

April 25

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

"ACCORDING to thy faith be it unto thee," would seem to be the Lord's method of dealing

with all who are His disciples, from first to last of their Christian walk and experience....faith when He seems not to notice us; faith when things seem to be going prosperously with us in our spiritual affairs and in our temporal affairs; and faith equally strong when the currents and forces seem all to be against us.

The victory that overcometh the world is the faith that in all conditions is able to look up to the Lord with absolute confidence in His goodness and faithfulness, and to realize that according to His promise, eventually all things will work together for good to us because we are His people. Z.'00-139 R2627:4

HEBREWS 11:6

R2005 "True faith is not credulity. It is critical, and believes only upon good evidence."

R3210 "The best proofs respecting the inspiration of the Scriptures are to be found on the inside—in the divine plan of the ages which it records with such grand harmony. The trouble with the higher critics is that they do not see this internal evidence... To those who see the divine plan which the book contains, these arguments of the higher critics respecting the authorship of the parts are of little weight; for it matters not to us who wrote the books, so long as we see they contain the elements of a divine plan so stupendously grand that we are confident no human mind conceived it or could have depicted it."

A348 "It carries with it its own evidence of superhuman design, being beyond the power of human invention..."

HOW DOES THIS FAITH BEGIN?

R5717 Concerning Heb 11:6 "The basis of the Apostle's argument in our text is that faith is the essential thing in coming to God.... The class referred to in our text as coming to God or as willing to come to Him, have a

heart-hunger for their Creator--a longing for Him that nothing else can satisfy. They say to themselves, "There is a God who made me. The more I learn respecting the vast Universe and of my own anatomy, the more I see the Wisdom and the Power of God, and the more I realize my own littleness and weakness and need. For this great God my soul is crying out, and I have been told that He has made a revelation of Himself, that to certain Prophets of old He revealed the fact that He takes an interest in His human creatures. I mean to study what He has declared through these His servants. I am also told that He has revealed Himself and His love further through Jesus Christ His Son; and that this Son of God came to earth and died for sinful man that he might live. If God has really given man His Message, I want that Message; I will draw near to this God, that I also may receive His blessing."

The Lord encourages all such through His Word. He says, "Draw nigh to Me, and I will draw nigh to you." And as these come, seeking to know His will, He becomes the Rewarder of their faith. He points them to the one who is the Propitiation for the sins of all who come to Him. He makes known to them that those who come to Him through His appointed Channel may have the Savior as their Advocate, up-

on the terms of faith and consecration to lay down their lives in sacrifice with Him. Thus step by step they come into the fulness of salvation, and enter into the Holiest by the blood of the cross. They are accepted in the Beloved.

CREDULITY NOT FAITH

Many imagine that they have faith when in reality they have only credulity. Their so-called faith is not founded upon the Word of God and upon His promises. Such credulity will surely fail when the great testing time comes. Credulity is the acceptance of a thing without good reason, without sure evidence. Faith, on the contrary, is the acceptance of a thing because we have indisputable evidence of its reality, its truthfulness and its reliability. As we exercise faith in God, we come nearer and nearer to Him.

"According to your faith be it unto you," are the Master's words. Every exercise of faith is based upon something real and tangible to faith. There is a mental tangibility for faith and also a physical, or outward, tangibility. True wisdom searches out the two grounds for faith. "The secret of the Lord is with them that reverence Him; and He will show them His Covenant."

These increase in faith as they go on in the path of obedience. Faith and obedience are like our two feet. We put one

forward, and then the other, and then the first one forward; and so we develop in faith by continuing in the spirit of obedience, following on wherever the Lord points the way. "We walk by faith and not by sight." But we have good, tangible evidences all along our Heavenward journey. Outside of all other evidences, the true Christian has in his own personal experiences abundant proof of our Father's love and care."

R2183 "Alas! many seem to receive the truth not in the *love of it*; but rather in the love of controversy or in curiosity. To such it will be of no real value. To profit us it must be received as the sword of the spirit to kill the old nature, that the new nature may develop;—it must become "a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" to us, that we may by divine grace conquer self and bring every thought into captivity to the will of God."

R1530 "The proper course unites the head with the heart in the search for truth. The heart searches that it may know or prove what is that good and acceptable will of God, that it may please and serve him. The head, as the servant of the heart, searches to test or *prove* the truth, that the honest heart be not deceived into believing and serving amiss. But when the head undertakes to do all the truth-seeking and feeding, the real design of the truth—sanctification—is not attained. The result is merely a reasoning *about* the truth, and not a practicing of the truth;—the word of truth is handled and dissected, but the spirit of it is not received into good and honest hearts; because it is not a heart-hunger that is being fed, but a curiosity-hunger."

(Joh 14:23 KJV) "If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him."

(Rom 6:17 KJV) "God be thanked...Ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you."

(Heb 11:1 Wilson Diaglott) "But Faith is a Basis of things hoped for, a Conviction of things unseen"

R5114 "Faith may be said to have in it the two elements of intellectual assurance and heart-reliance. Both the head and the heart--the intellect and the affections--are necessary to the faith without which it is impossible to please God... Neither of these elements alone can withstand the fiery tests..."

F148 "The proper remedy for the lack of faith would be its cultivation through study of God's Word, thinking upon his goodness past and present, and striving to realize that he is gracious "exceeding abundantly" more than we could have asked or thought."

QB774 "FAITH -- How Cultivated?..."

A doubter may become a most earnest and tenacious believer upon receiving proper evidence... To increase our faith we must, therefore, study God's word in a humble and prayerful manner, with the desire to know and do His will, and to rely upon His word."

WHILE IT IS EASY TO
DOUBT,
TRUE FAITH TAKES WORK

(Act 17:10-11 KJV) "And the brethren immediately sent away

Paul and Silas by night unto Be-rea: who coming thither went into the synagogue of the Jews. (11) These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so."

(Pro 22:20-21 KJV) "Have not I written to thee excellent things in counsels and knowledge, (21) That I might make thee know the certainty of the words of truth...

(Joh 8:31-32 KJV) "Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; (32) And ye shall know the truth..."

R5508 "The reward of continued discipleship is, "Ye shall know the Truth"—not, Ye shall be "ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the Truth." (2Timothy 3:7.) Here is the mistake many make; failing to continue in the Word of the Lord, they delve into various human philosophies, which ignore or pervert the Word of the Lord and set up opposing theories. To those who seek for Truth among these human theories, there is no promise that they shall ever find it, and they never do...

If we thus continue in the Word of the Lord as earnest and sincere disciples, we shall indeed "know the Truth," be "established in the Present Truth" [the Truth due], and "be rooted and grounded in the Truth"; we shall be "firm in the faith," and "able to give a reason for the hope that is in us"

(2Pe 1:16-19 KJV) "For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known

unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty. (17) For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. (18) And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount. (19) We have also a more sure word of prophecy..."

R598 "So highly did Peter esteem the prophecy of the Old Testament, that he considered it better evidence than his own sight..."

(2Pet 1:20-21 ASV) "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of scripture is of private interpretation. (21) For no prophecy ever came by the will of man: but men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit.

R24 "To understand *any* science or book it should be read according to its *own* principles of interpretation. "No prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation." *2Pet. 1:21*. Moved by one Spirit it should be taken as a whole, and not disconnectedly. If we would compare scripture with scripture, we would learn that—"God is his own interpreter, And He will make it plain."

(Jer 15:16 KJV) "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O LORD God of hosts."

(1Pet 1:7 KJV) "That 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:"

R5116 "The Apostle Peter's argument is that this special class who are being selected for exaltation to the Divine nature, must expect to have their faith tested, and that this testing is most important from the Divine point of view. If they have faith, it will control all of their affairs.-- Compare Heb. 11:1,6.

Our faith will be in proportion to our knowledge of the character of God. We shall find, upon observation, that in proportion to our faith we can endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ. Since our test is for so brief a time--a few years--it must of necessity be a very severe, a crucial one. God is subjecting our faith to a great heat in order to separate the dross. If we had not the faith, we might fear to take the steps which would bring us into this crucial position. Fear would lead us to decline to take the course that God indicates to be His will. Without faith we would shrink from the fiery trials, the heated furnace. If we have not the faith to stand the trials, then we are not of the kind for whom God is at the present time looking.

If we appreciate this matter, we shall see that "without faith it is impossible to please God"; and that confidence in Him will lead us to weigh His words of precious promise. These promises will make clear to us the reason why these testings are upon us, and will enable us to appreciate our testings as marks of His love for us. The Lord would have us be "a peculiar people," tried and tested, "zealous of good works," a people for a purpose; and so He develops us through suffering."

F146 "We are to remember that like as a proper earthly father pitieeth his children, so the Lord pitieeth those that reverence him. We are to consider our best earthly friends and their sympathy and love and compassion, and are to draw an analogy, and to consider that God would be much more kind and faithful than the very best of his creatures. He invites such faith, such confidence--and he rewards it. All who had faith enough to come to the Lord originally, have faith enough to come to him day by day with their trials, difficulties and shortcomings, if they will. If they suffer the clouds to come between, and decline the invitation of the Word to come to the throne of grace for peace and restored harmony, they will ultimately be counted unworthy a place amongst the special class whom the Lord is selecting: "The Father seeketh such to worship him"--such as both love and trust him. "Without faith it is impossible to please him." "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." John 4:23; Heb. 11:6; 1 John 5:4"

R5595 "When the Lord's people find themselves in difficulty, they should reason like this: What is the Lord's will? What does His providence indicate? He has said that *all things* shall work together for good to me because I love Him; therefore, having confidence in God, I am sure that all things shall indeed work out for my good. I have faith in His Wisdom and His Power and His Love. He could have protected me from this difficulty had He seen best. So the fact of its reaching me proves that He saw fit to permit it for a wise reason. He has promised that He will not suffer me to be tempted, tried, beyond what I am able to bear. As He is faithful,

He will never fail to keep that good promise. So then, I will "not cast away my confidence, which hath great recompense of reward."

CONFIDENCE IN GOD
TO BE TESTED

If God would reward according to *works*, some of His children would get very little. The very ablest of God's people cannot do very much. We spend one-third of our time in sleep; we need perhaps eight hours more for preparing our food, etc.; and we have a thousand and one things to do in the remaining eight hours. How little time we have, after all, even if we have cut off many things that once took more or less of our time! The most intelligent people have very little time to spare.

Do your very best, and try to note how little you will be able to accomplish by the close of the day. Think of those five minutes, that half hour, etc., and count up and see how much you render to the Lord your God daily. We fear that each of us would be ashamed to see how little time the sum total would make. And if the reward depended on our works, it would surely be a very small reward. God knows also that some have more time at their disposal and some less, and that some have more talents and some less.

Some are able to give ten times as much as others. How much would you like to do for the Lord? How much do you *strive* to do for the Lord? It will be in proportion as you have confidence in Him. As you come to have more trust in the promises, you will try harder and harder

to live up to all the terms and conditions of discipleship."

R1273 "If we hear the truth and merely say that we consecrate ourselves to God, and then go on living just like the rest of the world, spending all or nearly all of our time and our means merely for our stomachs, our backs and the temporal interests of our families and the business pursuits of the present life, what evidence have we...that the hope of glory is ours? Many seem to make this mistake, and the evidences of the shipwrecked faith of many such lie all about us...

Have you *faith*? Is it unmistakably manifested, not merely in profession, but in bold and definite acts of faith? If a million dollars were promised to any man who would walk from Pittsburgh to Buffalo, and a dozen men professed faith in the promise, and yet only one actually started out and walked, the natural and correct inference would be that the other eleven did not have the faith. If they had the faith in such a promise it would rouse them to activity. And just so, any man who appreciates fully and believes the exceeding great and precious promises of God to the church, will make haste and run for them; and he will closely observe the directions, too, that he may not run in vain.

And if Christ be formed in him, those established principles of Christian character will hold him firm and steady in the midst of temptations and error, and he will not be easily moved either from the practice of righteousness or from sound Scriptural doctrine. He will demand a

"Thus saith the Lord" for every doctrine, and on that sure word he will dare depend. And the language of his heart as expressed in his daily life will be, "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed. I will praise thee, O Lord, among the people." "Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage forever; for they are the rejoicing of my heart." "Thy words were found and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart; for I am called by thy name, O Lord God of hosts."--*Psa. 57:7,9; 119:111; Jer. 15:16.*"

R5595 "God is testing your faith, your confidence, and our own. And, oh, that is worth so much more than all the wealth of the world! We have been invited to try for the great Prize. We said, Yes, Lord! Yes, Lord! Then He said, Will you be faithful under the conditions which I impose? I am watching to see how faithful you are every hour, every minute. I will protect you from the pitfalls in the way, as you strive to show forth My praises; I will uphold you in every trial. My dear children, I want to give to you a great blessing. You have all entered on a common basis. You would be very unequal in the race if I should take you according to your natural qualifications. I will judge according to your heart and how you do in little things. He that is faithful in the little things, in that which is least, will be faithful in that which is greatest. I will *reckon* the matter thus. That is a fair proposition, and exactly what the Lord says. God purposes to reward greatly all faithfulness."

TWO TYPES OF SINNERS

--LUKE 7:36-50.--MAY 13.--

"Thy faith hath saved thee."

SIMON was a very common name amongst the Jews, and hence it is not so remarkable that there were two Simons at whose homes Jesus was entertained. It is a little peculiar, however, that there are so many features of similarity connected with the two entertainments--that at both of them our Lord's feet were anointed, etc. (Compare Matt. 26:6-13.) It is supposed that about a year and a half elapsed between the two events, that recorded by Matthew being just prior to our Lord's death, "anointing for my burial."

In this lesson we see Simon, a Pharisee, evidently considerably impressed with our Lord's character and teachings, and more favorably inclined toward him than the majority. He thought it would be pleasant to invite Jesus to dinner, thus to honor him, and possibly have a little notoriety himself in connection with the noted Nazarene.

When our Lord accepted the invitation and attended the dinner Simon treated him kindly and politely, but did not go to any extreme of politeness in his entertainment; perhaps thinking of him as not being used to special attentions, but rather as being a companion of fishermen and common people generally. Simon therefore did not salute him with a kiss on his arrival, as was usual with honored guests, for that would have seemed like bestowing too much honor upon an ordinary person whom he, as a Pharisee, was not yet prepared to fully endorse; nor did he send the servant to take off the Master's sandals and to wash his feet, according to the custom of the best entertainers of that time. He may have said to himself, This man and his disciples are not used to being entertained in such style, and my servants would recognize themselves as being on a par at least with any of these men except the Teacher himself. Without, therefore, going to the extremes of polite entertaining, the Pharisee had nevertheless cordially welcomed the Lord to his table, feeling no doubt that in doing this he was honoring the Lord, and not sufficiently realizing that he was the one who was being honored, in the privilege of entertaining so noble a guest. How will Simon regard the matter when, in the resurrection time (during the Millennium), he ascertains that his guest was "the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth"?

The Apostle urges upon us all, "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels [God's messengers] unawares."

The Lord wishes his people to be generous with such things as they have (but not to be vaingloriously extravagant), hence it is written again, "There is that scattereth and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet [proper] and it tendeth to poverty." It is a part of our present lesson to learn of our own mean selfishness, which all have inherited through the fall, and gradually, under the instruction of the Lord's Word, to get the victory over this and become more generous--more like our Father in Heaven.

Let us be specially generous and hospitable toward the "brethren," who really represent the Lord himself; not only as "ambassadors for God," but also as "members of the body of Christ."

The "woman of the city" mentioned, was evidently a common character, widely known to the people of the city, though she might not be known to Jesus and the disciples, who were not residents. Whatever the woman's previous life may have been, she had experienced deep contrition of heart, and a desire to live a better life. She had heard about Jesus, the great Teacher, and that unlike the Pharisees he did not disdain to speak with and to encourage fallen ones and to help them up again. She felt that she would like to go to the Lord in prayer for forgiveness, and would like to make a fresh start in life, to seek thereafter to live more consistently. She knew not how to approach the matter; she knew not what to say respecting herself; she would merely take a little offering in her hand, and while he was reclining at dinner, after the custom of that time, and while his feet would be easily accessible to her, she would venture to anoint them with the fine ointment which she had brought with her. Saying not a word, her heart too full of utterance, she reached the Master's feet, and there her tears trickled over them. By her tears he should know, more eloquently than she could voice her sentiments in words, what were the true longings of her heart for forgiveness and for reconciliation.

How merciful and considerate of our needs, is the Lord's provision that when we come penitently to his feet for forgiveness we are not required to approach him through another, nor to formulate our petition in some exact form of language--he can read our hearts and accepts our tears and even our humblest efforts to make amends and to serve the "members of his body." And even though he may

delay the message of forgiveness it is but to let the roots of penitence and faith sink deeper in our hearts.

Jesus for a time seemed to heed her not, and she may have questioned whether or not he was misunderstanding her motives and her prayer, but the fullness of her heart found vent in still more tears, and tenderly she wiped his feet and anointed them with the ointment. The Pharisee, meantime, was saying within himself: Now it is most fortunate that I invited Jesus to dinner to-day, and it is fortunate that this woman came in; it affords a proof, a test, respecting the ability of Jesus to read the hearts of those about him. If he were a prophet, if he were specially empowered and enlightened of God, he would have known the character of this woman; but he evidently does not know her character, and therefore is permitting her to anoint his feet, and this seems to be a proof that he is not a prophet.

But Jesus, fully conscious of all that was going on, and with a clear knowledge of the heart of the poor woman at his feet, and of the self-satisfied Pharisee who entertained him, was planning a way by which he might do good to both of them--a way by which he might set before all present a great truth. Therefore he put a parable to Simon, saying that a certain creditor had two debtors, the one owing a large amount, the other a small amount, and when they were totally unable to pay he cheerfully and promptly forgave them both. Then our Lord pointed his lesson on this little parable, by enquiring which of the two forgiven ones would be most appreciative of the creditor's leniency? Simon, who had not as yet caught the import of the parable, promptly answered that the one who had the largest debt forgiven would undoubtedly be the one who would be most appreciative, and our Lord approved this answer. Then directing attention to the woman, he reminded Simon that although he had been kind in inviting him to dinner, and although he appreciated his attentions, nevertheless the still greater attentions of the woman, and the still greater marks of respect which she had showed, were evidences that while they both loved, the woman loved the more; and the intimation clearly is that the greater love was developed by a greater realization of sin and a greater desire to be relieved from it.

Of course, in one sense of the word, all are sinners, all have come short of the glory of God, and are hopeless without forgiveness; yet the Pharisee occupied a different position from the woman, because under the Jewish Law Covenant he was al-

ready occupying a standpoint of typical justification, and was seeking to maintain that standing by living a life of strict regard for the divine Law. On the other hand, the woman, although under the same Covenant, by living an abandoned life in open violation of the Law, had lost her interest in the national typical justification, and was therefore in a much larger sense of the word a sinner. Simon knew very well that while he was trying to keep the Law he was not keeping it perfectly, but infringed it in various ways from time to time, and yet he was not wilfully an infractor of the Law, as was the woman; hence in this sense of the word there was the wide difference between great sin and less sin; yet both needed the Saviour, and if the Pharisee had realized the truth of the matter he needed the Saviour just as much as did the woman; for the Law Covenant could not give him everlasting life--to attain that he must admit his sin and accept forgiveness and salvation from sin and its penalty, death, as a gift from the Saviour who honored him by consenting to be his guest.

Then Jesus turned to the woman and said to her, "Thy sins are forgiven." What words those must have been to her! Her prayer was answered--a prayer, which had arisen in her heart, and which had expressed itself through tears and ointment, had been heard, and she was forgiven and all the past treated as forever blotted out. How thankful she must have felt! Poor Simon, however, so far as we know, did not come to the point of saying, Lord, I also am a sinner, and even though I have loved less than this woman I also need to be forgiven, and I pray for the forgiveness of my sins, that I may be counted one of your followers. No; the very fact that he had a religious standing in the nominal Church, and had made a profession of holiness, seems to have stood in his way, and to have hindered him from accepting the grace of God and the forgiveness of sins. And so it is right along. How frequently do we see that people who have been living moral lives, evidently seeking to walk in paths of righteousness, are much less prepared to accept forgiveness through the Lord Jesus Christ than are some others who have been living more carelessly and who awaken to a realization of their undone condition, and go to the Lord more contritely and more earnestly, and exercise a greater faith, and feel for him consequently a greater love!

There is no intimation, however, that because of his failure to ask forgiveness, and to become a follower of Jesus, Simon was condemned to "hell," etc.; quite to the contrary, he simply followed the course of his nation (blinded by prejudice and false

traditions of men). Their rejection of Jesus lost to them the privileges of joint-heirship in Christ's Kingdom, and led to their national rejection from God's favor until the opening of the Millennial age. Then, as the Apostle clearly shows, their blindness shall be removed and they shall be blest with a much clearer knowledge of the truth. Then the Lord will "pour upon them the spirit of prayer and supplication, and they shall look upon him whom they pierced, and shall mourn because of him." Then when they weep as did the woman with the ointment, God, through the glorified Christ, will have mercy on them and forgive their sins. Then their trial for everlasting life will begin.—See Rom. 11:25-32; Zech. 12:10.

The other guests at the table were particularly struck with our Lord's declaration that the woman's sins were forgiven her. Not recognizing the speaker to be the Messiah, the Son of God, they questioned the propriety of such words, but this was one reason why our Lord uttered the words; it was one of his unostentatious methods of calling attention to the fact that he was the Messiah, and that as such, and in view of the work which he was yet to do all power to forgive sins was in his hands.

Then he said to the woman, "Thy faith hath saved thee: go in peace." He wished her to know that it was not her tears that had brought the forgiveness; that it was not the value of the ointment that had moved him to forgive her, but that the thing which was pleasing in his sight, and on account of which her sins were forgiven, was her faith. She not only realized her own sinful condition, but she had realized that this great Teacher

had the power to forgive her and to restore her, and she had trusted, and acted upon this, and our Lord wished her to realize that the reward she had received was because of exercise of this faith. And so we may realize in respect to all of the Lord's favors in the case of each one of his people. When we come unto the Lord, with tears of penitence, we are to know that they do not prevail; and if we present gifts we are to know that they do not prevail, and that the tears and the offerings could avail us nothing except as we present to the Lord our faith, accepting him as the one who has power to forgive sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. And not only is this necessary at the beginning of the Christian way, but similarly faith is necessary all the journey through. If we do not continue in faith we cannot progress. ^{1}"According to thy faith be it unto thee," would seem to be the Lord's method of dealing with all who are his disciples, from first to last of their Christian walk and experience.

The center of the lesson, then, is abiding faith in the Lord: faith when he seems not to notice us; faith when things seem to be going prosperously with us in our spiritual affairs and in our temporal affairs; and faith equally strong when the currents and forces seem all to be against us. The victory that overcometh the world is the faith that in all conditions is able to look up to the Lord with absolute confidence in his goodness and faithfulness, and to realize that according to his promise eventually all things will work together for good to us because we are his people.—1 John 5:5; Rom. 8:29.

^{1} Apr 25 Manna, Heb 11:6

R1719 (From Harvest Truth Database V5.0 2008)
THE POWER OF FAITH

"This is the victory [the conquering power] that overcometh the world, even our faith." --1 John 5:4.—

BLESSED are the overcomers! "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. 3:21.

What a reward is this which is held out as an incentive and inspiration to urge us on to noble and heroic effort!--to reign with Christ, to be his bride and joint-heir, his beloved and confidential companion through all eternity, and to be partakers of his divine nature and glory. These promises are freighted with an "exceeding and eternal weight of glory," which "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard; neither hath it entered into the heart of man; but God hath revealed it unto us [brought it within the

range of our appreciation] by his spirit." The words sound hollow and meaningless to those who have no appreciation of spiritual things, but to the consecrated children of God who are faithfully striving to meet the conditions upon which the fulfilment depends, and who have therefore a good hope, they are exceeding precious, and fill their hearts with a joy unspeakable and full of glory.

But between the present time and the realization of the promises there lies the necessity of *overcoming*. The word is strongly suggestive of a great conflict, and calls to mind also the Apostle Paul's expressions--"*Fight the good fight of faith;*" "*Endure hardness as a good soldier of Christ;*"

"Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, *quit you like men, be strong.*" To overcome requires energy, force of character, perseverance and steadfast, patient endurance to the very end of the present life.

In the above text the Apostle John points to the only power which can sufficiently energize our whole being and nerve to patient endurance of tribulation, even to the end. That conquering power is *faith*. "Now," says the Apostle Paul, "faith is a basis of things hoped for, a conviction of things unseen." Faith is not merely belief or knowledge, but is knowledge applied, assimilated, appropriated--made a part of our habit of thought, a basis for our actions and a spur to all our energies. Such a faith is the overcoming power which all must have who would run successfully the race for the prize of our high calling, and be overcomers.

What is it that is to be overcome? John briefly comprehends it all in the expression, "*the world.*" Then the whole world is against us in this battle. Yes, its spirit, its popular methods, its ambitions, ideas, hopes and aims are all at variance with the elect Church of God, who are not of this world, even as Christ is not of this world. The world is taking its own course, ignoring God, leaning to its own understanding and pursuing its own way. Consequently, our course is in direct opposition to that of the world, and we must pull hard against the current of the world's spirit which is deeply inwrought in our old nature, as well as surrounding us on every side. Yes, it is a hard pull; and we need all the inspiration and energy that faith can impart to accomplish it.

It is important, too, to see that our faith is a correct faith; for if the faith be an erroneous one, inspiring false and delusive hopes built upon sandy foundations, the stronger this impelling power becomes, the more surely and quickly will it drive its deluded victim to shipwreck upon the rocks. Faith, like steam in an engine, is a power either for good or for evil. Hence the importance of a correct faith.

It was because of this importance of faith, and of recognition of it as the motive power, either for good or for evil, that the Apostle Paul was so solicitous for the continuance of his converts in the faith. (See 1 Thes. 3:2,5,6,7,10.) He urged all to examine and prove themselves, whether they were in the faith, grounded and settled, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel, but rooted and

built up in Christ and *established* in the faith; and to beware lest any man spoil them through philosophy and vain deceit, after the traditions of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. (Col. 1:23; 2:7,8.) He was deeply solicitous, too, that the faith of the Church should not stand in the wisdom (the vain philosophies) of men, but in the power of God. And, therefore, in his preaching, he did not launch out into foolish speculations or follow his own or any other men's reasonings, and so pander to the popular craving for something new; but he confined himself to the expounding of the sacred Scriptures and to exhortations, inspired, as they were, by the revelations made to himself--a prophet, as well as an apostle.--1 Cor. 2:4,13; 2 Cor. 12:1-7; Gal. 1:11,12; 2:2; 2 Pet. 3:15,16.

Let us see, then, that we have the faith of Christ--the faith well founded in the Word of God, a faith examined and proved, deeply rooted in the heart as well as in the head, and therefore *established* as the motive power of life. Such a faith is not nervously looking about for something new, and always probing the vain philosophies of men to see how skilfully they can withstand the Word of the Lord; for those who do so show plainly that their faith is not of sufficient influence to be the moving power in them, impelling them onward to full and complete victory over the world.

Faith, to be a conquering power in us, must go deeper than the head: it must go into the heart, and thus permeate and energize the whole being, bringing not only the outward conduct but every thought into subjection to Christ. Then indeed will faith impel to action, to works which clearly manifest it; for "faith without works is dead." A mere intellectual assent to the truth of God, which does not lead to activity in his service, is not faith, and can never overcome the world nor secure the prize of our high calling. But this is the conquering power that overcometh the world, even our faith. Let us examine ourselves and see that we have it pure and simple, and deeply inwrought in the fiber of our character, and that as an energizing principle it is moving us to faithful and persevering activity. Let it be the governor and inspiration of our lives--a living faith which purges and purifies and strengthens to diligence and patience to the end of the narrow way to life.