

**FAITH: Try it on everything!**

*“Let Yourself Be Convinced...  
... An Autobiography in Five  
Easy Chapters!”*

1 Timothy 6 6-19, Psalm 91: 1-6, 14-16,  
Luke 16: 19-31  
September 29, 2019

The way you do anything is the way you  
do everything.  
Listen to this autobiography in 5 short  
chapter...

### **Chapter I**

I walk down the street.  
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.  
I fall in.  
I am lost, I am helpless.  
It isn't my fault.  
It takes forever to find a way out.

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I walk down the same street.  
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I pretend I don't see it.  
I fall in again.  
I can't believe I am in the same place.  
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### **Chapter III**

I walk down the same street.  
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.  
I see it there.  
I still fall in...it's a habit.  
My eyes are open.  
I know where I am.  
It is my fault.  
I get out immediately.

### **Chapter IV**

I walk down the same street.  
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.  
I walk around it.

### **Chapter V**

I walk down a different street.

So, You and God working  
together...trying faith  
on everything! One thing at a time!

What does it mean to be within God's  
care...under God's wing, protected, in  
the real world?

Do we really have to fix those holes in  
the sidewalks?  
Is that our work to do? God's? Whose?

Or is the well-intentioned nudge to fill in  
the holes a distraction from doing the  
thing most needed?  
Can you really fix anything for anyone  
but yourself?

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So, when and where are you the rich  
man in your life?

When and how are you  
Lazarus...powerful to fault...powerful  
enough not to have to respond to the  
situation at hand?

Is “fault” the point? Or self-awareness?

If God has indeed given us everything  
and for our enjoyment, what are you  
enjoying...or not?

How are you rich? You are rich!  
Are you being haughty or envious to a fault?  
Are you rich in doing good for others?  
How self-aware are you?

What is the truth you are speaking to yourself?  
Do you see the holes in your own sidewalk?  
We all have that Lazarus within!

So...who are the prophets sent to you that *you* are ignoring?  
Who would you listen to?  
Is there an urgency to this?

What is your theology of the human condition, your condition? Given the wisdom teachings of today,  
what is your theology of suffering...and compassion?

Is the universe basically a positive place or negative place?  
Is God good or bad?  
Planned or arbitrary?  
Why does evil exist and bad things happen to good people? How is life fair and justice happen?

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Usually regarding such subjects, a sermon and the pastor guide you through a reflection that leads toward a conclusion...which often reflects the church line or the pastor's opinion.

So, I so trust you as adults, to be prompted by the spirit...and not by me!

I'm just gonna tell you what I'm thinking and then continue to reflect with you so you can think for yourself.

Here's what I'm thinking, so far, cause its always developing:

You can't explain God or the way things happen. I will never be able to fully mentally grasp how the universe works and God's role and timing in things...

yet I see there is a providence in God's timing over time ...over the long haul I think there is often a tangible sense of God's touch of universal light/love/justice/right relationship in things.

Sometimes it take some time for God's deepest desires for us to become manifest, for lots of reason...mostly having to do with us!

I believe God is good, bad things do happen to good people...and bad people, rich and poor people.

God is with us all the time offering a way through and a protection for our souls to make it through.

*And there is an urgency* to our understanding how valuable we are to God and how we could be treating ourselves and others, thinking about the choices that are ours to make.

God is not rational or irrational.  
God is relational, of the non-rational mystery,  
the one life/breath that is.

Science is proving it...there is an organizing principle in the universe...it was not random.

What will it take to convince you?

I'm thinking you can't convince anyone of anything which they are not already wanting to be convinced...  
including ourselves.

I believe about suffering...never God's intention for Jesus or anyone of us.

Suffering is not a badge of honor, proof of dedication...martyring yourself for your work, your kids...misses the point. What is the point?

Is the hole in the sidewalk the point?

Is the point money?

Is money the problem? Money is often the subject...but it is not the issue. This Lukan story and Timothy's sharing is not really about money.

And yet, as it did with the rich man, it often takes something rather drastic to open our eyes to the choices we make, including how we use our money,

to give us sight into our own blindness and to guide us to wisely use our wealth...  
the wealth of who we are.

**That wealth lies in our compassion.**

What is compassion?

How do you find it within yourself...whether you're feeling emptied or...powerful? Rich or poor?

Cared for or abandoned?

Here are some things we can do to find our compassion. They're important!

When was the last time you went to a Bible wisdom circle reflection so God could fill you up? So others could share their wealth of knowledge and compassion and insight with you?

When was the last time you slowed down to open to God in prayer or meditation or contemplation? Have you ever tried Centering or Sung Meditation...and stayed with it long enough for it to enter in to your soul?

When was the last time you opened up, perhaps tearfully so, to someone so the Spirit in them could minister to the Spirit in you?

When was the last time you stopped being defensive about money, choices, your kids, your work so Jesus could compassionately fill you with a more loving way to see yourself as a human being?

Compassion...maybe to give it, you gotta' get it!  
Be filled up with compassion to overflowing.

In this case, it just may be holier to receive than to give!

Imagine what the rich man would have received if only he had related...for even a minute... to Lazarus who sat at that gate...related as one of God's people!  
The rich man would have received a whole new life! Joy!

Actually, when we are truly giving and receiving,  
there is not difference between the two!

If you are truly on an inward journey with God to the heart of your soul where compassion abides,  
you will find yourself propelled outward joyfully! in ways you never knew you could be...

you will minister and you will do it as a response to your own soul's well-being and everyone else's soul will also be better off! Compassion. Joy!

Relationship is key. Is this the point?

Paul tells us in Timothy: "They are to do good, to be rich in good works, generous, and ready to share, thus storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of the life that really is life."

Take hold of the life that really is life! ...the really real...God within bringing out in you a wealth of compassion through all your gifts.

What a treasure you really are! You are indeed wealthy!  
What will it take to convince you...you have everything you need for life to be different?  
Bridge the chasm.

You see...God would go to hell for you! Jesus ascended 3 days...to open the gates...if they'd come.

God never gives up on anybody. All of us get to heaven when our timing and God's timing come together...at long last come together!

Pat shared with us at FF a few years back a CS Lewis story about a bus that crosses the great divide between heaven and hell. A day trip to heaven was offered those in hell...you could board the bus and cross the divide and even get off and spend a day, even stay. But in heaven, things are different. You have to share...you want to! You do see...see. In the Lewis story, so many re-boarded that bus and made it a round trip...heaven not a place they really wanted to be... still didn't want to be...not ready to share or be compassionate to others, self!

They didn't really see heaven at all if that's all they saw.

You don't have to share here on earth. But you get to!  
You get to!

You get to have some heaven here and now and everywhere all the time...and what those on the bus didn't get and still didn't see is the surest, truest, bestest wealth of life comes in sharing, being in relationship, being compassionate...

as much as you can as often as you can as soon as you can.

Compassionate...like holding back your judgement, not slipping into false arguments to make a point about how powerful you are, not punishing but disciplining yourself and others, no grudges!

And it changes you.

You find...freedom....from false notions of superiority (what an energy drain it is to be superior to everyone...so hard to maintain).

Free from keeping up fronts and being so prejudice, buying what you don't want, or giving up what you don't need to give up.

Free to be with people more like you “want to be” on the inside than you are on the outside.

Liked for who you are, not what you have, or not liked for what you don't have.

Freedom. An ease of mind, a deeper sense of what is...and can be. A bit of heaven...here and now. It shows up in the little things you do.

And prophets and teachers galore along the way...

Abraham, Moses, Ruth, Mary, Jesus, Priscilla, Martin Luther King, Gandhi, Abe Lincoln, Dorothy Day...

Maddie and Leland and Max and Natalie (all our kids!)...

John and Sheryl and Tom and Janet...and each person here...

We are so power-full!

~It is easier for me to believe that what I say or do will be taken lightly.

~It is easier for me to believe that problems of hunger, racism, and corporate corruption in our society are so big that there is nothing I could do today that would change the course of these issues in my community tomorrow.

~It is easier for me to believe that the way I love and treat the people in my life has nothing to do with the growing nature of distrust and dishonesty in our world.

Our deepest fear is that we are powerful...that we can do something about all the things we complain about!

Anytime there has ever been a movement toward peace and justice in this world, it has always started with just one person seeing themselves clearly

and acting with integrity for justice in their own lives and the lives of those around them, living compassion...

Moses, Isaiah, Jesus, Paul, St. Francis, Julian of Norwich, Martin Luther, Gretta, Sister Theresa, Thomas Merton, Gandhi, Mandela...and YOU!

Well, still not convinced?

There's nothing anyone can say, nothing any pastor can say, nothing any religion can say that will convince you.

Just like Abraham said to Lazarus.

The only thing that can convince you that new life is yours for the taking...*is your life!*

And the only thing we can really do to help you, support you, protect you, lift you up...

is continually be reformed together to do the things we can do and to live in the ways of Jesus in full view.

And every day you have a new opportunity.  
Every season, new teachers and classes.  
Every year, new ways to pledge your life to what is really real.

But I can't convince you....to avoid the hole in the sidewalk you're choosing to walk.  
Jesus may not yet be able to either.

*And still, you're protected.*

God by my side, your side...always...  
even when you're not convinced...even as we suffer the consequences of our own choices.

You have everything you need to begin to live the life you long to live.

In changing just one way in which you usually react to those around you, walk your talk,  
you change everything around you.

And that one thing on which you tried faith, has a chance to be the way you do...everything...one thing at a time!

Let yourself be convinced. Try faith on anything and everything! Everything!

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