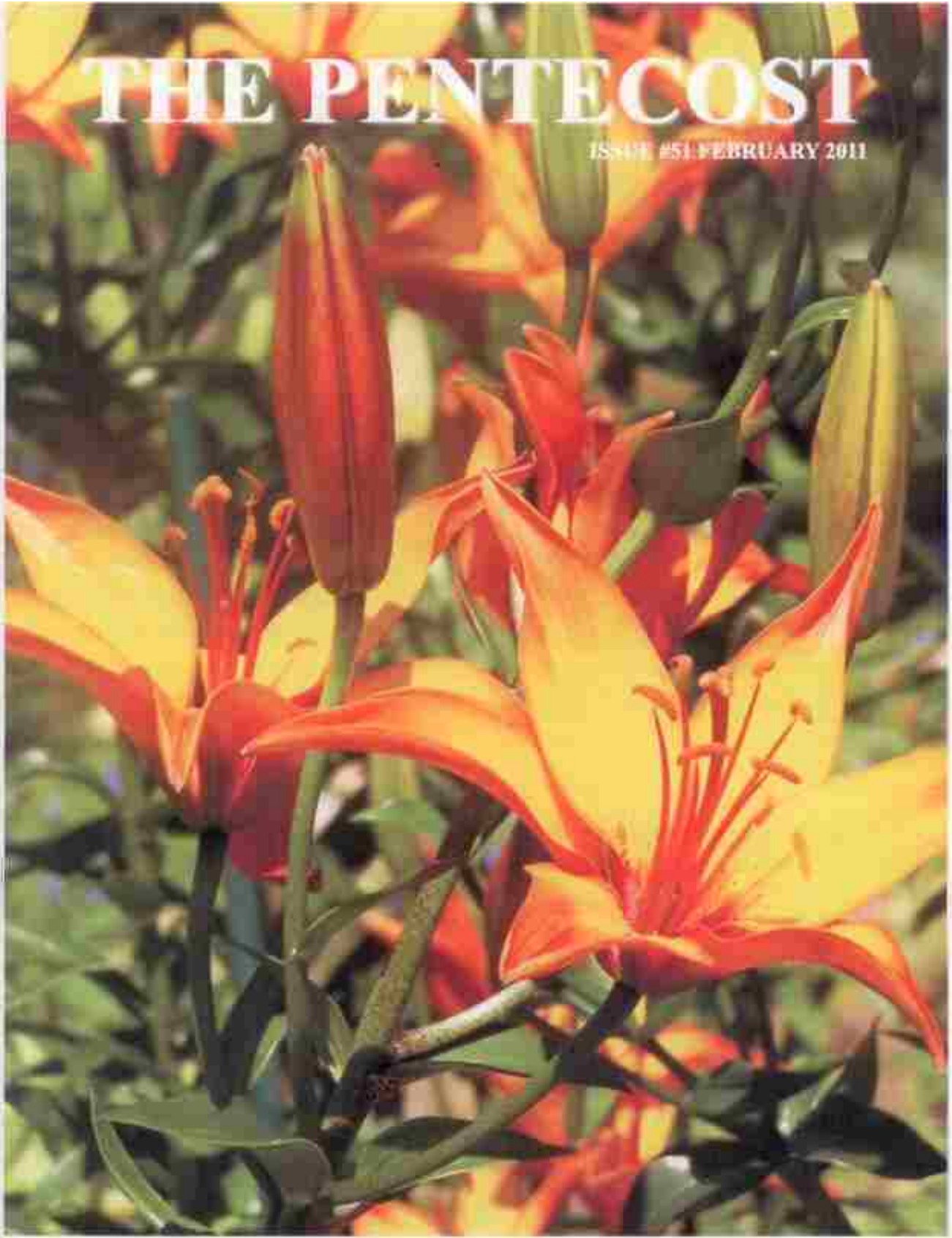


# THE PENTECOST

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# THE PENTECOST

True faith in God is the most important thing that a person will ever come to experience and understand in this life. In this February, 2011, issue of The Pentecost, we will discuss biblical faith. We will also look at the problems of *loneliness*, *bitterness* and *unforgiveness* and how we can deal with them. God bless you.



**Shawn Stevens**

Faith is precious. We may not realize it, but we use it every day. Rightly or wrongly, we put faith in our family, cars, money, etc. There is one person that we can rest easy putting our faith in, no matter what is happening around us, and He is God.

**Ramona Stevens**

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### A WORD OF CORRECTION

For those who have read my article Stone, Mountain, Whole Earth, printed in 2006 I wrote that the last world empire in Nebuchadnezzar's vision was Rome and that I believed that the stone cut without hands and hitting the base of the image was God's kingdom coming at the time of Christ's first advent. I would like to take back interpreting this passage and leave its interpretation to God. Thank you. Shawn Stevens



## SAVING FAITH

*Being therefore justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; through whom also we have had our access by faith into this grace wherein we stand; and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.*

### Romans 5:1-2 American Standard Version

Jesus, on one occasion, asked: "... Where is your faith? ..." (Luke 8:25). I believe that Jesus asks men and women this same question today. God has ordained that the receiving of salvation is by faith. We read that the end of our faith is the salvation of our souls (see 1 Peter 1:9), and that God's righteousness "... is revealed from faith to faith..." (Romans 1:17). In fact, when we come to God by faith, Jesus Christ comes to dwell within us. The Apostle Paul prayed for the Ephesian church "that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith..." (Ephesians 3:17).

What then, is faith? It is believing. We are told that it pleased God to save those who believe the Gospel (see 1 Corinthians 1:21). How does one come to true faith in God? Firstly, it is by believing the truth that Jesus Christ died for our sins and rose again. He not only died on the cross but, after three days, God resurrected Him. Just as Jesus died on our behalf, for our sins, He rose from the dead to conquer death on our behalf. Because He was raised back to life, He can grant spiritual life to those who come to Him by faith. In this way, those who are spiritually dead in sin can be born again to life.

So firstly, we must believe this truth and, secondly, we must believe in Jesus Christ Himself. Believing in Jesus means beginning a personal relationship with Christ. This can be done by coming to Christ in prayer, acknowledging to Him that you are a sinner, expressing to Him your remorse for sin and asking Him to forgive you; it is also acknowledging that you believe that He died for you, that He rose from the dead for you, and, committing to Him from your own way to follow His will.

Dear Reader, have you believed in Jesus? The Bible tells us: "And this is His commandment: that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, as He gave us commandment." (1 John 3:23).

Remember the discussion between Jesus Christ and Nicodemus (see John, chapter 3) on being born again. Further on in that discussion, Jesus said:

*For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved. He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already; because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.*

### John 3:16-18

Many today try to come to, and be accepted by, God on the basis of the good things that they have done. However, good works do not earn us salvation. Salvation comes another way. The Scriptures teach: "... But the just shall live by his faith." (Habakkuk 2:4).

Biblical faith leads to, and is an expression of, obedience to God. In fact, "belief," or "faith," seems to be used as a synonym in this verse for "obedience": "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; he who does not obey the Son shall not see life..." (John 3:36 RSV). In fact, the New King James translation renders it this way: "He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life..." (John 3:36 NKJ). Faith is not an involuntary act on our part that just simply occurs due to the sovereign act of God. Faith is a response which we must make to God and to His Gospel. Faith is not merely affirming a set of doctrines or believing in a creed. Faith is an experience where a man or woman expresses trust. Wesley described it as "a sure trust and confidence in God, that, through the merits of Christ, his sins are forgiven, and he [is] reconciled to the favor of God."<sup>1</sup>

Faith is a response from man to God. It is a change from the common course of unbelief that humanity is travelling on. Faith is necessary for salvation, for one must believe in Christ to be saved. Paul says this about the message of faith which he preached: "But what does it say? 'The word is near you; in your mouth and in your heart' (that is, the word of faith which we preach); that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved." (Romans 10:8-9). "Confess" is a term for acknowledging, agreeing and affirming. A man first believes in his heart that Jesus is Lord, that Jesus died for our sins and that He rose from the dead and, then, because his heart believes, he eagerly confesses this to God and to others.

<sup>1</sup> John Wesley, quoted in A Compact of Wesley's Theology, Robert W. Burton, Ed. at St. Peter's, Arlington Press, 1991.

Faith is absolutely indispensable. We must have faith if we are to please God. Scripture teaches, "But 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 diligently seek Him." (Hebrews 11:6). In order to come to God, we must believe in Him. We must believe that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. That means we must believe that God will hear the cry of, and reward, those who are truly seeking Him.

Faith is more than a mental act of understanding that something is true. Faith is tied to repentance and surrender to God. One thief on the cross, beside Jesus, exercised faith. The Scriptures tell of how there were two criminals who were crucified along with Jesus. As they hung on crosses, one of these criminals blasphemed Jesus. The other criminal then rebuked the blasphemer, saying, "... Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong." (Luke 23:40-41). The next verses say, "Then he said to Jesus, 'Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.' And Jesus said to him, 'Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.'" (Luke 23:42-43).

In this amazing account, we see a man putting faith in Jesus and receiving forgiveness, salvation and hope. What did he do? First, he acknowledged his sin; he said that he was deserving of the penalty he was suffering. He acknowledged that his deeds had led him to judgment. Next, he acknowledged that Jesus was pure and innocent. Then he called out to Jesus, calling Him Lord. This thief put faith in Jesus. Jesus saved the soul of this thief and blessed him with the promise of being with Jesus in Paradise.

Oh, the salvation which came to the thief on the cross; how wonderful and good and extensive is the grace of Jesus Christ. The thief called out to Jesus. The thief was humble and confessed that he was deserving of judgment. He knew that he was a sinner needing God's forgiveness and he called out to Jesus. He put his faith in Jesus Christ and was saved. Today he is with Christ.

Friend, how about you? Have you made this all-important choice to repent and put faith in Jesus Christ? Jesus has come to great lengths to save you from hell, a place of judgment and suffering. Have you called out to Him in prayer? Remember Jesus' question earlier; "Where is your faith?" Where is it, and what is it in?

Friend, if you do not know the Lord, then it is time to put your faith in Jesus Christ. Faith is a voluntary act. You must choose to

believe, or you do not believe. You must choose to obey God, or you disobey Him. Faith is not merely affirming a creed. Faith is an experience. It is a trust and a confidence in God. Faith is a response from man to God. Is faith your response to the Lord's love for you?

Friend, you are a sinner, just as the thief on the cross was a sinner. Have you come to Jesus for forgiveness for your sins? Jesus, the pure and innocent Son of God, died in your place and mine. Then He rose from the dead, showing His authority and power over death. Now, Jesus calls men and women to put faith in Himself. Faith is two-fold; firstly, it is believing in the truth of the Gospel, that Jesus died on account of our sins and that He rose from the dead. Secondly, faith is actively putting your trust in Jesus Christ, Himself.

Friend, do you have faith, as I have described it here? You may have good deeds, or even religion, but without faith it is impossible to please God. God is, and He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. Call out to Jesus Christ now. Call out to Him in prayer. Call out in faith.

I want to pray for you also:

Lord Jesus, it says in Your holy Word that if we would confess You with our mouths, and believe in our heart that God has raised You from the dead, that we will be saved. I pray for this reader, that they would find this place of confession and believing. Let them find this place of faith and trust in You. I pray that they will respond to You. I pray that they will respond to what You did when You died, on account of their sins, and when You rose again from the dead. Lord, You granted forgiveness and salvation to the thief on the cross. You granted it when he called out to You. Help this one also to cry out to You in this moment. Help them to repent and surrender. Amen.

**Shawn Stevens**

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### **Heart For The World**

*In this picture I wanted to show how, when God grips our hearts and His love flows through us, as we join together with Him, we can reach the world. God's love is so much bigger than the world and it radiates and brings light.*

**Ramona Stevens**