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FAITH VERSUS SUPERSTITION.

There is a vast difference between these two principles which is not always discerned among the children of God, so that a superstition based upon a fundamental error of doctrine often passes current for superior and *wonderful* faith. And such persons are often lionized among their brethren as saints of remarkable attainments, while the more logical and thoughtful, who exercise a more real faith, are often far less esteemed among their brethren, though doubtless more approved of God.

Real faith always has a good, sound, reasonable basis. It is simply an established confidence. You have faith in your friend because, you say, you have known him for years: you have observed and mentally noted his principles of action, and have found them uniformly the same; he has always been just, true, benevolent and kind; for many years and under many tests you have observed his steady faithfulness to these principles, and so your confidence or faith has been so established that you never think of doubting him. You know, judging [R1481 : page 373] from the past, that he will always be true to these principles, and hence can often tell just what his future course will be in various contingencies that may arise wherein these principles may be involved.

Just so it is with those who have become acquainted with God through his Word and his providences. From year to year their confidence or faith has grown and taken deeper and deeper root, until every promise of God is now to them yea and amen in Christ Jesus. They know that what he has promised he is able to perform and that he will do it, and they make all calculations accordingly and live and work in this confident hope. Such a faith is a real faith: it has been real from the beginning, but it has

matured and strengthened with the proofs of passing years. Such a faith is not mere surmise, imagination or guesswork: it has a sound, logical basis. You have drawn certain positive conclusions from a logical argument based upon an infallible and undeniable premise; and consequently you have full faith in those conclusions.

But superstition, unlike faith, has no substantial basis; nor are its conclusions reached by logical deductions. Superstitions originate in the diseased brains of fallible men, and upon no subject are they so prevalent as upon religious subjects. Here they are legion. They are in direct opposition to true faith and should be carefully avoided by every sincere child of God.

And not only should we avoid the superstitions themselves, but we should be careful to so frame our conversation that our true faith, minus all superstition, may be apparent to all. As instances of the lack of such care, we often hear such expressions as, The Lord told me thus and so, or, The Lord showed me this or that, or, The Holy Spirit taught or showed me thus and so, when the more careful Christian, who has a true faith and who is carefully instructed in the Word of God, often sees that this supposed or claimed teaching of the Lord or of the Holy Spirit is a fundamental or dangerous error, which is being thus put forth with **[R1481 : page 374]** the stamp of divinity forged upon it. Thus to stamp and send out error, if done intelligently and with a purpose to deceive, would be willfully to counterfeit the truth – a very criminal offence against God; but many very good people do it quite ignorantly. And what we are saying now is merely a caution and exhortation for such to greater carefulness in this respect.

Let us not be sure the Lord has shown us this or that item of doctrine or course of conduct unless we are able to put our finger on the testimony of the Lord which has borne this witness to us, so that the faith of our friends, as well as our own faith, may stand, not in the questionable wisdom of fallible humanity, but in the power

of God's own sure testimony. The Lord reproves very sharply some who recklessly use the expression "The Lord hath said" to give *weight* to their own imaginings or opinions. – Ezek. 22:28.

Beloved, let us not cultivate the habit of speaking in that irreverently familiar way of the Lord which is becoming more and more common among many of the subtle adversaries of the truth, of saying, The Lord told me, as though he had spoken to you face to face, or through some medium other than he has appointed for all his saints. Let us do all things with a view to edifying, and not in a manner to "darken counsel by words without knowledge." (Job 38:2.) "Except ye utter by the tongue words easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken?" (1 Cor. 14:9.) And "Let no man deceive you with vain words; for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience." – Eph. 5:6.

And, further, do not aspire to be a man or woman of "*wonderful*" faith: just be contented with a simple, child-like faith that believes every thing God says and refuses to believe what he does not say on matters of divine revelation. There is nothing wonderful or specially praiseworthy about a real faith. On the common principles of reasoning we ought to have full confidence in every item of God's Word, and should continually act upon it. Let our rejoicing be in the testimony of our conscience, that with the greatest simplicity and sincerity (not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God) we have spent our lives in this world. Especially should we be sincere toward the household of faith, whose development and perfecting should be our deepest concern.

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