

Call to Obedience #397
PO Box 299 Kokomo, IN 46903 USA
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A Lesson on Faith

By Reimar Schultze

Today I shall write to you about faith. At the end of 1 Corinthians 13, we have a marvelous statement of the Apostle Paul: *And now abideth faith, hope and charity* [love]... Paul makes these three virtues into a trio. These three are ever at the Christian's side: *faith, hope, love*.

They are like a milking stool. The most stable chair is one that has three legs. A three-legged chair will never wobble, no matter how uneven the ground. Anyone who has faith, hope and love will never wobble, because he will have an unshakable foundation for his Christian life. A lot of churchgoers are wobblers, somewhat unsteady, easily losing their balance, easily upset about this and that. The lack of faith, hope and love is their problem.

There is an old saying, "Whenever something is wrong, go back to the basics." The first place you should look for your lost glasses is on your nose. We should go back to the basics when we have come to coldness of soul. First check to see if you are properly grounded in faith, hope and love. Are you feeding on doubts? Are your eyes fixed on the seen rather than on the unseen, the eternal God? Or are you withholding love from someone?

Now today, let us focus on one particular leg of the humble milk stool: Faith. Let us go back to an Old Testament story. The call of God was for Ezra to take some of His people from Babylon back to Jerusalem after many years of their captivity. The Persian king, Artaxerxes, opened the door to freedom for the Jews. Hence we read:

Now after these things, in the reign of Artaxerxes king of Persia... This Ezra went up from Babylon;...and the king granted him all his request, according to the hand of the LORD his God upon him. And there went up some of the children of Israel...unto Jerusalem... (Ezra 7:1, 6-7).

So, there were Jews in Babylon who wanted to get out, to go home. There are some of you who want to go home, who are enslaved, imprisoned, and you

want to get out of it. Your life is miserable. You have neither peace nor joy nor love in your heart. You are looking for the city whose builder and maker is God. My friend, I can tell you today: "Have faith in God." Since God got His people out of Egypt, since He got them out of Babylon, He can get you out of your bondage. Holy faith, by its very nature, is unsinkable. It always brings in its harvest. Believe, be patient, hold steady and your harvest will come. You will get home.

In addition to Artaxerxes letting God's people go back to Jerusalem, he also offered them everything they needed to arrive safely in their homeland, including a military escort if Ezra would ask for it. And this gets us to the very crux of the matter on faith. **Many have faith to get out, but few continue to exercise faith in order to reach their promised land.**

Ezra's dilemma was whether to proceed on his journey in the strength of man, or in the power of God? My friend, once you have been saved by faith, will you now live by faith or will you receive everything the world and its kings have to offer you, for your comfort and convenience? *The king granted him all his request.* This was both a generous and a dangerous offer. It sounds a lot like the devil who offered Jesus all the kingdoms of the world. Watch out! Does not our King of kings also grant us all our requests? Does it not say, *But my God shall supply all your needs according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus* (Philippians 4:19)? What was Ezra going to do now? He was leading 7,000 people, young and old, with much livestock and over 54,000 pieces of gold and silver. That is like moving several bank vaults of money 700 miles through treacherous territory where thieves and roaming bandits made their living. Can you see here that Ezra found himself at a crossroads: *Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the LORD our God* (Psalm 20:7)? Who was Ezra going to trust in?

It is here where we either go by Murphy's Law or by faith. Let me explain Murphy's Law. It says: "If anything can go wrong, it will go wrong." This is a good and sound "law." It means attend to things before they get out of hand. Don't procrastinate. This law should be embraced by every pilot, engineer, doctor, scientist and builder. It should be respected by all of us, by the way we treat our bodies that are the temples of the Holy Spirit and by the way we handle our finances or train our children. Do not be slack in these areas. *...Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap* (Galatians 6:7). Jesus said:

he that has been faithful in very little, shall receive authority over ten cities (Luke 19:17). The Bible also supports Murphy's Law! When the Bible is silent on an issue (as it often is), go by Murphy's Law. Do not say: God will take care of it, when He has made *you* responsible to take care of it. Faith is no substitute for discipline nor a solution for laziness. God will not allow you to abuse Him. Unprofitable servants will be cast into outer darkness (Matthew 25:30). Faith will only profit if its foundation is sound.

Common sense and human wisdom whispered to Ezra: "Don't be irresponsible. Take the king's military escort." **But my friend, God's glory was at stake.** There is a time for the world to see a testimony, a time for you to break loose from dependence on the things and kings of the earth. There is a time to learn that Murphy's Law which rests on human wisdom must be discarded for the law of faith, for the nations to know that there is a God. Ezra refused to ask for the king's soldiers. He said, I am going for God. He said: *For I was ashamed to require of the king a band of soldiers...because we had spoken unto the king, saying, The hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek him...* (Ezra 8:22).

And so, my friend, Ezra moved from Murphy's Law: all that can go wrong, will go wrong, to the law of faith that says: all that can go wrong, will **not** go wrong. As the law of faith took Israel home, so it will take you home. Murphy's Law makes you a good steward, but the law of faith gives you wings to fly. It gets you into living by the supernatural.

The law of faith works! But you must be in the right position before God to make it work. Ezra was in the right position for it says, *God was upon him*. But now he also had to get his people in the right position before God by proclaiming a fast: *...that we might afflict [humble] ourselves before our God, to seek of him a right way for us...* (Ezra 8:21) in order to be protected by Him during their journey home. So, the law of faith does not work unless we are in the right position before God. Sometimes "position" means everything, doesn't it? **And here we learn that at the heart of the right position is humility.** Otherwise there is no revelation from the Lord, nor testimony for the Lord. Ezra said *no* to Artaxerxes' chariots and horses. Do not expect anything from God unless you are in the right position before Him, where you say *no* to all that the world has to offer and *yes* to all that God has to offer.

By asking when you are in the right position before God, you will ask only for that which will advance His glory. In the right position, you will neither under-ask nor over-ask. Sometimes we ask for too little and therefore God does not answer. Sometimes we ask for too much and we remain empty-handed. Our position before God has to be right and righteous.

Don't get me wrong. Let me say this again, Murphy's Law and the law of faith are not enemies. If you have not been faithful in that which is little, if you let things slide, the law of faith will not work for you. It will not work for slothful stewards. But if you act responsibly as a good steward, your faith can reach to the highest of heavens. Remember, Joshua made the sun stand still. Only in a right, humble position before God will you neither shame God nor yourself.

The LORD preserveth the faithful (Psalm 31:23).

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