

An Anxious Faith

By Ronald L. Dart

Jennifer's husband, Mike, was going into the hospital on Monday for open heart surgery. He was a little young to be having heart problems, but the surgeon said that his youth was in his favor. There were risks, of course, but they did this surgery several times a week at this hospital. They were good at it.

Jennifer worried anyway. She was a "professional" worrier—she was good at it. She could construct more scenarios of what could go wrong than the doctors could find in the medical journals.

Today he checked into the hospital and she prayed before she went to bed and then prayed in bed, but sleep wouldn't come. Tonight it bothered her that she didn't feel more confident. It wasn't that she didn't trust God. It was just that she didn't know what he might have in mind—it might be something very different from what she wanted. She would pray, "thy will be done," but she wasn't all that sure about it.

"I wonder if he has paid up his life insurance," she thought. She got up, went to his desk and rummaged through files and check registers to put her mind to rest on that. She went back to bed and turned off the light—still no sleep.

"I suppose I will sell the house," was the next thought. "His insurance will pay the mortgage, but I don't want to live here alone. Maybe I can move to Austin and be near Mike Jr. and Sue. Good grief," she thought, "Next thing I know, I will be planning the funeral" . . . so she did that too.

She finally fell asleep around three, and felt perfectly rotten when she went to the hospital the next morning. "How," she wondered, "can this be called faith?"

The best we can say for Jennifer's faith is that it is an anxious faith. It is a long way from outright unbelief, but it isn't outright faith either. A lot of us are like that. We believe, or perhaps we want to believe, but unbelief is never far away. It lurks in the form of anxiety.

Is faith a choice we can make? Or is it a gift that God either gives or doesn't give? There are those who believe faith comes as a spiritual gift and that there is nothing we can do to work it up. They cite Paul: "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" (Ephesians 2:8-9). Elsewhere Paul said, "For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; To another faith by the same Spirit. . ." (1 Corinthians 12:8-9).

So faith comes as a gift from God. But does this mean we have nothing to do with our own faith? Surely if the faith that is in us is not "of works" then we cannot be blamed for not having faith, can we? Intuitively, we know this cannot be right.

On one occasion, two blind men followed Jesus along the road crying out at every step, "Thou son of David, have mercy on us." How far they followed him is not known, but when he finally got where he was going, they came to him begging to be healed. Jesus asked them, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?" They said, "Yes, Lord." Jesus reached out and touched their eyes saying, "According to your faith be it unto you" (Matthew 9:29). Their eyes were immediately opened.

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Set on Fire

By Ronald L. Dart

If a man dies shall he live again? That's the question isn't it? "Is this all there is?" People want to know. Are we going to live out our lives here in misery, pain, frustration, aggravation, irritation and, after that, oblivion forever? Some might think that eternal oblivion will be merciful after all of this.

Job asked this question, and Job had good reason to ask whether life was even worth living or not. He was very successful and suddenly everything in his life fell completely apart. All his children were killed when a windstorm destroyed the house they were all partying in that day. Then a group of civilians came and stole all of his livestock—left him with nothing. One moment he was a wealthy man and the next he had nothing.

Then he was covered with boils from the top of his head to the bottom of his feet, and there was absolutely no place he could get comfortable. No peaceful sleep for Job in this period of time and the only encouragement he could get from his wife was, "Well, why don't you just curse God and die?"

It makes sense that a man in Job's position would want to know, "What is in this for me? Is life worth living? Should I keep on trying?" There's a marvelous passage in Job where he struggles with this question. "Man that is born of a woman is of few days and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down: he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not. And dost thou open thine eyes upon such an one, and bringest me into judgment with thee Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one. Seeing his days are determined, the number of his months are with thee, thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass" (Job 14:1-5).

For every single one of us there is a boundary we cannot cross. Job knew that and he said, in verse seven, "Because there's hope of a tree, if it is cut down that it will sprout again." Man is not like that—man dies and wastes away. You put him in the grave that's where he's going to stay. Then Job said, "Oh that thou wouldst hide me in the grave, that thou wouldst keep me secret until thy wrath be past, that thou wouldst appoint me a set time and remember me!" (Job 14:13). What Job was asking for was death, burial, and resurrection.

Here was a man who understood the concept that man was the work of God's hands. To me the concept that man is a work in progress is one of the most

profound things you will ever read in the Bible, ever grasp about the Bible, ever come to understand about what God is doing. Man is a work in progress. He is the work of God's hand and God has a plan—he has a point, he has a purpose. What is it that is so great that it trivializes everything that we suffer, everything we possess, everything around us—all we have is trivialized because of what he has out there for us.

The answer to Job's question lies in the person of Jesus Christ, who died and was raised from the dead. The best place I can take you from there is to Paul's first letter to the Corinthians. "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures" (1 Corinthians 15:1-4, KJV).

There's Paul's definition of the Gospel—Jesus died for our sins. He was buried. He was raised from the dead according to the Scriptures. Without that nothing matters.

"If there is no resurrection from the dead," Paul asks, "why do we stand in jeopardy every hour? Now I protest by your rejoicing that I have in Christ Jesus our Lord. I face death every day. You know, that I fought with beasts at Ephesus" what's the point in it? What's in this for me if the dead don't rise?

"You fool," he says, "That what you sow is not quickened except it died." If you're looking toward the Kingdom of God, and you want to be in the Kingdom of God, the Kingdom of heaven, and be around Jesus Christ and God the Father, you do know, don't you, that you have to die?

Just like a seed that is put in the ground, you in the flesh can't get there from here. It's not possible. What you put in the ground can never come up again unless it dies. So Paul says of the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption, it's raised in incorruption. Sown in dishonor, raised in glory. Sown in weakness, raised in power. Sown in a natural body, raised a spiritual body.

"Now this I say brethren," Paul says, continuing in 1 Corinthians 15:50, "that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither does corruption

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Whose faith was this? Jesus said, “According to your faith.” The entire issue hung on one question, “Do you believe that I am able to do this?” Jesus knew that he could do it. It was not a question of what he believed, but what they believed. What would have happened if they had not believed?

Jesus expected, even demanded, faith from his disciples. On another occasion, as he approached a crowd of people, a man broke from the group and ran and fell at his feet. “Lord, have mercy on my son. . .” he cried. It seems his boy had seizures that would cause him to fall into the water or even into the fire. “. . . And I brought him to thy disciples,” he continued, “and they could not cure him” (Matthew 17:15-16).

Jesus response was acrid, “O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you?” (v. 17). He called the child over, cast out the demon that caused the seizures and sent them on their way. The disciples knew the rebuke was for them and came and asked, “Why could not we cast him out?” Jesus replied, “Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you” (vv. 19-20).

This latter expression is, of course, a figure of speech. What Jesus is saying is that faith in the smallest degree can accomplish great things.

In Mark’s account of this, Jesus told the man, “. . . If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.” And the poor man replied: “. . . Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief” (Mark 9:23-24).

We have a lot of practice at unbelief. We don’t believe we deserve anything, so we don’t ask for it. We ask for things, but we don’t expect anything because it is obviously too good for the likes of us. We forget the promises of Jesus, “Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom” (Luke 12:32). It has nothing to do with what we deserve—it has everything to do with our Father’s good pleasure.

He demands of us but one thing: trust. We can call it faith, belief, or persuasion, but it involves a simple trust in God. He wants us to believe what he says, trust him to keep his word, and do what he tells us to do. It is a choice well within our grasp, and we cannot come to God without it: “But without faith it is impossible to please

him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him” (Hebrews 11:6).

How does faith come, and how does it go? There is a short passage in Romans that tells us how it comes: “How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? . . . So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:14-17).

Faith is built brick by brick. It is torn down in much the same way. Our problem is that we spend more time tearing it down than in building it up. In the belief system of many Christians there is a kind of fatalistic determinism. Whatever will be, will be—it is out of our hands. But if it were not in our control, Jesus would not have said what he did in the Sermon on the Mount:

“I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you shall eat or what you shall drink, nor about your body, what you shall put on” (Matthew 6:25, RSV). This entire section, to the end of the chapter is about anxiety, and Jesus’ conclusion of the thought is, “Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Let the day’s own trouble be sufficient for the day” (v. 34, RSV).

I can’t help recalling Paul’s words to the Philippians: “Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice. . . Be careful [anxious] for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:4-7). How?

All Paul told the Philippians was this: “Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things” (Philippians 4:8).

It seems we really do have the capacity and the responsibility to decide what we are going to think about. That decision has more to do with faith than we have ever imagined. By controlling our thoughts we can build faith, brick by brick, instead of tearing it down. It is not only within our grasp, it is demanded of us.

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inherit incorruption.”

Why is it that flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God? What is it that makes that impossible? It's a profound question. One respected theologian opined that, in the resurrection we would be like bright shiny mirrors that would reflect the glory of God. I thought that was a charming way to put it; however, there is something you need to know about the glory of God, and the concept of the glory of God in the Bible.

Glorify in the Bible is not a synonym for honor or adulation or admiration. In the Bible, glory is, in a very real way, a synonym for fire. In Hebrews 12:25-29 there is a powerful admonition: “See that ye refuse not him that speaketh: for if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven: Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain.

Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: For our God is a consuming fire.”

I don't know if you've ever thought of this, but when we finally come into God's presence, at long last, we will be set on fire—for destruction—or for glory. One way or the other. To hear all of this inspiring message request your *FREE* copy by calling us at 1-888-BIBLE-44, responding to the enclosed offer, or going online to www.borntowin.net to listen.

Save the Date for 2018 Women's Conference

What: New Church Lady Women's Conference 2018 - *Weightier Matters*

When: Saturday, April 21 beginning at 2 pm through Sunday, April 22 at 1 pm.

Where: Church of God International
3900 Timms Street
Tyler, TX 75701

Sponsored by: Church of God International, CEM, and Dynamic Christian Ministries.

For more information, contact Nancy White –
Nancy@DynamicChristianMinistries.org



YEA Program

Have you taught YEA at your church, in your home, or at the Feast? Have you been a YEA student? Have you purchased a YEA lesson in the past? If so, would you be willing to give us some input on this program? We would like to update the program and would love to hear from you if you are interested in helping us out.

Call 1-888-BIBLE 44 and ask for Linda Benton or email her at adm@borntowin.net.

Thanks and we really look forward to hearing from you.

Radio News

Expanding our radio audience is part of CEM's plan for this coming year. However, as of the end of 2017, we have increased our weekly play time by 15% but have not added any new stations. Please keep the *Born to Win* radio ministry in your prayers. Ask God to provide the stations and the funds for us to increase our radio audience.

Christian Educational Ministries

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That the man of God may be proficient and equipped for every good work.

CEM Mission Statement

Christian Educational Ministries (CEM) was founded in November 1995 by Ron and Allie Dart as an independent, non-denominational ministry to serve the public and individual Christians of every kind through the ministry of Ronald L. Dart. Mr. Dart, an ordained minister and evangelist, has served God through hundreds of sermons, broadcasts, Bible Studies, and books—bringing clarity and simplicity to topics.

CEM promotes Ron Dart's radio ministry, *Born to Win*, which is heard from coast-to-coast. His clear, conversational, and inviting style can be heard the world over. The *Born to Win* website, www.borntowin.net, features more than 1000 of Mr. Dart's timeless sermons and studies at any one time.

Our mission is:

- First, to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the world. (Matthew 28).
- Second, to teach the disciples of Jesus Christ so that they may be “proficient and equipped for every good work.” (2 Timothy 3:17).
- Third, to teach and train this generation and the next with studies and programs focused on youth, through the Dart's special passion, Youth Educational Adventures (YEA). (Deuteronomy 11:19, Proverbs 22:6).
- Fourth, to bring God's people closer together, through cooperative efforts wherever they may be. (2 Corinthians 5:18).

To this end, we teach the Bible and its Truth, with a goal of helping people make their own lives work while they are a positive influence and blessing to those around them. Follow Mr. Dart and CEM at www.borntowin.net, Facebook, YouTube, and other media.

February Scripture Writing Plan



We encourage you to read each day's scripture and then write it down in a notebook, a journal, on index cards, in a text message or whatever method you know works best for you. If you can't write it down, consider speaking the scripture and recording it on your cell phone or voice recorder. Our goal is to have read and written down a minimum of 365 scriptures by the end of 2018. Let's do this and see the value it brings to our lives.

February 1	Hebrews 11:1	February 10	Hebrews 11:11	February 19	Ephesians 2:8-9
February 2	Ephesians 3:16-17	February 11	Galatians 3:26-27	February 20	Romans 10:17
February 3	2 Corinthians 5:7	February 12	Matthew 21:22	February 21	1 Timothy 6:12
February 4	James 1:3	February 13	1 Corinthians 16:13	February 22	Romans 12:3
February 5	James 1:6	February 14	Hebrews 12:2	February 23	2 Peter 1:5-7
February 6	Romans 14:1	February 15	1 Timothy 4:12	February 24	Galatians 5:6
February 7	1 Timothy 6:11	February 16	2 Thessalonians 1:3	February 25	James 5:14-15
February 8	1 John 5:4	February 17	Matthew 17:20	February 26	Habakkuk 2:4
February 9	Mark 10:52	February 18	Galatians 2:20	February 27	Romans 5:1
				February 28	Hebrews 12:28-29

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Set on Fire (CD) FREE

If a man dies shall he live again? That's the question isn't it? "Is this all there is?" People want to know. Job asked this question, and Job had good reason to ask. One moment he was a wealthy man and then he was ill and had nothing. What Job was asking for was death, burial, and resurrection. Ron Dart answers the question and explains what it takes to get there from here and what will happen when we come into the presence of our God, who is a consuming fire.

Thank You

We are a donor supported ministry and we thank God for all of you who help us stay on the radio and help us provide Mr. Dart's messages to those who would otherwise not be able to listen and learn from his gift of teaching. We pray that you will be blessed for your support.

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