

Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY



Wednesday, July 1, 2020 – First Baptist Church Buda
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study

PSALMS, HYMNS AND SPIRITUAL SONGS “A Bible Study Drawn from Old and New Songs of Faith” *Ephesians 5:18-19*

Music has a rich history in the story of God’s people beginning with the songs of the Old Testament called Psalms, and the rise and spread of Christianity around the globe with the great teaching hymns of faith. And even today, though music has sometimes been a point of contention and division centering on styles and methods of worship, many of the spiritual songs of our day are rich and power lyrics and sounds of worship that exalt our God and feed the souls of men. The Apostle Paul instructs us in Ephesians 5:18-19 to, *“¹⁸...be filled with the Spirit, ¹⁹ speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.”* – Ephesians 5:18-19 We are actually commanded in God’s Word to dive head long into the music of faith... to be *“singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord”* with all kind of expression of music (psalms, hymns and spiritual songs). What many miss in great hymns and songs of faith is the rich Biblical tradition and teaching embedded is many of those songs. The Bible study will attempt to dig into some of those select songs of faith and the powerful Biblical truths and lessons those songs that generations have loved to sing may have for us. Perhaps this will change our worship as we begin to sing these lyrics with deeper appreciation and understanding for what they are actually proclaiming. We have looked at the great old hymn, “Farther Along,” then we looked at the subject of assurance of salvation by looking at the hymn “Blessed Assurance, Jesus is Mine”. Then last week we took at that great hymn that some have called the Baptist Fight Song, *“Victory in Jesus.”* Let’s look at another great hymn of faith, one that some may consider to have a more somber feel to it, that speaks really to loss in life and how to deal with it.

FAITH IS THE VICTORY – HYMN #413 “Faith That Gives Victory in Life’s Battles” *1 John 5:1-5, Hebrews 11, Selected Scriptures*

A.W. Pink said, *“Daily living by faith on Christ is what makes the difference between the sickly and the healthy Christian, between the defeated and the victorious saint.”*

Charles Haddon Spurgeon said it, *“A little faith will bring your soul to heaven; a great faith will bring heaven to your soul.”*

Life is a battle at times and for some the battle rages more fierce than others... almost as if it follows them and trails them. That may indeed reflect how John H. Yates felt most of his life. If you have accident-prone children, take comfort in the story of John Henry Yates. His parents had

immigrated to New York State from England; and John was born in Batavia, New York, in 1837. His dad was a shoemaker and a traveling temperance lecturer. His mom was a school teacher who loved poetry and literature. On several occasions, John gave his parents reason for grave alarm.

- On Election Day, 1844, when he was 7 yrs. old he fell from a high set of stone steps in a hotel and tumbled down into the cellar, fracturing his skull, and was seriously injured. It wasn't certain he would come to, as he was unconscious a long time. He wore broad scar across his face for the rest of life as a reminder and souvenir of the accident.
- Then in 1847, at age 10, when his family was traveling by ship, a storm struck so powerfully that young John was thrown across the deck, breaking his leg and badly injuring him. He again eventually recovered, but once again was left with the tell-tale signs of that accident... that dogged him his entire life.
- At 16, John brought down the curtain on a school play when, during a dramatic scene, he accidentally fell on an open double-edged sword being used in the play as a prop. The sword pierced his right lung. For three weeks, his life hung on a thread, not sure he would live.

He survived it all, however; and at age 18, he began helping his aged parents in the shoe business. About the same time his mother persuaded him to start writing poetry, which was immediately published in the Batavia newspaper, and soon in Harper's Bazaar and other national magazines. Before long his ballads, poems, songs, and hymns were being recited and sung across America. Despite his newfound fame, Yates kept his day job in retail sales, first in shoes, then working in a hardware store and finally managing a popular department store. Only later in life did he finally leave the retail business to work for the local newspaper.

All the while, John was preaching here and there. Beginning in his late teens, he served as a lay preacher in the Methodist church. For many years, he traveled through western New York State, preaching in churches of all denominations and sharing his faith in Jesus Christ.

That faith was severely tested in February of 1878, when his wife and two sons all died within the space of one week from an outbreak of diphtheria. He eventually remarried and kept going, giving living illustration that our faith in the promises of God and in our Lord Jesus gives us overcoming victory.

In 1891, Yates agreed to write Gospel songs exclusively for the great Christian song director, Ira Sankey, who directed the evangelistic campaigns for D. L. Moody. Many of his hymns became popular favorites. Yates also switched from the Methodists to the Free Will Baptists and began pastoring near Batavia.

He passed away on September 5, 1900, and this marker rests over his grave: ***In Memory of the Poet-Preacher Rev. John H. Yates... Born 1837 / Died 1900... Faith is the Victory, Oh, Glorious Victory, That Overcomes the World.*** John's house Washington Avenue at State Street in Batavia is now on the historic register and serves as the home of a quaint independently-owned bookstore — Present Tense Books and Gifts. John Yates' is credited with writing hundreds of hymns, but no doubt his most enduring hymn is "Faith is the Victory." Faith had truly given him victory many time over the tragic turns and hardships he had faced, and his faith in Christ carried him home to heaven in victory at the early age of 63 years after years of the battles of this life.

***Encamped along the hills of light, ye Christian soldiers, rise.
And press the battle ere the night shall veil the glowing skies.
Against the foe in vales below let all our strength be hurled.
Faith is the victory, we know, that overcomes the world.***

Faith is the victory! Faith is the victory! O glorious victory, that overcomes the world.

*His banner over us is love, our sword the Word of God.
 We tread the road the saints above with shouts of triumph trod.
 By faith, they like a whirlwind's breath, swept on o'er every field.
 The faith by which they conquered death is still our shining shield.*

*On every hand the foe we find, drawn up in dread array.
 Let tents of ease be left behind, and onward to the fray.
Salvation's helmet on each head, with truth all girt about,
The earth shall tremble 'neath our tread, and echo with our shout. *not in hymn book*

*To him that overcomes the foe, white raiment shall be given.
 Before the angels he shall know His name confessed in Heaven.
 Then onward from the hill of light, our hearts with love aflame,
 We'll vanquish all the hosts of night, in Jesus' conquering Name.*

Faith is the victory! Faith is the victory! O glorious victory, that overcomes the world.

- (1) Notice the lyrics of this song... what is the “imagery” that John Yates give to life and how might this have applied to his life? How does this imagery apply to the life of a Christian today and what are some of the battles... even daily battles we face today? *He uses the imagery of life as a battle... a fight. Certainly his life was a constant battle with injurious accidents that often threatened his life, losing his first wife and children so tragically. These things can have a tremendous impact on one's faith and walk with God. For the Christian, life is a daily battle not merely the daily physically battle with life that we face, but the mental, emotional and spiritual battle we face?*
- (2) The lyrics of the first verse of this song are interesting, “*Encamped along the hills of light, ye Christian soldiers, rise. And press the battle ere the night shall veil the glowing skies*” Yates makes an interesting observation about the battles we face in these words. Where according to Yates are Christian camped out on the battlefield and what hope do you think He is pointing to? *Light... Christians camp along the hills of light. Light dispels the darkness and the brings hope, helps us see, and helps us wage and win the battle... we can see who we are fighting and how to fight and win. Remember Jesus is the “Light of the World” and He fights for us! Notice what he tells us about the battle in these words what does the sky really hold and what hides it? The darkness tries to hide the light, and the skies really are filled with light and hope, but our dark trial try to discourage and obscure the light.*
- (3) Notice in the remaining verses of this song the weapons with which we are to wage war and fight the battle in the Christian life. What weapons does Yates mention in the song and how do they help us wage the war in faith? *The sword of the Spirit, the word of God (v2); the shield of faith (v2); the helmet of salvation (v3x); the belt of truth (v3x); the shoes that tread/feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace (v3x). See Ephesians 6:10ff)*
- (4) What do you think he means by the words “*Let tents of ease be left behind, and onward to the fray*”? What might Yates be saying to Christian, believers and the church today? How does this/might this apply to us today? What might this be saying about the lives of some Christians even in our day?
- (5) And what gives us victory? How? *Faith. Faith overcomes the pain and dark trials of this life... the world, and give us hope beyond this world. What role does “faith” really play in us being to find victory of the world and the things of this world?*

If you have your Bible with you let look at the Beloved Disciples words in **1 John 5:1-5**... verses 4-5 of this text are the inspiration for this great song by John H. Yates. Look at it with me.

¹Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves Him who begot also loves him who is begotten of Him. ²By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments. ³For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome. ⁴For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. ⁵Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

John introduces the subject of the victorious life. While the Bible uses many terms to describe what Christians are (e.g., believers, friends, brothers, sheep, saints, soldiers, witnesses, etc.), John highlights one particular term in this chapter... the “overcomer.” Of the 24 times the word “overcomer” occurs in the New Testament, John uses it 21 times. Several different forms of the term appear in these verses to emphasize the victorious nature of the believer, and make note of what it is that enable us... make to be “overcomers” according to the Bible.

3 Characteristics of the Victorious Overcoming Christian Life: (1 John 5:1-5)

- (1) **Faith - “*whoever believes*”** Saving faith is the first characteristic of an overcomer. The term “believes” conveys the idea of continuing faith, making the point that the mark of a genuine believer is that they continue in faith throughout their life. Saving belief/faith is not simple intellectual acceptance by whole-hearted dedication to Jesus Christ that is permanent. **“*Jesus is the Christ*”** The object of the believer’s faith is Jesus, particularly that He is the promised Messiah or “Anointed One” whom God sent to be the Savior from sin. Whoever placed faith in Jesus Christ as the only Savior has been born again and, as a result, is an overcomer. **“*born of God*”** This is a reference to the new birth and is the same word that Jesus in John 3:7. The tense of the Greek verbs indicates that ongoing faith is the result of the new birth and, therefore, the evidence of the new birth. The sons of God will manifest the reality that they have been born again by continuing to believe in God’s Son, the Savior. The new birth brings us into a permanent faith relationship with God and Christ.
- (2) **Love – “*everyone who loves Him who begot also love him who is begotten of Him*”** Love is the second characteristic of the overcomer. The overcomer not only believes in God, but love both God and fellow believers. This moral test is again in view.
- (3) **Obedience - “*keeps His commandments*”** John repeats this phrase twice in these two verses. Obedience is the third characteristic of an overcomer. In these 5 verses, John weaves faith, love and obedience all together inextricably. They exist mutually in a dynamic relationship i.e., as the genuine proof of love is obedience, so the genuine proof of faith is love. The word “keep” conveys the idea of constant obedience. **“*His commandments are not burdensome*”** – For example, in contrast to the burdensome man-made religious traditions of the Jewish leaders, the yoke of Jesus is easy and the burden light.

“overcomes” – John clearly defines who these overcomers are: they are all who believe that Jesus is God’s son, and all that means. The overcomers are believers – all of them. The word for “overcomer” comes from a Greek word meaning “to conquer,” “to have victory,” “to have superiority” or “conquering power.” The word reflects a genuine superiority that leads to overwhelming success. The victory is demonstrable; it involves overthrowing an enemy so that the victory is seen by all. Jesus also used this word to describe himself. Because of believers’ union

with Christ, they too partake in His victory. The word “overcomers” in the original language conveys the idea that the believer has continual victory over the world.

“*the world*” – Satan’s worldwide system of deception and wickedness. Through Christ and His provision of salvation, the believer is a victor over the invisible system of demonic and human evil that Satan operated to capture men’s souls for hell. John repeats the reference to overcoming the world 3 times – to press it home.

“*our faith... he who believes*” – Faith in Jesus Christ and dedication of one’s life to Him make one an overcomer. John repeats the truth for emphasis.

WHAT IS FAITH?

Faith involves a response to the truth we know about Jesus Christ. When we speak of faith in Christ, we mean a personal expression of trust and dependency on Him.

5 Things Faith is Not:

1. **Faith is not intellectual assent (approval)** – Head knowledge! It is not enough to acknowledge intellectually that Jesus is the only One who can take us to heaven. It is not enough to know about God and Jesus. And it is enough to know that what He did was sufficient to pay the penalty of our sin. Interestingly, James writes in **James 2:19**, “*¹⁹ You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble!*” In other words it is not enough to know intellectually about God, even the enemy of God (the devil) has that kind of faith.
2. **Faith is not emotional connection (embracement)** - Heart knowledge! Faith is not just going to church and participating in religious activities because of the emotional experience it creates that make one feel better about themselves. There is so much more than that. Many people do many good and noble things... even religious things because of how it make them feel inside and they express this as their faith. But this is not saving faith. The Rich Young Ruler in Scripture is a good example of one who was emotionally charged because he kept his religious connection to God.
3. **Faith is not religious expression (demonstration)** – Some people define their faith by what they “practice.” “I am a practicing Catholic!” or “I practice my faith at First Baptist Church of Buda!” Certainly our faith in Christ is expressed through our works, service, and fruit, but many have the mistaken definition of faith as their religious preference, denomination, or practice. This is always dangerous and it will provide no assurance for obvious reasons, but mainly because no church, religion or denomination can save you.
4. **Faith is not moral relevance (bearing, weight)** – Faith and spirituality are often closely tied to moral action and behavior. We will often hear it said of someone, “He or she is a very godly person with much faith!” and it is usually based on their moral excellence in some area or their high standards. Again the Rich Young Ruler in Scripture is a good example of a morally excellent and relevant person who was very faithful in his life, but he lack saving faith.
5. **Faith is trusting in God (Jesus) – It is leaning with the full weight of our being on Him. Placing our lives fully in His hands.** We must put our trust in Him, accept his offer, and place ourselves in His hands. In **1 John 5:1** we read, “*Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.*” Your faith in Jesus Christ – your belief that He is indeed the Christ, the Son of God – is what God requires of you to become a member of His family. John also told us, in **1 John 4:15**, “*Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.*” People may view Jesus as the greatest man who ever lived, as the supreme example for us to follow, or as the most impressive revealer of God’s love. But if they do not confess Him to be the Son of God, they have not expressed and placed their full trust in Him...that is faith.

That He is who He claimed to be and that He can do what He claims to be able to do. Once we have this kind of faith we find genuine salvation and assurance!

Perspective: *It's not enough to know about Christ and His finished work (column 1), you must place your faith and full trust in Him as Savior (column 1), believing that is who He claims to be and that He can do for you what He said He would do and that is give you eternal and everlasting life... life that cannot be lost.*

That give us a pretty thorough look at that faith isn't, but leaves us trying to get around just what "faith" really is.

How would you define faith in your words? _____

A good Biblical definition of faith can be found in **Hebrews 11:1**, "**Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.**" Simply put, the Biblical definition of faith is:

Biblical Definition of Faith = "Trusting in something you cannot explicitly prove."

This definition of faith contains two aspects:

2 Aspects of the Biblical Definition of Faith in Hebrews 11:1:

- 1. Intellectual assent** - Intellectual assent is believing something to be true.
- 2. Trust** - Trust is actually relying on the fact that the something is true.

Perspective: *A chair is often used to help illustrate this. Intellectual assent is recognizing that a chair is a chair and agreeing that it is designed to support a person who sits on it. Trust is actually sitting in the chair and trusting it to hold you with your full body weight.*

Understanding these two aspects of faith is crucial. Many people believe certain facts about Jesus Christ. Many people will *intellectually* agree with the facts the Bible declares about Jesus. But knowing those facts to be true is not what the Bible means by "faith." ***The biblical definition of faith requires intellectual assent to the facts and trust in the facts.***

Why is this definition of faith so important? Why must trust accompany agreeing with facts? Let me give you 3 good reasons...

3 Good Reasons This Definition of Faith is So Important: "Faith requires intellectual assent to the fact and trust in the fact."

- (1) Because "without faith, it is impossible to please God" (Hebrews 11:6)**
- (2) Without faith, we cannot be saved (John 3:16).**
- (3) Without faith, the Christian life cannot be what God intends it to be (John 10:10).**

A LOOK AT THREE CATEGORIES OF FAITH AND VICTORY

The term "faith" is a little five-letter word that we sometimes have trouble fleshing out in our lives – yet it falls freely from our lips. It is used more than 200 times throughout Scripture. It might help us to categorize the meaning of faith a little so that we understand exactly what we are talking about when we speak faith bringing victory in life despite life's trials and circumstance.

3 Categories of Faith:

1. **Saving Faith** – In Mark 4 Jesus described a farmer distributing seed across a variety of soils. Some of that seed fell on good soil and germinated, rooted, and yielded a huge crop. In several biblical instances, saving faith is represented as a small seed that, when planted, grows to be something large and abundant. Such is the mustard seed. Jesus spoke of this seed as being the size of faith it takes for a person to be converted (saved) (Mk. 4:30-32). When coming to personally know Jesus Christ by faith, we come to know God. We learn from a variety of Scripture passages that the blend of God’s grace and our faith result in salvation.

- Romans 5:1-2, *“Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand.”*
- Ephesians 2:8-9, *“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast.”*
- Galatians 3:26, *“You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.”*

Is this kind of faith (saving faith) ever threatened by doubt? Give examples! Yes, saving faith may come under assault from our doubt in the form of doubting one’s salvation, a lack of assurance, not being sure if one is indeed saved or lost.

2. **Doctrinal Faith** – This is the composite of Christian truths that make up our basic beliefs... what we believe. We might call it “doctrinal” truths or beliefs. References to such faiths are found in:

- 1 Corinthians 16:13, *“Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be men of courage; be strong.”*
- Colossians 2:7, *(Be) rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.”*
- Jude 3, *“Dear friends, although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints.”*

Is that kind of faith (doctrinal faith) ever threatened or assaulted/under attack? Give examples! Yes, there are many today who call into question “doctrinal faith” challenging the reliability and inerrancy of God’s Word, creation vs. evolution, the universality of sin, the fall of man, the existence of God, Jesus as God, Jesus as Savior/Messiah, how a person is saved, etc.

3. **Practical Faith** – This category refers to the faith principles upon which we must operate in order to find victory in life, to rise above the drag, the depression, the heavy weight of daily cares and concerns, the pains that come. *We could call it “deep, abiding, unswerving confidence in God rather than in ourselves, our circumstances, and our world.”* It has to do with relying upon God to handle “me” in troublesome times... times we do not understand, times of waiting, times of failure, times of misunderstanding, times of loss, times of mistakes, times of weakness, times of discouragement and depression, times of feeling inferior, times of fear, times with ends we cannot see.

Is that kind of faith (practical faith) ever threatened or assaulted/under attack? Give examples! Yes, practical faith is assaulted and threatened by the circumstances and uncertainties around us every day. Our faith must be put into “practice”... our “saving faith” and “doctrinal faith” but be put to practical use if we are to find hope and help for our doubts.

Some Helps on Practical Faith:

1. **A Biblical picture of practical faith that gives victory (Romans 4:19-21)** – An illustration of practical faith and how it was used in the face of doubt and uncertainty can be found in Abraham in Romans 4:19-21, *“Without weakening in his faith, he (Abraham) faced the fact that his body was as good as dead – since he was about a hundred years old – and that Sarah’s womb was also dead. Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised.”*
 - **How is this an example of practical faith?** *Abraham and Sarah not only had the heartache of desiring children and being childless, but they also had this “out of the blue” and seemingly unreasonable promise from God given their age that they would have a child and a great nation would come from him (Abraham).*
 - **What was the challenge to their faith that they may have been dealing with?**
 - **What was the greatest sign that Abraham (and Sarah) had found victory through faith?** *They acted on faith. Practical faith acted out*
 - **Could they have shrank back and what would have been the effects of their shrinking back?** *They would not have grown, their faith would have died, they would not have been the ones through whom God raised up His chosen people and ultimately the promised Messiah, Jesus Christ our Savior and Lord.*
2. **A Scriptural truth of practical faith that gives victory (2 Corinthians 5:7)** - A Scriptural truth for us to grasp (something to grab hold of and hang onto in times like these) is found in 2 Corinthians 5:7, *“We live by faith, not by sight.”* *How does this truth help us to find victory through faith?*
 - **What does it mean to live by sight in relation to the uncertainties we may face in this life?** *It means we put our focus on the circumstances, pains of this life, whatever they may be, and we quickly become paralyzed, growth is stunted, overwhelmed and defeated... we stop growing, become doubt filled. “I can’t do this!”*
 - **What does it mean to live by faith in this context?** *Trust and believe that God is bigger than these challenges that come our way and growing in them through Him.*
3. **A provided help for practical faith that gives victory (Ephesians 6:16)** - Ephesians 6:16 helps us understand the practical effects of this sort of faith, *“In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.”* Faith is seen here as “a shield” that holds off from us those darts of Satan which can pierce and immobilize us... in this case the fiery dart of doubt. Remember that “doubt” is one of the enemies most prized tools. God has provided us with everything we need to deal with the “doubts” of life... our faith put into practice.
 - **What is the relation of the evil one (Satan) to these battles/challenges that we face?** *Well, the truth is “doubt” is pretty common to all of us at some time in our lives. We all struggle with doubts at times. They are just a natural part of living I think. But what the darts are that he may throw at us are the darts to trip us up, slow us down, cause us to fall and falter under the struggle with these doubtful thing. God desires to use these things as stepping stone of growth... faith growth in our life, but you can be sure His enemy, Satan, wants to throw darts at you to make falter and struggle through this life and keep you from growing in your faith. You are dangerous when your faith is healthy!*
 - **So this “shield of faith” (practical faith) does what for us in the midst of our battles in this life and struggles?** *Shields up, protects us so we can grow. Faith protects us so we can grow no matter what the “doubts” of this life. It goes like this, “I don’t understand why these*

things are happening to me, why I am having to play the waiting game, why things aren't working out, why life is so hard and difficult right now, but I have faith that God is in control and He will take care of me." You see how that is a "shield" to the dart of the enemy who want you to cave to the problems.

A VICTORIOUS FAITH THAT CONQUERES (Hebrews 11:1-6)

The great faith chapter, give us not only a picture of what faith looks like, but much hope for conquering the struggles and uncertainty that confronts us in this this walk of faith we are on. Practical faith enables us to let go and let Him have the rope in the midst of our doubts and fears. Perhaps the exercise of this kind of faith will work more easily when we understand some basics. (READ: Hebrews 11:1-6)

5 Observations about Practical Faith for our Growth: Verse 1 stands as a clarifying frame around these six verses, *"Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see."* Keep this in mind as we proceed through these 5 observations

1. **Practical faith for our growth involved assurance and conviction (v.1)** – The first of these words (assurance) means to stand under something so that it is supported." It was used in the first century for a document like a title deed. Let's put it this way, when your faith is solid, it stands under every situation and support it with assurance. The second term (conviction) means "proof." Faith is conscious, living proof in the mind that something is going to happen... that God is going to take care of our life experiences. It is being convinced, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that He will take charge of the situation.
2. **Practical faith for our growth always relates to something yet future (v.1)** – *"... of what we hope for."* The word "hope" points to the future. Instead of enjoying the certainty available to us through faith, we ask questions like, "What if? We worry. We see tomorrow in light of our own abilities, not God's. Faith prepares us for adventure instead of fear, because of our assurance that God can capably handle all things... all things.
3. **Practical faith for our growth has as its object "things not seen" (v.1)** – Faith is fixing our attention on what we cannot see. It is thinking broadly, beyond the realms of tradition and history. Pessimists look to the past and cannot live by faith. They also maintain the status quo, they never soar to the heights which God has in mind for them... they can't see. That is because it is not seen, it is believed by "faith." Focusing only on "the seen," we lose our faith-thinking that is often characterized by fresh creativity and soaring thoughts... a vital trust that God can and will do as He promised.
4. **Practical faith for our growth is basic to pleasing God (vv.2-6)** – *"And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him."*(v.6) The author cites situations where different ones started with nothing and wound up with the marvelous provision that only God was able to provide: Abel (v.4) and Enoch (v.5). He goes back to the beginning of time, when there was nothing; when a precedent was established by God Himself as He created visible things out of that which was first unseen... things prepared "at God's command" (v.3). if God can do that, then He can take our lives, our dreams, and plans, our struggles, our failures and on the basis of our faith, make something of them. He can bring glory to Himself by doing so. Faith pleases Him.
5. **Practical faith for our growth means that we believe God exists and rewards the seeker (v.6)** – The word "exist," used in the phrase *"...because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists..."* means that He is "present" and "real." A good question to ask yourself is this, "If God suddenly ceased existing, would it make any difference in my life?" Would your life

be shattered, or would it be only slightly affected? Faith means that we believe He exists and rewards the seekers. One who seeks “searches diligently, requires, and demands.” In other words, by faith I require, my life requires God to come through. I depend on God. I trust Him. It that were my arrangement... my idea, that would be presumption upon God, but that’s His arrangement... He wants it that way... He desires to seek Him in all of life’s avenues. He is the one who can grow us.

2 Check-up Questions on Practical Faith: Practical faith that is the key to victory in the midst of the doubts and uncertainty of this life, cannot operate until we take things seriously and say, “I will not quit until I have developed this habit of unilateral trust in God... trusting God fully even in the face of my doubts.” This trusting must be performed in our home life, in our work life, in the intellectual realm, in relationships, in everything... every avenue. Here are a couple of questions to ask yourself periodically.

1. **Why is practical faith such a struggle for me?** We know it is a must for getting through the pains of this life and growing, but it’s just hard sometimes to let go and really trust God. Ask yourself why?
2. **Why is it so difficult to live one day at a time?** A great question when we are really struggling... God may reveal some areas where you haven’t really let some things go and turned them over to Him.

TWO PRACTICAL HELPS FOR DEVELOPING A FAITH THAT FINDS VICTORY OVER DOUBT

Life should be lived like this. Yesterday is a cancelled check; we cannot negotiate it again. Tomorrow is a promissory note; it can’t be utilized until it arrives. Today is cash in hand; it must be invested. The psalmist expressed it this way in **Psalm 118:24, “This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.”** Let’s look at this way.

2 Practical Helps for a Victorious Faith that Conquers:

1. **Faith... use it - Faith is like a muscle... it must be exercised if it is to grow and be usable in our fight against doubt.** If you don’t use it you will lose it. If you simply lay in bed and never use your muscles they will atrophy. Same with your faith. If we don’t walk our faith, we will atrophy and when the doubts, and pains, heartaches, when life happens we can’t do it. If we will exercise our faith it will grow. We exercise our faith through the Word of God, through prayer, through His church, through worship, and fellowship with other believers, through sharing our own faith with others, etc.
2. **Faith... embrace it - Faith is like a sunrise... it is fresh every morning.** We must embrace each new day God give us by... faith, and He will give us all we need for the challenges of the day. **“Because of the Lord’s great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness” (Lamentations 3:22-23)**