous thunder boomed a warning of destruction...yet, sounding above all of this chaos, challenging their terror, came the strident demand of Christ: "*O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?*"

That question must surely be the most arresting in the whole Bible!

Now I am bound to say this is one time when my sympathies are all with the disciples. Let's face it: had I been in that boat, I would have been just as paralysed with fear as they were! If ever men had a right to be afraid, they had! They were experienced fishermen, but they had never faced a wind like this. It was uncanny; there was something supernatural about it; it had a feel of evil - at any moment they expected to make their grave in the foaming sea. Yet Christ rebuked their fear. He plainly considered they had no right to be afraid, nor any good reason to doubt his promise that he would meet them on the other side.

UNBELIEF IS UNREASONABLE

This question shows pungently that in the sight of God unbelief is always unreasonable, for it is based on consideration of the wrong

evidence. The disciples fell into panic because they allowed their circumstances to occupy their whole vision. Had they properly understood the ability of God they, like Christ, would have retained mastery over the storm. After all, on the same lake, at the same hour, and in the same storm in which they were perishing, Christ was walking on the waters in perfect calm. The gale raged about him, but could not touch him. His faith gave him mastery.

Since we can never meet a problem any worse than the one faced by those men on that unforgettable night, we are forced to the conclusion that no crisis can arise in our lives which is sufficient cause to doubt God. In every storm, when we are about to yield to despair, the ringing voice of the Master will reach us, "*You of little faith, WHY DO YOU DOUBT?*" And to that "why" we can never give an acceptable answer.

YOU CAN'T SINK DOING GOD'S WILL

Have you ever set out to obey God, only to run into trouble? Instead of glorious victory, you found yourself facing the ruin of your faith. This is the position the disciples were in. Notice the word "constrained." Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship. They had apparently argued with him. They were reluctant to sail. They knew the lake and all its moods. They saw the sullen swelling of the grey surface; they watched the gathering clouds and heard the moan of the rising wind; they knew how quickly the fierce squalls could shriek down from the surrounding hills and thrash the quiet sea into a boiling cauldron. But the Lord insisted they should sail. So with great reluctance they pushed out from the shore - and sailed straight into disaster.

When the gale, howling like a host of frenzied dervishes, rushed upon them, they forgot the Lord's promise that he would meet them on the other side. They remembered only their own forebodings, and bitterly regretted heeding his command to sail. For this error they very nearly paid with their lives. Instead of concentrating on their own apprehensions, they should have realised these three facts: **(1)** Christ knew as well as they did that a storm was brewing. **(2)** They were on the lake by his express command. **(3)** Therefore, a thousand gales could not sink them, nor prevent them from fulfilling his will - only their own fear could do that.

So Christ showed them (and us) that night, that if we are doing what God wants us to do, and if we refuse to surrender to doubt but hold fast to our faith in his ability to deliver us, there is no storm can overwhelm us.

LOOK FOR GOD

Nothing can happen in your life, if you are a Christian, unless God allows it. The Lord has not yet surrendered control of his universe. But although God may allow troubles to strike at us from time to time, he is not the cause of it, nor does he want us to be defeated by it. The Father allows the storms of life to arise simply to perfect our faith, to develop our spiritual "muscle," and to give us an opportunity to witness his power in action. The true nature of God has always been to quell the turbulent seas, and to deliver his people.

So take it for granted that the Lord is present in every storm, walking across the water toward you - and there, in the centre of the peril, he is in complete control. What an arresting contrast there is between Jesus, strolling calmly across the wind-lashed lake, and the disciples, frantically struggling to stay alive. It was faith that made the difference.

Had the disciples remembered the scripture they would not have been so faithless. See, for example, Exodus 15:8; Job 9:8; Psalm 114:5-8; Isaiah 51:10. These promises, and others like them, offered the disciples ample room in which to believe God and to triumph over the hungry depths. But in their panic they forgot God. And see the result: they failed to recognise deliverance when it came to them. Blaming Jesus for their misfortune, beginning to doubt if he really was the Messiah, crazed with fear, seized by superstitious dread, they howled "*It's a ghost!*" when Christ approached them!

How quick we are to forget God, to doubt his goodness, and to blame him for our troubles. How ready we are to doubt, and how slow to believe! But those who fail to recognise God in the storms will perish, while those who find Christ there will know the miracle-working power of God and his great salvation.

Consider the two thieves who were crucified with Christ. Here were two men in the same position, suffering the same agony, for the same crimes. One failed to recognise Christ and cursed him. The other saw what manner of man Jesus was and cried out to him in faith. To the voice of trust he gave a matchless promise of deliverance (Luke 23:39-43).

In the storms of life, then, you must learn to look out for Jesus, to respond to him in faith when he says, "*Be of good cheer, it is I, be not afraid!*" You must learn to recognise the moment of deliverance when it comes.

WALKING ON THE WATER

In the storms of life a crisis point is often reached where the decision we make will determine whether we shall be defeated or break through to deliverance. That point is found when Christ has approached us, but will come no further until we recognise him and trust him to make us safe. When Mark tells the story of that remarkable night on Galilee, he adds the arresting statement, "*Christ cometh unto them, walking upon the sea, and would have passed by them*" (6:48). What an incredible scene! The Master was going to walk right past them and leave them there! He came near them. He identified himself. But he offered them no assistance until they subdued their fear and released their faith. By his presence he brought them promise of a miracle, but the promise would have bypassed them if they had not laid hold of it by faith.

One man responded to the challenge. Through the shrill clamour of the storm Peter heard the voice of Jesus. Hope of a miracle began to form in him. He knew that if he could reach Christ all would be well. But Jesus was standing still. Would he come no closer? Peter shouted, "*Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water.*" ON THE WATER! Peter saw that he had to reach Christ, not ask Christ to come to him. And he saw also that he had to reach Christ by way of the very thing that was threatening to destroy him!

But could he do it? This is still the question people ask, "*Lord, is it you? Can I come? Can I cross the waters to safety? Can I reach your power to heal me, to give me victory, to supply my need?*" And for all time the question has been answered. For Jesus said, "COME!"

On the strength of that one word Peter jumped out of the boat - and it worked. It took courage, a dare-all faith - but it worked; he walked on the water!

Many people say, "Lord, take away the storm and the raging waves, and then I will come to you." Others insist that the Lord should come to them. They say, "Lord, if you can do anything, help me!" But the Lord sternly places the responsibility back onto us: "*If YOU can believe, all things are possible to him that believeth*" (Mark 9:22-23). So, take the leap of faith. You too can walk on top of the stormy seas to Christ, and to a miracle of deliverance.

I was at church in Adelaide one Sunday night, assisting the pastor in his altar call, when a policeman appeared at the door with an urgent message for me to hurry to the hospital. A young man had been critically injured in an accident. At the hospital I was told the lad would probably not live through the night. But he did live, and now he has a wonderful story of answered prayer. Let him tell it to you in his own words....

"It was a mid-winter, 1958. I was riding my motorcycle down one of Adelaide's main thoroughfares, when for reasons still unknown to me, i drove head-on into a tree. I knew no more until I regained consciousness in the ambulance that carried me to the hospital. As I stumbled back into the realm of reality I tried to move, but as soon as I did a sudden sickening pain passed through my body from my spine. The ambulance attendant quickly stopped me from moving any more. 'Lie still,' he commanded; 'you've hurt your back.'

"The rest of the night is only a series of vague pictures wedged in among periods of darkness. I remember the first attempt to remove my clothes and the nauseating pain - followed by immediate black-out. I remember the first attempts to x-ray me - then darkness again. And then as the night went on, there was increasing weakness and nausea. The pain increased. My condition became intolerable. I felt that I would scream if anyone touched me. But I was too weak to even protest.

"It was only later that I found out the reasons for all of this. X-rays showed a fractured spine, a fractured arm, a fractured skull, and a fractured shoulder blade. Further tests showed a ruptured spleen and a ruptured kidney. And there was, of course, shock and concussion. As a result of the ruptured spleen I was actually bleeding to death internally. It was this that caused the nausea. And it was this that could end my life.

"Immediate surgery was necessary to save my life. The spleen was removed. But I was by no means past danger. Without the operation I would probably have died. But there was a very strong possibility that in my broken condition I would not be able to survive the operation. It was three days before the doctors gave my family any assurance that I would live. Until then, medically speaking, my condition was critical.

"But not as far as I was concerned!

"From the moment I first regained fleeting consciousness I knew that by the power of God I would certainly recover. And from that time on, I feared no more. I knew that God's will was for me to be healed. I am convinced that only the power of God enabled me to survive. This is not to belittle what the doctors did. But they themselves were the first to admit the hopelessness of my situation.

"When I did pass the danger point, the road ahead was still long. Initially there was talk of me being in a plaster cast from the waist upwards for about six months. Then it was said that I would not need the cast, but that I would be on my back for three months before I could sit up. However, in exactly four weeks from the day of the accident, I was walking around the hospital ward! And two days later I was home.

"It was then that I received bad news. My left arm had been strapped down for most of this time. Although nothing had been done to set it, it had set itself and the bones had knit together, not cleanly, but certainly strongly. So I tried to use it again. But it was useless. It would not work. It was paralysed. The diagnosis - nerve palsy.

"Apparently at the time the bone was fractured, the nerve was also damaged, and the shoulder paralysed. I could use my arm from the elbow downwards, but without some point of leverage for the elbow it was useless. I could not swing it as I walked down the street. I could not carry anything with it. I could not play the piano. Dressing and eating were difficult. I could not lift it at all. I could groan, grunt and strain - but nothing happened.

"Immediately I was put in the hands of physiotherapists and given various kinds of electrical stimulation. But all to no avail. I was rather shaken by this, but I stammered rather hesitantly, 'I believe that faith in God will cause my arm to recover.' One of the surgeons spoke almost gruffly: 'Don't be silly. Faith can do many things. It can heal psychological illnesses. But you have an organic injury. Faith can't heal that.'

"I know that he was trying to save me from what he regarded as certain disappointment. And I know, too, that although my previous recovery had been speedy, this could have been a result of a positive attitude and the determination of youth. But in the case of my arm, all the positive thinking in the world would do me no good. Only the power of God revealed in response to faith could help me here. So I continued to believe God.

"Nearly six months went by without any change, six months during which I steadily continued to expect a miracle. And then I began to notice almost imperceptible changes. There was the day I walked down the street and found I could carry a parcel. There was the day when I lay on the floor and found that I could slide my arm across the floor. There was the time when I began to lift it slightly from my side. Today my arm is quite normal. It has perfect freedom of movement, and is as strong as my right arm.

"About a year after the accident, I saw in the street the doctor who warned me not to try faith as a healing agent for organic injuries. I made a point of addressing him, and he asked how I was progressing. I raised my arm up high and said simply "Fine! Have a look!" He was astonished. His mouth dropped open and he said, "That's remarkable." During our conversation he repeated the word "remarkable" three times! I reminded him of what I had said before about healing through faith in God. And he agreed that God could heal organic injuries after all!

"I shall always be grateful for the magnificent efforts my doctors made to repair me, and to save my life. But nonetheless, my good health and perfect soundness today show a dramatic miracle of answered prayer, and for this I must praise God."

Well, there's the story. And I can assure you it is perfectly true - the young man involved is my brother, Barry! He is now a pastor, principle of a Bible school and a successful author. He wrote the account, ten years after his accident.

We must now go back to Galilee, and to the moment when Christ invited Peter to walk on water...

LEAP BEFORE YOU LOOK!

It is often forgotten that Peter actually did walk on the water. In fact, he walked to within arm's reach of Christ. At the last moment fear gripped him and he began to sink, but it was still a tremendous accomplishment, a marvellous triumph of faith over the elements.

However, just as he was on the verge of complete success, Peter allowed his attention to be diverted by the storm. "*He saw the wind boisterous and was afraid.*" He had a promise from Christ that he could walk on the water, for the Master had said to him. "Come!" But he turned away from the promise and began to hear instead the roar and crash of the waves. Inevitably his faith wavered, and he began to sink. As my brother demonstrated in his story, faith is always based on the promise of God, never on natural considerations. If you allow yourself to be ruled by the evidence of your natural senses, in opposition to the promise of God, you will never see a miracle. "*We walk by faith, not by sight*" (II Cor 5:7). If you have a promise from God concerning a certain matter, then you must completely ignore all other evidence and believe only that promise. If you consider your circumstances, fear will spring up and faith will decay.

Fortunately, Peter realised his error in time, and he screamed, "*Lord, save me!*" At once Jesus stretched out his hand, lifted Peter back on top of the waves, and walked with him to the ship. With the help of Christ Peter was able to renew his faith and to seize the miracle he had been on the verge of losing. As soon as Peter and the Lord climbed aboard the boat the wind dropped to a zephyr, and within a short time they reached the other side of the lake.

The disciples arrived there as a band of men wiser in the ways of faith. They had a new concept of what faith could do, and of the ability of their Lord, Jesus Christ. Now, when a "faith-community" of this kind is created, anything can happen. And it did. For Matthew concludes his account of this exciting episode with this thrilling report: "*And when the men of that place had knowledge of Christ, they sent out into all that country round about, and brought unto him all that were diseased; and besought him that they might only touch the hem of his garment: and as many as*

touched were made perfectly whole!" God gives nothing to unbelief, but he gives everything to faith!

So, in the storms of life, learn to ignore the evidence of disaster which may be a promise of God that offers you deliverance. This deliverance may come to you personally in different ways - perhaps strength to ride out the storm, or to walk right through it; perhaps a miracle that will hush the storm, or bring you out of it immediately; or perhaps some other way. The actual method of deliverance will be found in the promise. But when you have that promise, be bold to step out and to grip the hand of Christ, caring nothing for the savage gale. Dare to claim the whole measure of God's offer, refusing to take less than the whole gamut of what he has promised you.

Which all comes to this: in the life of faith, you must often leap before you look!

It's not often I go to a comic-book for inspiration. But one day I happened to be vetting some of my young son's reading matter when I came across this extraordinary saying: "It's not the size of the dog in the fight that counts, but the size of the fight in the dog." I have long since forgotten the name of that paper, but the saying sticks like a burr!

CHAPTER 7

LIVING DOGS OR DEAD LIONS?

*"I'd rather be alive and small as a dog,
Than tall as a lion but dead as a log..."*

So went one of the choruses we used to sing in Sunday school. We enjoyed singing it (to the tune of "Dixie"), but it was a long time before I learned it actually comes from the Bible! Solomon thought of it first: "*A living dog is better than a dead lion*" (Eccles 9:4). the difference between the dog and the lion is that one has fight in him and the other hasn't. You might be as big as an elephant, but if all the fight has gone out of you, you're not worth much. Or to put it another way, in the words of a football-club motto: "When the going gets tough, the tough get going!"

This leads me on to one of the most significant things the apostle Paul ever wrote about the power of God and your life...

"God is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we can ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us" (Eph 3:20).

God Is **ABLE!**

He is able to do **ALL** that we ask.

He is able to do **ABUNDANTLY** above all that we ask.

He is able to do **EXCEEDING** abundantly above all that we ask.

He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or even **THINK!**

What a staggering declaration of the immense ability of God to answer your prayers! Whether your request is spoken aloud, or remains a

hidden dream, the Lord is easily able to give you ALL that you desire.

In the face of sin, God is able. In the face of sickness, God is able. In the face of fear, God is able. In the face of poverty, God is able. In the face of defeat, God is able. In every situation, every problem, every need, GOD IS ABLE. He is exceeding abundantly able to do far above all you can ask or think!

A STRANGE FACT

But now we are faced with a peculiar difficulty. If God is able, why do so few people experience this wealth of answered prayer? After all, how many of us find the Lord doing even what we ask, let alone "*exceeding abundantly above all that we ask*"? The Bible tells us why: the measure of answered prayer is "*according to the power that worketh in us.*" In other words, God's ability is linked to the exercise of our ability. The Lord is indeed able; but those words "according to" determine the limits within which his ability can operate for you.

It is interesting to notice that Paul uses a Greek word which is translated in our text as "*able*" and "*power.*" In other words, the passage could be read, "*God is able... according to the ability that worketh in us.*" It means that there are some things God can do, and there are some things we can do. When we do what we can do, then God will do what he can do. The exercise of God's ability is limited by the extent to which we arouse ourselves and put our own ability to work. Certain things lie within your power. Only when you put that power to work will God move with his mighty power.

WE HAVE A THREEFOLD ABILITY

The Scripture is plain. God will exceedingly abundantly answer your prayers only "*according to the power*" that works in you. What is this power? The Greek word in this verse (dunamis) means simply "*ability.*" It does not necessarily mean power in a supernatural sense: see the following places where dunamis is used in the sense of just ordinary ability: Matt. 25:15; II Cor 8:3, twice; Rev 18:3,, "*abundance*"; I cor 14:11, "*meaning.*" Therefore, "*the power that worketh in us*" is simply a certain natural power that we all have that, rightly used, brings us to the position where divine power can operate on our behalf.

Let me suggest three aspects of this "*power that worketh in us.*"

IT IS THE POWER TO CHOOSE

The ability to make a truly intelligent choice is unique to man. No animal has this power. True, animals can choose to go here or there, to walk or to run, to kill or to spare; but these choices are largely instinctual. Animals are quite incapable of real moral choice, or of choosing to act contrary to their own nature. It is this higher choice which is the supreme prerogative of man. This is a power that not even the angels

possess. It is part of the divine image which lies in man. We can choose to raise ourselves to the highest heaven, or to thrust ourselves to the lowest hell. We can choose to obey God, or to disobey him; to live nobly or ignobly; to be ruled by faith, or by fear.

If you think for a moment, you will realise that all of life is a succession of choices. We are continually forced to decide between two courses of action, or to choose what attitude will govern us, what character we shall bear, or what emotion will dominate our personality. Every man's ultimate destiny is based upon the cumulative effect of the choices he makes each day.

Even your relationship with God begins with an act of choice. That is why the first challenge given to Israel was, *"I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore CHOOSE LIFE...choose you this day whom ye will serve"* (Deut 30:19; Josh 24:15). And just as Moses challenged Israel to make a right choice, a choice for life, for divine protection and prosperity, for supernatural abundance, so too this choice is thrust upon you. Paul sets before you the tremendous strength of God. He says, *"GOD IS ABLE!"* Then he lays down a challenge to choose: choose to believe that God is able; choose to believe that he can and will meet your need according to his riches in glory (Phil 4:19); choose to believe that God will answer your prayer with overwhelming generosity and irresistible might! Refuse to accept the possibility that the Almighty is unable or unwilling to hear your cry. So long as your choice lies within the scope of his promise to you, it will be done.

There is a place in the Swiss Alps where it is said that a traveller can throw a chip of wood into the water in one direction, and it will drift down the mountains via the Rhine river and into the North Sea; or he could throw the chip in another direction, and it would reach the Black Sea via the Danube; or he could throw it in yet another direction, and it would enter the Mediterranean via the Rhone. How large the difference at the end of the journey resulting from only a small difference at the start! The choice you make today, for or against the promise of God, may well be an irrevocable one, settling forever the outcome of your life.

IT IS THE POWER TO HOLD TO YOUR CHOICE

Making a right choice is important. But it is even more important, once that choice is made, to stick to it. Many people decide to believe the promise of God; but then, because the answer is delayed, or because opposition rises against them, they waver and turn aside. To people like this the stern warning comes: *"Ask in faith, nothing wavering...let not a double-minded person think he shall receive anything from the Lord"* (James 1:6-8).

Are you double-minded? Full of faith one day, full of doubt the next? If you are, you will have to do something about it or you may never know the thrill of answered prayer!

There is such a thing as the trial of faith. We pray. We believe. Then comes the testing. During this time of waiting for the answer to appear, will we hold to our choice, or will we become discouraged and reject the promise of God? This is when you will find out whether you are a living dog or a dead lion. This is when you will learn whether you are one of the "toughs" who gets going when the going gets tough!

It takes courage to stand by your choice; it takes spiritual "fight": but the Bible itself tells us to "*fight the good fight of faith.*" And remember also the words of Jesus: "*The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force*" (Matt 11:12); and again, "*Strive to enter in*" (Luke 13:24).

When Constantius was crowned Emperor of the Roman dominions, he found a large number of Christians in office throughout the empire. He issued an edict commanding them to renounce Christianity or to surrender their positions. The majority of them resigned at once rather than compromise their faith; but there were a few cowards who turned their backs on Christ. When the Christians had thus divided themselves, Constantius promptly sacked all those who had denied Christ, and took the others back into his service again. He reckoned that those who would not be true to Christ would not be true to him!

God will honour those who honour him and stand by their commitment to his word - perhaps not always with temporal rewards, as happened to those Christians in Rome, but certainly in fulfilling his promise to them.

Thousands of people cheat themselves out of a miracle simply because, having chosen to believe and to pray, they do not stay by that choice until the answer comes. Job was not like that. He cried out, "*Though he slay me, yet will I trust him!*" And out of this mighty, unshakeable determination to trust God was born the faith that brought him a dramatic miracle of healing and untold prosperity and happiness (Job 13:15; 42:10-17).

In the desert, the Lord Jesus Christ, exhausted and hungry, replied to Satan's temptation, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God." He preferred death by starvation rather than shift from his resolve to believe and to obey his Father. So the angels came and succoured him, the Holy Spirit came upon him in power, and the devil was driven away (Luke 4:1-14).

The army of Israel resolved to believe God, and to go and conquer the Philistines. But when they saw the vast enemy host coming across the valley, they began to feel like shrimp in the teeth of a whale. Fear drained their strength, and they all turned and fled for their lives. Except one man. Eleazar looked at his comrades running away, laughed, stood his ground, drew his sword, and shouted, "*BELIEVE GOD!*" He fell upon the Philistines and hacked at them until they lay in heaps all around him, and "*the Lord wrought a great victory that day.*" The rest of the Israelites did not return until it was over. One man, despite overwhelming odds, held to his choice, and a wonderful miracle took place! (II Sam 23:8-12).

So, the second step toward reaching the immeasurable ability of the Lord is this: set yourself to believe the promise of God and then, come what may, hold to that choice until the miracle is yours!

IT IS THE POWER OF A RIGHT CONFESSION

James writes: "*We can make a large horse turn around and go wherever we want by means of a small bit in his mouth. And a tiny rudder makes a huge ship turn wherever the pilot wants it to go, even though the wind is strong. A great forest can be set on fire by one tiny spark. So also the tongue is a*

small thing, but what enormous results it can cause!" (James 3:3-5; Living Letters, Kenneth Taylor).

One of the greatest powers we possess is the power of speech. This ability is unique to man. We can speak creatively or destructively, positively or negatively, in doubt or in faith. The right exercise of this ability will infallibly determine the measure by which God can answer your prayers. If the things you say are contrary to the promise of God; if you express unbelief, or anxiety; if you grumble and complain; then you make it almost impossible for God to answer your prayer. As far as your need is concerned, your negative confession renders the mighty ability of God nearly helpless. On the other hand, if you boldly speak your faith in the promise of God; if you declare the choice you have made to trust him, come what may; and if you support that choice with an unwavering confession of confidence in the power of the Lord, then you will open a channel through which all of heaven's resources can pour to meet your need!

There is a type of eagle in Turkey which preys upon the crane, a bird which is very prone to chatter and squawk as it flies along. The eagles will often mark the approach of a flock of cranes by the noise they are making, and will then swoop down and make the talkative bird pay dearly for its carelessness. The birds that survive these attacks apparently learn wisdom, for it is not uncommon to find the older cranes picking up a stone before they take to the air, and holding it in their beaks while they are in flight. With a stone in their mouths they have to fly silently, and therefore safely. There is a lesson there for us!

Some years ago my brother Barry and his wife were pastoring a church in Adelaide when they unexpectedly found themselves responsible for a small mixed business that was about to be declared bankrupt. It was a terrible dilemma. My brother was not willing to resign from his church, but neither could he tolerate his name and credit being dishonoured. Finally, after much prayer, and against almost all advice, he and his wife decided to take over the business and to continue pastoring the church. Since the church and the shop were some fifteen miles apart, and since Barry knew almost nothing about running a delicatessen, most of their friends expected they would only succeed in compounding their debts and in deeply hurting the church. But they were both convinced that they were acting in the will of God, and they boldly committed themselves to the double task of building up the church and the business.

They laboured together, and continually surrounded the church and the shop with a positive confession of faith in the ability of God to prosper them and to meet their every need. Many times they were threatened with foreclosure by creditors; but each time the threat was removed in an answer to fervent prayer. Incredibly, in a shop that was reckoned to have no hope of success, they prospered. Within a short time the former weekly turnover was doubled, and then tripled, and it continued to increase until, after two years, they were able to sell the business for a handsome profit. During the same two years the church also prospered, to the extent of erecting a fine new building!

Here is a young couple who made a choice for divine assistance and prosperity, who refused to be turned aside from that choice, who gave to their situation all of the ability they had, who, above all, declared in faith that God would stand by them, and held to that confession until the task was done. What God did for them he can do for you.

So, the third step to a miracle is to maintain a faith-confession in harmony with the choice you have made.

I think that these three things - a right choice, a determination to hold to that choice, and an unchanging confession of faith - comprise "the

power that worketh in us." The ability to do these three things is possessed by us all. So then, let this power that is in you work. For according to the extent of its working, God will show you his ability to do EXCEEDING ABUNDANTLY ABOVE ALL YOU CAN ASK OR THINK!

You may only be a "little dog," but with this kind of fight in you, you will render that old "roaring lion," the devil, as helpless as a stuffed Brontosaurus!

Twenty-three centuries ago the Greek mathematician Archimedes declared, "Give me a lever long enough, a firm spot on which to stand, and I will move the earth." Whatever else you can say about Archimedes, he certainly wasn't shy. Of course, he never did make good his boast; but in any case, the Bible tells us there's an easier method to get the world out of the way!

CHAPTER 8

REMAKING YOUR WORLD!

*"Cannon to right of them,
Cannon to left of them,
Cannon in front of them,
Volleyed and thundered...
All in the Valley of Death
Rode the six hundred..."*

So Lord Tennyson described the charge of the Light Brigade during the Crimean War. This incredible charge, splendid in its futility, was ordered by the obtuse pride of the English commander, Lord Cardigan. As they rode "into the jaws of Death, into the mouth of Hell," a French Marshall looking on commented, "C'est magnifique, mais ce n'est pas la guerre!" ("It is magnificent, but it is not war!")

They were great soldiers those cavalymen, even in defeat. But some nineteen centuries earlier John described the man of faith facing even greater odds - and winning! No vain heroics nor incompetent folly here! Just plain, sober fact. Here is what he wrote: "*This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith*" (I John 5:4).

What does he mean by the "*world*"? What is this "*faith*" that can give us mastery over it?

THE WORLD

When he talks about the "*world*" John does not mean the physical earth. The world made by God is very good (Gen 1:31), and in no sense is it opposed to the Christian. "*The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof.*" This whole physical creation belongs to God, and he has given it to his own people to enjoy. The Bible says that all things God has made "are yours" - yours to use for your own pleasure, benefit, and prosperity (I Cor 3:21-23; III John 2).

Away then with the pernicious idea that there is something evil in this good old earth fashioned by the hand of the Lord. Above all people, Christians should enjoy living in their Father's world!

But there is another "*world*" which is antagonistic to God and to his church - the "*world*" fashioned by men, corrupted by sin, and ruled by Satan. This is the "*world*" spoken of by Christ which "*loves darkness rather than light,*" which has Satan as its "*Prince,*" and which despises the children of God because they are "*not of this world.*" It is the world of human society and government; in particular that part of it which is distinct from the kingdom of God and foreign to the will of God.

This world opposes the Christian in five ways. It opposes us spiritually, saying there is no God, and mocking the reality of heaven. It opposes us morally, inciting us to passion and sin, and to rebellion against God. It opposes us intellectually, challenging the validity of our faith and scorning the supernatural character of the Bible. It opposes us physically, by inflicting disease and poverty, hardship and trouble. And it opposes us openly, through blatant persecution.

But against the apparent enormity of the world's strength, the Christian can lift up one overwhelming and completely invincible weapon - FAITH.

OUR FAITH

The faith that overcomes the world is...

Faith That Is Born in Prayer

Australian history is made heroic by the astonishing feats of many of the early explorers. These men set out into the immense interior of the continent, and braved fearful hazards as they endeavoured to reveal the secrets of the fabled centre. One of them was Coulthard, who was eventually found lying dead near a tree. His last words were found written beside him: "The last thing I remember is pulling the saddle off my horse and letting him go. My tongue is sticking to my mouth. I know it is the last time I shall express my feelings. Lost for want of water! My eye dazzles! My tongue burns! I can say no more! God help me!" Sadly, no water was near, and the brave man perished. There are many things we may thirst for in this world but never find. There is one thing, though, that you cannot fail to find - that is, if you long for it with all your heart: "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled" (Matt 5:6). There is an unbreakable promise in those words. If you desire faith, and seek it with all your heart, you will be given faith!

The king was afraid. His enemies had amassed a huge army, and were even now gathering on the borders of his kingdom. From a military point of view the position was hopeless. He had no alternative except to pray. So he fell on his face and cried out to God for help. A strange thing happened. His fright slowly vanished, and in its place came a rising throb of faith. An assurance was born in him that God could

deliver the nation. He remembered the promises of God; he remembered the miracles of the past; he began to believe that the Lord could do the same again. He gathered his army together, and with an infectious enthusiasm urged them, "Believe in the Lord God, and we shall be established. Believe his prophets, and we shall prosper!" The soldiers caught his vision and roared in acclamation. They even gathered the Temple choir and the musicians to precede the army into the battle, singing and praising God. And their enemies were completely routed (II Chron 20:1-25). Faith born in prayer brought them a miracle of deliverance.

Have you ever wondered why Christ spent so much time in prayer? It was not that he lacked anything. But simply that through prayer the faith that was in him became activated, alive, irresistible. And in this prayer-born faith he went out to heal the sick, hush the storm, feed the multitude, and to show himself master of all that was in the world. "*Men ought to always to pray, and not to faint,*" said Christ; thus showing that the greatest function of prayer is to create faith, so that we may not be weak, but strong, and may gloriously overcome the world! (Luke 18:1,8).

Faith That Sees Victory in Every Circumstance

It is said that when Alexander the Great faced the immense Persian army, some of his advisers were filled with panic. "What are we against such an uncountable host?" they cried. But Alexander retorted, "Is the butcher afraid, though he stands alone before a thousand sheep?" Then another complained, "When the Persian archers loose their shafts, they are so many they obscure the sun!" But Alexander laughed, "It will be more pleasant fighting in the shade!" Small wonder he conquered the world! Alexander faced every conflict, and saw only victory. He turned every barrier to his own advantage. He refused to capitulate to fear. He believed only in the inevitability of his own triumph.

And this is exactly what the scripture calls us to do. Whatever problem, or need, or conflict is facing us, we must inflexibly declare that we are, and shall be, and can only be, more than conquerors through Christ (Rom 8:31,37). Remember, no army is ever finally defeated until it actually admits defeat and surrenders to the opposition.

Do you realise that faith can never be defeated? Why? Because, as the scripture says, "*faith is the victory.*" Yes, faith is victory. Faith is not, and never can be, defeat. It is simply not possible for faith to be overcome. True, you can be overcome, but your faith, never! If you are overcome by the world, it is only because you have moved away from faith. Faith is the victory guaranteed. Faith is a weapon against which neither this world nor Satan has any defence. Faith looks at the world and laughs, exulting in its own strength, turning every situation to the glory of God, seeing victory in every circumstance, knowing that nothing can hinder its ultimate triumph.

Faith That Is Released by Praise

There was a monk who travelled the land, his only possessions being a donkey to carry him, a parrot to keep him company, and a lamp to light his way at night. As he journeyed, a lion sprang upon the donkey and dragged it away. The monk sorrowed for his faithful servant,

but said through his tears, "Praise God from whom all blessings flow"; and he continued on his way. As he travelled, singing the praises of the Most High, an eagle swept down and seized his parrot and carried it far into the sky. The monk was greatly saddened by the loss of his talkative friend, but he consoled himself in the Lord, and made the valley ring with melody, "Praise God from whom all blessings flow." As he walked, he stumbled and fell, and his lamp was smashed. He sought refuge for the night in a nearby village, but the people angrily drove him out, thinking he might be a spy from a robber band that had been terrorising the whole district. Murmuring "Praise God from whom all blessings flow," the monk retreated to a clump of trees and made himself as comfortable as he could. Bearing malice toward none, and resting in the peace of God, he was soon asleep.

During the night there was a great clamour in the village, and the monk wondered what was happening, but he remained under the trees until the morning. He then saw that the village had been ransacked by the robbers, and that all of its inhabitants had been put to death or carried off into slavery. He wept for the sufferings of the people; but then he realised the providence of God, and a great gladness filled him. He fell on his knees in thankfulness - for had the robbers heard the neighing of his donkey, or the squawk of his parrot, or had they seen his lamp, or had the villagers given him shelter, he too would surely have been killed. He had sustained his faith with unwavering praise, trusting that all would be well, and so he gained the honour and protection of God.

Plainly, a person who is holding fast to the goodness of God and who is claiming victory over the world by faith, cannot help but praise God. It is not possible for him to be full of complaint or deeply frustrated inside himself. For faith is more than a mere anticipation of victory, faith is a deep assurance that victory has already been won. Never once in history has a conquering army been known to sit down and howl in despair. Wailing and tears are marks of the vanquished. Victorious soldiers shout, and sing, and rejoice! So, if you are standing in faith against the world, knowing that your faith is already your victory, you will naturally express this faith in praise.

Now, the fact is, only as you do praise God in this way will the victory that is inherent in faith be released into your life. Jesus said, "*Whatever you desire, when you pray, believe that you receive it, and you shall have it*" (Mark 11:24). Again, "*Faith is itself the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen*" (Heb 11:1). Therefore, if you ask in faith, "*you know that you already have the thing you requested*" (I John 5:15).

It is wise to remember that men first began to sin when they stopped praising God (Rom 1:21). Conversely, by the faith which praise releases, and by the strength which praise imparts, you can easily take authority over all the blandishments of the enemy (Luke 10:19-20). When everything is going wrong, lift up your voice and start praising God with all the strength that is in you; there is a magic power in praise to create real faith! (Heb 13:15).

Faith That Is Based Upon A Proper Understanding

One day a truculent man approached George Whitefield, stuck out his chin, and announced, "You'll never get me to change my faith!" "Oh?" said Whitefield, "perhaps you will tell me then, just what do you believe?" The answer came, "I believe what my church believes!"

Rather amused, Whitefield asked again, "Well, what does your church believe?" With surprising aplomb the man replied, "My church believes what I believe!" "Well then," insisted Whitefield, a little exasperated by now, "will you tell me what you both believe?" The man declared, as he strode away, "We both believe the same thing!"

That man had prejudice, he did not have faith. What he thought was faith was only bigotry, a blind acceptance of what someone else had told him. There was no reason behind his belief, no proper understanding, no genuine knowledge of Christ.

True faith is not blind, but is based on knowledge of God and of his Word. In particular, it is based on what the Scripture tells us about the Lord Jesus Christ. For this reason, John, having told us that "*faith is the victory that overcometh the world,*" then defines that faith: "*Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God*" (I John 5:5).

What happens to the person who really believes that Jesus is the Son of God? He at once realises that the birth of Christ was the most stupendous event in all history, for this man is "*IMMANUEL - God with us*" (Matt 1:23). Nothing greater has happened to the human race. God has dwelt among us! And with this fact every human soul has to reckon. If Jesus is the Son of God (and he was proved to be so by his resurrection from the dead), then you dare not ignore him, but you must hasten to embrace him and to gain his friendship. (See Matt 5:25-26).

Then again, if you believe that Jesus is the Son of God, then you know that he must be alive today, for death could not possibly hold him (Acts 2:24). And if he is alive, then he can certainly do for you all that he did for people in Bible days. The Scripture says that "*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever*" (Heb 13:8). "*What he has done for others, he will do for you!*" All you need is the same faith they had. Your faith will bring you the same deliverance their faith brought to them.

SITTING ON TOP OF THE WORLD

Also, if you believe that Jesus is the Son of God, then you cannot help but wonder what great reason impelled him to leave heaven's glory, and to come and live as a man. Why did Jesus come to this world? He came from heaven to earth to get me up from the earth and into heaven, and to get the world out of me and heaven into me! (Heb 2:9-10).

Knowing then that Jesus is the Son of God, set yourself to stand fast in faith, to believe with joy, and you will indeed find yourself sitting on top of the world!