

The Depths of Belief and Faith

“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.”

—Hebrews 11:6

PAUL EXPLAINS THAT FAITH

is the “substance,” or foundation, of things hoped for, and the “evidence” of things not seen. (Heb. 11:1) If we possessed the things hoped for, and could see the things unseen, we would not need faith. We are surrounded by circumstances and conditions which greatly limit our ability to “see” by means of human eyesight and understanding. Therefore, we need faith, working through the power of God’s Holy Spirit, to view the glorious things that have been promised.

To please God, according to our opening text, encompasses not only believing on him, but also having full faith and trust in his promises. Such faith allows us to appreciate him more and more as our loving Heavenly Father. When we express in prayer our sincere desires to God, and ask for his will to be done in all our experiences, the following promise

can be claimed: “All things whatever you pray for, and desire, believe that you will receive, and you shall have them.” (Mark 11:24, *Wilson’s Emphatic Diaglott*) Those things promised in the Scriptures God is pleased to grant us if we strive daily to obey, serve and diligently seek him.

Our Heavenly Father provides us with everything that we need to grow to spiritual maturity. We recall the Scriptures which speak, in symbolic language, of the “water” of God’s Word which cleanses us, and the “meat in due season” and “finest of the wheat” which feed us. (Eph. 5:26; Matt. 24:45; Ps. 147:14) Indeed, God gives us many things, but there is responsibility on our part. Jesus said, “Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required.” (Luke 12:48) Each day we are to engage in applying the things that have been taught to us in God’s Holy Word, that we may “grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” (II Pet. 3:18) This will not be an easy task, as we are told: “Narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.”—Matt. 7:14

APPLYING OUR FAITH

Though we have entered upon a “narrow” way which “few” have found, it is the means by which we can enter, through Jesus our Redeemer, into the presence of God for assistance in applying our faith. How blessed are these words: “Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; And having an high priest over the house of God; Let us draw near with a true heart in

full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised).”—Heb. 10:19-23

Through the sacrifice of Jesus, God has made provision whereby we may be reckoned as righteous, just and pure in his sight, and thus able to apply our faith properly, and do works acceptable to him. When speaking to Jewish converts, Paul said that it was by Jesus “all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.”—Acts 13:39

Being justified through the blood of Jesus and thus entering into the narrow way which he opened up for us requires that, as his disciples, we begin following the Master’s example in the application of faith. An important aspect of this relates to the daily trials and testings which are permitted of God both to prove us, as well as to develop us as part of the “merciful and faithful” priesthood which will bless the world of mankind in God’s coming kingdom. (Heb. 2:17,18; Rev. 20:6) Concerning these experiences, Paul says, “No trial has assailed you except what belongs to man; and God is faithful, who will not permit you to be tried beyond your ability; but with the trial, will also direct the issue, that you may be able to bear it.”—I Cor. 10:13, *Diaglott*

In addition to the various trials and testings which come to us, the application of our faith involves many other things. Daily we must examine our heart and observe God’s ways; we must “walk circumspectly” and use our time wisely; we must be “doers” of God’s Word, and not merely hearers. (Prov. 4:23; 23:26;

Eph. 5:15,16; James 1:22) In his epistle to the brethren at Philippi, the Apostle Paul identifies several ways in which we can be further assisted in applying our faith—having singleness of purpose; avoiding self-satisfaction; forgetting the desires of the past; pressing forward toward our spiritual goal with energetic zeal; and guarding carefully our thoughts.—Phil. 1:27; 3:3,13,14; 4:8

The Apostle Peter also presents a revealing outline of how we may apply our faith by both claiming God's promises, as well as by adding to our faith certain qualities of character. "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity [love]. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." (II Pet. 1:4-8) If we find that we are making progress along the foregoing lines, it is evidence that the Holy Spirit of God has not only entered our hearts, but is molding our lives in such a way as to assist us in carrying out, day by day, the important work of applying our faith.

PRECIOUS PROMISES

How good it is to know and contemplate the all-encompassing promises of God contained in the Scriptures. "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the

most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.” “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” (Ps. 91:1; Heb. 13:5) Indeed, God has pledged his special watch care over all those who love him and seek to do his will. Yet, his promises go beyond this, reaching to the very purpose of his plan for man’s recovery from sin and death. We note these words from Paul: “The scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.” (Gal. 3:22) This “promise by faith” is not only for those who believe now, but will be extended to all mankind in the coming Messianic kingdom.

There are many assurances of the coming kingdom arrangement here upon the earth to be found in the Bible. The Prophet Isaiah foretold of this time: “Then the eyes of the blind will be opened And the ears of the deaf will be unstopped. Then the lame will leap like a deer, And the tongue of the mute will shout for joy. ... A highway will be there, a road-way, And it will be called the Highway of Holiness. The unclean will not travel on it, But it will be for him who walks that way, And fools will not wander on it. No lion will be there, Nor will any vicious beast go up on it; These will not be found there. But the redeemed will walk there, And the ransomed of the LORD will return And come with joyful shouting to Zion, With everlasting joy upon their heads. They will find gladness and joy, And sorrow and sighing will flee away.”—Isa. 35:5-10, *New American Standard Bible*

Furthermore, the Scriptures promise that there will be a resurrection of the dead, when all who are in the graves shall come forth; that the time is

coming when there will be no more death; and that the knowledge of the Lord will fill the earth. (I Cor. 15:22; John 5:28,29; Rev. 21:4; Isa. 11:9) Truly, we can say with the psalmist: “Many, O LORD my God, are the wonders which You have done, And Your thoughts toward us; There is none to compare with You. If I would declare and speak of them, They would be too numerous to count.”—Ps. 40:5, *NASB*

The promises of God are very potent factors in the lives of those at the present time who are striving to follow in the footsteps of Christ. As already noted, by claiming the many blessings and helps which are implied in the “great and precious promises” of God, and by yielding ourselves to his work within our characters, we will be victorious and become “partakers of the divine nature.”

In Hebrews 4:1 the Apostle Paul urges us to be on the alert so that we do not “come short” of the promises which the Lord has made for our benefit and encouragement. Thus, we understand that God’s promises have conditions attached to them, and failure to comply with these to the best of our ability may result in our coming short of the goal set before us. Rather, it is our faithful compliance with the conditions attached to the promises which qualifies us to be partakers of the divine nature and to have an abundant entrance into the kingdom of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.—II Pet. 1:11

Our opening text states that one critical aspect of our faith is that of believing that God rewards those who diligently seek him. This is another way of saying that, in order for the promises of God to be truly meaningful, we must have complete faith and trust in them—never doubting. Only then can

they be of eternal value to us. God is pleased when his people truly believe what he has promised. Of Abraham we read that he “staggered not at the promise of God.” Instead, he was “strong in faith.” Fully believing that God was able to perform that which he had promised, Abraham’s faith was “imputed to him for righteousness.”—Rom. 4:20-22

By nature, we are sinners, and have “come short of the glory of God.” Every day we see the results of our imperfect state. (Rom. 3:23) Our great adversary, the devil, also sees our weaknesses and attempts to use them to discourage us, hoping that we will give up running toward the mark for the prize of the High Calling. If our confidence in the promises remains firm, however, we will not fear, for our God has said, “No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness is of me, saith the LORD.”—Isa. 54:17

What a blessed assurance is found in the words, “their righteousness is of me!” If we can grasp the full meaning of this promise, we will realize that despite our imperfections we stand justified before God, and there is no condemnation from him. Truly, a proper recognition of this fact should keep us humble, ever remembering that our own righteousness is as “filthy rags,” and that the pure, white “robe of righteousness” which God sees as we stand before him is not our own, but Christ’s—the robe of his righteousness. (Isa. 64:6; 61:10) This is confirmed by Paul in his letter to Titus, where he writes: “Not by works of righteousness which we

have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit; Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour.”—Tit. 3:5,6

Most assuredly, it is by the many promises of God that we are made partakers of the divine nature—by their encouragement, by their authority, by our own faithfulness to all the conditions attached to them, and by their inspirational power in our lives. As we continue on in the narrow way of sacrifice and service, we continually need the strength of which these promises assure us. There is no possible circumstance in our Christian experience in which God has not promised to be with us, and to supply our need. As Paul states: “My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”—Phil. 4:19

If by virtue of the promises of God, we are to attain the divine nature, it will be necessary to give “all diligence.” (II Pet. 1:5) It will not do to make a halfhearted effort to attain the prize. We will not be able to divide our interests between the things of God and the things of the world; nor between the interests of the New Creature and the interests of the flesh. “This one thing I do,” Paul said. (Phil. 3:13) This is the only approach to the Christian life which will result in victory, and it is the only attitude of heart that we should have if the Lord is to fulfill his promises made to us. We cannot afford to be unduly concerned or anxious about even our temporal needs. The Lord knows about these and has promised: “Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”—Matt. 6:33

LET US CLEANSE OURSELVES

In II Corinthians 7:1 Paul admonishes us that if we have “these promises” we should “cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit,” and to then perfect “holiness in the fear of God.” This is a similar thought to that expressed by the Apostle John when he wrote that those who have “this hope”—the hope based upon the promises of God—purify themselves. (I John 3:3) We might reverse this thought and say that our purification of character will be the evidence of the possession of the promises, and of having truly inherited them. Indeed, the conditions and character qualities associated with the promises guarantee that this will be the case.—II Pet. 1:3-8

Paul speaks of those who “through faith and patient endurance are inheriting the promises.” (Heb. 6:12, *Diaglott*) In order to claim the promises for our very own we must demonstrate an active faith in them and patiently endure whatever trials the Lord may see we need in order that our worthiness of the promises might be manifested. The fulfillment of many of God’s promises belongs in the present life, while others apply to our future inheritance, if faithful unto death. Thus, when the apostle speaks of “inheriting the promises,” he refers to both our present and our future inheritance.

Have the “precious promises” really become ours? Do we believe them, or do we just read them in an impersonal manner as though they do not actually apply to us? This is important, because it is not until we are able to see in the promises of God a personal assurance of his blessing, that they become truly effective in transforming us into his character

likeness, and thus prepare us to become partakers of the divine nature.

What a blessed prospect is assured to us by God's wonderful promises. Truly he has given us "good doctrine." (Prov. 4:2) Let us yield ourselves to its transforming influence and be made ready for that glorious entrance into the kingdom, where we shall be "like him," and "see him as he is." (I John 3:2) At the present time, "we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face."—I Cor. 13:12

GOD'S ARMOR AND FORTRESS

The basis of our belief, our faith, and the promises of God attached thereto, is Christ Jesus. Even though our feet are firmly established upon the Rock of Christ Jesus, we are surrounded by enemies. Satan as a roaring lion is seeking to destroy us. We must contend also against the opposition of the world and against the foes within—our own fallen flesh. However, we should not fear. The "power of God" has provided us with "the word of truth," and the "armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left."—II Cor. 6:7

Paul tells us that we will need to put on this armor in order to stand in the "evil day." (Eph. 6:13-17) It is the armor of truth, and it affords complete protection if put on and properly used. We will certainly need such a defense as we go on with our daily experiences of life. There is the "helmet of salvation," the "breastplate of righteousness," the "shield of faith," the girdle, or belt, "of truth," the "sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God," and for our feet there is the "preparation of the Gospel of peace." We could never ask for an armor more complete than this.

With it we are equipped to “fight the good fight of faith” and “lay hold on eternal life.”—I Tim. 6:12

God has also provided a “fortress.” David wrote, “I will say of the LORD, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust.” (Ps. 91:2) Surely, we can put our trust in the most High, who has not only given us his many promises, but also protects all of our spiritual interests as a refuge and fortress. Our loving Heavenly Father has made every provision whereby we might be victorious, and “war a good warfare” as soldiers of Jesus Christ.—I Tim. 1:18; II Tim. 2:3

GIVING AN ANSWER OF OUR HOPE

In I Peter 3:13-15 we read, “Who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good? But and if ye suffer for righteousness’ sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled; But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear”—that is, reverence. Part of this giving “an answer” concerning our hope is to be demonstrated by our words. Paul testified to the brethren at Ephesus, “I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.”—Acts 20:27

It is also by our conduct, and by the way in which we go about our daily lives, that we provide an answer as to our hope. The apostle said: “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.” (Gal. 2:20) This hope which we have of being made perfect in Christ, of being made partakers of the divine nature, brings

about a lifelong work in us. “Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.” (I John 3:3) The “hope of glory” will only be attained if the character of Christ is found in us.—Col. 1:27

Giving an answer of our hope by word, action, conduct, and by the inward development of the fruits and graces of Christian character is the ultimate indicator as to the depth of our faith and belief in God and in the promises of his Word. Indeed, as Peter stated, “If these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Therefore, the apostle continues, “give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall.”—II Pet. 1:8,10

FULLY PREPARED FOR OUR FUTURE WORK

Being coworkers with the Lord now is a great honor, and those who are faithful experience a peace and joy of mind and heart which the world can neither give nor take away. However, there is a still greater field awaiting those who continue faithful in the present service—faithful even unto death. That future work will also be in association with Christ, reigning with him as kings and priests to bless all the families of the earth.—Gen. 12:3; Gal. 3:16,29; Rev. 20:6

If now we are among the those who, by faith, have heard the call of God to follow in the Master’s footsteps, and have received the assurance that if we present our bodies a living sacrifice the Lord will accept us and give us grace sufficient for our every time of need, then he is also saying to us: “In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee: and I will preserve thee, and give thee

for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages; That thou mayest say to the prisoners, Go forth; to them that are in darkness, Shew yourselves. ... And their pastures shall be in the high places.”—Isa. 49:8,9

When we are told, “I will preserve thee,” we should never have any doubts about the keeping power of God. He has promised that he will complete his good work in us. (Phil. 1:6) His love abides with us continually, just as it did with his beloved Son. Jesus reminds us of this when he says, “The Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God.” (John 16:27) One of the reasons the Father loves us is that he purposes to use us together with Jesus in his kingdom. God is preserving us for this glorious future time—preserving us, that is, if we continue faithful to him. It is both to Jesus and his church that the promise was made by God: “Therefore will I divide him [Jesus] a portion with the great [Jehovah], and he shall divide the spoil with the strong.”—Isa. 53:12

The “strong” is prophetic of the faithful church—those who are “strong in the Lord and in the power of his might.” (Eph. 6:10) It is in keeping with this that Jesus promised: “He that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations,” and “To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.”—Rev. 2:26; 3:21

May we be among those who are “thoroughly furnished unto all good works,” and who by “patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality.”—II Tim. 3:17; Rom. 2:7 ■