

The Life I Live by Faith
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The life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God.

What set my heart to singing was a thought inspired by this verse. I thought, "What if it were possible to live such a life of faith myself?" I mean by that, "Could I live such a life of faith as Paul did?" Could anyone live with such a delivery as to do that? And, the answer is, "Yes!" Yes, one can and today I want to share with you how that is possible.

Here's the first thing. How's your love of God? Is it warm, passionate? Is it with **all your heart, and soul, and mind and might**? Because, if it isn't, you are not alone. There are countless multitudes whose love of God is nowhere near their **first love**. It is nowhere near fervent, fierce and, and for some, it is nowhere near as captivating and wonder-filled as it could be. Truly. BUT it can be fanned into flame, yes, it can . . . and this is how.

Let's suppose you believe you ought to love God. You believe that your love for God ought to be so tremendous as to be stupendous. Again, I hope you, or some of you are with me. You might say, "Frankly, my love of God, Pastor, is rather blah. And I don't know how to ramp it up."

Well, this is how to ramp it up. Turn to the word. Read over Romans 5:5: **And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.** The love of the Holy Spirit for God **has *already* been poured into our hearts!** That is to say, we do not have to work up our love of God—I already have high octane love for God from the Holy Spirit. It is in my heart already. Perhaps you might want to pray for an increase of that love in quantity, but there is no question about its quality: *there is no finer love for God than that love of the Holy Spirit for God.* Top grade, I say, and I possess it already. All I need to do is to offer that bestowed love to God and it's done. My emotional assessment of that love, how I feel about it is an inadequate gauge of its quantity, or quality! It's **God's love**.

And, if that should not convince you, turn over to Luke 11:13: **If you, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him.** Just how does that fit in to my desire to love God more perfectly? Simple, here the Lord assures us that we **can ask** for the Holy Spirit and **God's love** (which) **has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit will be ours for the asking!** So we pray, Lord, give me the good gift of the Holy Spirit that I might receive of him the promised love of God as recorded, as gifted in Scripture that I might love God with that love! It is very unlikely that God will refuse that request . . . ever.

But there's even more in the word on this vital matter. In John 17:26, our Lord prays this for us: **I have made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them.** *This means that the love of the Father is Jesus' prayer request for us.* Now, who amongst us wants to question that the Lord's prayers are all answered prayers? Consider John 11:41-42, which reads: **So they took away the stone. And Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, "Father I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for of the people standing around, that they may believe that you have sent me.** Yes, Jesus, maintained a prayer life of answered prayer. So we have the love with which you (Father God) have loved me (the Son) in us (or in them!).

When we take stock then, we have the **love of God poured out by the Holy Spirit. . . into our hearts and** we have, ***the love of the Father for the Son . . .*** in us, conveyed to us. ***We have acquired the love, from God, with which we can love Him perfectly, divinely.*** And all we have to do is ask for its increase . . . yes, ask God to fulfill Jesus' prayer in us and you and I will be able to love God wholly, entirely—as **with all your soul, and strength and mind and might.** God has made it possible for us to fulfill the first and foremost great commandment, so do what we can do.

If the Holy Spirit is the "only great lover of God," we can further petition Him to make that love our personal, passionate and overwhelming love the center of our being. We can do this knowing that whatever obstacles may lie in the road, the power of God is able to detect them and remove them *the very instance that we consent for Him to do so!* And as the Father answers these prayers, we will glow in our core as an incandescent light as the very love of very God ignites us. This is the very prayer of Paul in Ephesians 3:14-19:

14 For this reason I bend my knees before the Father, 15 from whom [a]¹every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, 16 that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner [b]self, 17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; *and* that you, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 may be able to comprehend with all the [c]saints what is the width and length and height and depth, 19 and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that *you may be filled to all the fullness of God.*

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Footnotes

- a. Ephesians 3:15 Or *the whole*
- b. Ephesians 3:16 Lit *person*
- c. Ephesians 3:18 See note v 8

What also comes to mind at this juncture is Jude 17-21:

17 But you, beloved, ought to remember the words that were spoken beforehand by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ, 18 that they were saying to you, “In the last time there will be mockers, following after their own ungodly lusts.” 19 These are the ones who cause divisions [a]²worldly-minded, [b]devoid of the Spirit. 20 But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, 21 keep yourselves in the love of God, looking forward to the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life.

- a. Keep yourselves in the love of God . . .** yes, exactly. But, this is not a matter of exertion, or of “trying” to center oneself in God so much as it is faithfully staying open to God’s love and then to the flow of that love through you to others! It is believing God does what He does. . . what He wants to and, yes, is willing to do.

Here’s the second thing: by self-examination question whether or not God is the center of your life. How? Ask yourself whether you are Christ-centered, or self-centered? Ask whether your goal is self-realization, or Christ realization? How does one accomplish that? Well, check and see if you are prone to asking, “Why is this happening to me?” If God’s honor is your primary focus, you will not turn aside when people insult, or slight you. It will matter less and less.

If God is the center of your life, you will see yourself as “a human edition written in such a manner as to bring glory and honor to God.” As the mind of Christ showed itself through his speech and actions, so it will be in your life. And as you begin to realize Christ in your members, you will notice the uptick in spiritual antagonism because just as Satan sought to de-center Jesus, he will come against you—urging you to do things your way . . . and as Jesus operated out of his sense of Sonship to the Father, we must begin to operate out of our sense of oneness with Him. And just to be clear, it is not merely wondering, “What would Jesus do?” It is asking, “What would Jesus think and do?” Thinking to “do good, repay evil with good, to forgive and be forgiven, to love in a costly, even redemptive manner” is to precede your doings. Asking “will this bring honor and glory to God? In this mode, refusal to sin, or to act

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Footnotes

a. Jude 1:19 Or *merely natural*
 b. Jude 1:19 Lit *not having*

immorally, is not just because it's wrong, or stupid, but because it is dishonoring.

Joseph's cry was not, "This is wrong, or immoral" although adultery is certainly both! . . . No, it was, "How can I do this great sin against God!" And not merely other human beings!

Remember Jesus' saying: **I came not to do my will . . . but the will of Him who sent Me.** This should be our mindset! Doing Christ's will is the great mark of a regenerated heart! Thinking, "Wow, I am not here to please myself! If I please myself and displease God, what advantage is that?! Will others see **my good works and give praise to God?** Or will they give praise to me, and flatter my self-esteem? The point is to turn temptation on a dime . . . to refuse, out of love for God, to throw any shade on Him or His doings. Refuse to leave your first love, rather revisit and renew it and ask God to make you "Love Central" in your family, school and neighborhood. "This little light of mine, I'm going to let it shine."

Jesus was God-centered. That must be our goal as well. All goodness, religion and spirituality which is not God-centered is, by definition, a distraction, a diversion and Satan's attempt to de-center us and disable our walk with God. Always. All of Christ's teachings seem to orbit about the dethronement of self, and the enthronement of Himself as your new center. He is not calling us to "be nothing;" rather, He is calling us "to be something." And, which is more, He is calling us to be aggressively, and powerfully, uncrushably something . . . and that something is. . . a someone, someone who stands in the presence of God, who stands on the Rock! He wants us to be a person in whom He can walk and talk and do what He would have done. And the person who is passionately, personally and pervasively His, will do just that!

"Let it dawn on us that whatever gives us pleasure outside of Christ's interests is selfishness. But Christ-centered selfishness is our ultimate obedience. It will invite few and may antagonize many." (CHS)

Unless my relationship to God is right, I understand that my sympathy for men will be disordered. *You will have no idea what justice is even if you were inclined to seek it.* Such goals will lead me astray and them also. Getting right with my God is what allows me to love them truly. And that is because He who has loved

me has loved me past my sinfulness. . . my self-will . . . my pride . . . and my self-interest. And it is after all that, that I am cleared to **love my neighbor as myself**.

“This same love with which God has loved me is the same love with which I am to love my neighbor” but the One who makes this possible has done every necessary thing to enable me to do so . . . this makes Christianity a wonder to the world, a working wonder that is plainly in working order.

Amen.