

Vague Christianity—Powerlessness

By B. D. Tate

We are to live in the name of the Lord in demonstration of the Spirit. Our faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God (I Cor. 2:1-5). Another way of stating this: We are to live in the power of the Holy Spirit to work the works of Christ, just as He did (John 14:12). Our faith should not be in the best that human effort can do, but in the power of God.

1Th 1:5 For our gospel did not come to you in word only,
but also in power...

If this seems far and away, strange, fairy tale, whimsical, out of touch with reality, *then we are accepting far less*, being stolen from, and living with **hardened hearts**. Instead of being sons and daughters of God, we are living as mere men. We will never have God's power, experience His best, or know the full grace of God, if we remain comfortable with this state. (**Hardness of heart** has everything to do with its composition. What we have focused on and given our attention to in life we are sensitive to. What we have felt was unreal, unacceptable, unimportant, and strange we have hardened our heart to.)

We are not supposed to live in faith within and under all circumstances, holding true to God despite what happens, remaining in peace no matter how it turns out, **while the power, promise, and grace already given to us remains untouched, unused, unaccepted, and not received!** In other words, the grace of God poured out to us through Christ's atonement in many ways lies dormant, **or we could say void, or having been given in vain.**

2Co 6:1 We then, *as workers together with Him* also plead with **you not to receive the grace of God in vain.**

1Co 15:2 by which also you are saved, **if you hold fast** that word which I preached to you—**unless you believed in vain**.

Jas 4:5 **Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain**, "The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously"?

It is the **Spirit who yearns** to manifest glory and power in us as the Father's workmanship to: demonstrate His compassion; relieve the needs and deliver from evil; to show the Lordship of Christ; provide the evidence of Jesus being the Way, the Truth, and The Life to the Father; to Glorify God in this world; to make our joy full; to please God; show the forgiveness of sins; to change unbelievers into believers; and to show that nothing is impossible with God!

God Wants To Accomplish His Power Through Us, And The Spirit Desires So Jealously, Awaiting Our Full Acceptance.

Php 2:13 for it is God who works in you both to will and to do **for His good pleasure**.

It is God's desire that every Christian be full of Christ, and be like Christ to the world (I John 4:17). It is like someone sitting on the bench just waiting for their opportunity to get into the game, jealously watching others play. The Holy Spirit waits jealously to move in our lives to manifest the glory of God.

We need to see this and believe this so much that our dreams, imaginations, and visions are about God working through us.

Vague Christianity

Vague Christianity is undirected, confused, in doubt, in unbelief; does not know God’s will, His word, and does not know the movement or voice of the Holy Spirit. Vague Christianity is not filled with the Holy Spirit, but is filled with the best that human effort can provide—sometimes.

There is a saying that goes like this: *“If you shoot at nothing, you’ll hit it every time.”* or *“Without direction, we are going nowhere fast.”* If our life in Christ is based on hope (and not knowing), we are not in faith. The just shall live by faith. Faith knows; if we don’t know, we are not where God wants us—period.

Doubt Is The Culprit—We Can Remove It!

We are building our Christian lives on something **very vague**, if we doubt God wants us to know His will. We are supposed to build upon the rock of God’s Word, not some vague sense of sinking sands (Matt. 7:24). Our lives would tend to be based upon a type of fatalism that says in our hearts, *“Whatever happens must be God’s will and He will give me the grace to go through whatever it is.”* If I were the enemy that is exactly where I’d want every Christian to be: **in a state of not knowing!**

Another common Christian statement is, *“God is in control and I will rest in whatever comes.”* Jesus then must have had it wrong when He taught the disciples to pray saying, *“Our Father, who art in heaven hallowed be thy name; **thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven...**”* The fact remains that our world is fallen and cursed; **heaven is not**. God’s will is NOT being done on the earth; therefore, pray that it is. There is a problem with trying to pray that God’s will be done on the earth as it is in heaven, *if one doesn’t know* the will of God (or can know). It is a problem if we don’t know what heaven is like, it

becomes nearly impossible to pray for something we can't understand or see.

Faith Must Know God's Will

If we don't know God's will, or we are between opinions about God's will, we **ARE in doubt**. This doubt can source from ignorance, misguided teaching, or from a denial of God's Word—unbelief. **God's Word reveals God's Will**. Jesus' life is the very image of God in nature and focus (Col. 1:15). Studying God's Word in light of the ministry, teaching, and revelation of Jesus, reveals God's will.

Doubt comes because we are between two or more opinions, confused about God's Word, and **being taught to separate God's will from our lives**. God wants us *single minded* upon His Word and Will—that is God's will! For us to remain in-between, or in doubt, is NOT GOD'S WILL.

James 1: 5 If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.

6 But **let him ask in faith**, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind.

7 **For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord;**

8 he is a **double-minded man**, unstable in all his ways.

This passage makes it clear that God wants us single minded, and convinced, standing in His will. A double minded man, by definition, stands in-between opinions, does not know, and is tossed back and forth. The result of being in this position of doubt is that we'll not receive anything from the Lord (vs. 7).

From These Definitions We Can Know **That Faith Is Supposed To Know!**

Faith comes from hearing God's Word (taught with faith—someone who believes it. Rom. 10:17). Faith is our response to God's grace found in His Word. Faith comes from being convinced and single minded about God's Word. God's Spirit doesn't want us doubting.

Jesus lived a life of intimacy full of the Holy Spirit, and what characterized His ministry more than anything else, was His knowing. He knew God's will and taught, spoke, and acted in authority of that Will. Jesus was secure in God's Will (not from a *doubting point of view*, where **He guessed and gave Himself up to whatever will be**; but from a *knowing point of view*, fully resting in the revelation knowledge of the Spirit). Jesus lived in and through faith! The just shall live by faith--**KNOWING** (Rom. 1:17).

We often live by doubt and call it faith—that is twisting things around. We are not supposed to take life circumstances and make the word agree with it. We are supposed to take the Word of God and let it rule. We are to let the Spirit of Christ rule in our lives, and the by-product of this relationship, **is knowing God's will (A growing knowing)**.

Doubts that come to us have to do with NOT being convinced about God's will concerning anything that pertains to life and godliness. We are **not** convinced and doubts remain that God cares, has provided, and wills to heal, direct, guide, lead, or give us wisdom. We are **not** convinced that God wants to fill us with His Spirit, forgive our sins, and use us like He does others. God has given us faith to move mountains, deliver or cast out

demons in Jesus' name; but it is all to no avail, if we are uncertain of this truth.

Powerlessness from Unbelief! A Lack of Confidence in God—A Wounded Spirit

Jesus said to the disciples, "Have faith in God." We are to have a growing confidence in the compassion, nature, and love of God. **Many of us struggle with confidence that God will do what He says.** We lack confidence because we have asked in prayer, knocked on the door, sought the answers and **came away with nothing, feeling very confused.**

Maybe we've been disillusioned by prayer and ***instead of persevering through to find some answers***, we've decided to "not go there" again. A son who has been promised by his father to go fishing weekend after weekend, will eventually come to the point of not believing his father. His ***wounded spirit*** will reason that his father is lying, pacifying, and misleading him at best. ***A wounded spirit*** is hurt, offended, angry, bewildered, and unable to come to terms or peace, **because it has become personal.** When we take it personal (a slighting against us), we have lost trust in the one making the promise.

We aren't looking at the situation that God is hindered (after all God is Almighty, right?) by limitations of doubt, unbelief, resistance, or time and space, and the rebellion of this world. We believe God is against us, or at least *not* for us, like with others (sometimes unconsciously). We believe God doesn't approve of us, is holding back, and is choosing to not deliver, act, or answer. We are wounded, because God answers others, but not us; **we may believe He is no respecter of persons, but everything we understand about it says different.**

We don't understand what is going on, but emotionally, figure we are just not worthy, and God's love is conditional towards us. He did not choose us like He's chosen others. In such a state, we might just bury our disappointment, place it on the back burner, or avoid it altogether, by ending the relationship (at least from the heart). With **a wounded spirit** towards God, and the unexplained dilemma of having asked in Jesus' name but did not receive, **we often interpret it poorly.**

I have been angry because although I'm to believe that God's word is true, and God cannot lie, **everything about the disappointment is telling me otherwise.**

What we may do then is reason, excuse, or explain away such experiences. We say or think, "God doesn't heal that way any more." Or "God works in mysterious ways, and He is past finding out." We'll say, "God answers all prayers, but just not in the way we expect." The Church has a many explanations, **but in the end, we come away with little or no confidence, because we can't trust what we do understand.** Eventually we'll shut down, put our faith on auto-pilot, and live a maintenance Christian life holding on until the end.

There Is A Great Crisis Of Faith Within Us Because We Don't Understand *Why* What The Word Of God Promises Isn't Happening.

When our experience is something other than the promise, even after we have prayed and believed all that we can understand, **we have no place to go.** What most of us do is *let go of the promise*, and embrace some kind of anesthetic to numb us to our disappointment again (This is the **vague Christian** life!).

We let go of God's Word and find some solution, that nine times out of ten, is a *human explanation*, but doesn't line up with God. When we do, we lose the pressure-tension, the force, the power of faithfulness that **WILL BRING AN ANSWER!** We give up decrying how hard it is, how confusing and bewildering God is, and how it is too much.

We don't press on and stay in the game; we get out, excuse it, re-interpret, and re-define it. Instead of sitting in the seat of defeat, loss, or lack, having not received; we leave the faith that is narrow, and join everyone else on the wide road of vague faith.

Vague Faith Is A Faith That Is Generalized, A Hope In The Goodness Of God, A Broad Faith That Trusts God Without Understanding How It All Works.

The truth is there is no joy in *vague Christianity*. If we are living lives that don't see God, experience the **supernatural**, then our Christian experience is shallow and **superficial**—and we know it. This may seem harsh, but the reality of this must be faced. If we are drifting in life, and have *shut down our faith* walk, and refuse to take faith to deeper levels where God's Word proves true, **then we have backed away.**

Heb 10:38 Now the just shall live by faith; **But if *anyone* draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him."**

Failing To Receive—Setbacks!

There are times we will fail to understand and fail to receive, what do we do then? If we let go of the promise because of the struggle, roadblocks, or lack of understanding, we will miss God, settling for a superficial Christian experience. May God's grace

help us to not turn our frustration, anger, self pity, or wounded spirit *towards* God's Word and question, doubt, and not believe Him, when we fail to receive.

The Blame Game

No one likes to be at fault, but we will not find answers if we question God's integrity. If God's Word and promise, *or* my understanding are in question as to why I didn't receive, there really should be no trouble **determining that I am the one missing it**. It is my fault if I do not receive. That statement can create GREAT pain. That realization creates a heavy burden, condemnation, and self recrimination. No wonder we have such elaborate explanations for why we don't receive.

The vague Christian experience is to deny fault, or responsibility **on our part, to receive what God** has already given and provided through His grace, His Spirit, His name, and Will. Some will be so pained by this that they will reject any teaching that places the burden on us to receive. The thought of failure is unbearable and can't be God's word in regards to our walk with Him. We'll cite verses like:

“Come unto Me all who labor and are weary and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and I will give you rest (Matt. 11:28-30).”

This verse is true, but the rest doesn't come to any of us outside of **true faith**. Faith knows and it alone produces peace and rest. Faith is what it takes to receive from God.

There is a whole other side to the victorious Christian life that this pain is to take us to. If we live in vague Christianity, we will never get to that place.

The Place of Victory

What is this place? This burden of needing to receive, and the responsibility of needing to be Christ-like with power, leads us to one place: **A place of brokenness before the Lord**. We die to this natural realm and live to His grace! Grace is everything!

We are responsible to receive all that God has offered in Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit. We will not receive anything if we walk in the flesh and operate in the carnal mind (1 Cor. 2:14). We must be broken from our *self centeredness*, and loosed from the bonds of our carnal nature, so that the power of Christ may reign in us.

In a way, we are like wild stallions that need to be tamed for the Master's use. We must offer ourselves as living sacrifices unto God, which is our reasonable service (Rom. 12:1-3). The problem is that our wild stallion isn't broken in, and the living sacrifice we offer keeps getting up and off the altar!

What we want to do is live our life as we see fit, offer to God reasonable service **in our eyes**, and it be acceptable to God. Vague Christianity lives with one foot in the kingdom, and the rest in the world. We simply haven't died yet.

Col 3:3 **For you died**, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

Ga 2:20 "**I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me**; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

God needs us to realize that as long as we are living mostly in the flesh, we are not useable in the Spirit—at least to any great degree. We relieve ourselves of the pressure of the pain that comes, when we **do not** accept the responsibility to receive. This pain of failure points us to one place if we let it; **that place of total surrender to the Spirit.**

God Knows What We Seem To So Easily Forget, That Without Him, We Can Do Nothing (John 15:5).

We know we are doing nothing, or very little in our vague Christian life; we know that we have Christ, so we can reason that our life must be as God wants it. Nothing could be further from the truth to accept **vague Christianity** as God's will. When we look at our vague Christian experience, and see what the scriptures tell us that Christianity looks like, **we should be driven to our knees in pain!**

The worst thing we can do is relieve ourselves of the responsibility of being just like Jesus, and doing the same things He did (John 14:12). We are taking ourselves *out of the game* so to speak, and placing the responsibility somewhere else. We make up all kinds of excuses; we embrace doubt and unbelief, and then live the best (human effort) Christian life we can.

We receive acceptance and respect from others who are in the same boat, but God is not pleased. Do not relieve the pressure by excusing us from being responsible to receive God's promises already given. This is to lead to our brokenness before Him. **This is a place where God gains full ascendancy in our heart.**

Jas 4:6 **But He gives more grace.** Therefore He says: "**God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.**"

2Co 12:9 And He said to me, "**My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.**"

Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, **that the power of Christ may rest upon me.**

The gospel of Christ *destroys the works of the flesh*, and brings us to a point of brokenness, if we let it do its work. The problem is that we love our life, and in that position there is no power.

Many explanations of Christian powerlessness *implant doubt* in the hearts and minds of Christians, and once that happens, James tells us that no one receives (James 1:5-8). Many interpretations are elaborate, scriptural applications, that have the ring of truth, but when boiled down, ***they are excuses (poor interpretations) for why we don't receive.***

Most of the excuses absolve us of any responsibility for the failure to receive. When we believe these answers, we embrace integrated doubt. We don't know we're in doubt because we believe the teaching is Christian; nevertheless, we've been taught doctrines of doubt.

We've been taught that God's will is past finding out, or beyond this life—you'll never know. We've been given answers that make our experience trump what the word of God actually says. These interpretations rationalize, compromise, and justify failure. The thought that we could be responsible for failure is just too much to bear. The stress and the anguish of missing God trying to receive again and again and failing are not worth it, and too much weight of responsibility.

I have spent a great deal of time describing the condition of vague Christianity and where it leads. It leads to failure having

come from failure. We asked and didn't receive; we sought and didn't find...listen to what Jesus says about this:

Mt 7:8 "For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.

Jesus said this as a faith fact. Why then don't we receive? The dilemma is a burden and pain.

Relieving the Burden and Pain!

When we ask, seek, and knock, as if the answers are outside of us, we are standing in unbelief! When we received Jesus into our lives, we did receive! What did we receive? God's answer to our every need! If we have Jesus and authority to use His name, what don't we have? We have misunderstood what the new creation brought us.

One of the major problems in all of this is our understanding of receiving. Most of us think of receiving as something outside of us, coming into us. It is visualized like ordering a package, and then in a day or two, we receive it. There is another definition that applies to receiving.

Receiving is to be understood as understanding, accepting, and embracing. It is receiving as in, "getting it." I didn't understand, but now I do. Receiving, when it comes to understanding grace and Christianity, is all about becoming aware, growing in understanding of what it means, and then standing in it. I have received; I have been helped. My faith can only stand in what God has already done. Do I receive this? Do I understand this? Our faith becomes effectual as we acknowledge and stand in what God has done:

Philemon 1:6 that the **sharing of your faith** may become **effective by the acknowledgment** of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus.

It is when we take the responsibility of believing God, and realized He has saved us to the uttermost, including our lack of believing (Heb. 7:25). We are saved from the burden of having the responsibility by accepting Jesus as Lord of our life. This means that I have already surrendered! I am the Lord's. I am in the kingdom. I am in His righteousness. I am at peace with God. I am in Christ and in all that it means. Amen.

When we continue to think of receiving God's power, answers, or manifestation of healing as being outside of us, we will continue to miss grace. As long as we keep asking, seeking, and knocking on heaven's door for things He's already given us; the results will be the same—powerless.

We don't have a faith problem, **we have an acknowledgement problem**. We are not seeing the finished work of Jesus as finished in us. We think God is going to do a new work, or move on our behalf, because of our faith. **The truth is this: Our faith doesn't move God; it moves us to believe what He's done.** Stop thinking of the things of grace as outside of us and realize they are born within (II Cor. 5:17).

When we fail to recognize what Christ is in us already, and the position of power we have, we continue to miss His grace. We remain under the burden and pain because we are still under the law. The typical next step is to turn to naturalism: we turn our attention to human efforts and works of the natural realm. This to me, is where most, if not all Christians end up, living their Christian life—in vague Christianity.

The Battle Is To Stay Grace Minded

As long as we are ***not*** convinced of the ***new creation realities***, they lay dormant within us. Under the law, it was upon us to have faith and to believe all things are possible; under the new covenant and His grace, **He has already supplied faith and believing through Jesus our Lord (Heb. 7:25)**. We've been chasing the promise as if it has yet to be given; when it was already decided two thousand years ago. How can we doubt God wants us to have something, if He has already given it to us?

One of our main failures is that our prayers are hindered, and our faith challenged **from within our own hearts**, because **we did not weed out unbelief**. Stand in the truth that asserts that, in Jesus' name, **we have all authority** to speak to the mountain and it be removed (Mark 11:23).

God is after our heart, knowing that from it, determines the issues of life including faith to ACCEPT, faith to remove mountains, and faith to see signs, wonders, and miracles that glorify God.

Pr 4:23 **Keep your heart with all diligence**, for out of it *spring* the issues of life.

Conclusion:

Vague Christianity is confusion. It is misunderstanding faith, it doesn't know God's will, is not established and convinced to stand against those conditions, symptoms, and situations that are opposing God's will in our life, or the life of those around us. Vague Christianity is weak because it is mixed. It has embraced naturalism and explanations that deny the truth in God's Word.

Often it is mixed by remaining under the law and not walking in grace.

When results or setbacks occur, vague Christianity fades, stumbles, and lets go of the promise and provisions in the atonement. Vague Christianity lives in doubt, is double minded about many things. Many excuses, reasons, and answers for failure, the lack of power, are lived in. Single mindedness is almost a foreign concept.

The pain and burden that so many of us feel when we fail to receive, heal, restore, or experience victory, indicates a heart still under condemnation and the law. We've not fought the right fight to stay grace minded!

Jesus is the author and finisher of our faith. He is the completeness to believe and receive within us. When we received Jesus, we received what we needed in every respect. We don't need to ask, seek, or knock, God has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness!

Finally, we don't have a faith problem as much as we have an acknowledgement problem. We haven't understood what the new creation realities are! We are surrendered. We are made righteous. We are completely forgiven of all our sin. We've been given the gift of faith. All of the promises are yes and amen to God's sons and daughters.

What this means is that our anger, frustration, disappointments, regrets, and/or disillusionments need to stop being directed *towards* God. God has helped us. We've been given authority over all the power of the enemy in Jesus.

We need to be convinced and remove the doubt about this (leave vague Christianity behind), and turn our focused faith's attention towards the real culprits. The real culprits are the circumstances, symptoms, problems, issues, and fallen cursed facts of this realm that are opposing God's will. We are to speak to the mountain *with* God and stop speaking to God about the

mountain. We are God's ambassadors to bring about His will in the earth. Amen.