



Living Faith





“As I read the books of Helen Roseveare, these powerful words come to my mind – REALITY, VISION, INTEGRITY, COURAGE, ACTION and FORGIVENESS. They are all words that we need to hold centrally in our lives too. Perhaps you don’t read many books but I would urge you to read this one - and then to share what you’ve learned with others. They are a huge challenge to the indifference and lukewarm-ness of our day. It is necessary for the church to have IMPACT for the good of this world. Helen shows what kind of impact you too can have.”

George Verwer





Living Faith

*Willing to be stirred
as a pot of paint*

Helen Roseveare



CHRISTIAN
FOCUS





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To
the team at Nebobongo,
nationals and foreigners,
where many of these truths were learned.







PREFACE

Many friends, both at home and overseas, have suggested that I write the substance of the many talks given during my deputation ministry. I am indeed grateful to each one who has urged me to complete the task.

After much prayer and discussion, I have considered it wise to change the names of certain Africans to hide their identities from their national colleagues; where there is any reason to fear they could be harmed. If some readers recognize certain people by their testimonies, heard elsewhere, and are thereby puzzled by an unknown name, please accept this explanation. The testimonies remain true but the identities are not revealed.

Conversations, especially with Africans, have been reconstructed as translated from the local languages, to give the true gist of what was said, but I do not pretend that these are verbatim quotations. They are as nearly accurate as I can remember them in order to make real-life situations live.

In verse three of the hymn that gives the basic structure to the book, “Stir me, oh! stir me, Lord,” one word in line two has been changed from the original “till prayer is joy, till prayer turns into praise” to read “till prayer is power, till prayer turns into praise.”

Helen Roseveare





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Stir me, oh! stir me, Lord, I care not how,
But stir my heart in passion for the world:
Stir me to *give*, to *go*, but most to *pray*:
Stir till the blood-red banner be unfurled
O'er lands that still in heathen darkness lie,
O'er deserts where no cross is lifted high.

Stir me, oh! stir me, Lord, till all my heart
Is filled with strong compassion for these souls;
Till Thy compelling Word drives me to pray;
Till Thy constraining love reach to the poles
Far north and south, in burning deep desire,
Till east and west are caught in love's great fire.

Stir me, oh! stir me, Lord, till prayer is pain,
Till prayer is power, till prayer turns into praise:
Stir me till heart and will and mind, yea all
Is wholly Thine to use through all the days.
Stir, till I learn to pray exceedingly:
Stir till I learn to wait expectantly.

Stir me, oh! stir me, Lord, Thy heart was stirred
By love's intensest fire, till Thou didst give
Thine only Son, Thy best beloved One,
E'en to the dreadful cross, that I might live.
Stir me to give myself so back to Thee,
That Thou canst give Thyself again through me.

Stir me, oh! stir me, Lord, for I can see
Thy glorious triumph; day begin to break;
The dawn already gilds the eastern sky:
Oh, Church of Christ, arise, awake, awake;
Oh! stir us, Lord, as heralds of that day,
For night is past, our King is on His way.

Mrs. A Head

*As God says to us through Peter, "I think it meet (right),
as long as I am in this tabernacle [with you] to stir you up"
(2 Pet. 1:13 KJV).*





PROLOGUE

FAITH – GOD’S GIFT TO US

Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. This is what the ancients were commended for...

.. without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him (Heb. 11:1-2, 6 NIV).

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast (Eph. 2:8-9 NIV).

“I dare you!”

With a tight knot in my stomach, teeth clenched, and eyes screwed shut, I jumped – and waited – and it was all right!

I opened my eyes, looked disdainfully at my brother and sister, and turned abruptly to walk away so they would not see me being sick.

Why did they do it? Why did they pick on me, daring me to do this or that, just because they knew I was scared? But I would not let them know! No, somehow I would conquer that awful inner shrinking, that panic that threatened to overwhelm me every time that they egged me on. That time it had only been to jump off a six-foot wall. The silly thing was that I had done it before





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without any nervousness; but when they said, “Dare you” the realization that perhaps there was a danger hit me so forcibly that I could hardly think straight.

This vivid imagination, picturing all sorts of horrors as the result of minor incidents, never left me. I grew up with “fear” just around the corner. I could even manage to be afraid of happiness, in case it went away and became illusory.



“Dare you!”

The taunt in his voice cut me, the insolence in his eyes frightened me. The group stood over me, menacingly, in the dirty hallway. There were footsteps outside, and everyone froze. Time hung in the still air. The footsteps passed – and faded – and they let out their breath.

“Do you promise not to squeal on us?”

He did not actually threaten me; he did not need to strike me again. I crouched back into the dark corner, wrapped in the shame of my cowardice.

“Yes,” I whispered miserably.

“Come on,” snarled the leader, kicking my already sore shins. “She isn’t worth beating up! Let’s get out of here!”

The gang left. I lay, miserable and lonely, until I had to be sick. I staggered up the rickety stairs to the bathroom. It was eleven o’clock at night.

Why, why had I got involved with this East London gang? I had not wanted or expected this, when I had offered to help the Anglican Franciscan fathers in their relief work in Peckham. I had wanted to “do something for the war effort” during my school summer holiday. For a week I had served soup in a large air raid shelter. I had visited homes along three or four roads, filling in questionnaires about each householder’s need for help,





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food, coal, or sickness benefits. I had been with Father Charles Preston to visit a boys' reformatory.

Then one evening each week, I was asked to remain in the small home of the Fathers, while they were at prayers in the beautiful chapel across the road, to "host" a club of senior teenagers. These young folk had mostly been turned away from the local community club because of their police records. All I had to do, so I was told, was to change the records on the phonograph and replenish the cart of drinks from the kitchen. That had been all that I had to do the first week, but this week, things had subtly turned nasty.

I went into the front room where the club had met earlier that evening. The smell of alcohol and cigarette smoke filled the fetid air. The turntable was still revolving, the needle scratching endlessly around the centre of the record. Instinctively I moved to turn it off, subconsciously irritated by the sound. I kept my eyes from the far corner, while automatically gathering up glasses and bottles. That was where they had attacked the girl, fallen on her, dragging her clothes off her ... Why hadn't I rushed for authority? Why hadn't I screamed for help? I felt sick again. The big one had had a knife.

I suppose I had moved. He had swung around and seen me. With venomous anger, he had flung the knife. I had ducked and dived for the door, but he caught me, twisting my arm behind me viciously.

I do not know what would have happened next, had he not heard that whistle. The whole gang had frozen in total silence. Then suddenly everything seemed to happen at once. The light was switched off. I was flung down the stairs. The gang was there as soon as I was and pinned me down.





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You speak a word of this, and we'll ...”

He had boxed my ears, sending me to the ground as I struggled to stand. My head was splitting. I was drunk with fear. Unbelievable, horrified fear.

I glanced to that corner behind the sofa now. She was not there. I do not know how or when she left. I was alone. I shivered and rushed to the bathroom to be sick again.



I started my studies as a first-year medical student. I will never forget that first day in the anatomy dissection room. I was really very ignorant as to what university life was all about. I just knew that I wanted to do well. I meant to work hard. I hoped desperately that the nagging fear in the background would stay in the background. I did not understand it, nor did I want to look at it and analyze it. I just wished it were not there. Perhaps it was compounded of loneliness, a sense of inadequacy, and the dread of failure.

Watching hundreds of unknown others, I did as they did, padlocking my bicycle to a slot in the railings. I pulled my satchel from the basket, with the as yet unstained first volume of Cunningham's *Anatomical Dissection* and the small canvas bag of dissection instruments. Merging with the stream entering the anatomy department building, I took a white coat from a peg in the corridor, exchanging it for my jacket. A strange *something* was in the air. The hairs on the back of my neck began to prickle. The old nausea of fear was welling up. I willed it down. We passed through the swinging doors into another corridor, turned right through another door – and I was wrapped in 'it.' It? Even now, as I think of that moment, I can smell it and sense it and feel it. Numb horror tightened the knot in my stomach. If there had not been more and





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more students pouring through the door, carrying me relentlessly forward to the far end of the hall, between the rows of tables with their silent, grey, formalin-soaked “occupants,” I would have turned and fled.

It was the smell – that formalin-heavy odour – that pricked eyes and nose and throat. That smell haunted me, stuck to me, followed me. That smell spoke to me of those bodies. That smell laughed at my stumbling fingers. That smell stirred up all my fears. All the effort of learning, of trying to understand and appreciate the mysteries of the human body, was plagued by that smell. When the assistants came to examine us at each stage of the dissection, that smell drove what little I had learned from my memory. It mocked me into silence. I could not answer even the simplest question.

I knew I was in the wrong place. That smell confirmed it. I would never be a doctor. That smell assured me of the fact. And yet it was that smell that kept me there till I succeeded. Strange! It was almost as though the heavy sickly smell had said to me: “I dare you ...” – to leave medicine? to change courses? to acknowledge defeat? Despite everything. I stuck to it!



“Dare you trust Me?”

It was just one way in which the Holy Spirit began to work in my heart to convince me of my need of the Saviour.

Years before, I had begun to feel the need of acknowledging God. I needed a God who could give meaning to life and direction and control to living. At that time I had latched onto a particular group who believed in strict discipline and clearly defined rules; I had found security in this. They made the decisions. I just had to





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obey. The responsibility was theirs, and they promised a lifelong sense of belonging.

Then there had come the phase of questioning the very existence of God. Was He only a psychological crutch, “the opiate of the people,” as some said? Did I only believe in Him because I dared not be honest enough to disbelieve, as others suggested? Many in our classes mocked those of us who still believed in God, calling us old-fashioned, unscientific, the mental prisoners of a Victorian upbringing.

“Dare you step out and be honest? There is no God. You deceive yourself, because you haven’t the courage to face the truth.”

“Dare you ...?”

I had hesitatingly, half-heartedly, tried. I joined discussion groups who aired their views on scientific philosophies and left God out. In secret I still went to church early every Sunday, afraid to leave Him out altogether in case we were wrong... and anyway, without God, life was suddenly desperately insecure. There were no absolute values left; there was no direction or reason for living. Scientific or atheistic “post-Christian” humanists told me that I dared not believe in God merely because I was “poorly integrated” or “insecure” or simply “ignorant.”

“Dare you ...?”

“Dare you not ...?”



The quiet, consistent, happy lives of Christian students drew me and began to convince me. The teaching in their Bible study groups and the assurance in their daily prayer meetings brought a sense of sober reality. They talked of faith as an objective reality, not a blind leap-in-the-dark, hoping for the best. Faith to them was something





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far more wonderful and real than mere believism or frightened escapism. They spoke of faith as a fact, a gift from God Himself to His people to enable them to grasp and comprehend truth.

“This faith,” they said, “is something far more durable and wonderful than the inborn instinctive ‘faith’ that accompanies all living, such as that which enables you to sit on a chair, trusting the workmanship of the carpenter and the strength of the structure to support you, without undue questioning.”

I began to listen and to question, to ponder and to meditate around this word *faith*, the faith of God. Using a small concordance, I started to look up all the references to it in the Bible, seeking for an understanding at first, then searching for a means to obtain this same gift of God.

I found people in the Old Testament who were enabled to believe in God with an unshakeable steadfastness; the Israelites leaned on Him and had confidence in Him. This aspect of trust obviously came out of an absolute assurance that the One they trusted was trustworthy, and would not let them down or fail them or change His word. Oh, yes, I could understand believing in a God like that.

I found another line of thought running all through the Bible, linked with faith. Starting with Abraham, I found that he believed in God and His promises, and because of that belief, God accepted him and called him righteous. The harlot Rahab believed in the same God, and her trust saved her from destruction. David, having committed adultery and manslaughter, reached through to an assurance of forgiveness of sin by committing himself wholly to the judgment of the righteous God. The prophet Habakkuk summed it all up:





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The just shall live by his faith (Hab. 2:4).

People who obtain righteousness in exchange for their sinfulness by believing in God shall live, fully live, as God meant them to live. They shall have life – abundant, spiritual life – as they live in that faith that alone can make them righteous.

I moved into the New Testament and read through Paul's letters to the Romans and to the Galatians. Then I turned to the letters to Timothy and to the Hebrews and to the letter of James. I went back again to the gospel according to John until I came to a verse near the end which said:

These things are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name (John 20:31).

I remembered reading in the letter to the Romans:

So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God (Rom. 10:17).

I re-read John's gospel, during the December of 1944. Right from the start, the writer talks of our need to believe and stresses that we *can* believe. John the Baptist told us of the Light, the true light that shines in our darkness "that all men through him might believe." He declared that "as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name."

A hunger was stirring. To be loved by God as His child sounded wonderful. Could it be true? As I read of various miracles, I saw that it was when Jesus changed the water to wine at the wedding of Cana in Galilee that His disciples put their faith in Him. When He healed the sick son of the royal official at Capernaum, by a spoken word of authority, the official and all his household believed.





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When Jesus fed five thousand people with a boy's picnic lunch of five small loaves and two small fish, the people marvelled. When He raised Lazarus from the dead, calling him out of the tomb on the fourth day after his burial, all wrapped about with the burial clothes, many of the Jews put their faith in Jesus.

Suddenly I came on some startling verses in chapter six:

I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst (John 6:35).

And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day (John 6:40).

The passage went on to say:

Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you (John 6:53).

Already there was a stirring in my heart, a reaching out to grasp the inner meaning of the words, to satisfy a deep-seated hunger.

When Jesus was teaching at the great feast, He reminded those present of the many miracles He had already performed in their midst. If they could not believe in His words, could they not believe the evidence of their eyes in His works?

"And many believed on him," we read (John 10:42).

As I read on, I could hardly believe that the Pharisees sent soldiers to take Jesus into custody!

The tremendous story of the healing of the man born blind excited me, especially his own words of testimony: *"Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see."* The crass stupidity of the Pharisees, their insults and petty self-righteousness,





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annoyed me. Already I longed that my inner eyes, the eyes of my heart, might be opened to see the Lord, as that man did. I longed to believe. I prayed to believe. I read more and more every day in order to believe. I talked with others and asked endless questions that I might believe.

Many of the Jews ... believed on Jesus (John 12:11).

What stopped me? What held me back from doing just that? It was what I wanted to do.

Jesus continued to warn His disciples that in the coming days He must die, saying:

Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit (John 12:24).

And as a result of His continued teaching “among the chief rulers also many believed on him.”

As I read on through the story of the supper in the upper room and of Judas’ betrayal, I came to the tragedy of Peter’s denial when he swore that he did not know Jesus. Only a few chapters before, he had publicly declared that he would lay down his life for his Lord!

A flicker of fear caught my heart. Was this what held me back? Would I not have done just as Peter did? I would fail Him too. I was beginning to believe in Him, but could I ever be faithful? Would my faith in the Lord stand up to tests like that?

I read on through the heartbreaking account of the trial and the flogging, the mockery, and the sentence. I judged Pilate’s weakness with scorn and all the injustice that he allowed yet I dreaded to think what I would have done in that setting and those circumstances.

Through all the record of the crucifixion, the silent dignity of the unresisting, holy, innocent Man stood





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out in stark contrast to all the evil and cunning, the envy and hatred around Him. The sheer, barbaric cruelty, the thought of the agony of physical pain, the realization of total, human injustice, these only highlighted the quiet triumph as Jesus cried out, “*It is finished!*”

What was finished? Whatever it was, it enabled Christ then to give up His life. He died, and He was taken down from the cross and buried.

The twentieth chapter of John’s gospel gripped me as though I had never heard the story before. Christ rose again. He appeared to Mary and then to His disciples. He was alive! Thomas could not believe it – no, I guess I would not have believed it either. Thomas had to see and to touch in order to believe.

Then Jesus said to him, “*Because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.*”

Oh, how much I wanted to believe!

At the end of the book, I came again to that verse that I had read weeks earlier:

These are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name (John 20:31).

It was becoming very clear. My head and mind and understanding agreed, but somehow I did not “know for sure without a shadow of doubt” (which someone told me was the real meaning of to believe). I did not *know* Jesus. I found that I did believe that He was the Christ, the Son of God, but something was missing. My faith, if it were yet faith, was not living, vital, real. It was only theoretical.

I remember that during that term at college, some of the members of the Christian Union had been studying the





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eleventh chapter of the letter to the Hebrews, preparing for the following term's meetings. Perhaps sensing something of the hunger in my heart, they had invited me to join them. I do not remember anything of the first study, despite my urgent interest in the subject of faith.

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen (Heb. 11:1).

But I do remember how startled I was at some of what was said and discussed at the second study on verse three: "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear."

They said that God had spoken a word of command: "Let there be light," and there was light. This made sense ... as did so much else.

When I left the Bible study group that evening and went back to my own room, I began to question it all. How could I believe such – what was I about to say – rubbish? Yet ten minutes earlier my mind had accepted that it was sense. What made me change so easily? Using five normal senses in a logical scientific manner, I was prepared to say now that it was nonsensical. Yet such a short time previously, in the atmosphere of a Christian Bible study group, was it some sixth sense that had assured me that it was true, that God had created the world that we see from nothing? The student leader had explained that nothing was not something called nothing; it was actually nothing, the absence of something. God had created this perfect, orderly, beautiful world by a word of command: "Let there be ..." and there was.

Through the term, we had moved on through chapter eleven of the letter to the Hebrews, looking at different illustrations of the outworking of the principles of faith.





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By faith Abel, Enoch and Noah worshipped and served God. By faith Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph praised and obeyed God. By faith Moses chose to go God's way instead of the world's. By faith the walls of Jericho fell. Throughout, we saw faith as a driving force, an activity born out of an assurance of God, out of a conviction in the fact of God and the activities of God.

Some of the girls had devotional books to help them in these studies, and I borrowed some. In a book by G. Campbell Morgan I read: "Life has dimensions other than those that can be encompassed by the senses, and into those dimensions nothing can enter except the principle of faith." In the great realm of *life* – abundant, full living – there is obviously so much beyond the five senses and the measurements and definitions of science. Here faith is the active force, the sixth sense.

Going back to the first verse of the eleventh chapter of the letter to the Hebrews, where we find the only definition of faith that the Bible gives, we read: "*Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.*" A conviction is worked in our hearts and consciousness that God is, and that God is active in all the realm of living beyond the five senses. This conviction gives to us an assurance concerning the things hoped for, as yet unseen and indefinable perhaps, yet vitally real and certain to the realm of faith.

During my Christmas vacation in 1944–45, I went to a Christian house party in London. A certain Miss Doris Candy, well remembered and loved by many of us to this day, led us in a Bible study in the book of Genesis at the beginning of the week. I was fascinated, but also appalled at my ignorance. How did she know her Bible so well? She made the story live, with great relevance to us right





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then. I felt I knew nothing, as she unfolded to us riches from the Word of God. Later in the week she was to do a similar study in Paul's letter to the Romans, and she suggested that we read it by ourselves first, so as to derive more benefit from her teaching. I determined to do so. I sat up all one night, reading and answering questions on each part, as directed in a study book someone gave me (*Search the Scriptures*, IVP).

In the very first chapter I came up against this important word again – *faith*. “The gospel ... is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth,” that is, to every one who has faith. Chapter after chapter unfolded this gospel – the righteousness of God imputed to me *if* I believed. I found no difficulty in following the argument that all men were sinners in the sight of God. To me it was obvious that we all fell short of His holy standard, His true righteousness.

But now the righteousness of God ... which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: ...being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood (Rom. 3:21-25).

As James Philip clearly states: “The Apostle, having concluded the whole world accountable to God, announces the amazing fact that God the Judge acquits the guilty, granting him a free pardon and a new beginning, and making him a new creature in Christ.” Something in me reached out and grasped at this extraordinary and wonderful statement of fact. There actually was a redemption, a propitiation. The ransom had been paid “by Christ Jesus ... in His Blood.” It was something already completed. This was what I had read in John's gospel. Jesus Christ had paid our ransom on the cross





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when He was crucified, when He poured out His life's blood until He died. "The redemption that came ..."—aorist tense, a finished, past act. Suddenly I understood that cry of Christ's on the cross: "*It is finished!*" It was redemption that was finished. The ransom price for sinners had been paid fully. The death sentence on sin was passed and carried out. "Justified" could be written against my name, as the sin bearer gave up His life for me. He paid the whole price. Nothing was lacking.

I read on excitedly, all through that night until the early hours of the morning. My heart was strongly moved, as though on fire. I had glimpsed a great light, and yet somehow I felt blinded by it. Something was escaping my grasp. An almost desperate desire was forcing me to extend my reach. The following day, Miss Candy took us through the letter to the Romans systematically, but strangely I did not want the correctness just then. The fire had touched me, and I was terrified that the spark might go out before it had time to blaze up and set me truly alight.

I went to see her later that day. I plunged straight in with one hungry question.

"How do I get faith? How do I know that I have faith? What is faith, anyway?"

Quietly she sorted me out, seeking to discover how much I did or did not know already. Together we went through the gospel story.

"Do you believe that Jesus was the Son of God?"

"Yes," I answered with a sudden, certain conviction.


"Do you believe that He died on the cross of Calvary?"

"Yes." I had no doubt of that.

"Do you believe that He rose again from the dead?"

"Yes" — the evidence seemed incontrovertible.





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“Do you believe that Jesus died as a ransom for the sins of men?”

Miss Candy explained the phrase. She read certain other verses to me, as from Paul’s letter to the Romans:

For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God (3:23)

and,

The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord (6:23).

Oh, yes, I had read these verses last night and clearly accepted them.

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life (John 3:16).

For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many (Mark 10:45).

There were other verses, but these are the ones that stayed in my mind and linked together to speak peace to my heart.

Yes, I did believe all that, and yet somehow I lacked *faith* that it was really for *me*, and not just for everyone else. I so urgently needed assurance in my own heart.

“But you believe in God?” Miss Candy remonstrated patiently.

Yes, of course I did. I doubt if I had ever actually disbelieved, even when I was trying to “do without Him” those last six months.

“Could God lie?”

No, that was certain. God, if He were God, obviously would not lie. He simply would not be God if He did.



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“Well, He has said, ‘*Whosoever believeth in him.*’ You believe in Him and in His death as a ransom for sin. Are you not part of that ‘whosoever’?”

Yes, I could see the logic. I knew that I did believe. What was worrying me? Why did I doubt that I had faith?

“Faith is God’s gift in your heart that has made you able to believe,” she explained, and then read to me from another of Paul’s letters: “*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*” – unmerited mercy and love reaching out to save me from my sins, and planting in my heart His faith that I might be able to believe it!

Could this possibly be?

The supper bell rang, and we went down to the hurly-burly noise of a big crowd of girls, chatting and laughing. During supper, an argument developed over the understanding of the phrase “This is my body” said by the Lord Jesus of Himself as the Bread of Life. Already on edge, fighting my own internal battle toward faith, I was irritated by the discussion. I got heated and spoke angrily. Some looked at me, amused, others, surprised. One or two were frankly distressed at my outburst. Feeling ashamed, I left the table hurriedly and went upstairs on my own.

I flung myself on my bed and cried out to God in my heartache. I wanted Him so badly to be my friend and my Saviour. I longed for His gift of faith that I might not only believe but know that I had received forgiveness.

Be still, and know that I am God (Ps. 46:10).

I had glanced up through my tears at the painted text on the wall over my bed, and God spoke to me.

“Stop struggling, and searching, and asking. Just KNOW ...”





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And I knew. In that moment He filled me with His gift of faith. I knew Him. I knew His love, His nearness, His forgiveness. A great happiness filled me, and peace seemed to take over all my senses. I cried with relief; the struggle was over. I believed; I believed into the faith; I believed into the redemption wrought for me by the death of Jesus Christ, God's only Son, on the cross at Calvary. I knew that I was forgiven, accepted, loved by God. I knew nothing of the doctrine of adoption then, but I sensed that He owned me, as a father his child.

I went downstairs to the evening meeting, in a strangely embarrassed state. I knew I was happy, but for once I had no words to express my feelings. It was the last meeting of the house party; tomorrow all would be going home.

After some singing Mrs Gilbert-Smith, the leader, asked for testimonies. I was not sure what that expression meant and waited in silence. Nothing happened. She again invited the girls to take part, to share of their experiences. Again, a slightly strained, uneasy silence.

"Has no one met with God during this week together?" she asked.

"Oh, yes," I blurted out, "I have!"

I got no further. Suddenly I did not know what to say, how to express the extraordinary sense of certainty and peace and joy that seemed to flood me. Tears were welling up in my eyes. If I said another word, they would spill over. I knew God. That was the one overwhelming fact.

"Be still, and know ... God."

I did.

What had I read the day before in Romans?

The word of faith ... that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thy heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved (Rom. 10:8-9).





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I was saved and knew I was.

How had faith come? Where had it come from? How did I put this faith into action and believe? I did not then try to puzzle it out.

Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God
(Rom. 10:17).

Later, I read how Nygren puts it: "When one hears the gospel and is conquered by it, that is faith!" and that just expressed it for me.



The next six months were exciting. I knew from the moment that I was saved that I would have to give to the Lord Jesus Christ one hundred per cent loyal service. I was conquered by the gospel. I loved my new Master with a deep inner passion of loving, and that love had to be expressed in active service. The faith of God in my heart was a burning reality that had to work, to do, to *live*.

I have never seen a contradiction between the clear teaching in the fourth chapter of the letter of Paul to the Romans, that saving faith is independent of works, and the equally clear statements in the second chapter of the letter of James to the twelve tribes, that living faith must be manifested by deeds. This seems obvious. I knew only too well that I was not saved by anything I had done or achieved, not even by my believing, but only by God's gift of His faith in my heart, enabling me to believe that Jesus Christ had done all that had to be done to ransom my guilty soul. In Him I was redeemed and that freely by grace, unmerited mercy. But I knew equally certainly that to express my gratitude, the upwelling love in my





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heart, to respond to this so-great salvation, I *must* show my newfound faith by living deeds.

July 1946 found me at the Keswick Convention in the Lake District of northwest England in a small camping party of about fifteen girls, among the five thousand Christians who gathered for a week of Bible teaching. On Friday morning, the group of us sat in the central block of the vast marquee, directly facing the platform, perhaps some twelve rows from the front. The singing was tremendous. After five days of endless rain, the sun had broken through, and the glory outside seemed reflected by the joy inside the tent. Several missionaries gave short telling testimonies to God's blessing in different parts of the world, and each one ended by stressing the great need for other young lives to join them, if the gospel were ever to be preached to the uttermost parts of the earth in our generation. The final speaker drew it all together, pleading with us to surrender our all to the Lord Jesus Christ, who had given His all, His life, to redeem us.

He challenged us with the words of Christ:

Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple (Luke 14:33).

The leader of the meeting continued: "Do you want the inestimable privilege of being His disciple, His co-labourer, thrust out into His harvest field? As we sing the next hymn, if you are willing to say *yes* to Him on His terms and go anywhere He sends you, will you stand?"

The great congregation remained seated with heads bowed to sing a hymn that became from that day the prayer of my heart:

Stir me, oh! stir me, Lord, I care not how,





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But stir my heart in passion for the world.

Unknown to me, I had been waiting for this moment. Every part of me tingled with fervent joy and happiness that I was allowed the privilege of responding, and that Christ was inviting *me* to serve *Him*, to be called His ambassador, His missionary. With over one hundred others I stood, without the least sense of pressure or of strain. At that moment, there was not even a trace of fear or of hesitation. I just knew that *this* was what I wanted with all my being – a means to put faith into action, living faith, to say thank you in some tiny way for the great gift of His faith, so freely given to me by His grace.

After the service, I slipped away from the group and made my way up the lower slopes of Skiddaw. I sat there alone in the bracken, gazing out over the valley and the lake to the distant mountains; a precious stillness hung in the sun-drenched air. For two or three hours I stayed there, in tune with God and unbelievably happy in the consciousness of direction, in a confirmation of the inner urge to missionary service that had been growing in me during the previous eighteen months.

I again went to Keswick the following year. There had been various battles during the year, even moments of uncertainty as to whether what I understood to be my “missionary call” was perhaps only an emotional response of my own nature and not really a vocational direction from God at all. Would it stand the test of time? Could I go through with what might be involved? Missionary speakers had come to our College Christian Union almost every month, as also to the university missionary breakfasts. I had listened avidly to each one. I had read the biographies and literature that they brought with them, but these tended to frighten rather than to encourage me.





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As I read of places of loneliness, I was very conscious of my own need of friendships. As I read of the struggles of others over language study and communications, I could not help but remember that I had failed to learn French at school and had only just scraped through Latin. Besides which, one of my chief difficulties was an overriding shyness and consequent inability to communicate in English, let alone in a foreign language. I was not really troubled by the thought of doing without some of the world's luxuries, or even having to "rough it" in a primitive situation. My parents had never indulged us by an extravagant use of money; we had spent most of our annual family holidays under canvas "roughing it" in the Lake District or on the continent, and the frugalities of strict wartime rationing during my teen years had helped to develop a "do-it-yourself" attitude to the solving of problems. What did scare me, however, was the thought of carrying responsibilities and making decisions that I knew to be beyond my abilities. Maybe there would rarely be colleagues to whom I could turn for advice or help.

The apostle James has also written: "*The trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire wanting nothing.*"

I did not know this verse then, nor that James also says that these trials of our faith should be considered "pure joy!" Certainly I found no joy in the battles against the doubts that began to assail me. Would I not be better suited to a job at home?

As the previous year at Keswick, I went up onto the mountain slope behind the field where we were camping to be alone with God. I sat there and reread the hymn that had so stirred me the previous year. I wanted God's





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assurance that it was He who was calling me into His service and thrusting me out into His mission field, and not just some emotional responsiveness of my own heart. As I struggled with my problem, repeatedly assuring God that I honestly wanted only to do His will, a sense of peace began to replace the sense of conflict.

*Delight thyself also in the Lord;
And he shall give thee the desires of thine heart (Ps. 37:4).*

Once more, as the year before, I came to a place of solemn committal to Him. I endeavoured honestly and with a deliberate act of will to lay myself as it were, on the altar, giving all to God, as far as I could understand what that meant. I asked Him to accept my act as a “living sacrifice.” I asked Him to help me to become willing to renounce all, to be single-eyed for His will and His glory. I wanted to have no other ambition than to serve Him wholeheartedly. I referred back to the hymn and asked Him to stir me through and through, so that I might be wholly His, no part thought of as my own.

As I lay out on the hillside, in an attempt to consecrate myself wholly to Him and to His service, I seemed to get a brief glimpse of the fight that might lie ahead. In complete sincerity I ended my prayer somewhat as follows: “Please go on working in me until I really am transformed into the image of Your Son. Today I mean this, with every ounce of my being, but when You start doing it, and the stirring hurts, and I feel I can’t take any more, maybe I’ll cry out to You to stop. Please when that happens, don’t listen to my cry to stop, but just remember my vow today to be available to You, and just go on working away at me to make me like You want me to be.” I meant that prayer. I still mean it. I longed that the faith that He had put in my heart might be a living faith and never a dead faith.





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I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me (Gal. 2:20).

I would not dare claim that verse as mine, but Paul expresses there the deep aspiration of my heart. I long that it should be true.



Many, many years later, I was reminded vividly of that day on the mountains at Keswick. It was in 1969, three years after missionaries had returned to the northeastern province of Zaire (ex-Belgian Congo) following the devastation of the civil uprising of the “Simba guerrillas” of 1964–65. Together with our African church colleagues, we had started on the long slow process of reconstruction. The story is told in some detail elsewhere of how the five evangelical missionary societies working in the area put all their medical resources and personnel together to “develop a 250-bed hospital with facilities for one thousand outpatients daily, and first-class medical and surgical, obstetric and paediatric care ... (supporting) a training school for twenty four students annually in a three-year course”. My area of responsibility had been defined as the developing of this training school. This involved the erection of buildings as much as the preparation of course material and the selection and training of the students.

The first major building of the school complex was nearing completion by April 1969. Much equipment had been bought in Kampala, Uganda. Slate blackboards had been acquired in Nairobi, Kenya. Chairs and desks, tables and cupboards, window and blackboard frames were being made by local carpenters. The building was to be





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dedicated to the Lord's use at the annual meeting of the Board of Directors (a rather fancy name for the humble group of missionaries and African church elders who met each year to pray and plan for the following year's activities of the medical centre, as part of the overall programme of church evangelism). The students had been working hard to prepare an anthem for the occasion. After the service, they were planning to serve a feast in the evening to all the workmen who had put up the building.

Unexpectedly, we heard that the day of the board's meeting had had to be moved forward by three weeks, due to unforeseen circumstances. We seemed to be miles away from being ready. Could we possibly accomplish all that remained to be done in just one week? Almost frantically we set to, in an all-out effort to beat the clock. For that week, classes started half an hour earlier each morning; the breakfast break was halved; the midday luncheon break was shortened by an hour; the football was confiscated; and everyone put to work from two to six to help the workmen complete the task. Local carpenters were urged to produce chairs as fast as they could. As soon as these arrived, in batches of ten, students sandpapered them and others varnished them. We just prayed that the varnish would be dry before the board members sat on the chairs!

Two students claimed to know something of painting, so were dispatched with two brushes and a one-gallon tin of white hard gloss paint, to tackle the window, door, and blackboard frames in each room of the school. Others helped to clear brick rubble, sweep paths, dig a garden around the newly-erected flagpole, and plant canna lillies which to our joy, because of the tropical climate, were actually flowering by Saturday!





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Moving around inspecting all the different areas of work, I went in search of the painters to see how they were faring. They were not in the first classroom, which surprised me. When I did not find them in the second room, I became suspicious. I looked at the woodwork around the door, which had not noticeably changed since I last saw it. I touched it gingerly. There was a sort of brown, sticky “goo” ... I moved quickly across to the library. There they were, chatting away, brushes in and out of the paint pot, up and down the woodwork, totally unconscious that they were making no impression. The window frames looked just as before. I strode across to them and looked into the paint pot.

There was a solid mass of white matter, under a very thin remaining layer of rapidly disappearing linseed oil. The pot had not been stirred.

There was no point in being annoyed. It was probably my own fault, in assuming that they knew what to do and giving no instructions. One precious gallon of paint was wasted, as at that time we had no spare paint thinner. That paint was so precious. It seems ridiculous now, looking back from a distance, but everything was so hard to come by in those difficult days. We had waited literally months for the delivery of twelve gallon cans of paint. When they had arrived, three had already been stolen. Now another was wasted. I had to fight down a rising tide of frustrated irritation as I fetched another new can of paint.

I demonstrated the art of stirring. Hard work, right down to the bottom of the can, till all that was solid was stirred into the diluting oil, to become one consistency. It changed colour. It would not go so far now, but it would achieve the purpose for which it was designed. I left the two students, duly mollified, I thought, painting away with





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renewed vigour. Some half hour later, I suddenly realized that I had failed to explain that the paint would need stirring every so often until the job was completed. I hurried back to the two boys, only to find that, sure enough, the paint and oil were separating and the white losing its whiteness. I stirred, explained, and left them to it.

The next morning, being at heart a teacher, I gave the morning Bible study on the subject of “stirring” – how we as Christians need to let God stir us, right down to the bottom of our innermost beings. Paul had said: *“I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee ...”* (2 Tim. 1:6), and I wanted to help each student to ask God to stir him deeply. We needed to be stirred until there was no separation left between solid and liquid, between secular and spiritual, weekdays and Sundays. Our lives needed to be of one consistency, through and through, ready to do the task for which we were created. This stirring would need to be continued daily until the task was completed. At the close of our Bible study, one of the students prayed in French, the government language, rather haltingly,

“Go ahead, God, stir me. I don’t care what it costs ...”
Then there was a long pause, before he burst out, in his mother tongue, “I do care what it costs, I care a lot, but stir me all the same, God!”

How my mind snapped back to Keswick, over twenty years before. That was the prayer of my heart then, and has been ever since.

“Stir me, dear God, to live for you in the very fullest sense, by the faith of Your dear Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Stir me, that I may step out of the apathy and indifference and lethargy that seek to overwhelm our modern society, in self-sufficiency





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and self-complacency. Stir me to move out into the exciting realm of faith, to see Jesus Christ at work through me in all the daily details of living. Give me the courage to believe and to act in faith.”

This stirring of faith in my heart and life was as different from the stirrings of the “dares” of the days gone by as white from black; yet strangely, the one had moved to the other by the deliberate yielding to a new object of faith. Every part of my life was handed over, to be no longer a slave to Satan and sin, but rather to the mastery of Christ in His righteousness. I just knew that I now wanted to dare all to serve Him in the very highest sense of the word. It was not to prove my God able: it was no longer to prove myself able. It was just a deep longing, born in my heart by the Holy Spirit, to give Him all of which I was capable, my heart’s devotion, my life’s service, my will’s loyalty.

