

Table of Contents

International Bible Lessons

1. Faith Calls for Perseverance (Hebrews 10:19-31).	2
2. Faith Is Assurance (Hebrews 11:1-7; Psalm 46:1-3, 8-11).	4
3. Faith Is Endurance (Hebrews 12:1-11).	6
4. Faith Inspires Gratitude (Hebrews 12:18-29).	8
5. Faith Requires Mutual Love (Hebrews 13:1-3; 1 Corinthians 13).	10
6. Stephen: Spirit-Filled Deacon (Acts 6:8-7:2a).	12
7. Stephen's Martyrdom (Acts 7:51-8:1)..	14
8. Simon Wants to Buy Power (Acts 8:9-24).	16
9. Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch (Acts 8:26-39)..	18
10. Courageous Witness and Radical Gospel (Acts 26:19-32).	20
11. Paul Sails for Rome (Acts 27:1,2, 33-44)..	22
12. Mutual Ministry in Malta (Acts 28:1-10).	24
13. Paul's Proclamation in Rome (Acts 28:23-31).	26

Christian Light Publications

1. Commission and Ascension of Christ (Acts 1:1-14)..	28
2. The Church Is Born (Acts 2:1-11, 16-21)..	30
3. Healing of the Lame Man (Acts 3:1-16)..	32
4. Persecution and Holy Boldness (Acts 4:3-20).	34
5. The Community of Believers (Acts 2:41-47; 4:32-37).	36
6. The Sin of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-16)..	38
7. Suffering for Christ's Sake (Acts 5:17-29, 40-42).	40
8. Choosing Men to Serve the Church (Acts 6:1-15).	42
9. Philip the Evangelist (Acts 8:5-8, 26-40)..	44
10. Saul — From Persecutor to Preacher (Acts 9:1-20).	46
11. Light for the Gentiles (Acts 10:34-48).	48
12. Revival in the Growing Church (Acts 11:19-30)..	50
13. Prayer Brings Deliverance (Acts 12:1-19).	52

Titles and related Scripture selections used with appropriate permissions.

Copyright © 2012 by Mark Roth
All rights reserved; standard restrictions apply.

Panting brings into existence my devotional series *Faith Works*. To understand the series title correctly, think of it as a sentence. Faith in Jesus is active and effectual. In other words, it works! My goal is to make the books in the series demonstrate the extreme practicality and livability of God's Word and the Christian faith.

May this book encourage and challenge you. Before many (if not all) writing sessions, I asked God to speak to *my* heart and to lift *my* spirit. Thus what you find here I have taken for myself first. I urge you to read it personally as well. (My purposeful use of the first person should make that easier.)

How did I select the passages? I didn't. The passages in focus in each two-page spread were selected by I-Do-Not-Know-Who for use in two distinct sets of Sunday School lessons for September-November 2012. The first thirteen titles and passages come from Faith & Life Resources and are based on the International Bible Lessons. The second set of titles and passages comes from the youth-adult quarterlies from Christian Light Publications.

Panting neither intends nor pretends to supplant Sunday School materials produced by anyone else. Rather, it supplements those resources.

I wrote this book as an instructive devotional. I hope its value exceeds any it has as a Sunday School resource. May its usefulness and applicability extend outside Sunday School and beyond November 2012.

Read the Scriptures as a hart panting after the water brooks. Consider what God has for you. Commit yourself to living out His Word. My desire is that the questions and commentary herein help you in your quest for God and His living water.

Though I am not a KJV-only person, I use the King James Version almost exclusively in my English reading, writing, and public speaking. If I use any other version somewhere in this book, I'll make note of it then.

Panting is available in these additional formats:

- email
- Kindle
- Google Books
- www.anabaptists.org/books/faith-works/panting

Hopefully some day I can write a Spanish version of *Faith Works*.

Faith Calls for Perseverance

(Hebrews 10:19-31)
IBL 1 — September 2, 2012

Preparing My Heart

Jesus gave His body and shed His blood so I might have bold, unrestricted access to and communion with God Himself. Not only that, His sacrifice also fully atones for my sins and seals me in a covenant relationship with God, working in me an ongoing sanctification.

Faith in such divine work for me encourages me to persevere in the faith. Because of that divine work, I shall renew my efforts to faithfully “*draw near*” and “*hold fast*” and “*consider one another*.”

Making the Bible Personal

How does my congregation affect my ability to persevere faithfully?

What effect do I have on others’ faithfulness?

How do I get vision that is sufficiently sharp to see the day approaching?

What kind of treatment has the Spirit of grace been receiving from me?

How do I cultivate a love of assembling together for mutual edification?

Why would I sin wilfully?

Reviewing Basic Truths

We have boldness by His invitation, not by our presumption.

We need to stick together as members of the local body of believers.

Jesus is the only effective, acceptable sacrifice for sin.

Despise God’s provision and die.

Applying God's Word to Me

Jesus Christ “*consecrated for us*” “*a new and living way*.” He did that for me and for you. Isn’t that shocking?! Or maybe it’s just so common to us that it no longer awes us. If the awe has left me, I need to reflect more deeply and more often on Christ’s work for me. (And ask Him for awe as well?)

Surely this kind of sacrifice and this kind of provision for us should elicit some sort of response that’s reflexive to the new nature. I suggest these three be seen that way:

Draw near. God wants me close. He invites me. Will I respond? Will I draw near to Him? Yes, I will! I will seek first His kingdom and righteousness. I will hunger and thirst after righteousness. I will make His Word a priority in my life — after rising in the morning, before retiring at night. In my waking moments, I will acknowledge Him in all my ways. I want a sharpening keenness to my awareness of my need of Him. My soul will pant after Him as an hart pants after the water brooks. Yes, I will draw nigh to God, believing He will draw nigh to me and knowing that if He doesn’t draw me, I cannot of my own volition draw near to Him.

Hold fast. I will hang on to my profession of faith in Jesus and in His Word. I will refuse to entertain any doubting thought or any treacherous feeling. I will not succumb to any bewitching false substitute, not even one of my own crafting. I do not want to be ashamed of the Gospel and of my faith in it. I will press on toward the mark, striving to know Jesus more and more. And when my faith does waver (as it does at times), I will reaffirm my faith and ask Him to help my unbelief. *I. Will. Keep. The. Faith.*

Consider one another. Not only must I persevere in the faith and in faithfulness, I must also stimulate my fellow believers to do the same. Actually, God calls each of us to provoke and be provoked to “*love and to good works*.” This is part of the new and living way that Jesus consecrated for us! The closer we get to The Final Day, the more urgent this mutual encouragement. We must be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus, yes. And we must come along side each other lest we faint by the way.

Musing More With Mark

- <http://www.eaf.net/pantinghart/2005/his-blood-my-boldness/>
 - <http://www.anabaptists.org/clp/youth/11-397.html>
-