



Psalms 78:2-4

I will open my mouth in a parable, I will utter dark sayings of old... We will not conceal them.

Parables Bookshelf - Series 1.9.1

This issue of PARABLES BOOKSHELF introduces the book *The Divine Quest*.

Have you ever thought about how much man is focused upon what he wants to get out of life? We would have to conclude that man's focus is what could only be described as "selfish."

From childhood people are taught to begin planning what they would like to be, and what they would like to do in life. School teachers, parents, friends, media, and even churches foster this self-focus, urging men and women to pursue their personal goals.

The kingdom of God operates upon a very

different principle. Christ revealed this principle when He spoke the following words:

John 6:38

"For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me."

Think about how radically different the attitude of Christ is from the life of most Christians today. Even as a 12 year old child He had a focus upon doing the will of His heavenly Father. When His parents found Him in the temple after a search of several days, He said to them:

Luke 2:49

"Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?"

Consider how radical it would be had you begun your life with such a focus. Suppose the great purpose and drive of your life had from your childhood been to know the will of God and to do it. How different would your life be today.

We cannot go back and change the past, but we can set our focus upon a new goal today. We can die to selfish pursuit and begin pursuing the satisfaction and delight of God.

Why not start today?

Food for Thought

"Surely what a man does when he is taken off his guard is the best evidence for what sort of man he is. If there are rats in a cellar, you are most likely to see them if you go in very suddenly. But the suddenness does not create the rats; it only prevents them from hiding. In the same way, the suddenness of the provocation does not make me ill-tempered; it only shows me what an ill-tempered man I am."

C. S. Lewis

Scripture Memory

Galatians 5:22-23

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

Parables Newsletter

- Series 1.9.1
- *The Divine Quest*
- Introduction
- Chapters 1-4

The Divine Quest

Introduction

The Spirit has led me to put a number of things in writing to share with the saints for their edification and instruction, but I can think of no more important message than that which is contained in this book. The book *“The Remnant Bride”* presents a challenge to the saints to not be content with Outer Court

Faith finds its foundation in the love of God...

Christianity, but to enter into the place of intimacy to which the Bride of Christ is called. The books *“The Road from Babylon to Zion”*, *“Laying Down the Law”* and *“Sarah’s*

Children” contain insight and instruction to the saints to lead them out of the dead works of an apostate church and into the will of God. The books *“Sabbath”* and *“God’s Plan of the Ages”* contain foundational truths and hold great benefit for those who comprehend their message. Yet in this book is contained a message of foundational truth that goes even deeper than the books that have preceded it.

Some having read the cover to this book and discerned that it deals with the topic of faith might rightly object, that as profound and essential as faith is, there are deeper and more important issues. In Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians he declared that “there abides faith, hope and love, but the greatest of these is love.” What will be shown in the pages of this book is that faith is actually born out of love. Faith finds its foundation in the love of God, and it is those who struggle with trusting in the love of God who have the greatest difficulty in manifesting faith.

The extreme importance of faith is seen in the words, “Without faith it is impossible to please God.” Pleasing God should be the aim of every saint. If we understand that we have no possibility of pleasing God apart from faith, we can discern that it is among the most vital and essential needs of every saint. This book will explore questions such as:

- What is the foundation of faith?
- Why is faith so important to God?
- How might we be increased in our faith?
- Why does God allow, and even desire, for our faith to

be tested?

- How is God glorified by our faith?

From Genesis to Revelation the Scriptures reveal that Yahweh has been looking for faith in the heart of man. The history of the 6,000 years of man’s existence has revealed that faith has been a rare and precious thing. Far more men have lacked faith than have possessed it. It has been a mere remnant of mankind that have found God’s approval as they have manifested faith in Him. With these few God has been well pleased. Their faith has brought glory to the God who created them.

The words of Christ reveal the divine quest that has been present within the Godhead since Adam was created.

“When the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?”

Luke 18:8

The Father, Son and Spirit are still on this divine quest today. Even in the Old Testament, this divine quest, this earnest searching by God for faith in the hearts of men, was expressed in the clearest of language:

II Chronicles 16:9

“For the eyes of Yahweh move to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His.”

In this hour the eyes of Yahweh continue to search the earth that He might find those who trust Him with their whole being. He is looking for those who will willingly cast everything over onto Him in confidence that He will not forsake them. Will He find what He is looking for in your own heart? When the Son of Man comes, will He find faith in you?

This book is offered as a challenge to those who name the name of Jesus Christ, Yahshua the Messiah. Its aim is to reveal why faith is so precious to God, and why it is absolutely essential if any are to please Him.

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May you be stirred up in your innermost being, and may Yahshua find faith in you at His soon return.

Faith and Love

Understanding the message of this chapter is essential to comprehending why faith is so very important to God, bringing great honor to Him, and why a failure of faith is so grievous, serving as a reproach to Yahweh. Most of my life I did not understand the things shared here, and I cannot ever remember a sermon or teaching on this matter. It is something that the Holy Spirit has brought understanding in as I have been led through multiple trials of faith.

The foundation of faith is having a genuine trust in God's love for us. The absence of faith is similarly based upon a distrust, or unbelief, in God's love for us.

Understanding the words above is critical in order to comprehend this matter of faith. Most sermons on faith that I have heard have centered upon God's power and ability to rescue and deliver. There are myriads of examples throughout Scripture to draw upon to exposit Yahweh's great power. Yet, I am convinced that most failures of faith are not due to unbelief in God's great power. Most failures of faith are the result of not trusting in God's love and kind intention toward man.

When one considers this, they can perceive that this makes a failure of faith an even greater reproach to God. When a man or woman believes God can deliver them from some trial, or preserve them through it, when they have little doubt about His power and ability to save, but they do doubt His willingness to save them, this brings a tremendous reproach upon God. Throughout this book we will look at many examples of this type of failure, and we will see how Yahweh was dishonored as men doubted His love for them.

Consider for instance the children of Israel who were delivered from the bondage of Egypt. They had witnessed the awesome power of God in the miraculous plagues and judgments that were brought against the

gods of Egypt. They had seen the Nile turned to blood. They had seen frogs cover the land, as well as lice and locusts and other insects. They had witnessed the hail and lightning, and had seen Yahweh make a distinction between the Egyptians and the children of Israel, for the land of Goshen where the Israelites dwelt was right in the midst of Egypt, yet it was spared from the plagues.

They had seen the darkness that covered the land for three days, a darkness so thick that it could be felt, and no one in Egypt moved while under the darkness. They had witnessed the boils that tormented the Egyptians, breaking out everywhere upon their flesh. The Egyptians were so in awe of Moses and his God that they began to esteem the Israelites whom they had despised, and when Moses instructed the Israelites to ask of the Egyptians articles of clothing and gold and silver, we are told that the Egyptians gave them all they asked for, and so the Israelites plundered the wealth of Egypt. Finally, the Israelites also were witness to the first Passover where the firstborn of all Egypt was slain, both of man and cattle, yet all those of Israel were protected who had placed the blood of a lamb upon their doorposts.

Surely this generation of Israel could not doubt the power of God. They had witnessed things that astonished both great and small. The power Yahweh exhibited was so great that the Egyptians begged the Israelites to leave them in great haste, fearing that they would all be dead if they tarried any longer. There is no possible way that the Israelites who followed Moses and Aaron could doubt the power of Yahweh. They had seen His power repeatedly with their own eyes.

The absence of faith is based upon a distrust, or unbelief, in God's love for us.

The Israelites left Egypt and God brought them to the Red Sea by a circuitous course to make the Egyptians think that they were lost and wandering in the wilderness. The Egyptians then said, "What have we done in letting them go? We must bring them back." So Pharaoh and his armies pursued Israel and found them camped before the Red Sea, with mountains on either

The Divine Quest

side. The Egyptians came in behind them leaving Israel no place to go. They were hemmed in.

See now what Israel did next. Did they remember the plagues and great power of God and expect Yahweh to perform another miracle on their behalf? Did they

Doubting His love was a reproach to His character.

stand with confidence as they viewed the Egyptians, knowing that Yahweh was mightier than the gods of Egypt and well able to save and deliver them? Did they remember His words of kindness and His

promises to bring them into their own land? No. Instead they brought reproach upon Yahweh by expressing great unbelief. Yet their unbelief was not in His power to save, but in His love for them.

Exodus 14:10-12

As Pharaoh drew near, the sons of Israel looked, and behold, the Egyptians were marching after them, and they became very frightened; so the sons of Israel cried out to Yahweh. Then they said to Moses, "Is it because there were no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? Why have you dealt with us in this way, bringing us out of Egypt? Is this not the word that we spoke to you in Egypt, saying, 'Leave us alone that we may serve the Egyptians'? For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness."

What an insult this was to Yahweh. When He had demonstrated His mighty power, and His willingness to bring them out of Egypt; when He had spoken through Moses and Aaron, telling the Israelites that He had seen their cruel captivity and He had heard their cries and was going to bring them to their own land, a land flowing with milk and honey; after all this, they scorned His love and accused Him of having the falsest of motives. They accused Him of not truly loving them, but of bringing them out to the wilderness to kill them.

What is the greater insult to God, failing to believe in His power, or failing to believe in His love? It would have been better that they had doubted His power, for doubting His love was a reproach to His character.

The God who had just brought them through the first Passover celebration, demonstrating His love for them by sparing their children while killing the first-born of all of Egypt, would later give His own Son as an atoning sacrifice in their place. He would demonstrate a love that would confound both man and the angels by delivering up His Son in the place of sinful man. It was this love, a love purer and deeper than anything known throughout the creation, that was being called into question. Great was the insult to God, and deep was His displeasure over their unbelief.

If you are a child of God then you have surely been brought to trials of your own where faith was necessary in order to overcome and see God's deliverance. Perhaps you have known a financial crisis, or a health crisis, or a legal crisis, or some other test where you were placed in a perilous situation. Surely you heard the Spirit urging you to trust God, to place your hope and faith in Him to deliver you. When you heard this voice, did you truly doubt Yahweh's ability to deliver you? Did you think He did not have the power to provide the money you needed, or to bring healing, or to deliver you from the peril you faced?

I have been placed in many such situations, and I know that the struggle in my heart was not in doubting His power and ability to deliver me. Rather, my struggle was in trusting in His willingness to deliver me. In my youth I struggled with this time after time. I would say to God, "I know You can save me if You are willing, but how do I know You are willing?" My struggle for faith was not based upon my doubting His power, it was in doubting His love for me. What a diabolical thing is this struggle. What a reproach to a loving heavenly Father who did not spare His own Son, but freely gave Him up for us.

I did not understand when I was younger that my unbelief in His willingness to save me was actually a lack of confidence in His love toward me. It was years later when I was faced with some severe tests that the understanding came. His grace was great toward me, and He enabled me to cast myself upon Him, believing that He did love me and He would surely not fail me as I looked to Him. It was after these tests that I came to understand that my decision to trust Him brought great honor to Him, for it was a testimony of

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my belief that He is a loving Father.

Throughout this book we will look at numerous examples that bring forth the understanding that faith is born out of a confidence in the love of God toward us. We will also see that men and women struggle with faith when they lack this assurance of God's love.

It may seem incredible to us that the Israelites could have witnessed so many mighty acts of God and still failed in faith. We may be tempted to judge them as the most carnal of people after God had given them many assurances of His love and they still called it into question. Yet we need to judge with righteous judgment. We have been given a greater witness of God's love than they ever received. They only saw a lamb being sacrificed to spare them from the penalty of death. We have the witness of God giving the life of His beloved Son for us. When we look to the cross and see what an awesome and incomprehensible love was demonstrated there, we have not a shred of room to ever doubt Yahweh's love for us. But we struggle with unbelief, nonetheless.

We should weep and fall on our knees in repentance when we consider what a reproach we have often brought to God when we manifested unbelief in His willingness to see us through some situation. Yahweh has done all He could possibly do to demonstrate that His love for us is a faithful and true love, beyond our ability to comprehend. How His heart must ache when we come before Him with our doubts and anxieties and we ask Him, "Do you truly love me? Are you there? Have you forsaken me?" Look to the cross, child of God. His love is beyond questioning.

John 15:13

"Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends."

Romans 8:38-39

For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Messiah Yahshua

our Lord.

Prayer:

Father, forgive us for doubting your love. Your love is our delight. Though we do not deserve it, we receive it with gladness of heart and rejoicing. It is Your love that gives us hope, and it is in the confidence of Your love that we are able to demonstrate faith as we walk through many trials. Father, may You have a people who demonstrate an unshakeable confidence in Your love, and may I be among those people. May You receive honor as I willingly cast my life into Your hands in full assurance of Your great love for me. My Abba, my Father, my heart trusts in You.

Faith's Great Foundation

I do not know of any saint that does not want to have a strong faith that will see them through all the trials of life. This chapter will show the way to possessing such a strong and over-coming faith. In order to build something that will stand through the storms of life, one must begin by laying a solid foundation. Yahshua spoke about a foolish man who built his house upon the sand, and when the storm came the house was destroyed. He contrasted this with a wise man who built his house upon a rock, and when the wind and the rain beat against it the house remained a sturdy and safe haven.

Yahweh has done all He could possibly do to demonstrate that His love for us ...

The Scriptures reveal what is the only sure and unshakeable foundation that the saints are to build their faith upon. It is an understanding of the love of God. The apostle Paul prayed that the church might be given insight in this matter:

Ephesians 3:14-19

For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, that He would grant you, according to

The Divine Quest

the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through **faith**; and that you, **being rooted and grounded in love**, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God.

Paul mentions the faith of the saints, and then he immediately prays that they might be “rooted and grounded in love.” The words ‘rooted’ and ‘grounded’ are both foundational words. A root is the lowest part of a plant. It is what anchors the plant to the ground

Paul wanted the saints to be established in God's love toward us.

and it is also a source of life as water is drawn up through the roots. To be grounded also is a foundational matter. When we say that someone is “well grounded” in some field of

study, we are acknowledging that they have a firm grasp of the principles upon which this field of study is based. Paul also desired that the saints would have a firm grasp of God's love toward them. He knew that when the saints had become “rooted and grounded” in the love of God, then they would have a faith that was both sound and immovable.

The love that Paul wanted the saints to be established in is not our love toward God, but His love toward us. Notice that he continues by praying for the saints to comprehend “what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge.” When we begin to comprehend the love of Christ, the very measure of it which is past knowing, then we will have a sure foundation upon which our faith might rest. This is a foundation which cannot be shaken, for the love of Christ will never fail us, and nothing can ever come between us and this love.

Yahweh has given us many assurances of His love throughout the Bible. One promise that has been particularly precious to me is the following:

Romans 8:31-32

What then shall we say to these things? If God is for

us, who is against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?

The apostle Peter echoes this in his own words:

II Peter 1:3

His divine power has granted to us everything necessary for life and godliness...

What a magnificent foundation to stand upon, and I have stood upon it in many circumstances, and I continue to stand upon it. Yahweh loved you and I so much that He did not even withhold His own Son, but delivered Him over to die in our place on Calvary. This was His dear and beloved Son about whom He testified that He was well pleased. This was the Son that lived only to do the will of His Father and to bring Him pleasure in all things. If Yahweh did not even withhold His perfect and beloved Son out of His great love for us, will He not certainly and freely give us ALL things necessary for both life and godliness? Assuredly, He will!

Oftentimes when I have been in some place of need I have remembered these words. When I look to the cross of Christ I am comforted with a great assurance that God loves me. I know that His love is unailing and does not change. Since He gave His very best and dearest for me, I am brought to a confidence that He will give me what I need to sustain my life and that of my family. He will meet our needs.

The Father and the Son have both proven Their love in a way that I can clearly perceive and hold onto. My comprehension of God's love serves as a foundation to stand upon, and allows me to not be moved in the face of trials. Though the enemy comes against me with many attacks, seeking to cause me to doubt the watchfulness and concern of God for my life, I have only to look to the cross and be assured that there is no limit to His love. What strength is ours when we consider the love of the Father and the Son for us.

In the previous chapter I mentioned that most failures of faith are not based upon an unbelief in God's

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ability to deliver us, but they are the result of failing to trust in His love. The saints freely confess that the worlds were created by the Word of God. By His Word the stars were hung in their place. His power is seen everywhere. If God could speak a word and create the Universe, can He not take care of your need, whether it is a financial need, a health need, a need for protection, a need for peace in your life, or any other need? Surely He is able. Meeting our greatest need does not tax His omnipotence in the least.

Isn't it true then, that our struggle for faith is in believing that He is **willing** to do that which we need? Many saints struggle with feelings of unworthiness, and they allow these thoughts to bring into question God's love for them. They have forgotten that Christ died for them while they were His enemies. His love for us is not based upon our worthiness, but upon His own character. God is love!

Satan also attacks the saints in their understanding of God's love. He seeks to present God as a merciless judge who is looking for the slightest misstep in the believer's life that He might punish them severely. Rather than seeing Yahweh as a loving Father, they are tempted to see Him as a cruel taskmaster. In this way Satan has also unsettled the faith of many.

In each of these things the love of God toward man is under attack and brought into question. Satan knows that the love of God is the foundation of faith, so he goes straight to the foundation. If the foundation can be eroded then faith will fall. As we will see in the next chapter, this is the very point upon which he attacked Eve in the Garden.

It is understandable then that Paul had a great yearning for the saints to be rooted and grounded in the love of God. He knew that this foundation was essential to living an overcoming life, and he also knew that Satan would attack this foundation at every opportunity. We are not unaware of Satan's devices, and to be forewarned is to be forearmed. Let us press in to know the immeasurable love of the Father and the Son.

Prayer:

Father, we praise you for demonstrating such an incomprehensible love toward us. We rest in the assurance that You loved us 2,000 years ago when You sent Your beloved Son to die in our place that we might be reconciled to You. We rest in the knowledge that You love us with this same love today, and that Your love will never end. Teach us the measure of Your love that we might stand in faith all the days of our lives, bringing You honor as we confidently trust in You. Protect us from the deceit of the evil one who would seek to malign Your love through his lies, and to call it into question. At such moments may we remember that You did not withhold Your Son on our behalf, enabling us to quickly take such thoughts captive to the glory and honor of Your Son.

Faith's First Failure

The first occurrence of events, names and numbers in Scripture hold great significance, for they often establish a pattern or type for those things that follow. This is true when we look at the first sin which occurred in the Garden of Eden. The first sin was preceded by an attack of Satan upon Eve's confidence in the love of God. Satan could only entice Eve to disobey the command of Yahweh by first assaulting her confidence in His kind intention toward her and her husband. Let us read this account:

*Meeting our greatest need
does not tax His
omnipotence in the least.*

Genesis 3:1-6

Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which Yahweh God had made. And he said to the woman, "Indeed, has God said, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden?'" The woman said to the serpent, "From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die.'" The serpent said to the woman, "You surely will not die! For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and

The Divine Quest

evil." When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.

Satan tempted Eve to embrace the idea that Yahweh did not really have her best interests at heart. He suggested to her that the reason God forbade her to eat

*From the beginning...
God has treated man
with an unselfish love.*

the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was that God wanted to withhold something that was good for her, and that God's motives were not pure in the matter.

The serpent's words declared that God had lied to Adam and Eve in order to keep them from becoming like God. What was under attack was the woman's confidence in God's love for her, for if God loved her He would certainly always choose what was best for her.

The heart of God toward His children is expressed in the words recorded by Jeremiah:

Jeremiah 29:11

"For I know the plans I have for you", declares Yahweh, "plans for good and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope."

These words express the essence of Yahweh's love toward mankind. It is an unselfish love that seeks the welfare of another. The apostle Paul gave definition to this love with the following words:

I Corinthians 13:4-5

Love is patient, love is kind... it does not seek its own...

In I John chapter 4 verses 8 and 16, we are told that "God is love". We can then exchange the word 'love' with the word 'God' and understand the nature of God.

God is patient, God is kind... and does not seek His own...

God is unselfish in His love. If God were selfish, impatient and unkind, would He have ever sent His beloved Son to die in man's place? Undoubtedly, He would not have done so. From the beginning of man's creation, God has treated man with an unselfish love. He has looked after man's best interests, and has even destined man to share in His glory and the glory of His firstborn Son. It was a great lie that Satan brought to Eve in the Garden as he told the woman that God was withholding some good thing from her. It is Satan's nature to lie, and Yahshua bore witness to this.

John 8:44

"You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies."

Satan's transgression in the Garden is shown to be an exceedingly reprehensible thing when we consider that his first recorded words to mankind consisted of lies against God's holy character. He called God a liar with the words, "You surely will not die!", and he maligned the character of God's love for mankind when he suggested that God was withholding that which was good from Eve because He did not want her to become as He was. We see that what was under attack in the Garden was mankind's faith in the love of God. When Eve received the lie, she was then removed from a foundation of faith and her fall into sin was accomplished.

What Eve did was displeasing to God. It was the first act of mankind that displeased Yahweh, and the door was opened for a flood of similar acts to follow. The Scriptures tell us that "without faith it is impossible to please God." The first sin was both a failure of faith in the love of God, and a failure to please Him. With her faith in God overturned, it became impossible for Eve to please God.

Parables Bookshelf

Is it any wonder then that God has been looking for faith in the hearts of men and women ever since the Garden of Eden? When we are removed from a foundation of faith, when we begin to doubt God's holy character, His flawless love and His righteousness, it becomes impossible to please Him. Any thought or action that arises from a heart devoid of faith in God will be regarded with displeasure.

I am sure that all saints have heard the phrase "Have faith in God" a multitude of times. It has become a cliché and often has little understanding attached to it. We need to examine what it means to have faith in God. Faith in God is trusting in who He has declared Himself to be. Faith in God is confidence in His character.

I think perhaps that most saints, when they have heard this phrase, have thought about God's power. "Have faith in God" has been understood as "Have faith in God's power to deliver you." As we are seeing, a more accurate understanding would be, "Have faith in God's character. Believe that He loves you and will work all things out for your good." When we have this latter type of faith in God, when we trust in His character, we please Him immensely. We are declaring by our thoughts and actions that God is trustworthy.

Eve's sin in the Garden was a declaration that she believed God to not be trustworthy. She believed that He had some selfish motive in withholding from her the fruit that was forbidden. She doubted that He had her best interests at heart. Such thoughts are an affront and a reproach to Yahweh. In spite of the great insult that Adam and Eve gave to God, He did not destroy them and start anew. Instead He gave them a promise of a Savior being born to mankind who would take away the curse of sin. His love is truly kind and unselfish.

This first sin, being a failure to trust in the character of God, set a pattern for many more sins to follow. The histories recorded in the Bible demonstrate this same example of unbelief and sin being played out time after time. We could fill hundreds of pages with examples.

Before Cain slew Abel, God spoke to Him, "Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted?" God was telling Cain to trust in the character of God. He is a rewarder of those who do right. Yet Cain failed to have faith in God and he gave himself over to evil, murdering his brother.

The history of the kings of Israel gives us many profound examples of men who failed to trust in God's character. The first king was Saul. God made precious promises to Saul, telling him that if he did what was right that the kingdom would be established under him, and his sons would never cease to sit on the throne. As God does with ALL of His children, He tested Saul's heart to see if Saul would have faith in Him and obey Him.

The story of King Saul's failure to wait upon God is familiar to most saints. I have heard it frequently taught on. I think most saints are much too hard on Saul. I know few who would not cave in to the same pressure. Saul's son Jonathan had just gone and raided a Philistine garrison and had achieved a stunning victory. This angered the Philistines.

Faith in God is confidence in His character.

They called their whole army together. Their numbers were tremendous. "Now the Philistines assembled to fight with Israel, 30,000 chariots and 6,000 horsemen, and people like the sand which is on the seashore in abundance... (I Samuel 13:5).

How many people did Saul have. We are told that there were 2,000 men with Saul and 1,000 with Jonathan. King Saul was vastly outnumbered. The people with him saw this and it is said that those following him "trembled." They were scared to death. Things then began to deteriorate. Saul's army began to slip off and disappear.

I Samuel 13:6-7

When the men of Israel saw that their situation was critical and that their army was hard pressed, they hid in caves and thickets, among the rocks, and in pits

The Divine Quest

and cisterns. Some Hebrews even crossed the Jordan to the land of Gad and Gilead. Saul remained at Gilgal, and all the troops with him were quaking with fear.

Now, it is bad enough to be outnumbered and to have the numbers get worse and worse (it got to the point that Saul only had 600 men left, 4 out of 5 of his soldiers deserted), but to have the ones who remained “quaking with fear” made it even worse. Who was there to encourage and embolden Saul? Who was there to tell him to stand fast and trust in the Lord? Few of God’s saints today have ever been put in such dire straits.

Saul rightly knew that only God could deliver Israel in such a situation. It was customary to entreat Yah-

It was a tremendous test for Saul to wait even seven days.

weh’s favor before entering a battle. The king, however, was not to offer the burnt offering. It had been pre-arranged that the prophet Samuel would show up and make the offering and entreat Yah-

weh’s favor. Saul waited seven days, the days agreed upon for Samuel to arrive. When Samuel didn’t show up on time, Saul could endure the wait no longer.

It must be said that it was a tremendous test for Saul to wait even seven days. Each day he received reports of more Philistines gathering and more of his army fleeing. Saul was surrounded by terrified men. A seven day wait had to have been agonizing, but Saul waited these seven days. But, Saul had a point past which he could wait no longer. His endurance had limits to it.

I Samuel 13:11-12

Saul replied, "When I saw that the men were scattering, and that you did not come at the set time, and that the Philistines were assembling at Micmash, I thought, 'Now the Philistines will come down against me at Gilgal, and I have not sought Yahweh's favor.' So I felt compelled to offer the burnt offering."

Saul seems to have done the prudent thing. Certainly,

he felt justified in his own eyes. Things started out bad and they were falling apart. In very little time Saul anticipated having no men left at all. The Philistines could come against him at any moment. In offering up the burnt offering he was seeking Yahweh’s favor. Yet God looks on the heart of man and He saw something different. Saul had been commanded to wait upon Samuel to make the sacrifice. Yahweh saw that Saul’s confidence in His character was failing. He began to doubt that Yahweh would save Him, and deliver His people Israel. Unbelief took hold of Saul’s heart, and from this position of unbelief Saul could not please God. Samuel told Saul,

I Samuel 13:13-14

"You acted foolishly," Samuel said. "You have not kept the command Yahweh your God gave you; if you had, he would have established your kingdom over Israel for all time. But now your kingdom will not endure; Yahweh has sought out a man after his own heart and appointed him leader of his people, because you have not kept Yahweh’s command."

It is interesting to note that if Samuel had shown up at the appointed time that Saul would have appeared to be the most godly of men. He had faithfully waited seven days under the most trying conditions when all were deserting him. How many of us appear godly when God is on-time? How many of us look like heroes when God meets us according to our expectation? But what if God’s answer is delayed; what will be revealed to be in our heart? Will we also feel “compelled” to do that which we know in our heart is wrong? Will unbelief take hold of our hearts? Will we begin to doubt the love of God toward us?

There are a few examples among the Kings of Israel and Judah of men who had confidence in the character of Yahweh, and these men pleased God tremendously. By looking at the character of the man that God chose to replace Saul, we can see the underlying foundations of this struggle for faith and what it takes to please God. David had a different heart than Saul, and God also tested his heart. David was anointed by Samuel to replace Saul as king, but first he spent many years being prepared and tested by God.

David was jealously pursued by King Saul, who

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sought to take his life because God's favor was evident upon David. For years David lived as a refugee, even having to flee from the land of Israel. Saul organized military expeditions to hunt down David and his men, and this made his life very perilous. He was only a step ahead of death on many occasions. This precarious existence stretched from months into years, with no end in sight. The promise of God that he would be king seemed to be a distant fulfillment. The main obstacle between David and a fulfillment of the word of God was King Saul, for he was ruling as king and he was also seeking to put David to death.

On two occasions God delivered Saul into David's hands to see if David would fail in faith. If David did not have faith in God's character, if he doubted that Yahweh would fulfill the things promised to him, then he would reach out his hand to remove the obstacle from his path. He would kill King Saul and take the kingdom for himself. David knew in his heart that to do such a thing would be a great transgression against the will of God, but he was sorely pressed.

On one occasion David and his men went into a cave to hide from Saul and his army, and Saul came into the cave alone to relieve himself. David's men said, "Look, God has delivered your enemy into your hand. Strike him with the sword and your problems will be over." Great pressure was placed upon David to do this thing, for he and his men were living in peril of their lives. Yet David did not forsake his confidence in Yahweh's character. He knew Yahweh was faithful and would surely fulfill His word to David.

On another occasion when Saul was pursuing David, Yahweh brought a deep sleep upon Saul and his army so that David and Abishai were able to enter their camp and walk right up to Saul. Abishai counseled David to kill King Saul, but David answered in this way:

I Samuel 26:9-11

But David said to Abishai, "Do not destroy him, for who can stretch out his hand against Yahweh's anointed and be without guilt?" David also said, "As Yahweh lives, surely Yahweh will strike him, or his day will come that he dies, or he will go down into battle and perish. Yahweh forbid that I should stretch

out my hand against Yahweh's anointed..."

With these words, David demonstrated that his faith in God had not failed. He entrusted himself into Yahweh's hands, believing Him to be faithful and true to His word. This faith pleased God tremendously, and God's own testimony was that He had found in David a man who would do all of His pleasure. Without faith it is impossible to please God, but with faith we are able to fulfill all Yahweh's pleasure and desire.

Without faith it is impossible to please God.

Is this not the difference between these two men, Saul and David; Saul failed to trust in the character of God, believing that God would abandon him, while David maintained his trust in the character of God? The Psalms of David are filled with words of trust in God's character.

Psalms 4:3-5

But know that Yahweh has set apart the godly man for Himself; Yahweh hears when I call to Him... Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and trust in Yahweh.

Psalms 9:9-10

Yahweh also will be a stronghold for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble; And those who know Your name will put their trust in You, for You, O Yahweh, have not forsaken those who seek You.

Psalms 27:1-3

Yahweh is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? Yahweh is the defense of my life; whom shall I dread? When evildoers came upon me to devour my flesh, my adversaries and my enemies, they stumbled and fell. Though a host encamp against me, my heart will not fear; Though war arise against me, in spite of this I shall be confident.

One of the greatest themes of the Psalms of David is

The Divine Quest

trust in God's holy character. To be established in faith means that we have confidence in God's character. The author of Hebrews summed it up with these words:

Hebrews 11:6

And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.

It is not enough to believe that God exists. It is not enough to be convinced of His mighty power. One must also believe that He rewards those who seek Him. This is confidence in His character. It is testifying that we believe that He is just, He is righteous, and He will do that which is right. Abraham, the fa-

It is not enough to believe that God exists.

ther of faith, exclaimed his own confidence in the character of God with the words:

Genesis 18:25

Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?

Those who receive the testimony that they are pleasing to God are those who hold to their confidence in the holy character of God. Saul failed to maintain this confidence. Eve failed to maintain this confidence. The children of Israel at the Red Sea failed to maintain this confidence. All these received the testimony that they were not pleasing to God. Yet Yahweh has a remnant that will not waver in faith. These will look to God with confidence when the storms of life are raging and they are faced with great peril. Their testimony will be:

II Timothy 1:12

For I know Him whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that He is able to guard that which I have committed unto Him against that day.

Prayer:

Father, we confess that Your holy character is such that all men should rest easy as they entrust themselves to You. You are a just God, and those who place their lives in Your hands need never fear. You are a loving God, and those who place their lives in Your hands need never fear. You are a merciful God, and those who place their lives in Your hands need never fear.

Forgive us Father for allowing fear to have a place in our lives. We know from Your word that perfect love casts out all fear, so we ask You to perfect us in the confidence of Your love. May our lives be examples of the peace that surpasses all understanding as our hearts and minds are focused and set upon You. As we survey Your awesome faithfulness, Your immeasurable love, and Your certain justice, may we be brought to peace, and may anxiety, unbelief and fear find no resting place within us.

Sight, the Enemy of Faith

The apostle Paul was, apart from Christ, possibly the greatest New Testament example of a man of faith that we have been given. His faith in the character of God allowed him to walk in many dangerous places, and to suffer many things for the name of Christ, and yet remain confident in God's love for him. Through shipwrecks, beatings, stoning, nakedness, peril, hunger, the treachery of false brethren, the jealousy and hatred of the Jews, and many other such things, Paul remained confident in the love of Christ and declared with assurance that nothing could separate him from it.

It has been the tendency of the church to picture a man of faith as someone who performs many miracles, and believes God for awesome things. Such things are not to be discounted, but the greater man of faith is the one who remains steadfast in his confidence in God's just, holy and loving character when he is subjected to one heartache and suffering after another.

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In this regard, Paul was not unlike Job who suffered so much. In his suffering Job refused to curse God, maintaining his trust in Him. Even when Job suffered the loss of all things, his children, his great possessions, and even his health, and though he did not understand the reason that God had brought such devastation upon him, Job did not fulfill Satan's expectation by failing to trust in God. His words and example are an amazement when one considers the depth of his grief. Upon hearing the news of all the calamity that befell him in a moment of time, we read:

Job 1:20-22

Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head, and he fell to the ground and worshiped. He said,

"Naked I came from my mother's womb,
And naked I shall return there.
Yahweh gave and Yahweh has taken away.
Blessed be the name of Yahweh."

Through all this Job did not sin nor did he blame God.

Job's wife was overcome by her own grief, and she asked her husband why he yet maintained his integrity, his confidence and trust in God. She urged her husband to curse God and then die. Job's response is recorded:

Job 2:10

But he said to her, "You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God and not accept adversity?" In all this Job did not sin with his lips.

The man or woman of faith is one who maintains their confidence in the character of God, and His love for them, when all around them seems to be testifying very different things. Such men and women are not walking by sight, but by faith. Paul practiced this in the same way as Job, and he wrote these words for us:

II Corinthians 5:7

For we walk by faith, not by sight.

Our faith in the character of God stands apart from what our senses report to us. Faith comes to us by the Spirit of God, as Paul also wrote:

Romans 12:3

For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, **as God has allotted to each a measure of faith.**

I Corinthians 12:7-9

But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit; **to another faith by the same Spirit...**

Faith is a gift of God, as Paul further confirmed to the Ephesian believers.

Ephesians 2:8-9

For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that (referring to faith) not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.

The understanding that man's faith is a gift from God is manifested throughout Scripture. When Yahshua asked His disciples who they thought He was, Peter confessed that He was the Christ, the Son of God. Yahshua told Peter that this understanding of his did not come through his natural senses, but from God.

In his suffering Job refused to curse God.

The Divine Quest

Matthew 16:17

And Yahshua said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, **because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.**"

How does the Father cause this faith to appear in His children? He does a divine work in their hearts. When Luke penned the book of Acts he gave some insight into this.

Acts 16:14

A woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics, a worshiper of God, was listening; **and the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul.**

Even as God opened Peter's heart to discern who Yahshua was, in similar fashion we read that He opened Lydia's heart to respond to the gospel that Paul preached. This faith is a free gift, and it comes through an act of the Spirit. We don't really know how the Spirit imparts faith to men and women, but we can clearly see the effects of it, for where we formerly were in darkness and unbelief, our souls are suddenly filled with light and faith. Yahshua described the work of the Spirit to Nicodemus in the following manner:

This focus on natural sight led to unbelief...

John 3:8

"The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit."

We cannot see the wind, but we can see the effect of the wind as it blows through the trees and across the grass, and as it passes by us. We see the wind's effect, but we cannot tell where it originated or where it will end up. In the same way the Spirit comes and produces faith in our hearts, and it is hard to discern how He came, or how He accomplished His work in us,

but we can see the effect upon us as we are given spiritual sight that we formerly lacked. This spiritual sight is often at odds with our physical sight. What God reveals to our spirit is often unseen to our natural senses. This is why Paul wrote:

Hebrews 11:1

Now faith is the assurance (the confirmation, the title deed) of the things [we] hope for, being the proof of things [we] do not see and the conviction of their reality [faith perceiving as real fact what is not revealed to the senses].

(Amplified Bible)

The man or woman who walks in faith must often turn away from the things that their natural senses report, or they will be led into unbelief. In the examples already given in this book, we see with great consistency that those who failed in faith were focused upon the witness of their natural senses. This focus on natural sight led to unbelief, and the unbelief gave birth to sinful actions. We see this in each case. Look at the key words in the following passages.

Genesis 3:6

When the woman **saw** that the tree was good for food, and that it was **a delight to the eyes**, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.

Eve believed the report of her senses, rather than trusting in the word of God, and this opened the door to sin. We see the same pattern in King Saul.

I Samuel 13:11-12

But Samuel said, "What have you done?" And Saul said, "**Because I saw** that the people were scattering from me, and that you did not come within the appointed days, and that the Philistines were assembling at Michmash, therefore I said, 'Now the Philistines will come down against me at Gilgal, and I have not asked the favor of Yahweh.' So I forced myself and offered the burnt offering."

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Saul “saw” several things with his eyes. He saw his people scattering. He saw the Philistines gathering. And he saw that Samuel was delayed. What Saul witnessed by natural sight failed to confirm God’s instruction to him. The man or woman of faith cannot walk by natural sight. They must lean completely upon the word of God that they receive by the Spirit of God.

We are told in another place that “faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word (rhema) of God” (Romans 10:17). As saints, we only truly know something when we have received it from God’s Spirit. Our natural senses and carnal mind are incapable of leading us to truth. We dare not rely upon natural faculties, but must learn to discern the voice of the Spirit.

The Scriptures state that we are being conformed to the image of Christ, and knowing this we can gain understanding by studying an Old Testament prophecy of Christ.

Isaiah 11:2-4

The Spirit of Yahweh will rest on Him,
The spirit of wisdom and understanding,
The spirit of counsel and strength,
The spirit of knowledge and the fear of Yahweh.
And He will delight in the fear of Yahweh,
**And He will not judge by what His eyes see,
Nor make a decision by what His ears hear;**
But with righteousness He will judge the poor,
And decide with fairness for the afflicted of the earth...

In our lives as Christians we are continually brought to make judgments. Should we marry this person? Should we take employment with a particular company? What fellowship of believers should we participate with? Should we buy a certain item? Where should we live? How should we respond to a crisis in our life? Such decisions, and a host of others, are a part of our everyday lives. How are we to decide?

The way that the world makes decisions is to examine the things that their eyes see and their ears hear and choose a course based upon the physical evidence before them. The decision making process remains totally in the realm of natural observation and rational thought. As Christians, however, we are called to walk differently.

Consider this prophecy of Christ. He never made a judgment or decision based upon what His eyes saw or His ears heard. How then did He decide? We are told plainly in the gospels. He received instruction from His Father in heaven and did only what His Father directed Him to do. Yahshua walked in spiritual life. He was always beholding the Father, and He lived to do the will of the Father. He was so perfect in this that He did not even speak a word of His own initiative, but only spoke the things that the Father gave Him to speak.

Christ never made a judgment based upon what His eyes saw or His ears heard.

John 8:28

So Yahshua said, “When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught Me.”

John 12:49-50

“For I did not speak on My own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me a commandment as to what to say and what to speak. I know that His commandment is eternal life; therefore the things I speak, I speak just as the Father has told Me.”

Yahshua did not get up in the morning and think to Himself, “What do I want to teach the people today? What do these people need to hear?” He began His ministry only after the Spirit descended upon Him at the Jordan, and He was led of the Spirit in all things. The Spirit taught Him what to speak and led Him in every encounter. Yahshua practiced every day that which He gave as an instruction to the saints:

The Divine Quest

Mark 13:11

“When they arrest you and hand you over, do not worry beforehand about what you are to say, but say whatever is given you in that hour; for it is not you who speak, but it is the Holy Spirit.”

If the Spirit is capable of giving us the very words we need to speak in the moment that such words are necessary, then how will He not also give us guidance in every decision and in every judgment? Yahshua is

Our rational mind will not lead us to the will of God for us.

instructing the saints to not try to decide for themselves what they will say. They are not to apply their human reasoning to such matters and judge what would be appropriate. He is instead telling them to

yield themselves to the Spirit in that moment. We are to practice such yielded lives moment by moment.

Our senses and our rational mind will not lead us to the will of God for us. They stand as an obstacle to a true walk of faith in most instances. Some years back I attended a church where a pastor had been called to shepherd the body and lead them into the things of God. The Lord allowed me to have a close relationship with this man, and, after he had been at this church for about a year, he asked me to accompany him on an overnight stay to some type of teaching event. We shared a room together and were able to share things that were on our hearts.

This man had a wife and three children and they were all living in small rented quarters. He shared with me that he had a desire to purchase a house in a town closer to the church, but that he had been holding off because he was unsure of his future and the future of the church. His decision to remain in his small rented quarters was arrived at by examining things with his senses and making a rational decision.

The Spirit strongly convicted me that the decision of this pastor was a carnal decision, and that if he did not have faith for God to do a work through this body of believers, that as a shepherd of the people he would be unable to lead them into the plans God had for them. The Spirit showed me that the issue of the

house that this man desired was something God had brought him to in order to reveal the unbelief in his heart. If he could not trust God to work through this people, and this lack of trust was keeping him from purchasing the home he desired, then his unbelief would have a disastrous effect upon the body. The Spirit led me to share with this man concerning these things, and he felt the conviction of the Spirit.

Not long afterwards this pastor came to me and shared that the Spirit had convicted him in this matter, and that he had decided, as an act of faith in God's desire and willingness to work through this people, to buy a house in the community. He was excited about this decision because it was a desire of his heart to have a home, and he knew the witness of the Spirit in it.

The Spirit led him to a beautiful house in a nice neighborhood. The house was a dream home to him, far beyond what he had expected to find, and I was myself amazed at the house and the yard, for it was all very beautiful. As he spoke to the realtor, the owners, and the bank, he found that he had just enough money to close on the house and take possession of it. However, God had a test for him before he was able to do so.

On the day before he was to meet with the bank and close on the house the realtor called him and told him that a mistake had been made on the paperwork, and he would have to come up with several thousand more dollars than he had been told. He did not have the money, having already pledged all that he had available. He was brought to a crisis of faith. Would he be daunted by the obstacle that his senses were reporting to him, or would he believe the witness of the Spirit, that God had called him to purchase a house and had provided this one for him?

This man was not accustomed to walking by faith, and his confidence in God's love and character were weak. He shared with me that he drove out to the church parking lot, which was out in the countryside, and he parked there and got out of his car and began to rail against God. He accused God of deceiving him, of bringing him to a place of having his hopes built up only to dash them at the end. He shouted out many

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words of unbelief and shook his fist at the heavens. He shared that he was tempted to get in his car and drive away and leave behind the church, his calling as a pastor, and his confession of God.

The next day this man went to the closing at the appointed time, expecting to be given the news that he could not take possession of the house. However, God worked it out where the owners and realtor absorbed part of the extra cost, and this pastor was able to sign the papers on the house and move in. God had already determined how He would work things out and fulfill His words to this pastor, yet this man failed to trust God.

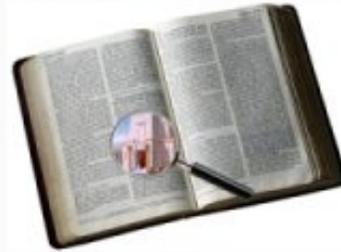
When I heard the account of what had happened I was reminded of the Israelites at the Red Sea, and how they had brought a reproach to God's love and compassion toward them by asking, "Did you bring us out here to kill us because there were not enough graves in Egypt." Great was God's displeasure over this pastor's lack of faith in His character. The Spirit spoke to me and told me that He had rejected this man as the one to lead His people into the plans He had for them, and it was not long afterwards that God removed him.

Without faith it is impossible to please God. Those who come to God must believe that He exists, and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him. What an important matter is faith.

Prayer:

Father, we confess that our natural senses and reasoning are an unstable foundation upon which to make decisions. Teach us to subject these things to Your Spirit that we might walk according to Your judgment. May we be guided by spiritual sight, and led by the voice of Your Spirit. When we hear a voice behind us saying, "This is the way. Walk in it." may we respond with trusting hearts and quick obedience that You might be honored.

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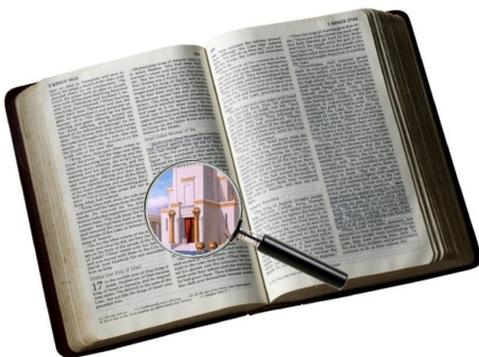
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PARABLES PRECEPT— The Bible



How many books are there in the Bible? The common answer among most Christians today is 66. It is doubtful, however that this is the number God established to represent the books of Scripture.

Most English Bibles show 39 Old Testament books, and 27 in the New Testament. Although the Jews have the same Old Testa-

ment writings, they divide them up into 22 books. They did this arbitrarily to make the number of books match the number of letters in the Hebrew alphabet.

The way the Jewish Scriptures (the Tanakh) are laid out is different from the Christian Bible, though all the same Old Testament books are included. The Jews have combined Judges and Ruth into one book, as they have also done with Jeremiah and Lamentations. They have also combined the minor prophets into one book, referred to as Shnem Asar, which means “the twelve.” Thus, what we have as 12 separate books in our Christian Bibles is combined into one book in the Hebrew Scriptures.

The Jews also combine all the double books into a single volume. For example I and II Kings, is Kings and I and II Chronicles is simply Chronicles in the Hebrew Scriptures.

Some of these divisions of the Jews are arbitrary, based on a desire to have the total of the books number 22. Others are based on the evidence of ancient Hebrew manuscripts.

E.W. Bullinger writes that the correct number of books based upon evidence of existing Hebrew manuscripts is 24. Numbers are very symbolic and precisely chosen by God. It would be beneficial therefore to adhere to the divisions of Scripture that God intended.