

Expectant Faith

Copyright © 2003 by Living Word Press

Chapter 1

Faith

Of all the Bible topics I have taught, I believe faith is my favorite. Hebrews 11:6 says that without faith it is impossible to please God. It is not just a little difficult to please Him but absolutely impossible. Romans 14:23 says that whatever is not of faith is sin. The Amplified Bible puts it this way: “Whatever does not proceed from faith is sin.” Faith is the primary force at work in the Kingdom of God.

Hebrews 11:1 makes this statement:

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

The word “substance” can be translated “title” or “deed.” In my home state, we have a title for our car. If that car is stolen, the title is the proof of ownership. When I go to the police, I show them the title and it proves I have a car. It proves what kind, what year, and even what color it is. I do not see the car. It is not in my possession, but my title makes it mine. Faith is the title for every promise in the Bible. They are all mine because of my faith.

Faith is also the evidence that these promises exist. Evidence is proof of something. My faith is proof that what God says I am, I am. What God says I can do, I can do. What God says I can have, I can have. You cannot see my salvation, but my faith is the evidence that it is real.

Faith is part of the original equipment of the believer:

(Eph. 2:8, NKJV) For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God.

Grace (or the unmerited favor of God) is what saves us, but it is by faith that we appropriate salvation. Where does that faith come from? According to this verse, it is a gift. Romans 10:17 tells us it comes from the Word of God. Through the preaching of God's Word, faith arose in your heart. When you responded to that faith, you received the gift being offered by God and it became yours. Not just the salvation, but the faith as well.

(Rom. 12:3, NKJV) For I say, through the grace given to me, to *everyone* who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith. (Italics are mine.)

What can faith do? Jesus said if we had faith the size of a grain of mustard seed, we could speak to a tree and it would obey us. The mustard seed is one of the smallest seeds known to man. Even the smallest amount of true faith can change any circumstance of life. By faith Jesus walked on water. Faith can reform the world around us to enable us to do what we need to do. By faith Jesus healed the sick, raised the dead and fed the multitude. Faith, active in our lives, can meet any and all needs.

What a wonderful thing this faith is. However the pressures and process of life can rob us of an aspect of faith that is very important. This aspect is the energy behind faith. This aspect of faith is expectancy.

Chapter 2

What Is Expectancy?

If we are going to be able to receive from God by faith, we must step across the line between faith and expectancy. In chapter 1, I discussed the importance and power of faith. We learned from Romans chapter 12 that all believers have faith or at least the potential for faith. I have been a pastor for 21 years. I have watched many good people who know how to walk by faith fail to receive the promises of God in their lives. They have faith. They are faithful people. They have walked for a long time in the things of God. And yet there are points in their lives where they do not seem to be able to receive from the promises of God. Why? It is because their faith does not contain the element of expectancy.

The Nature of Expectancy

What is expectancy? It is the feeling you have when you are looking forward to something good. It is the anticipation you might feel if you are getting ready for a vacation or some other good event. Have you noticed how different getting up in the morning can be depending on what you are planning for the day? On Monday morning

when you are getting ready for work, you drag yourself out of bed, look in the mirror and exclaim, “Good Lord, it’s morning.” However, if it is Saturday morning and you are getting ready to play golf (I like golf), you bound out of bed, go to the mirror and cheerfully declare, “Good morning, Lord!” What is the difference? Expectancy. Good expectation brings joy and confidence; bad expectation brings sorrow and dread.

Pregnancy

One of the best examples of expectancy we can find is a pregnant woman. As a matter of fact, when a woman becomes pregnant, we say that she is expecting. Why? We use this term because something has happened that has made the birth of a child inevitable in her life. My wife and I have six children. Before she became pregnant with the first, we believed in children. We believed in the concept of children. We believed in the process that produces children. We were believing *for* children. You might say that we had faith for children. But then one day something happened. My wife came to me and said, “I am pregnant.” At that moment something was totally different about our faith for children. We not only believed in children, the concept of children and the process of children, but also

now we expected a child. Our faith had crossed the line from concept to reality.

When we are expecting, we know that what we are believing for must come to pass. It is no longer in the realm of “somewhere out there.” It is a reality. We were no longer just believing to have a baby; we *were* having a baby. At that point, our whole life began to change. We began to order our life after our expectancy. We bought a little bed. I could not sleep in this bed. My wife could not sleep in this bed. No one that we could see could sleep in this bed. But we bought the bed anyway. Why? We bought it because our expectancy could sleep in that bed.

We bought a little chair with a tray attached to it. I could not use that chair. My wife could not use that chair. No one in our house could use that chair. And yet we still bought this little chair. Why? We bought it because our expectancy could use that chair. We prepared a room for our expectancy. We bought clothes for our expectancy. We thought up names for our expectancy. Why? There was nothing we could see. People might say to us, “I don’t believe that you’re going to have a baby.” We would say to them, “You just wait-and-see.” We were expecting. We didn’t have to see anything. We simply knew that what we had believed would come to pass. More than that, it had

already come to pass; we just could not see it yet in the world outside my wife's womb.

Isn't it funny how grown people will speak to a pregnant woman's stomach? What are they talking to? There is nothing they can see except a round stomach. They speak to it because they know something has happened in that mother. A seed has produced a life within her, and sooner or later it will be brought forth. That is the reality of expectancy.

Expectancy as a Rope to Hold Onto

In the Hebrew language, the word for expectation has an interesting shade of meaning. It paints the picture of tying a knot in the end of a rope. This is not a picture of desperation, however. As I was meditating on this thought, I saw something a little bit more modern.

Most of us have seen helicopter rescues either in the movies or on television. There may have been a boating accident or some kind of air accident that left people stranded in the water. Along comes the rescue helicopter. From inside the machine, a rope or cable is lowered to the victims. On the end of this rope is a collar. The collar is placed over the shoulders and under the arms of the victim, and the helicopter begins to raise him up. Often, in the

movies, there is some reason the helicopter must leave immediately. The victim is still being raised up into the machine while it flies away. The victim sways behind the chopper as it makes its turns.

Under any other circumstances this would be terrifying, but the victim is not terrified. Instead, he rejoices. He doesn't care how much he is whipped behind that helicopter as long as the winch keeps pulling him upward. A few minutes before he thought he was surely going to die, but now that rope and collar becomes his expectation of life. This is the power and reality of expectancy.

Expectancy in our Relationship with God

We need this same element in our relationship with God. We believe in God. We may believe in the promises of God. We know that God can do what we need Him to do for us. But what do we expect Him to do? We can answer this question by examining our actions and our attitudes. Are we looking for worldly solutions to the problem? That is not to say that we can never use worldly solutions, but is that where our real hope lies?

What about our attitudes? Are we confident? Are we joyful? Do we look towards each day as an opportunity

for God to meet our need? Or do we instead spend our time worrying and trying to figure out our own solutions? One set of actions and attitudes says we are expecting good things. The other says we are expecting failure.

We believe the word of God is true. But, do we expect it to come to pass? We believe that God answers prayer. But, how do we act once we have prayed? We believe that all the promises of God are “yes and Amen” according to 2 Corinthians 1:20, but we still question how they can come to pass in our lives. We may have faith, but we lack expectancy.

Chapter 3

Disappointment Steals Expectancy

One might say that what I am calling expectancy is true faith. It can be said that until we cross that line, we are not believing at all. I would agree with this up to a point. A lack of expectancy *can* be the result of never really believing at all. However, I also believe that many people who have walked by faith have been robbed of that sense of expectancy by the living of life. As a matter of fact, I would dare to say that every believer goes through this kind of period at some point in his or her Christian walk. I want to examine some things that can rob us of that sense of expectancy.

Disappointment

One of the most common things that can steal our expectancy is disappointment. Disappointment tends to make us afraid to try again. The more disappointments we experience and the deeper we allow them to take hold, the more afraid we become to expect good things. The pain of further disappointment is just too great. As Christians, we do not stop believing that “God is able,” but we stop

believing that God will do what we need. Our faith becomes passive and abstract. We tell ourselves that it will all work out, but we do not *expect* it to work out. We do not know when it will work out, and we do not prepare for it to work out. We are not pregnant with the promise. We simply believe that there is a promise. We will not grab onto that rope, but instead we maintain some vague hope that it will grab us. We are afraid to expect because we do not want to deal with disappointment.

Everyone has suffered disappointments. Most often it is because of some kind of failure. Other people may have failed us and kept us from succeeding. We may have failed ourselves through laziness or some type of sin. We may have stepped out to believe God certain that we were in faith and that we had heard the voice of the Lord only to find out we were mistaken. Our knowledge of the Word was not up to the challenge, or we simply believed for something for which we were not ready.

There are many reasons we might have failed either in life or in our walk with God, but the causes are not really as important as our response to the failure. We all fail, just as we will all be disappointed. The only way to never fail in life is to never try. Even then, I guarantee you will find a way to fail at something. It is the same in our walk with

God. You will have faith failures. That is not a negative confession - it is simply a fact. Failure, however, does not have to lead to disappointment. Disappointment does not have to rob us of our expectancy. It is all in how we react to those situations.

Stepping Stones to Success

First, see failure as a stepping-stone to success. If you fail, there was a reason. If someone failed you, forgive him or her and move on. At the same time you will learn what can or cannot be expected of that person. You also can learn how you could have helped him to better fulfill your expectations. My wife often tells me that I expect people to know what I know, feel how I feel and respond appropriately. When they do not, I get upset and sometimes disappointed. She reminds me that people cannot fulfill my expectations if I do not communicate those expectations to them.

If you thought you had faith and what you believed for did not come to pass, learn why. Were you outside of the conditions of the Bible? If so, you have learned something. Were you too weak in faith for what you needed? You now know where you can begin to strengthen yourself. I have found that the problem often lies in our

preconceived ideas about the things that we think we need. God knows us better than we know ourselves. Maybe you need to rethink that desire or that direction in life. That is not a bad thing. It is growth. Growth can be a little painful, but the alternative is to never develop beyond where we are.

Condemnation vs. Conviction

Perhaps the most difficult disappointment to overcome is when we fail ourselves. Most of the time we could have done better. Better at what? Better at whatever we were doing. Even when we have done our best, we tend to be very susceptible to thinking we have not. When we are lazy or when we allow that particular sin we are having trouble dealing with overwhelm us, we know that there is no one to blame but ourselves. For most people the response to this is condemnation.

The Bible tells us in the eighth chapter of Romans that there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus. There is, of course, conviction, but condemnation never comes from God. Let me explain the difference. Conviction is the knowledge that you really have done something wrong or that you really could do something better. Condemnation is the same knowledge with one

major difference. Condemnation emphasizes what you are not and what you will never be. Condemnation is designed to cause you to resign yourself to your condition. As a result, you sink deeper into it.

Conviction, on the other hand, emphasizes what you can do and where you can go. It does not tear down, but it builds you up. Most of us are easily led into condemnation. We go over and over our failure or lack until it becomes so big we are convinced we can never overcome it. Since we are the problem and we will never change, we are better off not trying and not expecting. That is the voice of condemnation. That is how it works. However, if we refuse condemnation and receive conviction, we will move from failure to success.

Moving On

Paul knew this truth if anyone did. Although we see Paul as the writer of two-thirds of the New Testament and the greatest missionary in the church, Paul's life was not full of fame and worldly success. As you read his letters, you hear the many disappointments in his life. Read 2 Corinthians chapter 11 and Romans chapter 8. You will find lists of things that none of us would wish for. Throughout his letters, you will read of people who left him or criticized him. He often talks of how those to whom he preached did not respect him. Paul knew disappointment and failure. Yet in Romans 8:37 we read these powerful words: "Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us." How could he say that with all of the disappointments he had suffered? Let us examine another of his statements:

(Phil. 3:12-14, NKJV) Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. {13} Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things

which are ahead, {14} I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

How can we get by disappointment and failure? How can we maintain our expectancy? Press on! Move forward. Learn from your mistakes, but do not dwell on them. Try again. You say, “What if I fail again?” What if you do not? There is a powerful key in this verse that can help us if we will accept it. The great Apostle Paul had to admit that he was not perfect. That he had not yet “arrived.” Neither have you.

When you learn to think that way, it is not such a tragedy to fail. We do not get as disappointed because we do not think we have to be perfect. That is not to say we should accept mediocrity. It does mean we can move past failure because we accept that we are not perfect. So I failed. If I sinned, I must be sorry and truly repent. Once that is done, move on. It will do you no good to keep dwelling on it. God was not surprised you failed. He knows you are not yet perfected. It does not stop Him from loving you. It does not even stop Him from trusting you in the future. Learn and move on.

Another aspect of pressing on is the term “lay hold.” Paul says, “That I may lay hold of that for which

Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me.” Can you see our rope of expectancy? God has taken hold of us, but we also need to take hold of Him. This is a picture of aggressively going after what God has promised.

When I preach on this scripture, I like to use a little physical illustration. I will ask someone to come and grab hold of my arm. Then I ask the biggest, strongest looking man in the congregation to come and pull us apart. Usually it is not very difficult. Then I ask the first man to take hold of me again, but this time I also grab his arm. The grip becomes two-way. I lay hold of him as he lays hold of me. Again I ask the big fellow to pull us apart, but this time it is very difficult if not impossible to do so.

God takes hold of us in salvation. God also takes hold of us concerning His will for our lives. He is moving us towards that success for which He created us. However, when we do not take hold of Him, His purpose for our lives and the promises in His Word, the enemy easily pulls us away from them. When we lay hold of God, His will and His word as God has laid hold of us, we will not be pulled away. Even if we fail, we will not be pulled away. Even through temporary disappointments, we will not be pulled away. We will be like Paul and “press on” to the highest that Jesus has for us.

You will notice Paul also tells us that he forgets what lies behind. Again, we should learn from our mistakes. The problem is we never seem to finish the lesson. Once you have learned, “fugedabout it,” to use a New York City terminology. You cannot change the past. Make right whatever you can and get on with the journey. This is where condemnation comes in with a different twist. Condemnation says you should not move on and be successful because you somehow do not deserve it. Maybe someone was hurt or something was lost. Can you change that? No? Then “fugedabout it.” Being truly sorry does not mean paying forever. You must move on.

Paul says the way to do that is to get your eyes back on the prize. Our prize is the high calling in Christ Jesus. It is all the promises of God as “yes and Amen” (2 Corinthians 1:20). It is righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost (Romans 14:7). You were meant to have these things. It is God’s will for you to have them. Do not let disappointment take away your expectation to receive them.

Chapter 4

Improper Focus

Another factor that can rob us of expectancy is having a wrong focus. It is important that our expectation be in a direction that is able to come to pass. In the area of finances, for example, we may be focused on a particular channel of provision that is either not realistic or simply not the direction God intends to use. If that is the case, failure is inevitable; this leads right back to disappointment.

The Test of Desperation

Often the reason for improper focus is desperation. We need a solution, so we latch onto the most obvious one and place our expectancy there. Desperation, however, is a breeding ground for bad decisions. This desperation may be in any area. Finance is a prime candidate, but I have seen people desperate for healing. Others may be desperate to enter into ministry or marriage. There is desperation over children, jobs, or anything else that is important to us. The term we use in English is “grasping at straws.” We need some hope - something to believe in. If we believe in

something that does not produce, we are right back to not wanting to expect anything. Proverbs 13:12 says it this way: “Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but when the desire comes, it is a tree of life.” Apply the test of desperation to your expectation and see if it is able to pass.

Fantasy

In addition to the test of desperation, there is another question we can ask concerning focus. Am I focused on a fantasy, a dream or a vision? First, let us look at fantasy. A fantasy is something that is simply not part of our reality. For children it is acceptable to spend time in the realm of fantasy. This is the way they exercise their imagination. It is also a way that God uses to teach them the art of living. They make fantasy decisions, they buy fantasy cars, they fight fantasy battles and they have fantasy marriages. The list goes on and on, but in all these areas they are learning and practicing skills that they will use as adults.

In a way, fantasy for a child is God’s version of a flight simulator. A flight simulator is a machine that creates a computer driven “simulation” of the real experience. Fighter pilots, for instance, are able to experience the feel of combat tactics without risking their

lives or their aircraft. In a way, fantasy has the same function for children. They do all the things that they will have to do in real life but without the risk. If they make a mistake, there is little or no damage.

The reason fantasy works so well in this role is that to a child the fantasy is very real. Although they may know the difference, the line between the two is very thin. For children, under the guidance and control of their parents, that is not a bad thing. However, one of the marks of adulthood is the ability to clearly distinguish between fantasy and reality and to live in the latter.

How does this relate to our expectancy in faith? Many people, instead of being in true faith, are having what I call “faith fantasies.” By this I mean they are believing for something that is so far beyond their experience in God that there is little or no chance for it to happen in any reasonable time period. Some will say, “But brother, we shouldn’t limit God.” I agree; however, God has established certain principles of growth, development and timing and He will not violate them just because we want Him to. If we have a real need that is beyond our faith, God is quite capable of taking care of that need in His sovereignty. I am talking about those times when we are

trying to believe for things that we do not need, we are not ready for or were never God's will for us in the first place.

Let me share a personal example. When I was 14, I started writing music. By 16 we had a band together and were beginning in the music ministry. After a few years we had gotten better. I began believing for the "big break" to happen. I knew God had spoken to me about ministry and in my immaturity and inexperience I thought God would just open the door, and we would walk through it and become the next great Christian rock artists. Was that possible in God? Anything is possible in God. Did I have a word from God that it would happen? No. Did we have the experience or even talent for that to happen? No. Had we gone through the life preparation that would have enabled us to handle that kind of success? No. I was believing for something so far beyond where I was at that point in my life that it was a fantasy. I got disappointed. It took sometime for me to get back to a healthy expectation of what God could and would do in my life in *His* time and in *His* way.

Some people believe for huge ministries, but they expect to step into them with no preparation. That is a faith fantasy. Some people would not go to the doctor for treatment of a major disease but have never successfully

believed God for the healing of a headache. That is a faith fantasy. Go to the doctor and, while you are at it, find someone who has successfully believed for and, preferably, ministered healing and get them to pray for you. Some try to believe for mansions when they cannot pay the rent on their apartment. Some just expect God to bring them from where they are in life to a place far beyond their current condition with no “dues” paid and no time invested. This is a faith fantasy, and it will lead to disappointment which will lead to a lack of expectancy. Do not be afraid to believe big, but take a look at where you are and where you want to go. Make sure the jump you are trying to make is not outside of your reality. Remember, the Bible tells us God will take us from “glory to glory” by building line upon line and precept upon precept (2 Cor. 3:18 & Is. 28:10).

Of course, another reason we find ourselves in the world of “faith fantasy” is that we do not take the time to learn the Word of God and build it into our lives. As was stated earlier, faith can only come from the Word of God. If you are trying to believe God but you do not know what He said, you are in a fantasy world and you will be disappointed. If you do not know what God said concerning the requirements related to what you are

believing for, you cannot meet them and you will be disappointed. Faith that is based firmly on an understanding of what the Bible says will never be fantasy and will always come to pass.

Let me touch on one more thing that can lead us into the world of “faith fantasy.” Pride. Pride will lead us to think of ourselves in ways God has not intended for us. Confidence in God is good; confidence solely in self is not. When we allow pride to gain control, we will begin to believe for things that God never intended for us. They will be things designed for self-glorification and not the glorification of God. That is a faith fantasy and it will not come to pass. Beware of this kind of pride. If things are not working out the way you planned, you might want to start by checking out this area first of all.

Remember, adult Christians may have fantasies that are not evil or even bad. God sometimes uses the imagination as a “simulator” even for adults, but an adult knows the difference between reality and fantasy and knows he or she must live in the reality, not the fantasy.

Dreams

The second possible focus for expectation is the area of dreams. Dreams are also beyond our current ability

to bring them to pass, but there are some major differences between a dream and a fantasy. A dream is out of reach at the moment, but not so far out of reach that it can never be attained. With dedication, prayer, faith and hard work, we can attain a dream. Also, a dream is something that is part of our destiny. Even more important when considering expectant faith is the fact that a dream is given by God - it is not just fabricated in our mind.

Let me go back to the example from my own life once again. The idea of becoming a world-renowned Christian rock star was a fantasy. Not only was it too far from where I was at the time, but also it was not from God. He never intended me to be a rock star. Along with that fantasy, however, was a dream. I knew I was called to ministry and that music was a part of it. I had a dream to do so on a full-time basis and at a level of proficiency. That was beyond me at 18, but not so far beyond me that I could not begin to progress towards it. Eventually I obtained that dream, albeit in ways I never understood at the time.

God gives us dreams so we will stretch and grow. If we have no dreams, we will not strive for anything. We are not expectant because we have nothing to expect. We go from day to day doing the same things the same way. If

we have a God-given dream, we know that there is more for our life than just today's reality. We can also give ourselves to the current reality knowing that it is taking us somewhere. Dreams are a wonderful tool for building expectancy, but there is a danger in dreams as well.

A dream that never progresses has the same effect as a fantasy. God gives dreams, but we must cooperate with His dealings in order to bring them to pass. Many people receive a dream from God and sit back and wait for it to happen. They do not apply themselves where they are because they are waiting for their dream. Their excuse for doing nothing is that what they are asked to do does not have anything to do with their dream. This dream does not come to pass, and the longer they wait the more discouraged they get until they finally lose all hope and expectation.

How can we progress toward the fulfillment of our dreams? First, we must put some action to our faith. James 2:26 tells us faith without works is dead. If you have a dream, put some works to it. That does not mean only works that seem to go with the dream. God expects us to apply ourselves where we are. Start doing something.

If you have a dream for a business, start by working hard for your current boss. You may say, “He’s the reason I want my own business!” The Bible says to work as unto the Lord. By applying yourself for him, even if he is unfair, you are sowing something that you will reap when you do get your business. I have found that no experience is wasted when we learn to work as unto to the Lord and trust Him. Everything I have done has contributed to what I am and what I am doing today.

The next step is to begin to solidify your dream in your own mind. Begin to ask yourself questions about your dream. Using the illustration of business, ask yourself, “What kind of business? What need am I going to meet? What resources do I need? Do I need some kind of education?” Write some things down and get started with what you can. Find someone who is already doing the kind of business you want and talk to them. Do not keep putting it off to someday. If you cannot think of any other way to put your dream into action, make it a real matter of prayer. You might even do some fasting. This proves to yourself, the devil, and God that you are serious. Each step in the direction of your dream, no matter how small, will build expectancy.

One other thing that is necessary in order to keep our dreams from robbing our expectancy is to allow them to be progressive. Sometimes we have a dream when we are young that either wasn't really from God or we misinterpreted. Sometimes we miss God's timing on a dream He has given us. Do not be discouraged; God can and will give you another dream. As life changes, sometimes we must allow our dreams to change. When we cannot do that, we will see dream after dream go unfulfilled until all expectancy is robbed from our lives.

Once more, allow me to go back to my own experience in music and ministry. As my life progressed, I began to realize the "rock star" dream was really a fantasy. I began to see, however, that my songs could bless and encourage people right where I was. I began to use them where I could. We even did some recording. Our record did not "go platinum," but many people were blessed and encouraged. As time went on, the dream for ministry began to take on other forms as well as music. I learned I had a gift to preach and teach the Word of God. I found music could be an aid in opening hearts for that teaching and preaching.

I also found that part of my music gift was to be used in leading people into God's presence through praise

and worship. Praise and worship music is much different from performance-oriented music. I found more and more that this was the area of music in which I was most comfortable. My dream and my interpretation of it changed and progressed as my life did. Much has been fulfilled and I expect much more because I have learned to cooperate with God as He works in my life.

Visions

The best focus for expectation is a vision. Vision is the most scriptural of the three. A vision is a dream for which God has revealed a plan. It is good for us to plan but better when God gives the plan. This is particularly important for anything we are doing that is ministry related. We need to see what God sees. We need to know what God desires for our ministering.

When God gives a vision, He also gives us the means to accomplish it. When we follow Him into each step He reveals, we see the vision fulfilled in our lives. With each element that is fulfilled, our expectancy will grow. As long as we continue to obey God as He directs the vision He has given us, we will continue to see success and we will never come to the place where we lose our ability to expect good things from God in our lives.

Again, however, we must remember visions, like dreams, are progressive and our interpretation of them must be allowed to grow. I have had many God-given visions in my life, but most of the time what I thought they would look like when I first received them was not at all what they turned out to be. Also remember that God will not give more until we do what He shows us to begin with. If we fail to obey, the vision will not progress and we will lose our expectancy in God.

What is Your Focus?

Take a look at your life and the things you are expecting from God. Are they fantasies that have no possibility of coming to pass? Are they dreams that need time and growth to come to pass? If so, are you putting any action to your dream? Is it a vision from God? If it is, are you working the plan that God has given? Are you continuing to obey Him and listening for His direction in how the vision will progress? Your answers to these questions could determine your ability to expect good things from God.

Chapter 5

Restoring Expectation

Back to the Word

If our expectancy is based on people, they may fail us. If our expectancy is based on circumstances, they may change. The place we must focus our expectations is the Word of God. It never changes, and it never fails. It says the same thing when I am up and when I am down. If my expectation is placed there, I will not be disappointed.

In the first chapter of this book, I talked about faith. Expectancy is an element of faith. One might say it is the cutting edge of faith which causes faith to produce in our lives. We learned that faith only comes by hearing the Word of God. Since that is the case, we must assume that if an element of faith, expectancy, has become weak, we must go to the same source, the Bible, to get it back.

We lose our edge of expectancy for all of the reasons discussed in this book. In the end, however, we could also say that we lose our expectancy because we hear and believe words of doubt. When we first found the promises of God to be true, we were excited about them.

We may have read them and meditated on them at length. Life continues, and we find that we do not have the zeal we used to have. We do not read the promise. We do not think on the promise. We are still believers. We still have faith, but the faith is abstract. It is someday instead of today.

The thing we need to understand is that the other voices, the voice of circumstances, the world, our friends who do not believe and many others, never stop coming into our eyes and ears. We slack off hearing the promise, but we cannot slack off hearing the doubt and unbelief. It is continually around us. In reality, the negative voices fill our lives. We hear them, and the edge of expectancy gets duller and duller the longer it takes for the promise to be fulfilled.

What is the solution to the problem? We must actively turn our minds, our eyes and our ears to the promise of God. We must go back to the Word. That is where our faith comes from and that is where it is maintained. Romans 4 is the most concise teaching on the process of expectant faith in the Bible. Let us examine part of this powerful chapter:

(Rom. 4:19, NKJV) And not being weak in faith, he did not consider his own body, already dead (since he was about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah's womb.

Here we see that Abraham was not weak in faith. Since his faith was strong, we must say that he was expecting. We also see the voice of circumstance that could have dulled his expectancy. He was 100 years old. It says his body was “dead.” He was still breathing, so what part was dead? I believe he may well have been impotent. Not only that, his 90-year-old wife never could have children. How could he be expectant concerning a promise that he would be a father of many nations? (Rom. 4:17)

The answer is right here in this verse. He did not consider those circumstances. He knew they were there. He knew they were true, but he did not consider them relevant when weighed against the promise of God. The word “consider” also means to gaze at intently. He was not gazing at the contrary circumstances. He was not giving his attention to the voice of unbelief. What then did he consider? He considered, paid attention to, listened to and gazed intently at the promise of God.

There is no way to simply not listen to the voice of unbelief. You will listen to something. You can choose to turn away from doubt and listen to the promise, but you will hear one or the other. Let me illustrate.

Often I study and pray in my bedroom. We still have 3 children at home as well as 4 grandchildren that visit. My wife home schools our children so there is always some activity in the house. When I try to get quiet, I often hear little voices and little feet. They may be laughing or fighting or just talking, but when it is quiet in my room I can hear them. No matter how hard I try to ignore them, I find my ears drifting to the distracting sounds. They are there, and they are constant. I could run out every 5 minutes, shout at the children and say, “Be quiet!!!! Dad is being spiritual.” That would not help me get much study or prayer done because a child’s definition of quiet and mine are quite different. I would end up frustrated, and they would end up confused.

The only way for me to not hear the children is to replace the sound of the children with something that does not distract me. I usually turn the FM radio on and put it between stations. I know it may sound like that would be worse, but the droning static is not distracting to me, so I can get back to concentrating on the subject at hand. The

point is that I had to replace the distracting sound with the non-distracting sound. I could not simply ignore the children.

It is the same with keeping our expectancy in God sharp. You may have a promise you have been standing on for some time. We must realize that the promises of God are “yes and Amen” but not always when we want them to be. There is often a waiting period. God may be changing you, working on situations or simply waiting for the time He knows will most benefit you. The devil could be hindering the promise from coming to pass. In any case you must be able to maintain expectancy. You cannot do that if you do not replace the voice of unbelief, circumstances, and contrary evidence with the voice of the promise you are believing. We must not consider the circumstance but the promise.

(Rom. 4:20, NKJV) He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God.

Often people of faith receive a promise of God and feel the release of revelation and faith in their lives. They pray and know that God has heard their prayers. They stand knowing that whatever they are believing for will

come to pass in their life. Then the wait begins. They stand strong for a while but they begin to waver at the promise. They begin to worry about the circumstances. They begin to wonder if God will meet the need on time. Eventually, expectancy wanes and, although they still believe, they do not expect.

When we believe God, we need to do what Abraham did. Faith comes by hearing the Word of God. We are also strengthened in faith by hearing the Word of God. Do not make the mistake of thinking that once you sense that release of faith and revelation you can put down your Bible and continue on your merry way. You must continue to feed your faith with the promise. How long? Until it comes to pass.

In reality, we need to strengthen our faith even when we are not believing for something specific. Do not just consider the promises on healing when you are sick. Strengthen your faith in that area periodically by reading and meditating on the promises for healing. Do not just read about forgiveness or repentance when you need to apply them, but also periodically go over the Word in these areas so the strength will be there when you need it.

Strengthening our faith by continually going back over the Word of God will keep us from wavering. James 1:8 tells us that a double-minded or wavering person is unstable. Double mindedness is the direct opposite of expectancy. When we waver, we are not really expecting. When we are expectant, there is no wavering at all. We know God is moving and, if it takes a while, so be it. We are stable in our faith, and we will see the promise come to pass.

(Rom. 4:21, NKJV) And being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform.

This is the picture of expectant faith. When we consider the promise and turn from the voice of doubt, we are strengthened in faith and therefore we do not waver. The end result is that we are fully convinced or persuaded that God will do what He said. We are expecting.

Expectation in God and God Alone

Not only must we focus our expectation on the Word of God but also on God Himself. Again, people and circumstances change. We may be failed by others or by ourselves, but God will never fail. Look at this beautiful verse from Psalms:

(Psa. 62:5, NKJV) My soul, wait silently for God alone, for my expectation is from Him.

You will notice this verse says we wait for “God alone.” When I focus on God and His great love for me, a supernatural expectation is released in my life. Other expectations can fail, but when my expectation is from Him and Him alone, I can be assured that it will come to pass. Paul said it in Romans 8: “If God is for us, who can be against us?” I will expect good things because God is for me, and no power is greater to stand against me. I may not always get the things I want when I want them, but God is working for me. I may have to endure some things by faith, but God is for me. It may look bad for a while, but God is for me. In the end I will come out on top. Something good will happen in my life because God is for me.

My father used to have a saying. “He could fall in manure and come up smelling like a rose.” (Manure was not the word my dad used before he was saved, but you get the idea.) This means that no matter what the circumstances may look like, the person being spoken of is going to come out on top. I believe that about myself. Not because of luck or timing or any natural thing but because my expectation is in God alone. Somehow He is going to

see to it that it works out for me as long as I trust Him. I may not know how at the moment, but I will come out successful and blessed. It may not be exactly how I think it should be, but I expect God to take care of me, and He will.

I like the picture painted by the words, “My soul, wait silently for God alone.” The soul is the mind, the emotions, the intellect and the will. This is the place our expectancy is attacked. Our mind begins to try to work out the problem instead of expecting God to deal with it. Our emotions become enflamed with fear and worry. Our intellect attempts to replace trust in God with natural answers, and our will begins to be weakened concerning the Word. Here the psalmist talks to his own soul and tells it to wait silently for God alone.

When you feel the elements of your soul draining away your expectancy in God, speak to it. Say, “Soul, be quiet and wait for God. He’s taking care of the problem, so you don’t have to.” Then begin to quote the promise to it. As your soul quiets, just begin to think on the goodness of God towards you and your expectation will rise.

Finally, the psalmist says that the expectation itself is from God. When failure and disappointment, improper focus or simply the lack of the Word of God in your life

have robbed you of expectation, go to the Lord and ask Him to restore it. Go in humility and faith. He will touch your soul and bring about the healing necessary. Repent for not trusting Him. He will restore expectant faith to your life.

Expect God to be God

I want to add one other thought as we close. Often our expectation fails because we have trusted a certain channel or person and it does not work out as we thought it would. Most of the time I cannot see in the natural how God is going to meet my need. When I try and figure out a way that God could do it, I invariably look in the wrong direction.

Someone might ask, “What should I be expecting in this circumstance?” You should expect the promise to come to pass. If God gives you a specific word or direction, you should expect it to work as God said it would. All of this is good, but I think there is something that can be added and applied when we have something specific that we can find nothing to “hang our expectation on.”

When there is nothing else for me to focus my expectation upon, I simply expect God to be God. I expect Him to be God in the situation. I expect Him to be God over my finances, my body and my family. I expect Him to be God in my whole life. What does that mean? Whatever need I have will be met. Whatever enemy I have will be defeated. Things will work out for my good because God is God and He loves me.

Great Expectations

So go ahead. Expect good things for your life. Do not walk around with a cloud of gloom over your head. God is for you and in you. You will not be disappointed! Just do not give up or give in to the voice of doubt and fear. Good things are in store for you.

Expect them today!!!