

WORD AT WORK

Dear Friends:

Hebrews 11:1,2 and 6 state, “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a *good* testimony. But 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 diligently seek Him.” These verses are so good it is very easy to lift them from their context applying the principles to what we want.

The context of chapter 10 addresses not only the necessity of using our faith on our flesh to resist sin, avoiding the consequent fearful expectation of judgment, but also to set our mind on eternal things to the point we could joyfully accept government appropriation of assets.

The contextual applications of faith which please God all have primary elements of the cross at their core. Abel used his faith on his flesh to offer a more excellent sacrifice than Cain. Enoch used his faith to leave earth, not gain what it offers. Noah used his faith to persevere in great persecution, possessing the promise through daily endurance.

Abraham and Sarah used their faith to pursue the vision set before them and were rewarded by not being tempted to turn back. Isaac, Jacob and Joseph used their faith for their kids, by proclaiming prophetic promises over them. God honored their faith for future generations!

Moses, like Jesus, used his faith on his flesh to obey. He forfeited personal status and a life of luxury to serve an unthankful people. Moses demonstrated using faith to endure dramatic cost with tremendous initial loss. Everything taken was returned to the people through Moses’ anointing. Using our faith on our flesh to obey God yields an eternal reward. What kind of faith do we have? Are we using faith for personal benefit or to satisfy our heavenly Father?

Yours in Him,

Al Houghton

W O R D A T W O R K

VOLUME XXIV NUMBER II
Using Faith On Your Flesh To Obey God

SUNDAY, February 1

Scripture: Revelation 3:14-16

One of the often forgotten components of spiritual warfare is the depth and dimension which geography dictates applications of our faith. A simple way to present this might be: How much of our adversity is fostered by where we live? Jesus confronted this issue with the church at Laodicea. On the surface His words seem like a strong rebuke, but really upon closer scrutiny we discover an exhortation to use faith to overcome the challenges of where they live. The issue of being “...lukewarm and neither cold nor hot...” comes from the physical manifestation of having Hierapolis on one side and Collossae on the other. Laodicea just happened to be in the middle, a city completely without water whose location was dictated by the juncture of the North-South and East-West primary trade routes for the entire empire. Laodicea bought water from both Collossae and Hierapolis. Hierapolis had hot springs. Collossae had cold artesian wells. By the time the water arrived through aqueducts at Laodicea it was lukewarm. There is a very strong case to be made for the fact that geography often dictates dimensions of spiritual warfare. It has to be discerned and understood in order to use our faith effectually overcoming resident principalities and powers which appear to have a claim on the people based on location. Resident strongholds influence all who live there. How often do we consider geography in our spiritual warfare? For most of the Church, “where we live” is hardly ever given any consideration. Those of us in Church leadership have a responsibility to address significant issues, especially those with strong geographical roots. Apparently the church at Laodicea had become captive to both geography and culture. It is certainly something worth exploring in this season.

MONDAY, February 2

Scripture: Revelation 3:17

Verse 17 says, “Because you say, ‘I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing – and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked --...’” Verse 17 offers another clue to the apparent importance of geography in our spiritual warfare. Laodicea, because of its geographical position as the center of North-South and East-West trade, developed as a banking and currency exchange center. When a major earthquake brought much destruction throughout the empire, Laodicea was the only city that didn’t request aid from Rome to rebuild. It had become quite wealthy, strictly because of its geography. Is there a Laodicean component to the Church in America based on our geography? Is there a difference between the churches in our large commercial regions versus churches in smaller areas? Is there a difference in the warfare that families face who are part of rural churches or churches in smaller cities as compared to their wealthier urban counterparts? Is there a difference in the warfare that Christians face who live on the West Coast as compared to those who live on the East Coast? Is there a difference between the Northwest and the Southeast? Geography may be a component that God is calling us to consider as we approach the end-times in order to fulfill all that He has for us regionally!

TUESDAY, February 3

Scripture: Revelation 3:18

Verse 18 says, “I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, *that* the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve; that you may see.” The word to the Laodicean church in the first five verses explicitly deals with issues of geography. “...gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich;...” addressed the issue of the wealth from trade that naturally developed. The “...white garments, that you may be clothed...” specifically addressed the garment district of Laodicea that developed from the very unique black wool harvested from the sheep of that region. Laodicea had earned a reputation for producing the finest tunics in the empire. The garments were jet-black. The wealth of the region supported medical research and they also became an ophthalmic research center. They produced a healing salve for the eyes that was sold throughout the empire. Isn’t it interesting that the great achievements resulting from geography apparently contributed in constructing strongholds creating spiritual blindness which had to be addressed. The successes that were achieved and resultant blessing, perhaps due to the pride of man, brought with them a spiritual deficit that had to be addressed. Is it possible that the blessing of our geography also carries with it a spiritual deficit that has to be discerned and addressed? It was not considered at all at Laodicea. I wonder if it’s discerned at all in the American church? Is the West Coast church aware? Is the East Coast church cognizant? Is the Southern church geographically captive? Is the Hawaiian church alert to its historical warfare? Is the Alaskan church aware? The variety of geographical blessing for which different regions have gained a reputation may, in fact, also carry with them a spiritual warfare that needs to be discerned and addressed. The last of the seven churches of Revelation may, in fact, hold a key for the Church of the last days.

WEDNESDAY, February 4

Scripture: Revelation 19-20

Verses 19 and 20 state, “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.” Is it possible that natural achievement and renown gained by success of geographical, historical heritage carries with it spiritual deficits of equal proportions? Who can deny the arrogance of East Coast cities, where major Revolutionary War events occurred? The attitude of cultural superiority is so prominent in some cities whose roots are in America’s earliest Colonies. Geography may eclipse impact, in some cases dominate. For example, the East Coast church, around Washington, D.C., quite possibly faces the influence of the power and position-seeking that is so much a part of the Washington, D.C. culture. The church in Southern California or the church in Hawaii, because of the entertainment and “laissez-faire” “surfs up” attitude could probably care less whether they had any position or title at all. The warfare of the region has a definite impact on the attitude we have to deal with in church. The geography of Washington, D.C. could produce a variety of volunteers seeking position and title. Whereas the geography of Southern California or Hawaii could make it very difficult to find somebody to fill a position. When Jesus spoke to the church at Laodicea, He specifically addressed the spiritual deficits that arose from issues of geography. Perhaps, as we approach winding up the age, it is time for this arena of spiritual warfare to gain consideration as part of our end-time responsibilities.

THURSDAY, February 5

Scripture: Revelation 3:21-22

In verses 21 and 22 Jesus promises, “To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” One of the first questions we would have to ask is what success or renown if, in fact, the region where we reside has any, would impact us spiritually? The answer for the church in Charleston would be far different from the church in Anchorage. The answer for the church in Princeville, Hawaii would be far different from the church in Placerville, California. The church in Seattle would have a very different answer from the church in Sterling, Alaska, and the church in Andrews, Texas would be far different from the church in Anaheim, California. The first thing we must do is identify regional roots. Secondly, the subsequent regional attitudes and actions must be discerned.

Thirdly, how do we address those issues and confront the residue of our historical geographical heritage? These questions move us toward appropriate action.

FRIDAY, February 6

Scripture: Isaiah 55:1-2 Revelation 3:18

In Revelation 3:18 Jesus said, “ ‘I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich;...’ ” whereas in Isaiah 55 we are exhorted to come buy...without money...and without price. Verse 1 says, “Ho! Everyone who thirsts, Come to the waters; And you who have no money, Come, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk Without money and without price.” The question, now, becomes one of how do we buy from God? Since we are exhorted under the Old Covenant and under the New to “buy from Him” this now becomes a function of application. The answer has to be, “**TIME DIVINELY DIRECTED** and **faith accurately applied**”. In the first case, “**TIME DIVINELY DIRECTED**” has to address the issue of “...buy without money and without price.” There is only one thing that God has given every man, woman and child the same amount of – and that is “time.” Time in the Kingdom spends somewhat like money in the natural. “Time” is a commodity that can be spent or exchanged for spiritual things. **TIME DIVINELY DIRECTED** is very much an answer to how we buy from God. Where we spend our time reflects the things on which we place the greatest value. How much we value God can be seen by how we spend our time. When the Lord exhorts us to “come buy from Him” part of what He is saying is reflected in how we spend our time. “Time” divinely directed has spiritual purchasing power. Spent time reflects worship!

SATURDAY, February 7

Scripture: Hebrews 11:1-2

The second part of “buying from God” is faith accurately applied. In Hebrews 11:1-2 we are told, “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a *good* testimony.” One reflection of maturity is the objects on which we use our faith. Immaturity is reflected in the continual use of faith for things. Things that will pass away. However, as God takes us more and more on the journey of maturity toward Christ-likeness, we find an increasing call to use our faith on our flesh to obey Him. Buying from God is a component of **TIME DIVINELY DIRECTED** and **faith accurately applied**. One question we must ask which has a geographical component is, “Are we using our faith to please ourselves, or are we using our faith to please God ?”

SUNDAY, February 8

Scripture: Hebrews 11:3-6

Verses 4-6 say, “By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness (testimony) that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and through it he being dead still speaks. By faith Enoch was translated so that he did not see death, *‘and was not found because God had translated him’*; for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God. But 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 diligently seek Him.” A unique thread that runs through Hebrews 11 is the willingness of Faith’s Hall Of Fame to use their faith on their flesh to obey God. They were consistent and being called to consistently use their faith to overcome. When they did, it produced a testimony that God gave to their heart. Divine testimony cannot be gained any other way. The **witness** that God gives becomes a platform of faith that is only produced in obedience when we use our faith on our flesh. How we use our faith becomes a yardstick of maturity. How would you like to spend your whole life teaching people to use their faith to satisfy their flesh and see the erosion of a life’s work before the Judgment seat? How would it feel to have your whole ministry eaten up because you never taught the cross? Judgment day may have a few surprises. Are we willing to use our faith to overcome the geographical components of our spiritual warfare? That is an issue, prophetically speaking, God is calling us to address.

MONDAY, February 9

Scripture: Genesis 12:1-3

It certainly should be no surprise that when God called Abraham, he had to use his faith on his flesh to overcome both geographical and cultural elements. Genesis 12:1 says, “Now the LORD had said to Abram: ‘Get out of your country, From your kindred And from your father’s house, To a land that I will show you.’” The first issue of faith for Abraham was to defy his culture, and to separate from his geography. Is it possible that this picture of the beginning of biblical covenant has a spiritual component that we must all now address? God wants us to be free from the dictates of our geography, the dictates of our historical heritage and the dictates of our nationality. Is it possible that there is a call to use our faith on our flesh to qualify as citizens of God’s Kingdom and to recognize the warfare that is involved as citizens of our earthly region? Is there a conflict that comes from being a Californian, an American, a Hawaiian, a South Carolinian, a New Yorker, an Alaskan or a Texan? Texas has certainly gained notoriety for the land of independent cowboys, defenders of freedom to the death, the Alamo mentality. Can we use our faith on our flesh and defend God’s Kingdom? Most of us have probably never considered the geographical historical attitudes/components that we must address in becoming all God has called us to be. Abram’s life and ministry started by using his faith on his flesh to obey God. It may be that our life in the eternal Kingdom must start at the same place. The good news is – Abram wasn’t very successful. God told him to get out of his country, from his kindred, and he had a very difficult time overcoming his cultural heritage. That means there is great hope for us.

TUESDAY, February 10

Scripture: Genesis 12:1; 11:31

In Genesis 12:1 God had (past tense) told Abram to leave his family and get out of his father’s house. But it is obvious from 11:31 that Abram bowed to his culture. He lived in a patriarchal society and it was unthinkable that he would ever make a move unless he submitted it first to the patriarch. Not only did Abram submit it to the patriarch, but 11:31 tells us, “And Terah took his son Abram and his grandson Lot, the son of Haran, and his daughter-in-law Sarai, his son Abram’s wife, and they went out with them from Ur of the Chaldeans to go to the land of Canaan; and they came to Haran and dwelt there.” It is obvious that Abram submitted what God told him to his father, Terah, and Terah decided that if God wanted to bless Abram he would go along for the ride. Abram had a difficult time using his faith on his flesh to obey God. The cultural heritage was too great to overcome. God had to help him out. He did and Terah died. That is one quick way to get obedient. When God removes the crutch, we have to stand on our own two feet and walk. Abram did. He was forced into it. And it may be that when we decide to use our faith on our flesh to obey God, we also get forced into some things or drawn down paths we would never have chosen. This was Abram’s life and it certainly may well be ours. Are we willing to use our faith on our flesh to obey God? Do we have any choice? We do have a choice, but I rather suspect on Judgment day we’ll be quite glad that we were willing to follow the biblical pattern.

WEDNESDAY, February 11

Scripture: Genesis 12:4

Genesis 12:4 says, “So Abram departed as the LORD had spoken to him, and Lot went with him. And Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran.” We could easily add the word “eventually” to verse 4 and be fairly accurate. Even after Abram submits it to his father and they move toward Canaan, God helps him out. Terah dies, leaving Abram to be the patriarch. Apparently Abram was the firstborn, according to Genesis 11:27. But as the patriarch, he has responsibility. God is trying to get him delivered from his culture and his geography, but deliverance is hard to possess when dealing with this magnitude of warfare. So Abram takes Lot with him, in direct opposition to God’s command. The neat thing about God is, He gives us space and time to grow in using our faith on our flesh to obey Him. I rather suspect that we will all rejoice throughout eternity over that issue and perhaps we need to give each other as much grace and mercy over this issue as God extends to us. Abram, in the first part of his life, looks much more like the father of unbelief than the father of faith, because at each juncture of confrontation, each opportunity to use his faith on his flesh, witnesses an absolute utter failure. It must be a testimony to God’s grace that Abraham became the father of all them that believe. Perhaps God stuck with Abram long enough until he

saw the principle, and once he saw it he could begin to do it. Are we that way? Is it possible that once we *see* it we will begin to *do* it and that is why God's grace is still upon us?

THURSDAY, February 12

Scripture: Genesis 13:8-10

In Genesis 13:8-9 we are told, "So Abram said to Lot, 'Please let there be no strife between you and me, and between my herdsmen and your herdsmen; for we are brethren. Is not the whole land before you? Please separate from me. If you take the left, then I will go to the right; or, if you go to the right, then I will go to the left.'" Once again we find God helping Abram out. This time the strife is so bad that Abram decides he is finally going to get obedient and in the process as he offers Lot the best choice. "You are a herdsman, you choose where you want to go and what you want to do. I'll take what is left over." Through adverse circumstance, Abram is finally ready to use his faith on his flesh to obey God. And the Lord apparently accepts it. What we're seeing is faith maturing. And as faith matures it becomes rightly applied producing the obedience God is after. The obedience sought demands we forfeit what would be best for us in the service of God's will. Abram forfeited the best land for his lifestyle. He forfeited all the water. He forfeited the flat land for tilling. Abram used his faith on his flesh to obey. How are we doing in this category? If in the choices that have to be made, we always choose what benefits us, how can we ever mature? Abram began to overcome the chief hurdle which would help make him the father of all them who believe. Abram became a pattern by choosing the straight and narrow course which still remains today as a path that few tread. Many use their faith to *satisfy* their flesh. Few use their faith to *crucify* their flesh and obey God. Which group will we walk in? It's a simple choice that usually comes to us weekly.

FRIDAY, February 13

Scripture: Genesis 16:1-16

God had told Abram He would give he and Sarai a son. After all the years past and discouragement set in, I'm sure that Sarai was as frustrated as Abram. Sarai came to Abram with a plan for gaining a child through Hagar. Suddenly Abram has a chance to use his faith on his flesh to obey. He fails and we're still dealing with the consequences today. How easy it is not to use our faith on our flesh to obey when pleasure results. The temporary pleasure of a sexual liaison, instigated by Sarai, brought bitterness which still exists. Abram's failures parallel his successes. How is it that God, in the New Testament, can call a man a success who has so many failures? The answer to that question is something to see, appreciate and understand, to see ourselves the way God views us. This was not a small failure. This was an eternal failure. Is it possible to make eternal failures and still be judged an eternal success? Both Romans and Hebrews attest to the fact it happened to Abram. If it happened to Abram, since God is no respecter of persons, it can happen to us. Perhaps the deciding factor is the dimension to which we are willing to use our faith on our flesh to obey God. Can our great spiritual failures be motivation for our greatest success? What Abram learned in grieving over Ishmael became part of the motivation that contributed to his obedience in Genesis 22.

SATURDAY, February 14

Scripture: Genesis 22:1-12

Genesis 22:10-12 says, "And Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. But the Angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, 'Abraham, Abraham!' And he said, 'Here I am.' And He said, 'Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only *son*, from Me.'" Abraham becomes the father of all them that believe because he is willing to use his faith on his flesh to slay Isaac. I don't see how Abraham could have ever gotten to that place without the failure of Ishmael's birth and the grieving of sending Ishmael away. God answers the intercession he makes for Ishmael. Abram learned the price of *not* using his faith on his flesh so that when the hardest test of all came, the greatest preparation was the failure. It was the fresh taste of failure that hardened his resolve. It was the failure that paved the way for his greatest success. The God we serve is a God who redeems failure in preparation for eternal success. Are we teaching our children the true ways of the Lord? The true way with God is using your faith

on your flesh to obey Him. We have taught a whole generation for 40 years to use their faith to get what they want, rather than using their faith on their flesh to give God what He wants.

SUNDAY, February 15

Scripture: First Peter 1:3-9

We are told in First Peter 1:3-9, especially in verses 6-9, “In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, *being* much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see *Him*, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith – the salvation of *your* souls.” Using our faith on our flesh during a season of trial, whether it be by offense, or by overt action, or by leadership insensitivity, or ungodly actions, is necessary to honor God. Choosing to stay when our flesh wants to leave, often brings the greatest growth. Tests come, whether in business, in family or in church which demand we use our faith on our flesh. God knows how to bring us into a place where using our faith on our flesh is the only way to walk through. The question is will we go His way or will we go the easy way? The easy way always demands very little use of faith on flesh to obey. The hard way always demands a lot of faith, almost always applied to our flesh, to obey God. It was Abraham’s pattern, it was Jesus’ pattern, and it is our pattern. Once we recognize it, now we have to make the choices of application. Sometimes recognition is nine-tenths of the battle.

MONDAY, February 16

Scripture: James 1:21-26

One of the first applications we are called to make concerning using our faith on our flesh to obey God is in the area of personal holiness, which often is manifested in how we use our time and what we say. God demands that we reign in the critical, judgmental nature and bring to our mouth the bit and bridle of His word. Have we embraced the bit and bridle concerning what we speak about each other? Are we speaking the best? Are we using our faith on our flesh to speak the best, to rein in the judgments that could be harmful? This is an area of application to which we are all called. What makes it worse is, if we don’t use our faith on our flesh our religion is useless. God has a way of getting very very practical – very very quickly. Perhaps this is a year to trust the Lord to use our faith on our flesh to rein in our tongue and possibly He would bless it in some very significant ways. It’s certainly something to ask for.

TUESDAY, February 17

Scripture: First Thessalonians 4:1-8

Using our faith on our flesh to obey God, not only has a practical application of what we say about each other, but also extends to the issue of sexual purity. After exhorting us to use our faith on our flesh to possess our own vessels in sanctification and honor, according to verse 4, in direct opposition to how the world lives, verse 5 says, “not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God;....” We are told that if we reject this we are not rejecting man but God. Using our faith on our flesh is very very practical. God expects us to walk this out and to manifest Christ-likeness as a result of being a doer of the Word and not a hearer only using our faith for the very practical application of personal holiness to which we are called as covenant people. Will the Church really reflect Christ in the last days? Will the power of the Holy Spirit come from a Church who has learned to apply God’s Word and walk it out? The end-time Church is going to reflect the Lord – in holiness – and keep the anointing that God gives as a result. We are certainly in that preparation and it is time to rise to the occasion.

WEDNESDAY, February 18

Scripture: James 1:2-4

We are told in James 1-4, “My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have *its* perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.” Patience, here, also means endurance or perseverance. We are exhorted as we use our faith on our

flesh, not to run from circumstances but to stand and face them developing patience. Endurance becomes part of us. Perseverance is engrafted into our nature and we come into the full measure of what God has for us. Are we a people of patience? Are we using our faith on our flesh to please God? That is the call. The question is what are we doing with the call?

THURSDAY, February 19

Scripture: Mark 4:2-8

In Mark 4:2-8 we see four kinds of soil as Jesus teaches this parable. Its not just any parable. It is a parable that becomes the foundation of the whole Kingdom. If we understand the principles of this parable, there is not anything we can't attain within God's gifting and calling. The four kinds of soil represent four dimensions that we all face that are simultaneous and co-existent. The first soil is the **WAYSIDE** and wayside, for the farmer, is the end of the field where he has to pull the plow out of the ground reversing direction. The turning areas are always plowed last in a perpendicular direction to the majority of the field. Wayside represents those things that we can't hear because the soil has not yet been tilled so it can accept seed. Everyone of us have areas God would like to deal with but they are protected and not yet plowed and prepared. Jesus only taught as people were able to hear it. Everyone has wayside issues that only time can prepare the ear to hear. The next soil is **stony ground**. Stony ground had hard places that couldn't produce because the depth of root could not penetrate the stone. This parallels issues in our own lives where the problem is the depth of earth is not sufficient to produce the desired crop. The stones have to be discerned, recognized and removed. The third kind of soil is **thorny ground**. Now this soil produces first a blade, then an ear, then a full corn in the ear. This growth process is often choked or when the thorns germinate and grow in an attempt to choke out the crop. Thorns represent competition for our time to turn us away from the full measure of what God wants to produce. Nobody is immune to the warfare of thorny ground. It challenges all of us. Finally the fourth kind of soil we all have is **GOOD GROUND**. Good ground will produce thirty, sixty or a hundred fold. These four kinds of soil are existent in each one of us and as we are all seeking to produce the thirty, sixty or a hundred fold, we find that we have warfare in these other areas. The question is not how much **stony ground** we have, not how big the **thorns** are, or not how large the **WAYSIDE** area is. The real issue is are we willing to use our faith on our flesh recognizing our **WAYSIDE** areas, recognizing **stony ground** when it is pointed out, recognizing the presence of **thorns** when they appear. The issue is not whether we have it or whether we don't. The issue is what do we *do* with these areas when they come to our attention. Using our faith on our flesh is God's call. The degree to which we answer it are choices each one of us make.

FRIDAY, February 20

Scripture: Mark 4:16-17

Verses 16 and 17 tell us, “These likewise are the ones sown on stony ground who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with gladness; and they have no root in themselves, and so endure only for a time. Afterward, when tribulation or persecution arises for the word's sake, immediately they stumble.” As God leads us through the issues of identifying and reclaiming areas of our life into good ground, we find that each of us will face tribulation. The Greek word here is **thi-lip-sis** meaning to brake, crush, compress or squeeze; to bring grievous affliction or distress. When tribulation comes will we use our faith on our flesh to stay where God is dealing with us, overcome what we see, or will we attempt to ease the pressure and find the pathway of least resistance? Persecution can have the same impact as tribulation. The Greek word for persecution is **dee-ogue-mos** which simply means to flee from pressure. As the Lord leads us to reclaim our stony ground, we have to use our faith on our flesh to overcome tribulation and overcome persecution. Are we ready to accept the challenge and grow in the dimension God has ordained? This can be a year of great growth. God is calling us to grow. We have to choose to walk it out.

SATURDAY, February 21

Scripture: Mark 4:18-19

We're told in Mark 4:18 and 19, “Now these are the ones sown among thorns; they are the ones who hear the word, and the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things entering in choke the

word, and it becomes unfruitful.” When God begins to deal with us about reclaiming more good ground, the enemy sends diversions and those diversions come as the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches and desires for other things. What new fun thing can we do? But in each of these the application is the same. It is the fundamental foundational issue of are we willing to use our faith on our flesh to obey God? It’s a very simple spiritual principle and yet it is basic gospel. Once we recognize it, we are well on our way to making the application that brings victory. Truly recognition is a major part of this warfare. As we ask God to grow us into a body that can sustain the move of the Spirit we may find that this is a year of using our faith on our flesh to obey God. We certainly trust the Lord will provide the grace needed to overcome and see God’s promises manifested.

SUNDAY, February 22

Scripture: Mark 4:17

Mark 4:17 says, “and they have no root in themselves, and so endure only for a time. Afterward, when tribulation or persecution arises for the word’s sake, immediately they stumble.” The Greek word for stumble is **skan-dal-id-zo**. It means to push, press or lead one to accept a course leading to loss or ruin. To stumble means to either get offended or choose a course leading to loss. **Skandalo** is the process by which we walk away from what we are doing because the pressure is too great. We have to find relief somewhere else. Rather than using our faith on our flesh to obey, we choose relief. Many battles are often lost at this juncture. When **skandalo** first arises perhaps we can recognize it for what it is and begin to use our faith on our flesh to break through it into God’s victory. The victory is in becoming a servant. The victory is in embracing the cross. The victory is choosing God’s way over relief or comfort. Abraham reached the pinnacle of his gifting and calling. His failures were every bit as valuable in preparation as his successes. As we recognize that and apply it to each other then we can certainly be a motivating force to help those we know achieve the full measure of their gifting and calling.

MONDAY, February 23

Scripture: Mark 4:21-25

In Mark 4:21-25 we are told, “And He said to them, ‘Is a lamp brought to be put under a basket or under a bed? Is it not to be set on a lamp stand? For there is nothing hidden which will not be revealed, nor has anything been kept secret but that it should come to light. If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear.’ And He said to them, ‘Take heed what you hear. With the same measure you use, it will be measured to you; and to you who hear, more will be given. For whoever has, to him more will be given; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him.’” Isn’t it interesting that Jesus promised us if we were willing to use our faith on our flesh and stay within His bit and bridle, that more would be given. But to him who does not have even what he has will be taken away. There is a point where using our faith on our flesh is what propels us into the fulfillment of God’s gifting and calling. And by the same token, a failure keeps us from achieving God’s intent. As far as it is up to us, let us choose to use our faith on our flesh and to encourage each other so that we may all come to the full measure of what God has ordained.

TUESDAY, February 24

Scripture: Mark 4:26-29

In Mark 4:26-29 we’re told, “And He said, ‘The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground, and should sleep by night and rise by day, and the seed should sprout and grow, he himself does not know how. For the earth yields crops by itself; first the blade, then the head, after that the full grain in the head. But when the grain ripens, immediately he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come.’” Harvest is promised to all who are willing to use their faith on their flesh to obey God. The mystery of this parable is very simple. The very same principle that Jesus used to fulfill His gifting and calling took Him to the pinnacle of using His faith on His flesh to obey God, while embracing the cross. That principle has not changed for believers. It is still the essence of what we are called to do. Just as Jesus had to use His faith to obey God, we are promised a harvest if we are willing to embrace and follow this pattern. The real question is – **are we willing?** If we are, we can have the full measure of what God has for us. **ARE WE WILLING?** This may be the year to really find out.

WEDNESDAY, February 25

Scripture: Ephesians 4:11-13

In Ephesians 4:11-13 we are told that God has a plan for carrying us into the full measure of the stature of Christ. That plan is, according to verses 11-13, “And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;....” What is God’s plan? God’s plan is the five-fold ministry and all of their inputs bringing us into the full measure of the stature of Jesus Christ. How much using of faith on flesh to obey God is necessary for a church to seek all five of these inputs? Is it possible that we don’t have the full measure of the stature of Christ in many of our churches because there has not been a willingness as leaders to use our faith on our own flesh and cease judging each other? Can we choose to love each other, overlook our differences and join together for God’s purpose? Certainly those of us who stand in leadership will have to give an account for our attitudes, our actions, and our words that have contributed to division, disharmony and disunity. The magnitude of those attitudes have kept the input from the people that God ordained! I certainly don’t want to have to give an account for that when I stand before the judgment seat, yet all of us in leadership will surely have to face an element of that in the days ahead. Is it worth being so intractable in doctrine that it keep us from giving an input that would help bring the full measure of the stature of Christ to a church or a body? Some doctrine is worth it – but many are not. Where we draw the line is the point at which we will have to give an account. It is certainly time to let GOD draw the line in the realm of doctrine. His people are ordained to reach fullness and to the degree that we can propel them toward that goal, is the degree to which we have to be available to go where God sends, using our faith on our flesh when we don’t agree.

THURSDAY, February 26

Scripture: Luke 22:39-44

Luke 22:39-44 records the true essence of using our faith on our flesh to obey God. It says, “And coming out, He went to the Mount of Olives, as He was accustomed, and His disciples also followed Him. When He came to the place, He said to them, ‘Pray that you may not enter into temptation.’ And He was withdrawn from them about a stone’s throw, and He knelt down and prayed, saying, ‘Father, if it is Your will, remove this cup from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done.’ Then an angel appeared to Him from heaven, strengthening Him. And being in agony, He prayed more earnestly. And His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.” Are we willing to use our faith on our flesh to this level? What is Jesus doing? He is fighting the battle of fulfilling God’s will. Everything in His being recoils at the magnitude of the pain involved, but He is seeking God’s empowering to walk out His gifting and calling. This is like Abraham taking the knife to his own son! Jesus used His faith on His flesh to obey God. Jesus was willing to do this for us. Will we use our faith on our flesh for each other. To do anything less is to diminish God’s call on our life.

FRIDAY, February 27

Scripture: Hebrews 10:5

A look at Hebrews is a wonderful way of summing up, sometimes in just one verse, the essence of what it means to use our faith on our flesh to obey God. And how important is this really? Verse 5 says, “Therefore, when He came into the world, He said; ‘Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, But a body You have prepared for Me.’” If there was ever a Scripture with a multiple application, it is this one. The first body prepared was Jesus Himself. But in order for that body to fulfill God’s call, it took a lot of application of faith on flesh. The same Jesus who used His faith on His flesh because the pressure was so great He sweat blood, also ascended on high and led captivity captive, giving gifts to men to equip the Church for the same preparational process. In the church world today, those who give substantially are often very proud of their sacrifices. Using our faith to love the unlovable can equal the sacrifice of a million dollar gift. Using our faith on our flesh in that dimension demonstrates maturity. Spiritual maturity carries a different cost. Are we willing to step up to the call? God is asking. Are we answering?

SATURDAY, February 28

Scripture: Hebrews 10:19-22

Verses 19-22 say, “Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, and having a High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.” Using our faith on our flesh to obey produces a true heart, and a true heart is the soil which grows full assurance. What can we do with full assurance? Well, Enoch had full assurance in Hebrews 11, and he decided he didn’t want to see death and escaped it. Is it possible that God is calling a generation to walk with full assurance, especially the one which according to First Thessalonians won’t see death? Isn’t there a generation that will meet the Lord in the air? Is it possible that generation will have to walk the path of full assurance? Is it possible we’re closer to that generation than we think? Could we be behind the power curve of God’s preparation? What shall we do? Will we rise to the occasion? Will we prepare a generation to meet the Lord? Will we prepare a generation with the kind of faith that really pleases God? God’s is asking. Are we answering?

SUNDAY, February 29

Scripture: Romans 12:1-2

We are exhorted in Romans 12:1-2, “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service (worship). And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” Finding the perfect will of God demands using our faith on our flesh to present our bodies a living sacrifice. It is the essence of what makes worship. When does God really get worship? When we sing? When we lift our hands to heaven? Or when we use our faith to obey Him? Our idea of worship embodies a song service. God’s idea of worship is when we use our faith on our flesh to obey Him – just like Jesus. Jesus paved the way. He is the pattern Son. Are we rising to the level of sonship that God has ordained? It is time we **committed** to **USING OUR FAITH on our flesh to obey God**. Only then can we school the succeeding generation. We can’t say it and not do it. We have to do it – then say it.

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ITINERARY

Al Houghton

February 6-8

Kingdom Faith Center
1153 56th Street, Delta, B.C. Canada
Phone: (604)943-8100
6th – 7PM 7th – 10AM & 7PM 8th – 10AM

February 21-24

Northbay Vineyard Christian Fellowship
1 Rancho Square, Vallejo, CA
Phone: (707)642-5673
22nd – 6:30PM 23rd – 7PM 24th – 7PM