

February 8

O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt? Matthew 14:31

WHAT must be done to overcome this lack of faith, and to have an increase of faith? We answer that, like the apostles of old, we should pray, "Lord, increase our

R2005 "True faith is not credulity. It is critical, and believes only upon good evidence. It criticizes closely and distinguishes clearly between the teachings of men and the substantiated Word of God. But, having found the Word of God, it trusts it implicitly, knowing that its Author cannot lie; and that all his purposes and promises will be accomplished."

(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*... With some, faith is all *emotion*; with others, it is all *intellectuality*. But neither of these elements alone can withstand the fiery tests to which faith is subjected."

HOW TO INCREASE FAITH -- INTELLECTUAL ASSURANCE --

R5115 "There is a difference between *intellectual belief* and *heart-reliance*. The person who knows God *best* will trust Him *most*... The greater the knowledge of God's character, the greater will be the heart-reliance upon Him."

Col 2:6-8 KJV "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, *so* walk ye in him: (7) Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving. (8) Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ."

R1822 "If an attack is made upon the intellectual foundation of our faith we should see to it that we have a, "Thus saith the Lord," for every item of our belief. Let the Word of God settle every question, and let no human philosophies, however ingenious, lead us into the labyrinths of error..."

R4930 "Every now and then we are brought to a realization that many of those who rejoice considerably in the Truth have but an imperfect knowledge of it -- they are not rooted, grounded, established and built up in the Truth; they are not able to "rightly divide the Word of Truth"; they are not workmen who need never be ashamed in discussing the Truth with others.

Some of these, deficient in their knowledge of the Truth, are mere babes, beginners, who have not yet had a full opportunity for study. Some of them have read Vol. I and have skimmed over the other volumes. They perhaps learned of the classes for Bible study, and, attending them and discussing with the brethren and hearing some discourses, seemed to assume that they knew the teachings of the entire six volumes as though they had read them, studied them.

This is a great mistake; more, it is a *se-*

faith." And then, acting in harmony with this prayer, each should cultivate faith in his own heart: (a) By refreshing his memory continually with the divine promises, becoming very familiar with these in the Father's Word, (b) He should seek more and more to remember that, having made his

rious mistake, because we are in the time when each and all must expect to be specially tried and tested. And those who have only a partial understanding of the Divine Plan--those who have only a part of the provided armor, will find it difficult, if not impossible, to stand in this evil day the assaults of the world, the flesh and the Adversary. If they have proper zeal for the Lord and a proper love for the Plan, they should manifest that zeal by thorough and persevering study of the volumes. They cannot afford to do less."

Eph 6:13 KJV "Take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand."

R4930 Continued: "We find also that some of the dear friends who read the SCRIPTURE STUDIES years ago, and not recently, imagine that they remember their contents, when in reality they are quite ignorant of many of their teachings. We all have leaky, earthen vessels and the precious treasure of Divine Truth soon exhausts unless we keep replenishing... Such of our readers as have not read the STUDIES IN THE SCRIPTURES this year can scarcely appreciate how much they probably have lost of what they originally learned therein."

Heb 2:1 "We ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let *them* slip."

R2275 "The evil day here referred to is this Day of the Lord, in which we are now living, wherein every man's work shall be tried, so as by fire. These are the "perilous times" of which the Apostle forewarned the Church--times peculiarly perilous to Christian faith, because of the many subtle and delusive forms of error now springing up to intercept the progress of the truth. But God's provision for his saints is equal to the emergency of the perilous hour. Never before this "evil day" was it possible for the saints to put on the whole armor of God; and never before was it needed... The time is shortly coming when it will be impossible to stand without it."

HOW TO INCREASE FAITH -- HEART RELIANCE --

F148:1 "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."

F146 "We are to remember that like as a proper earthly father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth 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

covenant with the Lord, these promises are his, and in his heart and with his lips he should claim them as his before the Lord in prayer with thanksgiving. He should claim them in his own thoughts, and in his conferences on holy things with the brethren. Z.'00-170 R2642:6

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."

Heb 4:16 KJV "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

R5114 "THE DEVELOPMENT OF FAITH THROUGH FIERY TRIALS

"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 honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ."-1Pet. 1:7...

When he has his faith well grounded in the *fundamental principles* of Divine Truth, let every consecrated child of God see to it that he also continue to cultivate heart-reliance in the "*great and precious promises*." St. Peter tells us that a faith which has stood the tests of fiery ordeal and has come off victorious is very precious in the sight of the Heavenly Father. Whenever we pass through a fiery trial and still retain, not only our faith in the doctrines, but also our *confidence in God*, our *reliance in His promises*, our integrity of heart and purpose, and our zeal for Truth and righteousness, then our characters have grown more Christ-like and hence more pleasing to God...

THE PURPOSE FOR WHICH FAITH IS TRIED

The trial of our faith is not left to *chance*. It is supervised by our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, who is represented by the Prophet Malachi as a refiner and purifier of gold and of silver, that He may purify the antitypical House of Levi, and separate the dross from the precious metal. (Mal. 3:3)...

First of all, our Lord laid down His life in *fulfilment of the types of the Law*, thus demonstrating His absolute trust, loyalty, and faith in God. The Church of Christ must be similarly tested and proved in respect to their obedience, trust, loyalty to the Father. They must be willing, not only to trust God when things are favorable, but to trust in His providences when they cannot see the outcome. To attain this degree of faith, they must pass through manifold trials and testings, that they may demonstrate their faith and loyalty...

When we begin our course as Christians, we have comparatively little faith, and it must be developed; our Christian experience is for the purpose of faith development. As St. Peter suggests, our faith, which is on trial, is much more precious than gold, although the gold be tried by fire. The exercise of faith tends to its development, and so our Father gives us numerous trials to test its strength."

R3937 "Lord is now looking for the few, the little flock, able and willing to walk by faith, through evil report and good report, to trust him where they cannot trace him..."

R5557 (From Harvest Truth Database V9)
"TREES OF RIGHTEOUSNESS"

"As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him, rooted and built up in Him, and established in the Faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving."—Colossians 2:6,7

THE context from which our text is taken seems to show that the Apostle is contrasting with the Gospel hope the various hopes which might go to establish one in some kind of faith, some kind of belief, some kind of course in life. But he is addressing those especially who have already accepted Jesus Christ as God's Representative—those who believe that God has sent His Son into the world to be the Redeemer of the race of Adam, and by and by to be the Deliverer of mankind from the power of sin and death. All those who are in Christ Jesus have received Him with this understanding. This is the only Message which God has sent; this is "the faith which was once delivered to the saints."

DIVINE VS. HUMAN MESSAGE

The Apostle Paul urged those to whom he wrote to continue in this faith, and not to try to combine earthly philosophy with this Heavenly Message. As they had received Christ as God's Anointed and their Sufficiency in all things—the One "in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge," in whom "dwelleth all the fulness of the Deity bodily"—so they were to walk. As they had recognized Him as the Heavenly Teacher, so they were to continue to make progress in the same way—the path that leads to glory, honor and immortality. They were not to think for one moment that any human teaching could be mixed with the Divine Message; for any other doctrine would serve only to confuse the Heavenly Message in the minds of the hearers.

This would not mean, however, that the teachings of the Apostles were to be ignored, for the Master especially informed the Church that His Twelve Apostles would be His mouthpieces. It would, however, guard us against any supposition that there would be any other teaching or any other Church to take the place of Jesus and His Apostles. To these He declared that whatsoever things they would bind on earth would be bound in Heaven, and whatsoever things they would loose on earth would be loosed in Heaven.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE SPIRITUAL PLANT

Having stated the matter in this way, the Apostle then uses a forceful illustration to show how we are to progress in Christ. Turning from the figure of a man walking in Christ as a member of His Body, St. Paul gives us the picture of a tree, the root of which goes downward and the trunk of which reaches upward, to obtain that nourishment which will give it strength and stability. As the roots of a tree push themselves downward and imbibe the nutriment of the soil, while at the same time the trunk and the branches reach up into the atmosphere to obtain through the leaves the necessary elements of growth, so the mentality of the Christian takes hold of the great and precious promises of the Word of God, while at the same time he is building character through his heart appreciation of these promises, in connection with the experiences of life. The roots of faith push down deep into the knowledge of the Divine Plan, while the tree of character grows higher and higher, developing and maturing the rich fruits of the Holy Spirit of God; for instruction is a form of *construction*.

While the Christian is thus growing up in character-likeness to our Redeemer, and his roots of faith are reaching deep down into the deep things of the Word of God, he is becoming established, settled. A tree that is well rooted in the earth is hard to uproot. It has a wonderful strength, a wonderful hold upon the earth, and requires years to die out. So it is with the Christian whose faith has been properly established; he should be so fixed, so established in the promises of God's Word, that no wind of doctrine could overturn his faith.

Whoever is continually looking around for something new is thus demonstrating the fact that he is not established in the Faith. Having once made sure that the Divine Plan is the Plan of God, we should not permit ourselves to be moved away from that position. On all Christians who are thus rooted and grounded in the Scriptures the theories of our day—Evolution, Christian Science, New Thought, etc.—have no effect whatever. No Christian growth will be developed nor spiritual life retained unless the soul becomes fixed and settled in the Truth as it is in Christ Jesus.

ONE CAUSE OF SPIRITUAL DECAY

When once we have seen the Plan of God as revealed in Jesus, and have given ourselves to God and the study of His Word, the only way to retain our spiritual life is to continue in this doctrine, to root ourselves in this soil and remain there. We are not to seek other fields with the thought that we can receive additional nourishment

there, and that an admixture of other elements with what we have will be advantageous. No theories will mix with the Lord's Plan. It is *complete*; it needs no assistance from other systems of belief. Any attempt to incorporate with it theories and ideas of men will only destroy its value. We can never become rooted and built up in Christ by such a course; our spiritual decay, and finally our spiritual death, would be the result.

No child of God can be carried about by every wind of doctrine; nor can he indulge in a morbid curiosity as to what this or that new theory may teach. To do so is very dangerous to the spirituality of a Christian. For one who has never known the Truth there might be some reason for such a course, but for one who has once thoroughly proven what is the Truth in Christ to go hunting around for new pastures in which to feed, there is no excuse. Either he has never been established in Christ, or else he has fallen into a spiritual decline. There is an exhaustless field for thought and for mental and spiritual activity in the Plan of God in all its varied features.

We believe that God purposed to have a Seed of Abraham through whom a blessing would come to all the families of the earth. Those who look for the fulfilment of this Promise realize that Christ is the Seed of Abraham and that His work is to fulfil this Promise. For this purpose He came into the world. Later on, the Church learn that not only Christ Jesus, the Head, but also the Church, His Body, are sharing in the same faith, the same Promise made to Abraham. Each individual called has the opportunity of coming in, of exercising his faith, and of being built up as a member of the Body of Christ. By this time the Body of Christ must be nearly complete. The hour is at hand when this glorious Seed of Abraham is to take hold of the affairs of earth and bring in "the Restitution of all things spoken by the mouth of all the Holy Prophets since the world began."—Acts 3:19-21.

As a tree does not breathe the same element at all times, and as it is not always flooded with sunshine, but needs also the rains and storms for its development, so the child of God needs varied experiences and sometimes change of environment to best develop all the fruits of the Holy Spirit. The great Husbandman knows just what experiences and surroundings each one of his "trees" needs—how much sunshine, how much rain, how much cold and how much heat, how much pruning—and He will supply just what is best adapted to each case. He knows how to vary these conditions, environments, etc., without disturbing the process of rooting and upbuilding, but developing it. This we do not know how to accomplish, but would bring upon ourselves spiritual disaster. So we need to keep ourselves continually under the care of the skillful Husbandman and earnestly co-operate with Him, that we may grow and become strong and immovable—firmly established.

DEPTH OF ROOT SHOWN IN VIGOR AND FRUITAGE

The depth and the spread of the roots of a tree are shown by the vigor and the fruitage of the tree. A tree that is not deeply and firmly grounded can neither bring forth rich, luscious fruit nor furnish cool, refreshing shade to man. Depth of root is absolutely essential. So the Christian's faith must be deeply grounded in Christ; and thus shall we also *grow up* into Him, learning more and more what is the Divine will as expressed in Him. The rooting process is unseen, and can be judged only by its outward manifestations. When there is luxuriant foliage there is good rooting. But the growth must not stop there; fruit must be borne. And so the spiritual life of the child of God will manifest itself more and more in its likeness to Christ. To vary the figure, the Christian will not only be a branch in the Vine, but will bear rich clusters of fruit, which should become more choice in quality and size year by year.

We sometimes see Christians who have little knowledge of worldly things and yet have deep spirituality, very deep rooting and grounding in Christ, a clear insight into the deep things of God, and a rich Christian experience. Perhaps their knowledge of the usages of polite society is less than that of many others of their brethren; they may have had fewer opportunities to learn all these details; and yet their ripe attainments in Christ may shame some who are more outwardly correct according to the social standards of the world. How careful we should be that our standards of judgment and our estimates of character are fashioned after the pattern of the Master; that we look beneath the surface; that we note rather the real, the essential traits, than any outward peculiarities of the flesh which in

the sight of the Lord would have no weight in deciding the quality of the character or the place in the Kingdom.

SUGGESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

If we are to be the judges of the world in the next Age, how shall we be fitted for this position, if we do not learn now how to take the proper viewpoint, the Lord's viewpoint, in our estimates of our brethren? If our love and our esteem for them is gaged by trifles, yea, by matters even unworthy of notice in the eyes of the Lord, are we developing the qualities of character which will fit us to be the judges of the incoming Age? How are we growing up into Christ in all things? Let us judge ourselves rigidly along these lines, that we may indeed become like the Master and win His final approval.

The Apostle urges that we become established in the faith. This term refers to "the faith which was once delivered to the saints"—the one Faith. This is to hold at all costs. Satan will attempt to divert our minds into other channels, to draw our attention to some new thing. But the Plan of God, the Truth of God, as revealed in Jesus Christ our Lord, is but one. It is given us for our instruction in righteousness, "that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto every good work." (2 Timothy 3:17.) It is not the truth of Geometry or Trigonometry or Geology or Astronomy or any other science that we are to be diligent to study and be grounded and built up in, but God's Word. (John 17:17.) These other truths are very well in their way, but we have little time to study these now. We shall have all eternity in which to learn all the wonders of creation, but now we are to apply ourselves especially to the mastery of spiritual Truth, the deep things of the Mystery of God, revealed to His saints for a specific purpose.

AN ESTABLISHED CHRISTIAN NOT A BIGOT

The Truth embraces all the Scriptural teachings relative to Christ and His work, to our relationship to Him as members of His Body, and to the brethren as fellow-members. We are to abide therein with thanksgiving. We should familiarize ourselves with the different features of this Truth more and more. We should be clear in regard to what our Lord taught and why He taught it, and should know how to connect the different parts of the Truth into a harmonious whole. We are to be *thoroughly* furnished. We are heartily to appreciate the loving kindness of our God in revealing to us these glorious things, and to realize that we did not originate them ourselves, nor was any man the originator of them, but the Lord Himself. They are the Gift of God to us, and we are to be most thankful for this great Gift, to guard it jealously as a priceless treasure, and to let our light shine to the glory of God's name.

The general sentiment among the teachers of false doctrine, and even among the world in general, who do not believe in the necessity or the advisability of being established in faith, is that to be established is to be bigoted. Those who are so unfair in mind as to receive and tenaciously hold what they have never proven, either by sound logic or by the authority of the Word of God, are rightly called bigots. But one who in simple, childlike faith accepts and firmly holds to what God has inspired, what He has caused to be written in His Word for our instruction, is not a bigot, but a strong, established character, and will stand when all the structures built upon the numerous theories and imaginings of men shall have fallen. The great Day now upon us is trying every man's character-structure, of what sort it is, and but very few, even among professed Christians, will stand the test.

The few who will pass safely through this crucial trial without loss are those only who have become established in the Truth of God, "rooted and grounded and built up into Christ." The difference between a strong and steadfast Christian and a bigot is that one is

established in Truth, and the other is established in error. The "fire" of this Day will continue to burn and to manifest the great difference between the two classes, until all have been tested and tried and found worthy or unworthy.

IMPORTANCE OF SELF-SCRUTINY

The Apostle's words in our text lead each child of God back to the time when he first made his own consecration. Under what conditions did we come into Christ? We recall that it required much humility on our part to acknowledge that we were sinners, utterly unable to save ourselves. Some seem to forget the way in which they started. They started with faith and humility and meekness, and with the desire to be truly built up into the Master's likeness. But they seem by degrees to lose sight of this, and begin to grow in another direction than straight upward into the fullness of Christ. They like to make some show before the world. They come to neglect the first principles of Christian development, while still talking about the doctrines, or making up doctrines of their own.

Thus gradually these get away from the doctrines and the Spirit of Christ. The Apostle puts us on guard against these dangers: Are you sure that you ever really received Christ? Are you sure that you ever actually made a full consecration to God and became a New Creature? You should know this. If you did, then make sure that you are progressing in His likeness. Without careful scrutiny, you might think you are progressing when you are not. The Narrow Way remains narrow unto the end of the journey; a mere profession of faith and a certain round of observances are not sufficient. Remember that we are to confess the Lord by our looks, by our manner, by all the acts and words of life.

Only by continual scrutiny of ourselves in the light of God's Word can we make real progress in the narrow way in which our Master walked. Truth is to become brighter and fuller and more luminous as we go onward. To this end, we must keep close to the Word and in line with His Program. The Lord will not accept little, undeveloped sprouts for the Kingdom, but He wants those that have grown and matured—strong, sturdy "trees of righteousness."—Isaiah 61:3.

GOD'S WORD ALONE WILL UPBUILD

Delve into the promises of God more and more. As you do this, the roots of faith will draw up the nutriment and send it out into your life, and you will grow, just as a tree grows, because nourished, fed. Thus alone will you become established in *The Faith*, and not in your imaginings nor the imaginings of others. Our faith is to grow stronger and more vigorous day by day. It is not to be a faith in ourselves or in anything apart from the Lord. Faith is what we started with in the beginning, and we shall need it in increasing measure as we go on in our upward way—faith in God and in His sure Word. All that we know as children of the Lord has come to us through the channel of Jesus, His holy Apostles, and the Prophets of old, and we are to continue feeding at this same table with thanksgiving.

We are not to feel a spirit of bondage, and say to ourselves, "I would like to ramble outside; I do not like to confine myself merely to what the Bible teaches. I would like more liberty." This disposition is not the spirit of a true son of God. Such sentiments encouraged would lead to utter spiritual disaster. All such temptations, if they come, must be promptly and positively resisted. Our spirit should be one of deepest gratitude and thankfulness that we have been granted this glorious Divine Revelation. Following thus in the Lord's way, we find the only true joy, and can make the only true progress. "If ye do these things, ye shall never fall, for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."—2 Peter 1:10,11.

R2642 (From Harvest Truth Database V5.0)

FULL ASSURANCE OF FAITH

"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever. --Psalm 23:6.—

SAINT PAUL speaks of the full assurance of hope and of full assurance of faith, as being the proper conditions for the Lord's people. (Heb. 6:11; 10:22.) And this is the thought expressed by the Prophet, in our text—full confidence that he who has begun a good work in us is both able and willing to complete it. (Phil. 1:6.) But how few Christians, comparatively, have this full assurance of faith; how few can say, Surely, undoubtedly, goodness and mercy shall follow me henceforth through life, and by God's grace I ultimately shall gain the heavenly Kingdom and the glorious things which God has promised to them that love him! The few who can enter fully into sympathy with the Apostle and Prophet in these expressions have therein a great joy, a great blessing, a great rest of heart which

others do not possess. Let us therefore inquire why it is that the number who thus enter into the rest of faith is so small. What are the hindrances to the others, and how can those hindrances be removed, that a larger number of the Lord's people may enjoy their patrimony?

The hindrances are of two kinds: (1) Many who are on the Lord's side, and who have been greatly blessed of him, and who have made considerable progress in the knowledge of the truth, and who are trusting in the merit of the Lord Jesus' sacrifice as the only hope of a future life, and who are thus justified, have nevertheless failed to take the second step necessary to their full induction into sonship in God's family and into joint-heirship with Christ to all the

exceeding great and precious promises which extend only to those who become his sons. This step, essential to becoming sons and joint-heirs, is the purpose of full consecration--the full surrender of our own wills, including all the aims and objects and purposes of life, and including also all that we have in the way of time, influence, means, reputation, etc. Not having taken this step, not having taken up the cross to follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth, this large class very properly feels that it is questionable to what extent the Lord's promises, either for the life that now is or for the life that is to come, belong to them. And in this they are right; for none of the promises, present or future, belong to them, nor to any, until they have come under the terms of a full self-surrender, consecration, presenting their bodies living sacrifices to God, holy, acceptable, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Our advice to these, then, is that realizing the situation they do not longer delay, but hasten at once to avail themselves of the greatest privilege that could possibly be offered, even by the Almighty. If they stand still they are, in the language of the Apostle, receiving the grace of God in vain--failing to use it. (2 Cor. 6:1) God's grace, as freely bestowed upon those who have come to a knowledge of the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, is the grace of the forgiveness of sins, of justification through faith; and the very object of this grace is to *permit* or *qualify* us to become living sacrifices, acceptable to God's altar through the great sacrifice of our Redeemer.

Whoever, therefore, shall advance thus far and know of his privilege, and yet refuse to present his little all, has failed to be constrained by the love of Christ, has failed to appreciate the divine favor bestowed upon him, and manifests this failure by his neglect to use his opportunities, by his neglect to sacrifice the imperfect fragment of this present life, that he might obtain in exchange the great prize of glory, honor and immortality, and joint-heirship with Jesus in the Kingdom: such receive God's grace in vain, profiting nothing by it over and above the world, which as yet lies in darkness and blindness.

What should such do? They should at once resolve that ⁽¹⁾to render all they have to the Lord's service is not only a reasonable thing, but an offering far too small--far less than what they would like to render to him who has manifested such compassion and grace toward us. And we should feel thus, even if there were no rewards attached to such a consecration of ourselves. But inasmuch as God has attached great rewards and blessings, we should feel not only that a refusal to accept would be an indication of non-appreciation of divine mercy, but an indication also of a weakness of mind, of judgment, which is unable to balance the trifling and transitory pleasures of self-will for a few short years, with an eternity of joy and blessing and glory, in harmony with the Lord.

And more than this, the consecrated are the only ones who really fully and truly enjoy this present life, for they indeed have a peace of heart which the world can neither give nor take away--a condition which all the world is coveting and seeking after, but finding not because they seek it not in the Lord's way of full self-surrender to him. We urge, then, upon the class now addressed that they promptly make their covenant with the Lord, and thus become heirs of his good promises pertaining to the life that now is, and also of that which is to come, and that thus they lay the *foundation* for entering into "full assurance of the faith" and full assurance of the hope that God's mercy and goodness shall follow them all the days of the present life, and that they shall dwell in the heavenly home forever.

(2) But amongst those who are real Christians, and who have made a full covenant of sacrifice unto the Lord, we find many who say, and more who think it without saying,--"O that I could feel sure that God's goodness and mercy would continue with me all the days of my life, and that I should attain unto his Kingdom! O that I might have a full assurance of faith, a full assurance that I am accepted of the Lord, and that by his grace I shall ultimately be an overcomer!" What is the difficulty with this class? Why is it that these do not possess this full assurance of faith? We answer, that their difficulty is a lack of faith in God, and such a lack of faith is not pleasing to God, for "without faith it is impossible to please God." Such a lack of faith, moreover, is a constant hindrance to their overcoming, as it is written, "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." The Christian who has not the shield of faith, and a large one, is continually at disadvantage before the Adversary.--Heb. 11:6; 1 John 5:4.

⁽²⁾What must be done to overcome this lack of faith, and to

have an increase of faith? We answer, that like the apostles of old he should pray, "Lord, increase our faith." And then, acting in harmony with this prayer, each should *cultivate* faith in his own heart: (a) By refreshing his memory continually with the divine promises, becoming very familiar with these in the Father's Word. (b) He should seek more and more to remember that having made his covenant with the Lord these promises are his, and in his heart and with his lips he should claim them as his before the Lord in prayer with thanksgiving. He should claim them as his in his own thoughts, and in his conferences on holy things with the brethren.

When trials or difficulties or perplexities arise, he should think of these promises, remembering that they *belong* to him--because God has promised them to such as love him,--who have made a covenant by self-sacrifice. (Psa. 50:5; Mal. 3:17.) He should resolve henceforth to trust the word of the heavenly Father implicitly. Thus, if some seeming accident befall him, let him call to his mind the promise that "All things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are called according to his purpose," and assure himself that the seeming accident would not have occurred had God not seen a way to make it the channel of a needed lesson or blessing. Let him refresh his mind with the thought that he comes under the provisions of this promise because he loves the Lord, and so loved him as to make a full consecration of himself to him; thus he is assured that this promise was intended for him.

Let such also remember the language of the Apostle, that if God loved us while we were yet sinners, so that he provided for us the great salvation in Christ Jesus our Lord, much more does he love us now, since we have been justified through faith in the great atonement, and have made a full consecration of ourselves to him, and thus come under the terms of adoption into his family. ⁽³⁾Let him remember too, that he who has begun the good work changes never, and that if our hearts are still in harmony with him, if our faith is still clear and firm in the great atonement, if our consecration is still full and complete, so that we seek not our own wills but his will to be done in our affairs, then we may indeed have the full assurance of faith, because knowing that God is unchangeable, and knowing that we are still in line with his promises and arrangements, we know that all of his gracious providences are still being exercised on our behalf. This is full assurance of faith--full confidence in the Lord.

(3) It is possible, however, for the true Christian who has taken the step of justification and the step of consecration and adoption into God's family, and who has had the blessing of full assurance of faith--it is possible for such to lose this, if he become overcharged with the cares of this life, cold and indifferent as respects the Lord, his Kingdom, his brethren, his cause, etc. Such, of course, should not have a full assurance of faith; God does not intend it for them, but rather intends that if we leave the proper consecrated attitude we should also lose the joys and consolations which belong to it. And this is not merely as a retribution or punishment, but designed specially to awaken us to a realization of what we are losing, to the intent that such as have "lost their first love" may be revived, may renew their consecration vows, and thus return to the Lord, who will abundantly pardon, and restore unto them the joys of his salvation.

So then, reviewing our text, we say that this assurance of faith that God's goodness and mercy will follow us all the days of our lives, and that we shall ultimately by his grace attain to the Kingdom, is for the class mentioned in this Psalm, viz., the Lord's sheep--those who are following him, and who are having the experiences outlined in this Psalm. One of these experiences is that following the Shepherd they are not left to hunger and thirst, but are bountifully supplied in the green pastures and by the still waters of the truth. Moreover, it applies to those who experience the Shepherd's care, his rod and staff, correcting, reproof or guiding them. Such sheep as learn to love and have confidence in the Shepherd and in his guidance, and to take comfort and blessing out of all the afflictions and trials of life which may be permitted to come upon them, realizing that they are providential, and for their blessing--such continue to follow the Shepherd, continue to have the experiences of sheep, and may rejoice with full assurance of faith that he who began the good work of shepherding them and leading them out from the byways of sin and of selfishness into the full blessing of the heavenly Father, will continue this work and complete it, if they abide in him.--John 15:4-6.

⁽³⁾ Nov. 5 Manna, Heb 10:21-22

⁽¹⁾ Nov. 6 Manna, Rom. 12:1

⁽²⁾ Feb. 8 Manna, Mat. 14:31