God's Work of 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

THOSE WHO ARE DRAWN by God and respond to the High Calling with a true sense of faith, and a full consecration of their lives to the doing of his will, are promised to be led step-by-step in their understanding of his Word for them. As the apostles needed the Holy Spirit to reveal the will of God more perfectly to them, so also is it with all who dedicate their lives to the service of God. Although the apostles had to wait for the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 1:8), God has so arranged the matter that since that time those who are being drawn receive this blessing at the time of their full surrender to him.

At this point in God's loving dealings, a whole treasure-house of riches is opened up as the reward of faith. From righteous Abel to John the Baptist, those who believed God, and upon the basis of their

faith were dedicated to the doing of his will, were, symbolically speaking, taken into his bosom as friends. He loved them; he cared for them; he gave them a limited vision of his loving Messianic purpose; he promised them a resurrection. But so far as the present life was concerned, they remained under the condemnation to death which, through Adam, had come upon the whole world.

This was a necessity, for the price of redemption from sin and death had not yet been provided. God's dealings with the Ancient Worthies were a result of his great plan of redemption through Christ. He who speaks of things that are not as though they already were, was pleased to take to himself as friends those whom he knew would qualify to receive life through the blood of Christ, when raised from the dead and made "perfect" in the "better resurrection" for which they endeavored to prove worthy.—Heb. 11:35,40

Beginning with the Gospel Age, a new feature of the Divine plan began to operate. This is the age of sacrifice—the "better sacrifices" mentioned by Paul in Hebrews 9:23. Jesus was "made flesh" (John 1:14), "crowned with glory and honour" (Heb. 2:9) of perfect human nature, in order that he might give himself in death a "ransom for all." (I Tim. 2:3-6) And now his followers are invited to suffer and die with him. Their bodies also are presented in sacrifice.

It is possible for these to offer an acceptable sacrifice to God only because they are made free from Adamic condemnation through the merit of the blood of Christ. Paul speaks of their bodies being offered as a "living sacrifice." (Rom. 12:1) This can

be only because, through the merit of Christ's blood, they are no longer under death condemnation, but through faith have been made alive in Christ.

What a glorious reward of faith! From God's standpoint it is as though, through accepting Jesus as our Redeemer, we had been restored to perfection of life such as the world will enjoy.—Acts 17:31

NO CONDEMNATION

In II Corinthians 5:14,15, Paul reminds us of how we were constrained by the love of Christ to dedicate ourselves fully to the Divine service. He speaks of those who have taken this step as being "in Christ," or members of his mystical body. (vs. 17) In Romans 8:1, he writes that to those who are "in Christ Jesus" there is "no condemnation." 'No condemnation'—what a glorious reward of faith!

To continue enjoying this no condemnation standing before God, it is necessary also to walk "not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." (vs. 4) Paul adds that "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death."—vs. 2

In verses 14-17, Paul further explains, saying, "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption [or, of sonship], whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together."

How rich is the reward of sonship with our Heavenly Father! This also has *(Continued on page 35)*

(Continued from page 31) come to us through faith. Abraham received the reward of friendship because he believed all the truth of the Divine plan which was then revealed and due to be understood. We receive the reward of sonship through our belief in the more complete revealment of the Divine plan that has come to us.

In this further unfolding of God's plan, we see the truth concerning Jesus who gave himself a 'ransom for all.' We see his death upon the cross as the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world. (I John 2:2) We see him raised from the dead, giving evidence that the Heavenly Father was well pleased with his sacrifice, and proving also God's ability to fulfill his promises pertaining to the resurrection of the dead.

By faith we accept these advanced truths. We believe that Jesus was raised for our justification to life, and that he ever liveth to make intercession for us. Believing this, we go boldly to the "throne of grace" there to "obtain mercy" and to find "grace to help in time of need." This is another reward of faith.—Heb. 4:16

"PEACE WITH GOD"

Again Paul writes, "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." (Rom. 5:1) Abraham, and all the Ancient Worthies, had 'peace' in the sense that they were God's friends. Their faith in his promises removed fear and anxiety from their hearts. But to have 'peace with God' referred to by Paul implies separation from the condemned and dying family of Adam. It implies that peace with God is the heritage of those

who belong to the family of God. Through faith in Christ which is demonstrated by 'works' of full consecration, we may now enjoy this rich reward of faith.

"By whom also" Paul continues, "we have access by faith into this [further] grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God." (vs. 2) Faith has opened the door into this glorious hope of the Divine nature, and of sharing the glory of God. "Not only so," Paul adds, "but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience hope: And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us."—vss. 3-5

Since without faith it is impossible to please God, the reverse is also true. Through the exercise of faith in God and in his promises, the floodgates of his love and favor are opened wide for consecrated believers. We read that "the just shall live by his faith." (Rom. 1:17) In the New Testament, this is quoted in various contexts, revealing that through faith we receive justification to life; and also that through faith in the promises we receive strength to continue on in the way of sacrifice.

Paul quotes this statement in Hebrews 10:38, saying, "Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him." Living by faith, as mentioned here, means that faith in God and in his promises is a way of life. It is the only way that a Christian can live day by day rejoicingly, at peace with God, and enjoying the peace of God.

Living by faith, the abundant mercy and love of God are our daily portion. Living by faith is to live

free from condemnation. Living by faith is to rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Living by faith we triumph in tribulation. Living by faith we are led by the Spirit of God and enjoy the blessings belonging to the sons of God.

Living by faith we can go boldly to the throne of grace to receive strength for our every time of need. By faith we know that all things work together for our good because we love God and are called according to his purpose. By faith we know that nothing can separate us from the love of God, or the love of Christ, that since he is for us, nothing can be successfully against us.—Rom. 8:31,35-39

By faith we dwell in the "secret place of the most High" (Ps. 91:1), and by faith we are sheltered under the "wings," of the Almighty. (Ps. 91:4) Truly the just do live by faith, and the LORD finds pleasure in them as they lay hold more and more firmly upon his promises, zealously devoting themselves to the doing of his will. ■

"Love the LORD, all his saints! The LORD preserves the faithful, . . . Be strong and take heart, all you who hope in the Lord."

"The deeds of faithless men I hate; they will not cling to me. Men of perverse heart shall be far from me; I will have nothing to do with evil."

"My eyes will be on the faithful in the land, that they may dwell with me; he whose walk is blameless will minister to me."

—Psalms 31:23,24; 101:3,4,6, New International Version