

THE BOOK OF ROD

By Don Krider

Several years ago I went to a memorial service for Rod Jacobson, a dear friend of mine, and the Pastor ministered a message that day that truly touched me. He spoke about the "Book of Rod." I thought to myself that there was no Book of Rod in the Bible, and then I realized it was my friend Rod's life story.

The thought jumped into my heart that people watch us and see how we live, and how we conduct ourselves. It is so important. The Holy Spirit quickened some things to me and I want to share them with you. We need to be challenged.

Let's look at what Paul wrote to the Church at Corinth.

(2 Cor. 3:1 KJV) Do we begin again to commend ourselves? or need we, as some others, epistles of commendation to you, or letters of commendation from you? (2) Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men: (3) Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshly tables of the heart.

Manifestly means to make known, to be seen, or brought forth. We know that Jesus was the manifested one, the part of God that the world could see. Now we Christians are the part of God that the world can see. The tragic thing is that we are the ones who are responsible for what we allow into the chapters of our lives. There are no idle pages. They are either filled with what God wants, or they are filled with the things we want.

This word says, "Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ..." That is what you are, whether you want to be or not. It isn't what you voted to be. It is what you do with what you are, that is going to count. Every one of us has an opportunity to live in victory and in joy. Every one of us has an opportunity to live in a place in Christ where we are always growing in Christ, but the choice is ours. What is written in these chapters of our book is up to each one of us.

The Lord laid on my heart that there are sentences, paragraphs, pages, and chapters in our books. There are sentences that just stick out and hit you in your heart, and touch you, and are written down forever.

The first chapter should be the chapter of "FAITH," because without faith it is impossible to please God (Heb 11:6), and that which is not of faith is sin (James 4:17). The more that faith grows in our lives, the more righteous events begin to take place in our lives. We begin to make righteous decisions, where we made unrighteous ones. We begin to walk uprightly before God where we walked in compromise in times past.

I am talking about Christians, not about the world. The world's book is closed; it is dead. No matter how much money or position or name they have, their book is dead. There is nothing good in it. But Christians are an epistle that has been declared to be of God. In other words, the world should be able to read us.

The world was able to read Jesus and we knew what God was like. Jesus said, "Have I been with you so long and you don't know who I am. If you have seen me, you have seen the Father"(John 14:9).

The world has seen us, and they should see Christ, because we are called Christians, which identifies us as an epistle full of Christ. These books are living books. They are a living testament of our lives. Every page should be filled with victory, even in the time of sorrow, in the time of need, and in the time of problems.

Sometimes we exaggerate what we really are. We try to believe more than we are able to believe. We try to live in a realm that we can't live in, and when it doesn't come to pass, we begin to feel condemned. We need to live where we truly believe, and not try to hike our faith up. ***Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*** (Romans 10:17).

If you aren't studying the word of God, you do not have much faith. If you are not hearing what the Spirit is saying to the Church, you have very little faith, and you are doing a lot more unrighteous things than you are doing righteous things. Abraham believed God and it was accounted to him for righteousness (Gen 15:6; Rom 4:3). I believe the chapter of faith means that we become obedient. We begin to believe what God said is true, no matter what the world says, and then it is written down on that chapter of our lives that we live by faith. It is not just a word, but it is written there.

One day God is going to open the book up, and then everyone will know. You can put "Shout" on the outside, you can put "Victory" on the outside, but when the book is opened and the test time comes, it proves what you truly have written in your heart.

Paul is saying something here; he has admonished this Church and is trying to get them to grow up, and they are still messed up. He said, "Think about it for a minute. You are manifestly declared to be the epistle of God, known and read of all men. You may fool somebody, but you can't fool everybody."

So the first chapter in our lives needs to be faith. If you are doing something that is sin, it is not of faith, and you need to quit doing it. That place of unbelief that has kept us trapped, we need to begin to write faith in there by living obedient. Being obedient to the word.

How did God reason that Abraham believed Him? Was it because Abraham said, "I believe you, God." No! He was obedient! He did what God told him to do. That is what proves you have faith. That is what proves what you really believe. It is not what you say, it is what you live. So unless the first foundation of this book, the first chapter, is not faith, we have nothing to build on.

Without faith it is impossible to please God, and they that come to God must believe that He is the rewarder of them which diligently seek Him (Heb 11:6). So faith is not something you talk about having, because the word says that if a man has faith, let him have it to himself. It is not something that you tell everybody about. You just live it and people know if you have it or not. They read your book every day.

That is why the Church is called hypocritical. They talk about holiness and live like the devil. Talk about righteousness and live in unrighteousness. People say, "I wouldn't go down to that church. There are nothing but hypocrites down there." I say that is a good place for hypocrites to be. They might get saved. They might get straightened up. They might get their testimony right. So the first chapter of your book has to be faith.

The second chapter has to be "LOVE." The question is how much love is seen, is manifested in our lives. I John 3:18 says not to love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth. Don't tell

somebody you love them if you are not going to back it up with some action. That has been the trouble; it is that easy love. "Hey, I love you," but when you are in trouble and try to get hold of them, you can never find them.

So you have to have faith for the foundation, but the structure has to be tied together with love. Look at 1 Cor. 13th chapter.

*(1 Cor. 13:1 KJV) Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. (2) And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. (3) And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing. (4) Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, (5) Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; (6) Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; (7) Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. (8) **CHARITY NEVER FAILETH**; but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.*

Do I really have long-suffering toward my brother? Does my love suffer a long time, or am I ready to cut them off? Am I joyful? Do I have love that is full of peace? Am I kind? Paul said, "Let a man examine himself to see if he be in the faith" (2 Cor. 13:5).

Everything has to be built by love. We even have to speak the truth in love (Eph 4:15). That eliminates a lot of talking. Everything about a Christians' life has to be backed up by the love of God. Somebody said to me that they wanted a big ministry, but you have to start off little. You have to start on the foundation chapter of faith, and then everything you do has to be in the love of God.

The next chapter has to be "THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT."

(Gal 5:22 KJV) But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, (23) Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

How well is it developed? The thing about these chapters is that they begin to produce in your life. If you really have faith, you go from faith to faith. You begin to grow if you have faith. You can't help it. Your righteousness begins to be manifested. It is manifested more and more each day. You start walking away from things that used to cause you to fall. You walk away and quit making unrighteous decisions. An unrighteous decision is one that is not righteous.

Speaking in tongues doesn't make you spiritual. Prophesying doesn't make you spiritual. Even miracles don't make you spiritual. None of these mean anything except that God has used you. The proof of maturity is in the size of the fruit that you bear.

The only way you can produce spiritual fruit is to submit yourself to God. Submit yourself to the word of the Lord, and humble yourself and ask God to help you, to allow the fruit of the Spirit to be developed. When you ask that, you get sandpapered, you get stretched out, you get crossed up, you get messed up.

God is pruning you. People you thought were your friends and would never leave you, and then all of a sudden you never see them again. The person who said, "I will stick closer than a fly on fly-paper" is gone and the fly and paper are gone. You feel like you have been stripped naked out in the middle of a forty-acre field.

It is because you asked God to let you write a chapter on the fruit of the Spirit. God is going to cut away every ounce of dead wood so you can produce more fruit. Pretty soon you can have much fruit, and then God is glorified (John 15:8). God is not glorified in more fruit, but in MUCH fruit. This is a self-examination book, isn't it?

You cannot backbite somebody as unto the Lord. You can't gossip as unto the Lord. It is impossible. Some of our chapters are tiny little chapters. We haven't written much. We look over at the back of the book where we have really been writing and working, and we find a chapter on murmuring, a chapter on grumbling, a chapter on forsaking. We find all kinds of chapters that we shouldn't have in our book. Do you feel like you are a Christian who sits on the bench all the time? The greatest place for a Christian is on the edge all the time.

Somebody asked me one time if I was nuts. He said, "You are always on the edge of trouble." Christians need to live on the edge, out there where faith really lives. We shouldn't be a people who say, "I told you so. I knew it would happen to you."

There are some chapters that should never be written in our books. Here are some of them: unforgiveness shouldn't even have a paragraph in the book: anger, jealousy, envy, strife, backbiting, murmuring, complaining. Somebody is reading you, and they may not say anything about it, but they think it. I have had people who are heathens say to me that "Christians don't do that, or act like that, or say that." God lets them do that, because I am writing a wrong chapter. Some of us have a big eraser, don't we? There is an eraser, thank God, but only Jesus can use it.

One chapter that you should never write in your book is the forsaking the assembling yourselves together as you see the day approaching (Heb 10:25). Many say, "Well, I go to church once a week. That is enough." How many times do you eat a week? If we were writing a book on eating, we would do well. You need to be going to church as you see the days approaching, because you are going to need the strength that somebody else has, and you are going to need to supply something to the body. So you never want to write a chapter like the forsaking assembling together.

The fourth chapter is called "MOTIVATION." What is the motive behind what you are doing? I know that Jesus was led by the Spirit. He was moved by compassion. We cannot be moved because we need to minister. We can't be moved because there is money, or fame, or to have our name recognized, or we get a little higher up on the roll somewhere.

We must be motivated rightly. If that which is not of faith is sin, then we need to be motivated by faith. We need to be motivated by the love of God. When I witness to somebody, it is not to put another star on the board. The most natural thing that a Christian does should be to share Christ.

One day another brother and I were privileged to go down the alley behind the office to dump the garbage, and there were three guys there, drinking beer. We began to talk to them. They needed to hear about Jesus. I told them God loved them, and I said, "Let's pray together," and they all reached

their hands out. It wasn't because there was somebody down there looking at me to see if I would do anything. Something in my heart said to pray for these men. Something in my heart said that they need Jesus.

It was the love of God, the compassion of Christ, that wanted to touch these men, and the only way He can touch them is through an epistle. We could have just thrown the garbage in the dumpster and gone on by, and said, "Look at that bunch of bums out there." That is self-righteousness. Righteousness reaches out to the lost. Compassion reaches out to the lost. It is not something you do once in awhile. It is something that you do all the time. If you have to get a program to get it done, then it is just because of the program that you are doing it.

They make fortunes by having motivational speakers, to motivate you to do something. But we should be doing it because we are motivated by the love of God. We are motivated by the righteousness of God. We are epistles. Every day somebody is reading your life. When they find out you are a Christian, they watch how you manage yourself. They look to see how you do things, and they have a right to do that, because you are manifestly declared, which means that you are on review. I pray that if you are living wrong, one of them will say, "Christians don't do that." Then we need to say, "Oh, God, get the eraser out. Lord, forgive me."

Next, there is what I call the "book-mark Christians." They have only had three experiences in their life: saved, sanctified, and on their way to heaven. I used to preach in churches and hold revivals, and never failed to get half a dozen people up there saying, "Thank God, I have been saved, sanctified, and on my way to heaven. Forty years ago I got my three bookmarks. That is all I know about walking with God. That is all I know about anything. If you have a problem, go see the Pastor. If you need prayer, go find a sister."

We need to quit being bookmark Christians. If all we can remember is what happened forty years ago, then nothing has happened since then. We haven't written a chapter in that book that will glorify God forever. Everything we have ever written has been the same chapter.

Christians are now writing another chapter called "I don't know what is going on," which I call "the ignorance chapter." Somebody said, "Ignorance is bliss," and I said, "No! It is just stupidity." We are destroyed for lack of knowledge (Hosea 4:6). That lack of knowledge destroys people. That is why it takes knowledge to have true motivation in your heart. God is not going to use you if you are ignorant of the things of God.

Please don't be a bench-sitter Christian. Saved, sanctified, and on your way to heaven. Those are good things to be, but there is a lot more to living than sitting around telling people when you got saved and how holy you are, and what your final destination is. What are you doing in the in-between times? Is your chapter on faith growing? Is your chapter on love growing? Is your chapter on the fruit of the spirit growing? Is your chapter on motivation growing?

Really look at your life and see what kind of chapters you are writing. If you need help, ask somebody. They will tell you if they are speaking the truth in love. You don't want to ask somebody who is trying to get on your good side. Ask a child. Seriously! If you really want to know how you are doing, ask a kid. They haven't yet learned how to get on the good side of you. They don't even care what side they are on. They will tell you the truth. That is the way we should be. We are on the Lord's side. That is

all we care about. Whether it is your good side or not doesn't make any difference to me. Whether it is your bad side or not, it doesn't make any difference to me. I am just on the Lord's side.

In conclusion, what we need to have in our books is the following:

Chapter 1 - FAITH. What is not of faith is sin. Abraham believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness because he was obedient.

Chapter 2 - LOVE. 1 Cor. 13th chapter. Love in deed, not in word. Check and see how much love you have working in your chapter.

Chapter 3 - FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT. Check and see how much fruit you have.

Chapter 4 - MOTIVATION. Having God move. Jesus moved by compassion. Doing all things as unto the Lord.

IN CLOSING, LET US DESIRE THAT THE BOOK OF OUR LIVES
WILL BE A LIVING EPISTLE, GLORIFYING GOD