

The Victory of Faith

***“This is the victory
that overcometh
the world, even
our faith.”
—I John 5:4***

The Scriptures lay a great deal of stress upon the subject of faith. Hebrews 11:6 states, “Without faith it is impossible to please [God].” The Apostle

Peter tells us that by adding certain qualities of character to our faith we shall have an abundant entrance into the “everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,” and that we “shall never fall.” (II Pet. 1:10,11) Our Master says, “According to your faith, be it unto you.” (Matt. 9:29) Here we have inspired authorities who stress faith directly.

In Hebrews 11:1 we read: “Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” Only from the standpoint of spiritual vision is this statement understandable. In II Corinthians 4:18, the same apostle says, “The things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.” Paul here is saying that the things we see with our natural vision are only temporary, while the things we do not see with our natural eyes, but with the eyes of faith, are eternal things. Linking this up with the

Apostle Peter's statement that we are begotten to an "inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away," we can see that the unseen things are the real, tangible, enduring things. —I Pet. 1:4

Another very appropriate definition of faith is this. Faith is the operation and the exercise of our minds with regard to God and his promises. This is a wonderful but sobering thought. Often, unless we are careful when confronted by any trial, we may do almost everything else but exercise our minds, especially in respect to God and the promises he has given us.

The world has certain apt ways of expressing things. It speaks of "flying off the handle," "going all to pieces," or "having a knee-jerk reaction," all of which indicate a measurable loss of control. With the Christian this means a failure to properly exercise the mind. We should stop to think, taking into account familiar promises such as Romans 8:28, that all things are working together for good to the called ones, according to God's purpose. If we do this, then whatever experience we might be having would take on an entirely different viewpoint.

We have still another definition which states to the effect that faith is heart reliance, based upon a mental conviction, not positively proven to our natural senses, but received upon much in the way of good authority. None of us can say positively that we know there is a God from the standpoint of having seen him with our natural eyes, or having heard him speak audibly, or having shaken his hand. However, we have a mental conviction that he "is," because of what he has done in the past, is now doing, and yet purposes to do for the human family.

This latter definition indicates that faith is composed of two parts—an intellectual assurance and a heart reliance. The foundation of our faith is an intellectual grasp of the fundamental principles of divine Truth. Among these are the existence of an intelligent, personal God, the Creator and sustainer of all things, and the fact that he has a plan and purpose of redemption through Jesus Christ our Lord.

To have this foundation, however, is not all there is to possessing faith. In order to have the faith without which it is impossible to please God, we must have a super-structure of heart reliance in the promises of God, who is the Author of our being, and as a Father, who invites the implicit confidence of his children.

To believe merely that God exists cannot in itself be particularly pleasing to him, because even devils believe this much and tremble. (James 2:19) Therefore the faith structure which we, as Christians, are to build might be compared to a dwelling, with both its foundation and superstructure. The foundation is not the house, neither is the superstructure without a foundation very satisfactory. It requires the two to constitute a strong, long-lasting dwelling. The same is true with faith.

Our Contract

We who have made a consecration to the Lord have made a solemn contract, or covenant, to build him a house, a dwelling place. The apostle says, "Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son." (Rom. 8:29) Indeed, in Christ we have the plan, the specifications, or the copy, after which we are to build a

character in his image. The Lord has provided the material. In fact, he has provided everything.

In time past, we found ourselves under condemnation, sentenced to death, but by God's wondrous grace we were enabled to see our condition. He pointed us to the only way of escape, Christ Jesus. As we accepted him, we were called of God with a "heavenly calling." (Heb. 3:1) Responding in full consecration, we were begotten of the Holy Spirit and were given "exceeding great and precious promises." (II Pet. 1:4) "Old things" were now passed away, and we became "new creatures" in Christ. (II Cor. 5:17) We were given the Word of God and all the other tools with which to build within us the character likeness of his dear Son.

The question then is: How are we building? Are we using only what God has provided, or are we browsing around here and there for something else, perhaps finding something which appeals to us? According to the apostle's statement in I Corinthians 3:11-15, we can build with different kinds of material. He says, "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire."

This scripture shows us that we can build with material that will endure the trials, the fire, or with material that will not withstand these things. Again we inquire: How are we building? Are we building a

character structure that will endure the trials of faith? This is especially important to all who have given themselves to the Lord in consecration, and it is a question that each of us must answer individually. Will the great Architect of the universe pass favorably or unfavorably upon our faith superstructure?

In Romans 10:17 we have the statement that faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. This implies that a certain kind of faith is the result of knowledge. This is true, but we then ask: Does all Biblical knowledge result in a living, active faith? By no means. If it did, it would prove that those who have the largest amount of knowledge would also have the greatest degree of faith. This does not necessarily follow. Down through the centuries many have had a great deal of Bible knowledge and a wonderful ability to tell what they knew. Yet, many of these did not have other essential elements of faith.

The faith which enables one to endure all sorts of trials, persecutions, afflictions, losses, aches, and pains—cheerfully, gladly, rejoicingly—is a faith that is not developed merely by reading and study, but one that has been painstakingly developed by experience. This is shown by the Apostle Peter's statement where he says, "Add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge." If all faith were the result of knowledge, the apostle could have said: Add to your knowledge virtue and to virtue faith. He did not put it that way, but said: Add to your faith virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love. Then he adds, "If ye do these things, ye shall never fall."—II Pet 1:5-7,10

Apostle Paul wrote: "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus ... That Christ

may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge.”—Eph. 3:14-19

What kind of knowledge is it that is surpassed by the love of Christ? It is evidently what we often speak of as “head knowledge.” There is a great difference between knowing something and appreciating its value. So it is with our understanding of the Bible.

We know it is valuable because it is the Word of God. Yet do we realize its true eternal worth and how precious it is? Do we appreciate that the great God who owns everything could not give us in our present condition anything of greater value than what he has given us—an understanding of his character, his plan, and his purposes? In addition, he has invited us to share his glory, to become heirs of his and joint-heirs with his only begotten and well-beloved Son.—Rom. 8:16,17

To the words quoted earlier from Ephesians chapter 3, the apostle adds, “That ye might be filled with all the fulness of God. Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages.” (Eph. 3:19,20) This “power that worketh in us” is the power of faith operating through the Holy Spirit.

It is through the exercise of faith in Jesus that we passed from death unto life at the beginning of our Christian journey, but that was only the beginning of our life of faith. Though taken from this sin-sick and dying world, and being born in sin

ourselves, we have the prospect, through the full development of faith, to be elevated to the highest plane in the universe, that of “glory and honour and immortality.” (Ps. 51:5; 40:1-3; Rom. 2:7) The only faith that can accomplish this is that faith without which it is impossible to please God.

Should we not believe God? Has he ever deceived any of us? Has he ever asked anything unreasonable of us? Can we think that God will be pleased when in confronting a certain trial or experience, we show by our conduct that we do not trust him? This evidently is what the apostle meant when he said, “Without faith”—trust, confidence, heart reliance—“it is impossible” to please God. Let us be like the apostles, who said to Jesus, “Lord, increase our faith!”—Luke 17:5

Rewards of Faith

Thus far we have considered what constitutes faith. Now let us examine the rewards of faith. In Romans 5:1 we read, “Being justified by faith, we have peace with God.” Having “peace with God” is priceless, while “the whole world lieth in wickedness,” being at “enmity with God.” (I John 5:19; James 4:4) In this same connection the apostle tells us, “By whom [the Lord Jesus Christ] also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.”—Rom. 5:2

The thought that we, by nature fallen creatures, should be given an opportunity to strive to attain unto God’s eternal glory, is beyond the power of the human mind fully to grasp. If it were not stated repeatedly, we would be unable to believe it. The apostles could not tell us the details of what this glory is, not having experienced it yet themselves.

The Apostle John contented himself by saying, "It doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."—I John 3:2

Then we are told that we can have not only peace "with" God, but also have the peace "of" God. (Phil. 4:7) What greater blessing could anyone have than peace of heart and mind in this present time of distress, when men's hearts are "failing them for fear, and for looking after those things that are coming on the earth?" (Luke 21:26) In proportion as we are able to realize that all things work together for good to those who love the Lord, it is our privilege to enjoy peace.—Rom. 8:28

It is our privilege to realize that God loves us. "The Father himself loveth you." (John 16:27) He has our interest at heart. He wishes us to learn these lessons of faith, trust, and confidence in him, and thus have his peace ruling in our hearts. When all those about us are in doubt and perplexity as to the outcome of the present distressful conditions, it is our privilege to view matters from God's standpoint. Though we see the social, religious, financial, and political institutions tottering to their fall, we know that it is only a part of the work of "the day of his preparation." (Nah. 2:3) "When these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption [deliverance] draweth nigh."—Luke 21:28

How wonderful and faith-strengthening it is to think that God would take us into his confidence and reveal to us his plans and purposes, making known unto us things that were hidden from ages and generations, which are now made manifest to the saints.—Col. 1:26

Trials also a Blessing

Sometimes we are inclined to wonder why it is that since we have given our hearts to the Lord, we should have so many very trying experiences. Gradually we learn that these tests are to qualify us for the work to which he has called us, according to his purpose. These trials are great blessings in disguise. Peter says, "The trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ."—I Pet. 1:7

Concerning the future reward of faith, Peter explains that there "are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature," the nature of God. (II Pet. 1:4) We shall be with him who was highly exalted, "Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named." (Eph. 1:21) We shall see the one who is the "express image of his [the Father's] person." (Heb. 1:3) "Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure."—I John 3:3

Here again, it is well to note that there is a difference between knowing about this hope and having it fully abiding in us. As the Apostle John said, each one who has this hope "purifieth himself." We realize that we cannot be actually pure, as God is pure, but we can be pure in thought, and in intention; the Lord takes the will for the deed. It is possible to be of such intent of heart and mind that if we had a perfect body we would do perfectly. This attitude is graciously accepted by the Lord.

As a concluding thought we quote the *Daily Heavenly Manna* comment of June 4th:

“It is your faith that is on trial now. In the calmer days, when the sun of favor shone brightly upon you, you were quietly laying the foundation of a knowledge of the Truth and rearing the superstructure of Christian character. Now you are in the furnace to be proved; summon therefore all your courage; fortify your patience; nerve yourself to endurance; hold fast to your hope, call to mind the promises, they are still yours; and cast not away your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward. In quietness and confidence shall be your strength. Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him, and faith hath gained her victory.” ■