

FOUNDATIONS FOR CHRISTIAN GROWTH

Lesson NINE FAITH'S CONFESSION — THE EXAMPLE OF GOD

- I. INTRODUCTION
- II. OUR MEASURE OF FAITH
 - A. Faith Comes By Hearing
 - 1. Knowing the revealed will of God
 - 2. Examples
 - B. Faith Can Be Developed
 - 1. Continue in the Word
 - 2. Exercise
 - 3. The growth process
- III. ACTING ON THE WORD
 - A. Faith and Obedience
 - 1. The sick friend
 - 2. The ten lepers
 - 3. Peter walks on water
 - B. What It Means To Be A Doer Of The Word
 - 1. Proper foundations and storms
 - 2. The assured heart
- IV. FAITH'S CONFESSION
 - A. The God-Kind of Faith
 - 1. Abraham's name change
 - 2. How it works
 - B. Confession Brings Possession
 - 1. Jesus and the centurion
 - 2. Address the mountain
 - C. Speak Your Faith
 - 1. Guard your speech
 - 2. The power of the tongue
 - 3. The heart & mouth connection
- V. SUMMARY — FAITH THAT SPEAKS
- VI. ASSIGNMENTS

FOUNDATIONS FOR CHRISTIAN GROWTH

Lesson NINE FAITH'S CONFESSION — THE EXAMPLE OF GOD

I. INTRODUCTION

In the previous lesson we saw that it is by faith we receive all that God has given to us. God's only means of getting to us all that He has accomplished in Christ is through faith. That is why there is no more important theme in the New Testament. God's desire is that His children develop their faith, so that they can walk in it more and more each day.

God is much like our earthly parents in that He desires our *development and growth*. Just as parents are ecstatic about their child's first word or step, so God is pleased about our faith in His Word. He longs to see His children mature in the area of faith, so that they are able to stand on their own feet.

God has given to every Christian the same ability and potential for growth. Those who are strong in faith are not so because they are God's "favorites"; "*God is not one to show partiality*" (Acts 10:34). They are strong in faith because they have *developed* their faith through God's Word. Every believer has been given this same opportunity for spiritual development, and so **every believer is capable of having strong faith.**

II. OUR MEASURE OF FAITH

Any person who is born again has faith enough to appropriate God's righteousness. Thus, *every Christian has faith*. If a Christian did not have faith, he would not be saved. "*For by grace you have been saved through faith*" (Ephesians 2:8). Often, the enemy will put believers under condemnation by telling them that they don't have any faith. But, the Bible states that *every child of God has faith*. "*For through the grace given to me I say to every man among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith*" (Romans 12:3).

And opening his mouth, Peter said: "I most certainly understand now that God is not one to show partiality."

Acts 10:34

For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.

Ephesians 2:8

For through the grace given to me I say to every man among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith.

Romans 12:3

FOUNDATIONS FOR CHRISTIAN GROWTH

Lesson NINE FAITH'S CONFESSION — THE EXAMPLE OF GOD

So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.
Romans 10:17

And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.
I John 2:2

For "Whoever will call upon the name of the Lord will be saved."
Romans 10:13

In order that what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, saying, "He Himself took our infirmities, and carried away our diseases."
Matthew 8:17

God is a just God and would not require anything of His children which they were not able to do. God always gives us the ability to do what He commands before giving us the command. God is looking for us to live and to walk by faith. But He has also given to us the ability to do this, because He has allotted to each of us a *measure of faith*. This faith comes by the Word of God, and can be developed. It is up to the individual believer as to whether or not he will begin to exercise that faith which God has given to him, and develop it through the Word.

A. FAITH COMES BY HEARING

God's means of giving us faith, and increasing that faith, is His Word. "*So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ*" (Romans 10:17). The Word of God is what gives rise to faith in our spirits. Here we have a simple way in which we can obtain faith for any area of our lives. Faith will come as we read and meditate on the scriptures. We don't need to work it up, or strain to get it; faith comes automatically as we partake of God's Word.

1. Knowing the revealed will of God

Faith rests upon the *revealed will of God*. Only when you know the will of God in a matter can you have faith in that area. If you don't know that it is God's will to save, then you can't have faith for salvation. If you don't know that it is God's will to heal, then you can't have faith for healing. If you don't know that it is God's will to bless, then you can't have faith to be blessed of God.

The Bible reveals to us what God's will is by showing us all that God has already done through His Son. The Word reveals His will for salvation by showing how it was purchased for all on Calvary (I John 2:2), and stating that "*Whoever will call upon the name of the Lord will be saved*" (Romans 10:13). We know the will of God in the area of healing, because the Bible states that Jesus paid the price for it on the cross (Matthew 8:17). Faith arises in one's heart when he begins to see what God's will for him really is, and that the price to bring that will to pass has already been paid in full.

FOUNDATIONS FOR CHRISTIAN GROWTH

Lesson NINE FAITH'S CONFESSION — THE EXAMPLE OF GOD

2. Examples

Faith comes by hearing the *revealed will of God*, which is found in His Word. Paul once preached the gospel (Word of God) in a town called Lystra, and in the crowd was a lame man. "*This man was listening to Paul as he spoke, who, when he had fixed his gaze upon him, and had seen that he had faith to be made well, said with a loud voice, 'Stand upright on your feet.'* And he leaped up and began to walk." (Acts 14:9-10). The man obtained faith to be healed because he *heard* the Word preached, and faith sprang up in his heart. The hearing of the Word produced faith, and faith brought about the lame man's deliverance.

Much the same thing happened to Cornelius the centurion. Without so much as an altar call, Cornelius and his entire family were saved and filled with the Holy Spirit. He had been told by an angel to send for Peter, who would *speak words* by which he and all his household would be saved (Acts 11:13,14). As Peter preached the Word to them, the Holy Spirit fell upon them. Since the Spirit is only poured out on believers, it is safe to assume that Cornelius believed and was saved *while he was hearing the Word of God* from the mouth of the apostle Peter (Read Acts, chapter 10).

In both these examples from the scriptures, it is obvious that the faith which these men exhibited came as a result of their hearing the good news. Faith for any of God's blessings comes as a person *hears* the Word which declares those blessings to be God's will for all men.

And at Lystra there was sitting a certain man, without strength in his feet, lame from his mother's womb, who had never walked. This man was listening to Paul as he spoke, who, when he had fixed his gaze upon him, and had seen that he had faith to be made well, said with a loud voice, "Stand upright on your feet." And he leaped up and began to walk.

Acts 14:8-10

"And he reported to us how he had seen the angel standing in his house, and saying, 'Send to Joppa, and have Simon, who is also called Peter, brought here; and he shall speak words to you by which you will be saved, you and all your household.'"

Acts 11:13,14

FOUNDATIONS FOR CHRISTIAN GROWTH

Lesson NINE FAITH'S CONFESSION — THE EXAMPLE OF GOD

And He said to them, "Why are you so timid? How is it that you have no faith?"

Mark 4:40

And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and took hold of him, and said to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?"

Matthew 14:31

But Jesus, aware of this, said, "You men of little faith, why do you discuss among yourselves because you have no bread?"

Matthew 16:8

Now when Jesus heard this, He marveled, and said to those who were following, "Truly I say to you, I have not found such great faith with one in Israel."

Matthew 8:10

Then Jesus answered and said to her, "O woman, your faith is great! be it done for you as you wish." And her daughter was healed at once.

Matthew 15:28

And without becoming weak in faith he contemplated his own body, now as good as dead since he was about a hundred years old, and the deadness of Sarah's womb; yet, with respect to the promise of God, he did not waver in unbelief, but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God.

Romans 4:19,20

Listen, my beloved brethren: did not God choose the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?

James 2:5

And the statement found approval with the whole congregation; and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Arnenas and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch.

Acts 6:5

B. FAITH CAN BE DEVELOPED

It is evident from the scriptures that faith is a *measurable* spiritual quality. Jesus spoke of those who had *no faith* (Mark 4:40), those who had *little faith* (Matthew 14:31; 16:8), and those who had *great faith* (Matthew 8:10; 15:28). The Bible has many references to different types and stages of faith.

- Romans 4:19,20 Weak and strong faith compared
- James 2:5 Rich in faith
- Acts 6:5 Full of faith
- James 2:22 Perfect faith
- I Timothy 1:5 Unfeigned faith
- I John 5:4 Overcoming faith
- I Timothy 1:19 Shipwrecked faith

Not only is faith measurable, but it can be increased and developed. It is possible, if not essential, for a Christian to *grow in faith*. "We ought always to thank God for you, brothers, and rightly so, because **your faith is growing more and more**" (II Thessalonians 1:3 NIV).

This type of growth in faith is available to *every* Christian, not just to a select few "faith giants." God wants *all* of His children to be men and women of *great faith*, and not those of "little faith." He has put at our disposal all the tools and instructions necessary for us to grow in faith. If we will use them, we too will have a faith that is "growing more and more."

FOUNDATIONS FOR CHRISTIAN GROWTH

Lesson NINE FAITH'S CONFESSION — THE EXAMPLE OF GOD

You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected.

James 2:22

But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.

I Timothy 1:5

For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world — our faith.

I John 5:4

Keeping faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and suffered shipwreck in regard to their faith.

I Timothy 1:19

We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brethren, as is only fitting, because your faith is greatly enlarged, and the love of each one of you toward one another grows ever greater.

II Thessalonians 1:3

FOUNDATIONS FOR CHRISTIAN GROWTH

Lesson NINE FAITH'S CONFESSION — THE EXAMPLE OF GOD

And the apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith!" And the Lord said, "If you had faith like a mustard seed, you would say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and be planted in the sea'; and it would obey you."

Luke 17:5,6

1. Continue in the Word

Just as faith *comes* through the Word of God, so faith **also grows as we feed on and meditate in His Word**. It is not enough just to hear the Word once, and then assume that no more hearing of the Word is necessary. No one will ever grow in faith unless he *continues* in the Word. Faith will wither and die when one is not fed with the Word, just as a plant will die if it is not watered. In order to grow in faith, one must constantly reaffirm in his heart and mind the truth of what God has spoken.

Faith grows in an atmosphere where the Word of God is constantly going forth. This means at home, in one's own personal study time, and at a church where the Word is being preached. It is impossible for faith to grow when one hears the Word only intermittently, or when one constantly hears teaching that is contrary to faith. Faith for healing will not develop in a place where sickness is preached as the will of God. Faith for prosperity will not grow where poverty is taught as a virtue. Faith will only grow when a person *consistently* subjects himself to *hearing the Word*, at a church where it is taught, and at home in personal study.

2. Exercise

Exercise is another factor necessary for growing faith. Faith grows when it is used. Just as muscles develop when they are worked, so too, our faith develops when we use it. The disciples once asked Jesus to increase their faith. Jesus responded, "If you had faith like a mustard seed, you would say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and be planted in the sea'; and it would obey you" (Luke 17:6). Jesus' answer to their request for increased faith was simply an exhortation to *use* what they already had.

Faith will increase when it is *used*. Every time we stand in faith for the blessings of God, we are becoming stronger and stronger in that faith. Faith will not develop if it is not used, any more than muscles will develop if they are not used. To grow in faith, we must use the faith that we already have by standing and acting on the Word.

FOUNDATIONS FOR CHRISTIAN GROWTH

Lesson NINE FAITH'S CONFESSION — THE EXAMPLE OF GOD

3. The growth process

Growth and development don't occur overnight. It takes time to increase faith — time to hear and meditate in the Word, and time to exercise the faith that one has. Christians are not born again with the faith to move Mt. Everest! Trying to believe God for something that is beyond your maturity in faith will only lead to discouragement. For example, it is absurd to believe God for a new car, when one has never even believed God for a new pair of shoes. Faith grows a step at a time, not in one gigantic leap.

It is essential that Christians avoid making comparisons between themselves and other believers. Too often people try to emulate men of faith without realizing all that has gone into their growth. They want to be able to believe God for the same mighty things they see others receiving, without taking the time to hear the Word and develop their own faith.

If a man is strong in faith, one can be assured that he didn't get that way in a day. *Strong faith is a result of spending time consistently hearing and meditating in the Word, and then exercising that faith until it becomes strong and vibrant.*

III. ACTING ON THE WORD

Faith is "*the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen*" (Hebrews 11:1). Faith is an *inward* assurance and conviction; it is with the heart that a man believes (Romans 10:10). That assurance of the heart will always make itself known in *action*. If a person says that he has that inner assurance, yet shows no outward actions to prove it, then he is self-deluded. The apostle James said that faith without works is dead, or *useless* (James 2:17,20,26). In other words, faith without corresponding actions is not the kind of faith that receives from God.

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

Hebrews 11:1

For with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.

Romans 10:10

Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself.

James 2:17

But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless?

James 2:20

For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.

James 2:26

FOUNDATIONS FOR CHRISTIAN GROWTH

Lesson NINE FAITH'S CONFESSION — THE EXAMPLE OF GOD

But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.

James 1:22

You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected.

James 2:22

By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going.

Hebrews 11:8

Faith without works is really nothing more than mental assent. *Mental assent is an agreement with the Word of God which has no action to back it up.* Often, mental assent will appear to be very much like real faith. But the discriminating factor between the two is action. The “believer” will always act on his convictions, while the “mental assenter” will never show any corresponding actions to what he “agrees” is true.

“*But prove yourselves doers of the Word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves*” (James 1:22). Walking by faith in the Word of God means being a doer of the Word. It means acting in accordance with the assurance that is within our hearts. Now works or actions done *without* that inward assurance are not faith. But Bible faith must always have corresponding actions which give evidence of that inward conviction of the heart. It was when Abraham acted on what he believed that his faith was perfected (James 2:22), and he received from God.

A. FAITH AND OBEDIENCE

“*By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going*” (Hebrews 11:8). Abraham’s obedience sprang out of the assurance that was in his heart. He left his home to receive the promise of God which he had never seen, because he was convinced of the truthfulness and reality of that promise. Out of this conviction came action.

If Abraham had never acted in obedience to God’s call, all his “faith” in God’s promise would have been totally useless, or dead. It wasn’t Abraham’s mental assent to the promise of God that enabled him to receive. It was his *obedience* that brought about the fulfillment of the promise. If he hadn’t acted on his conviction, his faith would have been dead, and he never would have become the “father of many nations.”

Several times during the earthly ministry of Jesus, people received a miracle as they acted in correspondence with their faith. The actions they displayed were a witness of the faith that was in their hearts. We will look at three such incidents.

FOUNDATIONS FOR CHRISTIAN GROWTH

Lesson NINE FAITH'S CONFESSION — THE EXAMPLE OF GOD

1. The sick friend — Luke 5:17-20

Jesus recognized faith in men's actions. Four men once cut a hole in the roof of the house in which Jesus was teaching in order to lower their sick friend into His presence. They couldn't get him through the door because of the crowd. As they lowered the sick man in front of Jesus, the Bible says that Jesus "*saw their faith*" (Luke 5:20). In that act, He recognized the real inward assurance of their hearts. (Read Luke 5:17-20.) So assured were they that God's power would deliver their oppressed friend, that nothing would discourage them from getting him to Jesus.

2. The ten lepers — Luke 17:11-14

When ten lepers cried out to Jesus for mercy, He simply instructed them to go and show themselves to the priest. Under Levitical law, when a leper had received deliverance from the disease, then he was to go to the priest and make the proper sacrifices (Leviticus 14:1-4). Jesus told these men to go *before* they had received any manifestation of cleansing. "*And it came about that as they were going, they were cleansed*" (Luke 17:14).

They received a miracle when they acted in obedience to the Word of Jesus. Their action was a demonstration of their conviction of God's power to heal.

And it came about one day that He was teaching; and there were some Pharisees and teachers of the law sitting there, who had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and from Jerusalem; and the power of the Lord was present for Him to perform healing. And behold, some men were carrying on a bed a man who was paralyzed; and they were trying to bring him in, and to set him down in front of Him. And not finding any way to bring him in because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and let him down through the tiles with his stretcher, right in the center, in front of Jesus. And seeing their faith, He said, "Friend, your sins are forgiven you."
Luke 5:17-20

And it came about while He was on the way to Jerusalem, that He was passing between Samaria and Galilee. And as He entered a certain village, ten leprous men who stood at a distance met Him; and they raised their voices, saying, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!" And when He saw them, He said to them, "Go and show yourselves to the priests." And it came about that as they were going, they were cleansed.

Luke 17:11-14

Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, "This shall be the law of the leper in the day of his cleansing. Now he shall be brought to the priest, and the priest shall go out to the outside of the camp. Thus the priest shall look, and if the infection of leprosy has been healed in the leper, then the priest shall give orders to take two live clean birds and cedar wood and a scarlet string and hyssop for the one who is to be cleansed."

Leviticus 14:1-4

FOUNDATIONS FOR CHRISTIAN GROWTH

Lesson NINE FAITH'S CONFESSION — THE EXAMPLE OF GOD

And in the fourth watch of the night He came to them, walking upon the sea. And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were frightened, saying, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out for fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid." And Peter answered Him and said, "Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water." And He said, "Come!" And Peter got out of the boat, and walked on the water and came toward Jesus. But seeing the wind, he became afraid, and beginning to sink, he cried out, saying, "Lord, save me!" And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and took hold of him, and said to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" And when they got into the boat, the wind stopped.

Matthew 14:25-32

But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.

James 1:22

"And why do you call Me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say? Everyone who comes to Me, and hears My words, and acts upon them, I will show you whom he is like: he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid a foundation upon the rock; and when a flood arose, the river burst against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built. But the one who has heard, and has not acted accordingly, is like a man who built a house upon the ground without any foundation; and the river burst against it and immediately it collapsed, and the ruin of that house was great."

Luke 6:46-49

3. Peter walks on water — Matthew 14:25-32

In the account of Jesus and Peter walking on the water, attention is usually focused on Peter's failure. But here we will focus on the fact that Peter did indeed walk on the water. Jesus told Peter to come, and Peter acted on that command. The other eleven disciples didn't walk on water like Peter, because they didn't get out of the boat. Their "faith" was useless and accomplished nothing in that situation because they did not act. But Peter did act, and although he feared and began to sink, the fact remains that he walked on water. The rest of the disciples just sat in the boat looking. They didn't receive a miracle because they added no action to their faith. **If you want to walk on water, you have to get out of the boat.**

B. WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A DOER OF THE WORD

If a person is not a doer of the Word, but simply one who hears and doesn't act, the Bible says that he is self-deluded (James 1:22). This delusion arises when a person fails to distinguish between faith and mental assent. Faith and mental assent are in many ways similar. Both hear the Word of God. Both rejoice over the Word. Both state with conviction that they *believe* the Bible. But the difference between the two is shown in their *works*. Faith always has actions corresponding to an inward assurance. Mental assent never has any action attached to it. The one who hears but doesn't act is deluded into thinking that he has faith, when in reality he is simply mentally assenting to the Word.

1. Proper foundations and storms

Jesus Himself called upon men to be doers of the Word. He likened the doer to a wise man who built his house with foundations on the rock. When the storms came, the house stood. The hearer of the Word was likened to a fool who laid no foundation for his house at all. When the storm came, his house fell (Luke 6:46-49). Notice that before the storm, the wise man and the fool fared the same. But when the storm arrived, the difference between the two quickly became apparent.

FOUNDATIONS FOR CHRISTIAN GROWTH

Lesson NINE FAITH'S CONFESSION — THE EXAMPLE OF GOD

To hear the Word and not act on it is as foolish as building a house without a foundation. The house won't last, and neither will the person who only hears. It is the doer of the Word, the one who acts on the conviction in his heart, that will not be shaken. He will stand solidly in the midst of the storm, just like the house that is founded on the rock.

2. The assured heart

Faith comes by hearing (Romans 10:17). It is apparent from the scriptures that the first step in obtaining and developing faith is hearing the Word of God. That is the only way that we can get that settled assurance in our hearts. Then, when that conviction is settled within, we are to act on it. It is wrong, however, to act and step out when we *don't have that inner assurance*. Just stepping out and acting are not, in and of themselves, faith. Faith is not action; it is a *condition of the heart*.

"But the one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man shall be blessed in what he does" (James 1:25). One will not be an effectual doer until he has *looked intently* into the Word. Hearing has to come before acting. Some try to act when they haven't really yet heard, thinking that their action, in and of itself, is faith. But the works that please God are those that are done out of a heart that is fully assured of God's Word. These are the works which faith will manifest, and without which faith is dead.

It is the condition of the heart that pleases God, and not the works themselves. We cannot buy God's approval, or get Him to move in our behalf, by doing good works. Abraham was blessed because his heart was assured of God's goodness, not because of his works. The works which he did (i.e. his obedience to God) were simply indicative of what was already within his heart.

So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.
Romans 10:17

But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man shall be blessed in what he does.

James 1:25

FOUNDATIONS FOR CHRISTIAN GROWTH

Lesson NINE FAITH'S CONFESSION — THE EXAMPLE OF GOD

IV. FAITH'S CONFESSION

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

1 John 1:9

I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who testified the good confession before Pontius Pilate.

1 Timothy 6:13

Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering for He who promised is faithful.

Hebrews 10:23

That if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved.

Romans 10:9

at what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" — that is, the word of faith which we are preaching.

Romans 10:8

But having the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, "I believed, therefore I spoke," we also believe, therefore also we speak.

II Corinthians 4:13

The word "confession" is often used only in a negative sense, denoting an admission of sin and guilt. This indeed is a scriptural usage of the word (I John 1:9), but by no means its only meaning. More often when the Bible uses the word "confession," it is used in the positive sense of affirming one's faith with his mouth. Jesus is said to have had a *good confession* before Pontius Pilate (I Timothy 6:13), and this could not refer to an admission of sin. In the book of Hebrews, we are told to hold fast the confession of our hope (Hebrews 10:23).

One of the basic principles of Christianity is the *confession of faith*. Down through the centuries this has degenerated into a ritual, in which some words are mouthed for gaining church membership. But, the confession that comes from our mouths is an integral part of *any faith* that we have.

Paul stated that a man is saved when he believes *and* speaks! "If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved" (Romans 10:9). The word of faith is not just in our hearts; it must also be in our *mouths*. "The word is near you, **in your mouth and in your heart** — that is, the word of faith which we are preaching" (Romans 10:8).

"But having the same **spirit of faith**, according to what is written, 'I believed, therefore I spoke,' we also believe, therefore also we speak" (II Corinthians 4:13). The spirit of faith is one that believes and then speaks out that assurance which is in the heart. Faith always has a good confession which affirms the truth and reality of God's promises. This verbal affirmation of faith must come *before* there is any manifestation of the promise's fulfillment. Remember that *faith believes that God has provided the answer before it sees the result*. So also, confession is made of the reality of God's Word, even when the results have not yet been manifested in the seen realm.

FOUNDATIONS FOR CHRISTIAN GROWTH

Lesson NINE FAITH'S CONFESSION — THE EXAMPLE OF GOD

A. THE GOD-KIND OF FAITH

God is a faith God and operates in this same spirit of faith. When He created the universe, He did so with His words. *"By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God"* (Hebrews 11:3). In Genesis, chapter 1, we see that God said, *"Let there be light!"* (Genesis 1:3), and it was so. Jesus called this the faith of God (or the God-kind of faith). In teaching His disciples (and us) about faith, Jesus said, *"Have faith in God (have the faith of God — marginal reading). For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith"* (Mark 11:22,23 KJV). The God-kind of faith is faith that *speaks* what it believes. Notice that the word "say" appears more times in Jesus' lesson on faith than does the word "believe." We are to believe that what we say will come to pass. Many Christians think that what they believe will come to pass. But the word of faith is in our mouths, and must be spoken out if we are to receive from God.

1. Abraham's name change

God demonstrated this kind of faith in His dealings with His friend, Abram. God promised Abram a son, and then spoke His faith by changing Abram's name to Abraham. "Abraham" means "the father of a multitude." God called His friend "father of a multitude" before the promised son was even conceived. *"No longer will you be called Abram, your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you a father of many nations"* (Genesis 17:5 NIV). In the eyes of God, the promised son was an accomplished reality, so God spoke His faith by calling Abram a "father of a multitude," or Abraham.

In the cultural setting of Abraham's day, a person's name had great significance; one's name described his characteristics, and in many ways stated who and what that person was. Every time Abraham introduced himself by his new name, he was in effect making a *statement* to whomever he met that he was at that moment the "father of a multitude," even though Isaac was as yet unborn. (Read Genesis, chapter 17).

By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible.

Hebrews 11:3

Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light.

Genesis 1:3

And Jesus answered saying to them, "Have faith in God. Truly I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be taken up and cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says is going to happen, it shall be granted him."

Mark 11:22,23

"No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I will make you the father of a multitude of nations."

Genesis 17:5

FOUNDATIONS FOR CHRISTIAN GROWTH

Lesson NINE FAITH'S CONFESSION — THE EXAMPLE OF GOD

2. How it works

This is the way in which the God-kind of faith works. It is in the very nature of God to speak of spiritual realities as though they already existed in the physical realm. In the book of Romans, Paul lists two great attributes of God. He refers to Him as "*the God who gives life to the dead and calls those things that are not as though they were*" (Romans 4:17 NIV). That God is One who gives life to the dead, no one will dispute. But, it is just as much a part of His nature to call things which are not (in the physical realm) as though they already existed. This He demonstrated by renaming Abram, Abraham.

The God-kind of faith, then, is faith that *speaks what it believes*. Faith is not fully functional until a person is speaking from the assurance that is within his heart. When he does so, he is operating in the same spirit of faith in which God operates. He believes; therefore he speaks.

B. CONFESSION BRINGS POSSESSION

The positive confession of God's Word is an essential part of the faith which receives from God. It is as a person begins to speak out his faith in the Word of God that the "mountains" will begin to move. Words will cause the things which we desire to come to pass, when they are spoken out of the full assurance of faith. Since faith comes by hearing the Word of God, it is apparent that the word which we speak must be God's, and not just our own. God's Word has all of His authority and power backing it up, so that when it is spoken in faith, it comes to pass.

Words, in and of themselves, are ineffective in the spiritual world. It is only when words are connected with faith in the heart that they accomplish things. The man who has whatever he says, is the man who doesn't doubt in his heart, but *believes* that what he says will happen (Mark 11:23). Words spoken with no corresponding faith in the heart will not move the mountain. The seven sons of Sceva once tried to speak words of authority over a demon, but had no faith in their hearts (they didn't believe in Jesus). The Bible says that their words were completely ineffective (Acts 19:13-16).

(As it is written, "A father of many nations have I made you") in the sight of Him whom he believed, even God, who gives life to the dead and calls into being that which does not exist.

Romans 4:17

"Truly I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be taken up and cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says is going to happen, it shall be granted him."

Mark 11:23

But also some of the Jewish exorcists, who went from place to place, attempted to name over those who had the evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, "I adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preaches." And seven sons of one Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, were doing this. And the evil spirit answered and said to them, "I recognize Jesus, and I know about Paul, but who are you?" And the man, in whom was the evil spirit, leaped on them and subdued all of them and overpowered them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded.

Acts 19:13-16

FOUNDATIONS FOR CHRISTIAN GROWTH

Lesson NINE FAITH'S CONFESSION — THE EXAMPLE OF GOD

But, words spoken out of a heart that is full of faith in God and His Word are effective and carry great authority. When a believer speaks God's Word with the conviction of its reality in his heart, it is as though God Himself were speaking. The results are the same — the mountain will move.

1. Jesus and the centurion

Jesus exemplified this kind of faith in His earthly ministry. When a storm arose which threatened to capsize His boat, he spoke to the wind and the waves to be still, and they obeyed Him (Mark 4:37-39). When Peter's mother-in-law was sick with a fever, Jesus rebuked the fever, and it left her (Luke 4:38,39). Jesus' words carried authority, because He believed that what He said would come to pass.

The centurion who came to Jesus on behalf of his sick servant understood the power of words. When Jesus offered to come to his house to heal the servant, the centurion replied that all Jesus need do was speak the word!

"But just say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I too am a man under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to this one, 'Go!' and he goes, and to another, 'Come!' and he comes, and to my slave, 'Do this!' and he does it" (Matthew 8:8,9).

Jesus marvelled at his *great faith*. The centurion knew that because he was a man who had authority, his words were effective. He recognized the same thing in Jesus. Jesus' words carried power to heal, because they were backed by the power of heaven. His word was sufficient to effect a cure in the sick man.

2. Address the mountain

In the same way the Word of God, spoken from the mouth of a believer, has the authority of Heaven behind it. The mountain will move when the Word is spoken. Many people believe for the mountain to move, but they don't speak to it; many pray and ask God to move the mountain, but never address it themselves. Jesus told us to speak to the mountain in faith.

And there arose a fierce gale of wind, and the waves were breaking over the boat so much that the boat was already filling up. And He Himself was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they awoke Him and said to Him, "Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?" And being aroused, He rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Hush, be still." And the wind died down and it became perfectly calm.

Mark 4:37-39

And He arose and left the synagogue, and entered Simon's home. Now Simon's mother-in-law was suffering from a high fever; and they made request of Him on her behalf. And standing over her, He rebuked the fever, and it left her; and she immediately arose and began to wait on them.

Luke 4:38,39

But the centurion answered and said, "Lord, I am not worthy for You to come under my roof, but just say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I, too, am a man under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to this one, 'Go!' and he goes, and to another, 'Come!' and he comes, and to my slave, 'Do this!' and he does it."

Matthew 8:8,9

FOUNDATIONS FOR CHRISTIAN GROWTH

Lesson NINE FAITH'S CONFESSION — THE EXAMPLE OF GOD

"You brood of vipers, how can you, being evil, speak what is good? For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart. The good man out of his good treasure brings forth what is good; and the evil man out of his evil treasure brings forth what is evil."

Matthew 12:34,35

In this situation, He didn't tell us to pray; He told us to **SAY!** Too often, Christians are praying when they should be saying. There is a time for prayer; but there is also a time to open our mouths and speak to the mountain, difficulty, or adverse situation and command it to be gone. When we do this, we are walking in the footsteps of our Lord, and following the instructions and examples that He left us.

C. SPEAK YOUR FAITH

The God-kind of faith always speaks what it believes. That assurance within a man's heart will find expression in a positive confession of God's Word. Jesus said that what is in a man's heart in abundance will be manifested by what he says with his mouth (Matthew 12:34,35). In other words, *you can always locate a person by their speech.* If a person's heart is full of faith, it will be evident by what he says. This positive confession is to be made *before* there is any manifestation of it in the physical. Remember that God called Abram, Abraham, *before* Isaac was born. God calls things which are not as though they were, before they are manifested. We are to *believe* that we have received things before we have them; we are also to *say* that we have received before we have them. This is exactly opposite to the way the world operates, but it is exactly in line with the way God operates. The pattern is simple.

BELIEVE

CONFESS

RECEIVE

FOUNDATIONS FOR CHRISTIAN GROWTH

Lesson NINE FAITH'S CONFESSION — THE EXAMPLE OF GOD

1. Guard your speech

The scriptures are full of admonitions for believers to guard their speech. *"The one who guards his mouth preserves his life; The one who opens wide his lips comes to ruin"* (Proverbs 13:3). *"He who guards his mouth and his tongue guards his soul from troubles"* (Proverbs 21:23). These are just two among many references which warn against being careless with words. Also read Proverbs 10:19; 17:28; Ecclesiastes 5:2; James 1:19; 3:2).

It is possible for a believer to make statements which tend to negate the faith in their heart. Often, when believing God for a particular thing, Christians will speak only what their eyes can see and their emotions can feel. If they are believing for healing, but haven't yet received a manifestation, their speech will be all about how sick they are. What they should rather say is: *"By His stripes I was healed"* (I Peter 2:24). They may be believing for financial prosperity, but their words are always a complaint about how they don't have enough money. They should rather say: *"My God shall supply all my needs . . ."* (Philippians 4:19).

The one who guards his mouth preserves his life; the one who opens wide his lips comes to ruin.
Proverbs 13:3

He who guards his mouth and his tongue, guards his soul from troubles.
Proverbs 21:23

When there are many words, transgression is unavoidable. But he who restrains his lips is wise.
Proverbs 10:19

Even a fool, when he keeps silent, is considered wise; when he closes his lips, he is counted prudent.
Proverbs 17:28

Do not be hasty in word or impulsive in thought to bring up a matter in the presence of God. For God is in heaven and you are on earth; therefore let your words be few.
Ecclesiastes 5:2

This you know, my beloved brethren, but let everyone be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger.
James 1:19

For we all stumble in many ways. If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body as well.
James 3:2

FOUNDATIONS FOR CHRISTIAN GROWTH

Lesson NINE FAITH'S CONFESSION — THE EXAMPLE OF GOD

Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit.

Proverbs 18:21

“Truly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, ‘Be taken up and cast into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says is going to happen, it shall be granted him.

Mark 11:23

2. The power of the tongue

“Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit” (Proverbs 18:21). Few have realized the full import of this statement. A person can experience life or death depending on what he allows to come forth from his mouth. Constant negative confession of doubt and despair will bring to pass those things which are being spoken. One negative statement, said unwittingly or in jest, will not cause evil to come about. But if a believer gets into the habit of continually confessing negative things, he’ll get to a point where his heart will start to believe the things which his mouth is continually saying. When the words of his mouth begin to align with what he believes in his heart, the principle of Mark 11:23 will be fulfilled in a negative sense.

One negative statement will not bring disaster on a believer. There are times when we must inform those who can help us of what our problem is. Having a positive confession does not mean that we are to *hide* our difficulties from our brethren. The thing to be avoided is the continual confession of defeat. This is why we must put a guard on our mouths and not allow ourselves the luxury of an *undisciplined mouth*. The occasional negative confession will turn into the frequent negative confession, and the frequent negative confession will soon become a continual negative confession. Thus, it is best to stop negative statements while they are still occasional, rather than waiting until they are a deep-seated habit.

3. The heart & mouth connection

When a person is believing God and exercising faith, he must maintain a positive confession of God’s Word. It is the confession of the Word, when connected with assurance in one’s heart, that will bring about a manifestation of the answer. This confession must be made out of the conviction of one’s heart. Remember that the one who does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says will come to pass, will have what he says. There must be a connection between the heart and the mouth.

Thus, there are two purposes behind confessing God’s Word. The first is so that we may become more and more assured in our hearts of what the Lord has to say about our situation. As

FOUNDATIONS FOR CHRISTIAN GROWTH

Lesson NINE FAITH'S CONFESSION — THE EXAMPLE OF GOD

a person confesses the Word aloud to himself, he is in reality meditating on the scriptures (remember, to meditate means "to mutter to oneself"). As he meditates on the Word by confessing again and again, the assurance of faith begins to rise up in his heart. Then he can speak to the mountain, fully believing God's Word on the subject, and the mountain will obey him.

Just as the world is in the habit of saying things that are negative, so Christians ought to get into the habit of only speaking things which are in accordance with the Word. Believers need to be continually affirming the faith that is in their hearts by speaking God's Word, *the answer*, rather than speaking the problem. Talking about the problem can only make it worse, but talking about the answer will bring about its manifestation in your life.

V. SUMMARY — FAITH THAT SPEAKS

God wants His children to have and to use faith. "*Without faith it is impossible to please Him*" (Hebrews 11:6). But, God has given to each one of us a measure of faith and has told us the way in which we may develop and use that faith. God's Word is the source of any faith we now have, and it is the source of any increase of faith we may experience in the future.

To walk by faith means to exercise the faith that God has given us and to speak out of our mouths the Word of God. As we act on the Word, both by obeying its precepts and by confessing it daily, we will not only grow in faith, but we will receive from God's gracious hand all that He has given to us through the death of His Son.

God's will for His children is health, prosperity, victory, and complete deliverance from the power of the enemy. God wants us blessed in every area of our lives. But, we will only receive these blessings as we begin to put all our trust and confidence in God and His Word. Thus, one of the reasons that faith is pleasing to God the Father is that it makes us able to receive more and more of His blessings.

Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit.

Proverbs 18:21

"Truly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be taken up and cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says is going to happen, it shall be granted him.

Mark 11:23

And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.

Hebrews 11:6