

# Simplicity of Living Faith

**Erik and Kim Byman**

On this journey, we are weak and often-weary travelers. Struggles with the sinful world around us can cause us to question or doubt our faith. As leaky vessels we need to be filled with God's goodness and the forgiveness of sins over and over again. Believing the gospel brings peace, joy and freedom. "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 14:27).

Believing our sins forgiven not only cleanses our hearts and minds, it can also turn a saddened, darkened home into a happy and bright place of refuge.

## **Faith Has No Prerequisites**

Recently in our congregation, a couple of young people have received the grace of repentance. They both shared stories of how they felt they had to accomplish certain things before they could repent. They thought they had to understand the Bible and learn specific details of living faith before being acceptable. One had a list of things to do and check off before repenting, but once he received the grace of repentance, these things no longer mattered.

We often marvel at God's great love for us, His children. As humans we tend to complicate and overthink matters, when sin weighs us down we can go to a fellow believer to have our sins washed away in the name and blood of Jesus. When we simply believe that all our sins are truly forgiven, we are heaven acceptable. We are not saved by works, but rather by the grace of God and His infinite love for us. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast" (Eph. 2:8,9).

## **A Simple Plea**

Years ago when our older children were young, we were eating dinner and our two-year-old was not pleased with the food that was set before him. After several attempts to get him to eat, he finally got frustrated and threw his plate on the floor scattering food across the kitchen. I jumped up, upset with his behavior and he immediately blurted out "name and blood." I stopped in my tracks, ashamed that I was so quick to anger and at the same time amazed at his simple plea to have his misdeed forgiven, also recognizing my own need for forgiveness.

Sometimes when burdens and sin begin to weigh me down, I hear that voice in the back of my mind: "name and blood" and know that I need to listen to this simple sermon that God sent through the lips of that young child.

“Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 18:4). This verse brings great comfort as I feel I have so little knowledge and understanding of faith. It reminds me that I don’t need to let minute details weigh me down; I can simply believe like a child, who is acceptable to God and greatest in the kingdom of heaven!

### **As Often as Needed**

As simple as that sounds and should be, do we always allow it to be so simple? It seems that the devil constantly works to try to complicate matters of faith, to cause doubt, plant ill thoughts and drive wedges between God’s children. However, when we own the precious gift of living faith, we can go to a fellow believer as often as needed to wash away our sins in the name and blood of Jesus. When we do so, ALL sins and doubts can be forgiven and forgotten forever.

Recently a visiting speaker-brother told of his mission trips to distant countries where there are few or no believers, where many have never before been exposed to living faith or God’s Word. When God’s Word is preached and repentance made, God gives understanding and the new child of God simply believes even though he or she knew little or nothing of faith or the Bible before. This is a good reminder of the precious gift we own and how we need not have great knowledge but can simply trust and believe.

Another example is the thief on the cross who said to Jesus: “Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.” Jesus said to him, “Verily I say unto thee, today shalt thou be with me in paradise” (Luke 23:42,43). This thief was not required to study, to do good deeds or even to pray. He simply begged for mercy and Jesus forgave him, promising that “today shalt thou be with me in paradise.”

### **Paid in Full**

It is no more complex today, though the devil and our own reasoning tries to complicate matters and question: can it really be so simple? Or shouldn’t I have to do something to earn it, or pay for it? No, when Jesus died on the cross, He paid for ALL the sins of the world, no matter how undeserving we may feel.

There is no better place on earth to reside than in the love of God’s gracious kingdom.

# We Trust in God's Plan

**Shelby Jurmu**

Life is a scenic route, full of twists and turns. Many times we see beauty around us, but sometimes there are difficult curves and steep hills to climb and we may be unable to see the beauty.

How do we accept our lot in life during times of hardship and trial? We know and understand through faith that God has a plan for each of us. He promises to not give us more than we can bear, and He helps us to handle what we are given. God sends escorts – family, a spouse, believing friends and others too – to make our path easier, to help carry our burden. He gives strength and perseverance. Sometimes even just going to sleep at night and waking to a new day can give a new outlook and renewed energy.

In the fall of 2018, we experienced a very excruciating time of our lives. Our son Tyler has endured many adversities and surgeries in his life. He needed two major surgeries with difficult recoveries, six weeks apart: one in August and one in October. During the recovery from the first surgery, I remember thinking and even stating a few times that I didn't know how we would make it through the second surgery.

Suddenly I didn't have time to wonder about this because a week before the second surgery, my dad was in an auto accident resulting in severe injuries that required surgery and a week's stay in the hospital.

The day after dad began rehabilitation, Tyler went for his second surgery. He came home eight days later, with three months of significant movement restrictions ahead of him. Three days after Tyler came home, our six-year-old son Bryce had a complicated leg fracture requiring surgery. We were told he would be in a wheelchair for two months.

In early December Tyler suffered a seizure, requiring more testing. The day after Christmas, my dad passed away. A couple days later one of our grandsons suffered an unexplained seizure and was hospitalized for several days. My father-in-law was also declining during this time and passed away in January, three weeks after my dad's passing.

We look back on this time in our lives and marvel how we made it through, at times even feeling joy and happiness despite the trials and sorrow. We have realized that it was hope for better days ahead that kept us going. And we knew that God was with us.

Each of us will have steep hills to climb at some time in our life. These trials often bring us closer to God and can make us ponder the meaning of life and marvel at God's guidance and blessings. A time of trial can sometimes help us to see life's beauty and joy and God helps us accept our lot for another day – or even for a moment. When frustration, impatience and offenses set in, how good it is to wash them away in the name and blood of Jesus.

*Thank you, God, for every moment of my lifetime on the way, in the sunshine of Thy mercy, even on the darkest day. For the trials on the journey, for the cross that I must bear, thank You, God, for being beside me, lifting me from dark despair (SHZ 344:3).*

## Faith versus Human Understanding

### **Allen Pirness**

Living faith is essential for human salvation; knowledge is not. Scripture tells us that “without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is” (Heb. 11:6). Faith establishes a direct relationship with God, but faith itself is established through His congregation.

### **Sin Separates from God**

Sin separates a person from God. When faith is lost because of unforgiven sin, the separation from God is evident. Sin does not have the same sting as it did when there was still a faith relationship with God. The effects and consequences of sin are the same for all humans, but the God-given sorrow over sin is felt by the one who is God’s own. God’s voice on earth is His kingdom. If God’s congregation rebukes us, it is also by definition a call from God.

Sometimes the statement has been made by former believers that there is no definite memory of when faith was lost, and the announcement of their unbelief was done when it felt convenient. Faith was evidently left behind sometime before that.

Our human understanding is not the right tool for caring for our walk of faith. Our mind is a necessity that God gave us when He created us in His own image, but it is part of this corrupt human body. It can never have a relationship with God. “The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be” (Rom. 8:7).

### **Forgiveness of Sins Restores Peace with God**

Faith is cared for in the forgiveness of sins. In the proclamation of the gospel and subsequent belief of it, is the washing away of sin. It is done in the name and blood of Jesus, for His is the only name and His is the only blood that are an acceptable sin offering to God. When sins are forgiven, a clear conscience before God gives strength to continue our faith relationship with God.

Reading and comprehending articles in the *Voice of Zion* and other Christian publications requires human understanding. When the message is such that it aligns with God’s Word, it answers to the Holy Spirit and edifies the faith of the believer who reads it. The answer of the Holy Spirit does not come

from human understanding; rather it is part of the faith relationship with God. It's possible for someone to read the same articles, even God's Word in Scripture, and allow human understanding and sensitivities to judge what was read and become offended by it.

God can use human understanding to call one to repentance. God reveals himself to show one's separation from Him and causes one to ponder this matter earnestly. He is then able to break barriers of human understanding to get right to the soul of a person and reveal the blackness of sin. The question then becomes: "What must I do to be saved?"

### **Faith Is a Gift**

Lars Levi Laestadius experienced that when he was led to the door of God's kingdom, the preaching of the gospel is what transformed his human understanding of God's grace into a living faith of the heart. Only from the inside was he able to understand that he had been on the outside. From the inside, one sees that the gift of faith is the most important thing, because attached to this gift is peace with God.

## Care for Another with Love and the Gospel

### **Kate Moll**

"Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love...Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer" (Rom. 12:10,12).

When a fellow believer is struggling, we are instructed to care for him or her in love. It can be hard to approach another to ask how matters are; our flesh is weak. We often worry that we won't have the right words or that we might come across in the wrong manner.

When we know of one struggling with doubt and reason, God's Word instructs to approach, as with any area of temptation, from a humble and loving place. It is good to pray for strength to approach the brother or sister. We can ask God to give words into our weak mouths and help us to show love to the troubled one. One would hope to approach in a manner that is humble and open, to encourage the other to speak freely. We can begin such a discussion by offering the gospel and also asking for it for ourselves. The gospel's power gives strength, even in what might be a hard discussion.

Sometimes a traveler can be plagued by doubts and reason for a long time. As a friend we can offer a listening ear without judgement and preach the gospel freely so that the doubting one can continue to endeavor on the way to heaven. If there is a need for more support, we can visit together with other believers. There are many gifts in God's kingdom; we can all help each other.

We can continue to pray, both for the doubting one and for ourselves. We can pray that God would give words to speak, that we would not begin to also struggle in these matters or think of ourselves as better than the other. Above all we can continue to put away sin. The gospel is our source of strength to help us get to heaven one day.

### **Discussion Points**

1. Do you ever find yourself doubting the simplicity of faith and wanting to over-analyze God's Word? What is the danger in doing this?
2. We know that we are no more deserving of salvation than the thief on the cross. Why is this and what does God's Word say?
3. How do you find peace and reassurance when doubts and questioning come?
4. Sing song of Zion 558. Visit about the instruction in these words.
5. Who does Jesus say is the greatest in the kingdom? What guidance can be gained from this?