

## "YOU HATH HE QUICKENED"

– JAMES 2:14-26. – MAY 30. –

**Golden Text:** – "Faith without works is dead." – V. 20.

MANY have supposed doctrinal conflict between St. Paul and St. James, the former holding faith as the important feature of Christianity, the latter insisting that works take precedence. More or less this conflict of thought has come down the ages and is with us to-day. We hold that there was no such conflict between the Apostles, and that the subject, rightly understood to-day, leaves no room for disputation. St. Paul insists that the Law Covenant was a Covenant of works, and that none could be justified under it, because none could do perfect works, and that, therefore, all Jews were under condemnation. He points out that the original Abrahamic Covenant was better and superior to the Law Covenant, because its provisions did not require perfect works, impossible to the fallen man, but instead tested him along another line – the line of his faith. St. Paul did not mean, and did not say, that works were valueless in God's sight; but, realizing that the Jews, trusting in their special Law Covenant, already laid more stress upon works than upon faith, he pressed upon their attention the fact that with Spiritual Israelites of the Isaac class, heirs of the original Sarah Covenant, faith must be regarded as the standard. Under it whoever would attain the proper kind of faith would be acceptable to God. That Covenant does not declare for faith without works, but it does indicate a proper development of faith as necessary – something beyond the initial belief that "God is and that he is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him." – Heb. 11:6.

Faith is a matter of steps and development; and only the developed faith could possibly bring to us the blessing of the Abrahamic Covenant. This would imply *works*, to the extent that

they would be possible, as in attestation of the *faith*. Nevertheless, none of us can be justified by works, because our best works are imperfect. Our judgment, our test, in its last analysis is, "According to thy *faith* be it unto thee." (Matt. 9:29.) St. James possibly noticed a tendency in some to go to the opposite extreme in the matter of faith, and to ignore works entirely. He does not claim that any could do works that would justify them before God, but merely insists that if the right kind of faith be developed in the heart it will surely bear fruit and make an outward manifestation, according to circumstances. Undoubtedly this is a sound position and one fully in accord with our Lord's words, "By their fruits ye shall know them." – Matt. 7:16.

Coming to an orchard filled with fruit, we may quickly discern the various kinds of trees by their fruits. So with the Christian. If he professes faith in Christ we are willing to acknowledge him as a brother, but "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of **[R4377 : page 121]** his;" hence, we look for evidences of the Lord's Spirit, disposition, character, in all those who profess to be his "members," "brethren." (Rom. 8:9.) If we see little of the Lord's Spirit (disposition) we are inclined to next inquire how long the brother has known the Lord and professed consecration to him. We thus sometimes find "babes in Christ," who, for the time they have had a knowledge of him, should be more developed and have a larger measure of his Spirit. We should be on guard against considering such, in any sense of the word, suitable teachers or exemplars.

On the contrary, we may very speedily discern the Spirit of Christ in some – their gentleness, meekness, patience, brotherly kindness, love. And if, as sometimes, these qualities be quickly developed in some who have only recently come to a knowledge of the Truth, we may the more rejoice with the fruit-bearer. However young in years, the fruit-bearing quality, the heart

development, would indicate such to be possibly one of the "Elder" brethren – even though, because a novice, the Church may not yet consider it due time to advance him formally to an official position as an "Elder."

## **THE BEGETTING, THEN THE QUICKENING**

In other words, the teachings of St. Paul and St. James may be fully harmonized by remembering the words of the former, "You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins." (Eph. 2:1.) After the sinner, dead in trespasses and under condemnation, has, by the grace of God, heard of Christ and has accepted his share of the redemptive work by *faith*, he is "justified by faith," before he has had any time to bring forth works or fruitage of any kind. Then if, following the Lord's leading and instruction, he presented himself a living sacrifice to the Lord to take up his cross and follow in the footsteps of Jesus, the acceptance of his sacrifice by the Father meant his begetting to a new nature – to the spirit plane as a "New Creature." If the begetting spirit be not lost, if it do not die, a transformation work will progress. By and by *a quickening* or activity will result from the indwelling of the holy Spirit in the mortal body. If this process continues, ultimately the "New Creature" will be perfected and ready for birth on the spirit plane – by resurrection. Thus our Lord in his resurrection was the First-Born of many brethren, and we, his brethren, will be "born from the dead" in due time, if faithful. But if the spark of life perish, we become castaways and will experience no resurrection birth.

From this standpoint we are ready to discern that the beginning of God's leading with us is along the lines of *faith*, and that it is to our *faith* that the promises of God appeal, and that by these "exceeding great and precious promises," touching our faith, energizing our faith, God works in us, first to will, and later to do, his good pleasure. To *will* to do right is of primary

importance and is wholly of faith. The doing, which results from this faith, is God's operation through it and corresponds to the "quickenings" of the natural birth. The period of the quickening may come sooner or later, but the strength, the vigor, of the unborn infant is usually estimated by the degree of quickening manifested. And so it is with the Christian. When his faith shall have developed sufficiently, the degree of his activity in obedience to God in the service of the Truth and righteousness and the brethren will indicate the strength or the weakness of his spiritual development.

Self-examination along this line is very proper. If we have heard, seen, tasted, of the grace of God and enjoyed it, and if no desire to serve our gracious Father or to assist others to the same blessings that we enjoy has been manifested, it implies that our spiritual vitality is very weak and in danger of perishing. But if, on the contrary, we find ourselves burning with fervency [R4378 : page 121] of love for the Lord, and with appreciation of his great Plan of Salvation, and are consumed with a desire to tell the good tidings to others for their blessing, strengthening, upbuilding and participation in the Divine faith, it should encourage us. We should notice, too, that Jesus specially loved and favored the more zealous, vigorous and energetic of the apostles, Peter, James, John, and, we may be sure, Paul also.

### **BE YE WARMED AND FILLED**

St. James presses his point and endeavors to awaken some who have a measure of *faith*, but who have not gone on to the *quickenings* degree. He asks what profit there would be for us to say that we have faith if we do not have works to correspond – to attest the faith, however imperfect the works would be. He asks (R. V.), "Can that faith save him?" We answer, No. As St. Paul declares, It is the *faith that works* by love that counts. But it is the faith that counts, and not the works; because the faith can be

perfect, complete; but perfection of works is impossible to us, because we have this treasure of the New Nature in an earthen vessel.

Illustrating this point he suggests that to tell a poor brother of our faith that God will help him and to send him away without relief, when it is within our power to relieve him, would not be such a faith as God would approve. It would rather signify that we had deceived our own selves. It would profit us nothing. So faith that has no works, of any kind or degree, cannot be called a living faith, because, as yet, it has given no evidence of life – it has shown no quickening.

St. James clearly attests his thought, saying, "A man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works; show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works." Again he points to the special feature of the Jewish faith in one God in contrast with the beliefs of the heathen in many gods. He says to the Jewish brethren, "You boast in having knowledge of the one living and true God, but surely this is not the extent of your faith in this direction; because the devils believe and tremble. Oh, foolish man, faith without works is barren. It can never bring you life, birth." A faith that will not develop obedience, in harmony with ability, is, therefore, unavailing during this Gospel Age, even as imperfect works failed to justify to life under the Law Covenant.

## **ILLUSTRATIONS OF FAITH AND WORKS**

Note the case of Abraham, the "father of the faithful." It is written that he believed God, and that his *faith* was counted to him for righteousness. But how much faith is required and to what extent is it involved in works? St. James points out that God placed a crucial test upon Abraham's *faith*, which would have proven it inefficient, if it had not developed to the quickened stage of *works* of obedience. It was years after the promise had

been made, and Isaac, the seed of promise, was grown to young manhood, when God commanded that he should be sacrificed upon the altar – thus prefiguring how The Christ, the true Seed of Abraham (Gal. 3:29), must all have the testing of faith to the point of obedience, even unto death – sacrificial death.

Then, fearful that he had given an example of so lofty a faith and obedience as would discourage us, St. James picks out and holds up before us another illustration of faith and works – that of Rahab the harlot. She had *faith* in God, but it would not have availed her if it had not developed to the degree of activity and helpful service, risking her own interests temporarily for the assistance of the spies. Manifestly she would never have had such works without faith – and it is the *faith* that is specially pleasing to the Lord. But the faith would not have been pleasing to the Lord, had it not led up to works in accord. Thus we see how *works* have to do with our justification, in conjunction with our *faith*, which is the foundation of our works.

### **THE BODY WITHOUT THE SPIRIT**

St. James summarizes this thought, saying, "As the body without the spirit of life is dead, even so faith without works is dead." Some might think that the writer of these words had erred in likening the body to faith and the spirit of life to works, supposing that the illustration [R4378 : page 122] should be reversed, namely, to compare the body to works and the spirit of life to faith. But St. James has expressed the matter properly. A body must be had before any spirit of life could come into it. So a *faith* must exist before it can be quickened into activity. But the quickening is absolutely necessary ere we could have our birth of the spirit in the First Resurrection.

Notwithstanding all that we have written on this subject, especially in *Studies*, Vol. VI., some of the dear friends occasionally write us in perplexity, desirous of knowing what

course they should pursue, in respect to brethren (and sometimes prominent brethren) whose works do not correspond with their professions of faith. For instance, a letter recently received noted the fact that one prominent in the Truth at whose residence the meetings were usually held, has a weakness for intoxicating liquors. They feared that if the meetings were removed from his home he would not attend them elsewhere. They desired to know the Lord's will respecting their course of action.

We were glad to note their love for the brother and also their solicitation for the Truth, lest his weakness might bring the cause of Christ to a measure of dishonor. We advised that the erring one be still treated as a brother, for his weakness may be of heredity and much against his own will; but we also advised that one thus weak should not in any sense of the word be set forth to the world as a prominent representative of the Truth; that so doing would dishonor the Truth and also be injurious to the brother, who might come to feel that his weakness was conceded by the brethren to be justifiable, and thus encouraged he might fail to put forth the necessary energy – fail to allow his *faith* to work in him, to rule him, to control his mortal flesh, as the Scriptures require.

With full sympathy and brotherly love it is our belief that the brother is not being helped by the course pursued; that it would be better for him if the dear friends would give him loving reproofs and remove the meeting from his home. If he has any of the spirit of the Lord, the spirit of meekness and love of the brethren, such a course would be a most helpful reproof, setting before him, and before all, the high standards of Christian deportment. Is it claimed that this might lead him to antagonize the Truth? We answer that the Scriptures forewarn us that our Gospel is a "savor of life unto life, and of death unto death." (2 Cor. 2:16.) Our whole responsibility is in doing the Lord's will in the kindest, most gentle, most loving manner possible, yet with that force and positiveness which will impress a lesson upon

those who are amenable to our influence and the influence of the Lord through us.

We have just received a letter from a dear Sister who has been connected with and deeply interested in the Truth for years. She writes us that she is only now awakening to a realization of the wonderful privileges that are hers in connection with the Harvest work, and of "showing forth the praises of him who has called us out of darkness into his marvelous light." This dear Sister is only now becoming thoroughly *quickened*, energized with the Truth. The good features to result may be expected, not only in the bringing of others into a knowledge of the Truth, but also a bringing of her own heart into full harmony with the Lord and to greater character likeness to him, in the manifestation of the fruits and graces of the Holy Spirit. This quickening came in conjunction with the endeavors of the Sister to live up to all the various features of The Vow. We hope to hear from others similarly blessed and energized to good works for the Lord, the brethren and the Truth.

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