

“From Faith to Faith”

“Therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.”
—Romans 1:17

TO HAVE FAITH DENOTES

believing as true that which cannot be demonstrated by our natural, physical senses. Since we cannot physically see God, hear his voice or touch him, it takes faith to believe in his existence. The Apostle Paul emphasizes the importance of having this special quality of faith, and that God is pleased with those who exercise it. He tells us, “Without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.” (Heb. 11:6) This is faith in the simplest form. However, true Christian faith must go beyond this. We not only must believe that God exists, and that he rewards those who seek him, but it is also necessary to have faith in his character attributes—his justice, love, wisdom, and power—and their harmonious operation in the fulfillment of his purposes.

Our opening text suggests a connection between faith and justice, or righteousness. Indeed, God has

revealed his righteousness to us so that we will have faith in him and his divinely appointed plans. Thus, those who are justified—made righteous in God’s sight—by faith are instructed to “live by faith” in their daily walk with the Lord. Upon this basis, faith must grow and become stronger, through experience, towards higher levels of development. The Scriptures tell us, “They that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.” (Isa. 40:31) Progression from “faith to faith” by consecrated believers leads to Christian maturity, and to a confidence in God which is unwavering, regardless of the difficulty of one’s experiences. Thus, such as follow this course of life “walk by faith, not by sight.”—II Cor. 5:7

Knowing that we are to grow from “faith to faith,” there are various aspects of our faith and its development which are important to note. Just as gemstones have many facets which are cut, chiseled and polished to enhance their appearance and allow them to reflect greater light, our faith is being similarly developed, shaped and polished. Jesus states the result that should come about in our lives from having these facets of faith come to fruition: “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”—Matt. 5:16

FAITH GIVES ASSURANCE

Hebrews 11:1 states: “Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” True faith has “substance” and “evidence,” and is

not based on mere credulity. The foundation truths of the Scriptures, harmoniously expressed throughout the Bible, provide the substance of our faith. God's providential overruling in our lives, and his daily watch-care over us, affords much in the way of evidence to further bolster our faith. Such a faith, based upon substance and evidence, provides great assurance as we walk in the narrow way of self-sacrifice. The Scriptures also provide us many "exceeding great and precious promises" to give further assurance to our faith. (II Pet. 1:4) A mere sampling of these promises is worthy of joyful contemplation. "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." "Continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, ... To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory." "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."—Luke 12:32; Col. 1:23,27; Rev. 2:10

The members of the church, Christ's footstep followers, are presently being selected, chiseled, and polished for placement in God's heavenly symbolic temple. This work, done in the quarry of our life's experiences, is generally unrecognized by the world. In the case with the building of Solomon's Temple, the stones for the Temple were prepared ahead of time, before being carried to the temple site and assembled. We are told: "Only blocks dressed at the quarry were used, and no hammer, chisel or any other iron tool was heard at the temple site while it was being built."—I Kings 6:7, *New International Version*

Similarly, as footstep followers of Christ we are being prepared now, “transformed by the renewing” of our minds, as well as producing the “peaceable fruit of righteousness” by rightly exercising ourselves during the various trials and testings which our Heavenly Father permits in our life. (Rom. 12:2; Heb. 12:11) The Apostle Peter speaks of this: “Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up ... sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.” (I Pet. 2:5) Therefore, though this great preparation work, and our part in it, are unknown to the world, we can continually draw near to God in “full assurance of faith.”—Heb. 10:22

FAITH PRODUCES ENDURANCE

“Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.” (Heb. 12:1,2) Here we are exhorted to look back at the experiences of the faithful ones of the Old Testament, as well as Jesus and the apostles, all of whom constitute a great “cloud of witnesses.” We should consider what they endured and how faithful and loyal they were to God, even in the most difficult of experiences. Their endurance should inspire us to greater faithfulness in running our race, and to take to heart the many Scriptural admonitions which address the need for constant endurance. “All things are for your sakes, (Continued on page 36)

(Continued from page 31) that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound unto the glory of God. For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.” “Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God.”—II Cor. 4:15-17; Rev. 3:12

We are told: “Consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.” (Heb. 12:3) The mind is a special battleground for each of us. The “old man” of our fallen nature is in continual conflict with the “new man.” (Col. 3:9,10) Our flesh’s resistance to sacrifice is also part of this battle. Rather than succumb to these fleshly influences, however, we should rejoice that our Lord has invited us to walk in his footsteps, and to endure as he did. Let us drink of the cup he drank of and be baptized with the baptism he was baptized with. (Mark 10:38,39) Thus, when we endure hard experiences, or are scorned by others, we can remember the words, “Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, ... Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven.”—Matt. 5:11,12

FAITH CALLS FOR PERSEVERANCE

As we grow from faith to faith, we should recall the words of Paul, “Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.” (Eph. 6:10) To become strong requires continual exercise, training and perseverance. Spiritually speaking, we should be energized by God’s word, and by our relationship

with him through Christ. We have the same favors, promises and inspiring hopes that Jesus and the apostles had. Yet, to fully attain these, we must persevere day by day. “Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised.)” “We are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end.”—Heb. 10:23; 3:14

Perseverance requires vigilance. Peter counsels us, “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist stedfast in the faith. ... But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.” (I Pet. 5:8-10) These words indicate that being in the school of Christ will bring trials and suffering from various sources. These are, in reality, manifestations of divine favor because they develop perseverance which, in turn, even more firmly establishes our faith. Paul expressed his desire to continually persevere with these words: “I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” (Phil. 3:13,14) Perseverance begins with our thoughts. Thus, we are reminded that whatever thoughts are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, of a good report, virtuous and praiseworthy, we are to “think on these things.”—Phil. 4:8

A consideration of perseverance is most certainly not complete without mentioning the vital role and

privilege of prayer. “Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.” (Eph. 6:18) As children of God we must have an active prayer life, “with all perseverance,” communing with him concerning our daily experiences and his help and guidance in them, being motivated by a desire to do his will in all things.

FAITH INSPIRES GRATITUDE

We should be ever thankful to our Heavenly Father, for we owe everything to him through the redemptive work of his beloved Son. Recalling the words of Paul, we are reminded, “Ye are not your own, For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God.” (I Cor. 6:19,20) We understand this to mean that our time, talents, influence, money, and all that we consider precious or valuable, properly belongs to the Lord, including life itself.

Our loving Heavenly Father is concerned about every matter in our lives, and every experience we have. Our faith and trust in him should invoke deep gratitude, as we realize the care, encouragement, comfort, consolation, guidance, peace and rest he daily bestows upon us. To this end Jesus has invited us: “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” (Matt. 11:28-30) Truly, with gratitude we can be assured, “The LORD will give strength unto his people.”—Ps. 29:11

Christ Jesus is our heavenly friend and advocate. (John 15:14,15; I John 2:1) He is represented to us

in the Bible as being “the brightness” of God’s glory, and the “express image of his person.” (Heb. 1:3) Our understanding of the Heavenly Father and his beloved Son has been revealed to us through the enlightening influence of the Holy Spirit. For this, also, we should daily express our gratitude, for it is God’s spirit which assists us day by day to grow from faith to faith. Truly, we can say with the psalmist, “What shall I render unto the LORD for all his benefits toward me? I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the LORD. I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all his people.” —Ps. 116:12-14

As children of God, we are to be ever thankful to our Heavenly Father for his providential care and overruling in all aspects of our lives. We are to realize, through the eye of faith, that he has all of our affairs under his supervision, and he has designed them to work out in full accord with his eternal purposes. This should inspire us to strive to fulfill the vow that we have made concerning faithfulness unto death, as we “by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality.” (Rom. 2:7) “Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.” —II Cor. 9:15

FAITH REQUIRES MUTUAL LOVE

“Now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.” (I Cor. 13:13) Charity, as spoken of by Paul in this chapter, is more properly translated as love—love that is completely unselfish, not desiring anything in return. This kind of love can be demonstrated by acts of kindness, giving assistance, engaging in sacrificial service on

behalf of others, and even by the expression of goodwill toward our fellow man. The apostle further tells us about this divine love. "Love suffers long and is kind. Love does not envy. Love is not boastful; is not puffed up; acts not unbecomingly, seeks not that which is not her own; is not provoked to anger; does not impute evil; rejoices not with iniquity, but rejoices with the truth; covers all things; believes all things; hopes for all things; endures all things. Love fails not at any time."—I Cor. 13:4-8, *Wilson's Emphatic Diaglott*

Our hearts should be kept full of the love of God to such an extent that there will be no room for unkind thoughts toward others, even those who we may consider our enemies. We should remember that God "first loved us," and did so "while we were yet sinners." (I John 4:19; Rom. 5:8) We can do no less than show our love toward the Heavenly Father and his Son Christ Jesus by loving our brethren, our neighbors, and all mankind, including our enemies. Love is the ultimate mark of true holiness, and God has instructed us, "Be ye holy, for I am holy."—I Pet. 1:16

The Scriptures give us these additional admonitions concerning love. "Honour all men. Love the brotherhood." "Let brotherly love continue." (I Pet. 2:17; Heb. 13:1) We note in these words that brotherly love is not merely to be given at certain times or under limited circumstances, but it is to continue. The word translated "continue" in the above text means "not to depart, ... to be held, kept continually." When our minds are enriched by this understanding we are led to the realization that "a friend loveth at all times."—Prov. 17:17

Hence, we are to love one another even when we do not agree regarding some details of scriptural interpretation. We must inculcate the meaning contained in the words of Ephesians 4:4-6: "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." When asked by one of the Jewish religious leaders, "Which is the great commandment of the law?" Jesus replied: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." (Matt. 22:36-39) On the evening before his death, Jesus added a third commandment, which was addressed specifically to his disciples and footstep followers throughout this Gospel Age. "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."—John 13:34,35

FINAL VICTORY THROUGH FAITH

The Apostle John wrote: "All that has been begotten by God overcomes the world; and this is that victory which overcomes the world—our faith." (I John 5:4, *Diaglott*) We note that although faith is necessary to gain this victory, our triumph is only made possible by the conquering power of God. It is he who has begotten us, and it is his Holy Spirit that, through our begettal, leads us to victory. Guided by God's spirit, we know that all things will work together for our ultimate good. (Rom. 8:28) Therefore,

we are to be submissive to the will of our Heavenly Father and his Son, Christ Jesus, and continually put our faith and trust in them, even when the way seems dark and foreboding. This is the ultimate progression of going from “faith to faith”—to implicitly trust our loving and all-wise God even where we cannot trace him. This is how the righteous “live by faith.”

Only those who, from faith to faith, are fully baptized into the sacrificial death of our Lord will be granted a share with him in glory as his joint-heirs, and as members of the great prophet, priest, king, mediator, and judge of the world in the Messianic kingdom. (Rom. 8:16,17; II Tim. 2:10-12; Rev. 3:21) The final members of Christ’s body will all soon be raised up in glory and become sharers in the “first resurrection.” (Rev. 20:6) Having been faithful unto death, the promise given by Jesus in the upper room will be fulfilled: “I will ... receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.” (John 14:3) Then will come the glorious fulfillment of the prayer that has been uttered for more than two thousand years: “Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.”—Matt. 6:10 ■