

Tried and Found Wanting

by Stella Paterson

When all is said and done, there is one vital thing God is looking for in those who call themselves disciples of Jesus Christ. What is it, and how, if we were tried, would we be found wanting?

Of all the articles I have written of late, this could well be the most important. I am about to share some powerful truths the Lord has revealed in recent days. God does not give me these "nuggets" to keep to myself. I must share them. My prayer is that you would be challenged to examine your own heart, as I have done, with the various thoughts presented herein.

Let's get to it!

This passage is where the Lord led me after He gave me the title for this article. Nebuchadnezzar's son, King Belshazzar had a dream which Daniel interpreted. These words were part of that interpretation: "*Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting.*" (Daniel 5:27) Although God had blessed him, the king became puffed up with self against the LORD God. That very night Belshazzar's life was taken.

We find throughout the Bible that self-exaltation was very common and has become rampant today. This is no surprise, since it began with the entrance of the knowledge of good and evil. Because of it, Adam and Eve were evicted from the Garden of Eden lest they eat of the Tree of Life and live forever in their fallen state. The knowledge of good and evil gave them awareness of "self" with all its capabilities. Their trust was no longer in God who created them and gave them breath and life. Just as God promised, they died (spiritually) and became nothing but mere creatures of flesh.

Calling Forth the Remnant describes in detail how God dealt with mankind; how He gave Moses' Law by which Israel was to live; how "flesh" has affected the Body of Christ, and how Jesus came to restore Life to man. There is much more in the book but in this article we will expand on one particular aspect and how it relates to present-day "Christianity." I believe we must ask ourselves the question, "If I were tried, would I be found wanting?"

The "one particular aspect" of which I speak is "faith." It is one of the most distorted and misrepresented truths God has given. Our eternal soul depends on this one thing and we need to understand what the Bible really tells us about it. Jesus said this: "...when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:8b EMTV) As in every word Jesus spoke, this is of great importance - never doubt that! When Jesus returns for His Bride He will be looking for those with "faith." Will He accept those with counterfeit faith, believing it is in Him when it is actually based in self and flesh with all the manifestations

we see today? Stay with me here as we look closer at this thing so many people see as "basic."

In a paragraph from Andrew Murray's *Absolute Surrender*, he makes a point we need to consider. *"Come and cast this self-life and flesh-life at the feet of Jesus. Then trust Him. Do not worry yourselves with trying to understand all about it, but come in the living faith that Christ will come into you with the power of His death and the power of His life; and then the Holy Spirit will bring the whole Christ - Christ crucified and risen and living in glory - into your heart."* (Emphasis mine) The word "trust" is better understood when we keep in mind the definition of "faith." The Greek word for "believe" means "to have faith" or to "entrust one's spiritual well-being to Christ."

From Adam's time until the present, it has been natural for mankind to trust primarily in self. We are born that way, separated from God, and must come "to faith" in Christ's finished work on Calvary's tree. That is faith for salvation. But as followers of Jesus we must entrust our spiritual well-being to Him if we are going to be kept by the power of God. Peter says in 1 Peter 1:4-5, "...kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." The power of God is His grace which is given to keep us in this life. I believe too that faith and grace are inseparable.

Law versus Faith

The apostle Paul tells us about the Law and faith in Galatians chapter three. He explains how the Jews were kept under a "tutor," which was Moses' Law, until Faith (Jesus) came. The way in which they pleased God was through obedience to the Law. But when Jesus came, all was changed; there was no longer need to be under any law - Moses' or otherwise. Being the Son of Love, He fulfilled the Law by putting to death flesh on behalf of all mankind. Man's trust was to be in Christ and what He accomplished by His coming, His death and His resurrection. His coming was the promise fulfilled; His death was our death, and His resurrection will be our Life IF our trust is in Him. I like how Paul Esposito translated Galatians 3:25 in the *English Majority Text Version*. *"But after faith has come, we are no longer under a custodian."*

If the Jews were no long *under a custodian*, why do we non-Jews insist on adopting laws by which to live? If we stop and consider how much of the New Testament has become "law" among believers today, we will see what a faithless bunch we are. Do we really prefer to circumcise people so we can *"glory in their flesh?"* (Galatians 6:13)

Think of some of the "laws" we have accepted and even raised our children by. How often does a child hear "do" or "don't?" And if we are really "religious" we will raise them to believe what they do pleases God. Sad to say, it will please us as parents because it causes people to comment on what "well-behaved"

children we have. But are we really doing the child a favor? Yes, correction is necessary and Biblical, but do we need to go to the degree that the child believes "doing" is what makes a Christian? Children are tender little people and will easily put their trust in Jesus, if taught properly. Do we not believe the same Spirit of Grace has as much power to keep a child as He does a surrendered adult? *Without faith it is impossible to please God.* (Hebrews 11:6) Wisdom tells us that a child trained in the way he should go will not depart from it as he grows older. (Proverbs 22:6)

There are many other "laws" used to "rule over" the flock of God. We are all guilty of using them. Think of the "laws" we have made from the New Testament passages regarding marriage, foods to eat, women speaking in "the church," tithing, giving, "church" attendance, etc., etc. We have become a bunch of "do-ers" rather than BEING in Jesus, trusting His Life to live through us. How can we call ourselves a "people of faith," when we so rigidly follow Biblical principles in the strength of flesh? If Paul said Moses' Law was weak through the flesh, how could any perceived "law" we see in the New Covenant be any better? Look at what Paul said: *"For what was impossible for the law to do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and concerning sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, so that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who **do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.**"* (Romans 8:3-4 EMTV)

When we consider the things that have become "law" because of a legalistic view of the New Covenant, it should be obvious that we will more than likely become judges. As "judges," we gauge our behavior and that of others by man-made rules. This is nothing but unadulterated living according to the knowledge of good and evil. Do we think God would allow us entrance into the Garden of Eden if such were possible? If we are going to be free from the influence of this deep-seated knowledge, we need to throw ourselves upon the mercy of God and allow His Spirit to cleanse us lest we be judged for the judgment we mete out.

Faith - walking by the Spirit

When Christ's Spirit comes to dwell in our spirit, we do not "feel" Him - our spirit is conscious of His presence and He ministers Life to our spirit. "Self" is our mind and our will, and if we follow self we will get into trouble every time. Our mind must be renewed through the Word of God and time spent in His presence, away from the cares of this life. WE must undertake to renew our minds if we desire to do the perfect will of God. (Romans 12:2) Our "will" is our "*choice, determination or inclination.*" It is something that operates independent of the Spirit. All the more reason to have our ears "attuned" to the still, small voice of the Spirit.

Allow me to share a personal experience to explain how the Spirit sometimes leads. Back when I was still "doing church," I was sitting with other band members, when suddenly I had a sense of urgency in my spirit that I could not

ignore. So I packed up my trumpet, Bible and handbag, headed for the car and drove to the hospital where a lady I had been visiting for some time lay dying of cancer. When I arrived, I spoke a few words with her but soon realized it was intercession for her the Lord was calling me to. So, I left the hospital and drove to my special quiet spot in the country and allowed the Spirit to pray through me according to the Father's will. Later, I learned from the lady that it was at that moment she finally came to grips with leaving this life, knowing her young children would be cared for - she was ready to go to be with Jesus.

The leading of the Spirit was a strong "tugging" in my spirit that I could not escape. I was driven to prayer in such a powerful way that I did not care what anyone thought of my walking out in the middle of a "church" service. I'm sure many of you could share similar experiences of "hearing" the Lord's voice in your spirit.

"Quiet" faith

The Holy Spirit is gentle and quiet. He is not boisterous and demonstrative like an unruly child who wants to draw attention to himself. Jesus sent His Spirit to lead us into all truth and to be Life to us. I believe a simple definition of "faith" would be "ceasing from our labor, and resting in Him so He can manifest Himself through us." After all, did Jesus not say "*Come unto me, you who are wearied and overburdened with spiritual anxiety and I will make you exempt* [from mortal liability]."? (My paraphrase of Matthew 11:28 according to Greek definitions.) The "mortal liability" comes with the flesh, and if we would simply come to Jesus, He will free us from that state. I am not speaking of "salvation" from flesh through the new birth, but as "believers" leaving behind the anxiety of religiously trying to measure up to standards set by man - not God.

God's Spirit is the Spirit of Love, for God is Love. It is the first fruit of the Spirit of which Paul spoke. The others are "*joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, temperance.*" The Spirit is a spirit; He quietly produces His fruit in one who has surrendered "self" to the crucifying power of Jesus. We can never crucify "self" - we are simply called upon to surrender to Jesus and entrust our spiritual well-being to Him.

Self and Faith - Death and Life

It is impossible to remain "self" and truly say we "have faith." That kind of double-mindedness can only bring confusion - in our own mind as well as in the minds of those around us. With "self" comes death, but through faith we find Life.

"Death to self" means that Christ thinks through our mind until our mind conforms to His mind. Only then can our thoughts be according to His will. "Death to self" also means that we follow the Spirit's leading of our spirit, never allowing our will or emotions to get in the way.

"Faith" is also trusting and obeying the voice of the Spirit. We must seek Him in everything we "feel" we must do. "Feel" is of the senses and should sound a warning that it is time to seek the Lord in humble surrender. Without the Lord's direction, our lives will produce nothing but dead works. Yes, they may look good to other folks, but it is most likely because they too are dead.

Monuments to "faith"?

One area about "faith" where we have strayed is found in a revealing statement by Oswald Chambers. "***Today we have substituted creedal belief for personal belief, and that is why so many are devoted to causes and so few devoted to Jesus Christ.***" To what or to whom are we devoted? Unless we have a living relationship with the living Savior Jesus Christ, having entrusted our spiritual well-being to Him, we WILL be found wanting. Chambers also said, "*Jesus Christ calls service what we are to Him, not what we do for Him.*" (Emphases mine)

This reminds me of Paul's words on Mars' Hill where he was addressing the men of Athens about their altar inscribed "to the unknown god." He then told them of the true and living God who "*does not dwell in sanctuaries made by human hands, nor by the hands of men is He served, as though He needed anything, for He gives to all life, and breath, with respect to all things.*" (Acts 17:24-25 EMTV) In verse 28 he also says, "*...in Him we live and move and have our being...*"

The Spirit of God seeks a dwelling place in man, but fleshly mankind has constructed dwelling places "for God" where it is assumed His presence dwells. So then man can remain flesh and come and go at will to "worship God" in "God's house." What blatant rejection of the One who died and gave us His Spirit to live His life through us! As Chambers said, creedal belief has replaced personal belief.

I could go on and on, with examples of causes that hold our devotion, but I think you get the picture. Too often when a simple truth is revealed to us, we tend to use our knowledge of good and evil to go out and try to "change" something.

Manifestations of flesh

Psalm 46:10 tells us, "*Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth.*" If we are busily exalting self and flesh, we definitely are not being "still" and exalting the only One who deserves to be exalted. How much exaltation of self and flesh do we see today? Think about the "signs and wonders" of which Paul spoke. Are they of God, or are they flesh-based?

One way to discern what is true is to look closely at what is taking place in the name of Holy Spirit moves. If there are manifestations, we can usually count on their being evidenced in the flesh and the senses. As Jesus told Nicodemus, the

Spirit cannot be seen or felt but goes where He wishes. To be still and know that God is God, do we really need to have a fleshly manifestation in order to believe? Jesus told of the "signs" that would follow those who believe. He did not tell us to run all over "following signs." Faith [belief] in Him meant there would be things wrought by His power, producing signs pointing to Him. If we think we must "follow signs" we are in the flesh and seeking a fleshly thrill that is soulish and of the senses. This is not a walk by the Spirit.

The enemy of man's soul is more than pleased to comply with our desire for things that appeal to our "spiritual" flesh. The serpent had a plot to entrap man when he planted doubt in Eve's mind as to the surety of God's word. And now, more than ever, that serpent the devil has walked through the door of flesh, just as he planned, and has set up his counterfeit spiritual experiences. And millions are falling for it! We are seeing on a daily basis the fulfillment of warnings spoken by Jesus, Paul, Peter and others; not to mention the powerful prophetic words of Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, to name a few. If we stop and think for a moment, we will realize that at the core of every thing that is wrong there is "flesh," rearing its ugly head. Change the middle three letters of that five-letter word to read "faith," without which we can never please God.

Faith perfected

In my estimation, the 11th chapter of Hebrews could be called the "faith hall of fame." In it we read of those from ages past whose unwavering faith in God brought about amazing results. Toward the end of the chapter we read of those who faced horrendous situations, yet never wavered in their trust in Jehovah. If called upon, would any of us pass the test of our faith in such situations?

The last four verses of Hebrews, chapter ten speak of Christ's return and the need for faith. Read this, from the EMTV: *"For you have need of endurance, so that having done the will of God, you may receive the promise: 'For yet a little while, and He who is coming will come and will not delay. But **the just shall live by faith**, and if he withdraws, My soul has no pleasure in him.'* But we are not of those shrinking back to destruction, but of faith, to the saving of the soul." (Hebrews 10:36-39) Those are the words leading into the "faith chapter," as I like to call chapter eleven.

At the beginning of the twelfth chapter, the thought carries on with an admonition to follow the example of the faith demonstrated by the "cloud of witnesses" in chapter eleven. Look at the words the writer used, as found in the EMTV: *"So therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every impediment, and the **sin which so easily ensnares us**, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."* (Hebrews 12:1-2) What is the sin which so easily ensnares

us? It is the sin of unbelief, which is not having faith in Jesus who is the *Author and Perfecter* of our faith. He came in fulfillment of the promise of faith given to Abraham thousands of years ago. He is the "*completer*" or "*consummator*" of our faith, according to the Greek word.

Faith tried

There is a day coming soon when we may be tried beyond anything we could ever imagine. The apostle Peter told us "*That the **trial of your faith**, being much more precious than of gold that perishes, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:*" (1 Peter 1:7) There again is mention of the faith Jesus is looking for when He returns.

Do we have tribulation in this life, with pressures almost too much to bear at times? Yes, we do! But God is faithful, and the "furnace of affliction" will serve to burn off the dross and purify us for His use. The Greek word for "tribulation" means "pressure." Did you know that a diamond is simply a chunk of coal that was "hard-pressed" for many, many years? And pressure will serve to purify us if we will only do this one thing He asks of us - keep our eyes on Jesus and trust Him no matter what.

In Galatians 4:22-29 we read how the account of the birth of Abraham's two sons provides an allegory which will possibly become more applicable in the days to come. Verse twenty-two begins with, "*For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman. But he who was of the bondwoman was **born after the flesh**; but he of the freewoman was **by promise**.*" Again we see the words "flesh" and "promise [faith]." Then we see the allegory, beginning in verse twenty-four: "*for these are the **two covenants**; the one from the mount Sinai, which genders to bondage, which is Agar [Hagar]. For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answers to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all.*" Mount Sinai typifies the Law of Moses and is the covenant of flesh and death, which could never give life. Jesus came in the flesh and died to satisfy that Law and bring freedom to all who come to faith in Him. Verses twenty-eight and twenty-nine continue with, "*Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. But as then **he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now.***"

We can be assured that those who follow after the flesh in the name of "Christianity" will persecute those who are true followers of Jesus and who have firm faith in Him. I don't know about you, but I would rather be among the persecuted. The onus is on us to walk in quiet faith and allow the Life of Jesus and the fruit of His Spirit to be seen. May we never stoop to reacting in the flesh.

In closing, I leave you with these words of Paul the Apostle's: "*Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so **walk in Him**, having been rooted and*

*built up in Him and being **established in the faith**, just as you were taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving." (Colossians 2:6-7 EMTV)*