

## **THE VICTORIES OF FAITH**

– *JUNE 29.* – *ACTS 7:9-16; HEB. 11:20-22.* –

**"This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." – 1 John 5:4.**

WE ARE living in a day when faith is greatly discounted – in a day when people seem disposed to say, "I care not what a man believes, if only his life be honorable." And by this generally is meant that faith is of no consequence. Those who so hold usually put honor of men as the highest goal. Their sentiments, translated into plain English, would be, "With all your getting, get money and prosperity; for without these, no matter what you believe, or whom you worship, you will never prosper in the present life, success in which is the only goal now recognized by an increasing number."

The Bible standpoint, however, is the very reverse of this. God's Word puts faith first, and builds character upon that faith. God declares that no human being can do perfect works. Hence He has not made works the standard. Faith is God's standard, and He assures us that whoever has the proper faith must of necessity have works which will correspond to his faith. In line with this principle, we note that God's favorites of the Bible have all been men of faith. Their faith did not make them perfect, nor were their works always acceptable in God's sight, but He punished them for evil works and rewarded them for their great faith.

Thus we find in the Bible record that some of God's favorites committed grievous sins and made serious mistakes, and still, for all that, maintained themselves in God's favor, by reason of their faith.

## **GOD LOVES NOT THE WICKED**

Of all religious books ever written or ever read, the Bible is perhaps the most candid. It tells of the mistakes and the sins of the

very characters which it holds up as models and examples of men after God's own heart. Yet the Bible leaves no room for any one to assume that God loves wickedness, or that the friends of God are the depraved of mankind. Quite to the contrary, the highest possible standards of righteousness, in word, in deed and in thought, are inculcated, and we are distinctly told that full acceptance with God can be only along the lines of truth and righteousness.

God tells us that we and all mankind are by nature sinners. He tells us that we could do nothing to clear away our own guilt and the sentence that stands against us as members of the fallen race. But He also tells us that He purposes to adjust that matter for us satisfactorily; and hence that our responsibility is not for what we cannot avoid, but for what we can avoid – not for what we cannot do, but for what we can do. He tells us that the foundation of all our noblest endeavors will lie along the lines of confidence in Him. This confidence He calls *faith*. He assures us that without faith it is impossible to please Him, and He has shown us this in all the lessons of the Bible.

## **FAITH IS NOT CREDULITY**

Many make the mistake of supposing that faith is credulity. Under this delusion they are ready to swallow any and everything of a religious kind, if they are told **[R5244 : page 156]** that God says so. But this is not the faith which the Bible encourages. On the contrary, the Bible would have us know definitely the things that God has promised, and exercise a definite faith in those things and give no heed whatever to the seductive vagaries of Satan, of our fellow men, or of our own imagination.

It is not for us to quarrel with those who take a different view of matters and who in the name of faith bind their followers with ignorance and superstition, and seek to prevent them from using their reasoning faculties. It is for us to address those who are feeling after God if haply they might find Him – those who are not content with

superstitions, but whose hearts and minds cry out after the living God and His definite Word, His solemn statement of His will respecting us, and of His Plan, and of the part which we may have therein. So Jesus and the Apostles attempted not to teach everybody, but merely those who hungered and thirsted after righteousness. In the language of Jesus, "He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear." [R5244 : page 157]

## THE FAITH BEFORE CHRIST CAME

Let us look into the past, and note the method by which God has all along sought His peculiar people. The first proclamation of God's purposes respecting our race was made to Abraham. God spake to Abraham, saying, "Walk as in My presence, and be thou perfect" – *i. e.*, Do your best to be perfect. After Abraham had manifested some faith, God gave him further tests. When in obedience to those tests Abraham left his native land to live in Canaan, he manifested so great a faith that God called him His friend, and made to him the very first revelation of the Divine purposes in respect to humanity.

Abraham knew that there was a curse upon the race, under which the whole creation was groaning, going down to the tomb, and God's declaration to him was that the time would come when, instead of the curse, He would send a blessing. This meant to Abraham that, instead men becoming more imperfect and wasting away in death, a change would come, by which they would be rescued from the dying condition, and resurrected from the power of the tomb.

This was a wonderful proposition, even for God to make; yet Abraham, with childlike faith, believed the Message. God declared to him that, because of his own faith, He would greatly bless him and his posterity, so that through him as a father eventually would come children who would accomplish the great work of blessing mankind, and would rescue all from the power of sin, Satan and death. The briefly epitomized statement of all this was in the words, "In thee and

in thy Seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed." – Genesis 28:14.

What was it to have faith in that Promise? What did it mean to Abraham? Assuredly it meant that thenceforth Abraham's mind would take in a larger horizon – the world of humanity, instead of merely his own immediate family and flocks and herds, and his nearest neighbors. It meant that if God would so honor his posterity, Abraham would seek in everything to co-operate with God and that great Promise.

For years God tested Abraham's faith. Yet he still believed. "His faith staggered not." After Isaac had been born and as yet had no child, God directed that this son of promise, the one in whom the whole Promise centered, should be sacrificed. What a test of faith! What a grand development of faith Abraham had acquired when he was ready to obey the Voice Divine, accounting that God was able to raise Isaac up again from the dead! Oh, for such a trust in God! Oh, for such a faith! Oh, for such an appreciation of Divine Power! What could not be accomplished in the world through the Divine Message if such faith prevailed amongst God's children! What would God not do for children who would trust Him thus!

It was the same with Isaac and with Jacob. They trusted that same Promise. It influenced the whole course of their lives. It made them more like God. It shaped every interest of life. Although they understood practically nothing of how God would accomplish so great a blessing, their faith laid hold upon the fact. From their posterity God would raise up a holy people to be His agency, His channel, for instructing the world, ruling the world, uplifting the world, resurrecting the dead, bringing mankind back to all that was lost through Adam's disobedience.

Their faith might have had plenty of opportunities for stumbling, if it had been weaker. If they had been more worldly-wise, they might have said, How can God do this thing and yet be just?

Having once pronounced a sentence, how can He clear the guilty? But their faith wavered not. In their hearts they said, "God has promised; and what God has promised, He will do, and He will have His own way of accomplishing it."

By and by, the nation of Israel as a whole was called the people of God. The nation as a whole entered into a Covenant with God, and He with them, through Moses, the mediator of the Law Covenant. Israel was impelled by faith – faith in the Promise made to Abraham that God would use his posterity and through it bless all people, all of Adam's race – the living and the dead.

The Covenant of Sinai pledged the people of Israel that they would be a holy nation, that they would keep God's Law blamelessly. God covenanted that in that event He would fulfil in them the Promise made to Abraham. God knew that imperfect human beings could not keep His perfect Law. But He would let them try; He would let them learn the lesson; He would through that lesson give instruction to the angels respecting His own righteousness. He would also through it give instruction to Spiritual Israel, whom later He would develop and through whom the blessings actually would come. This St. Paul explains, saying, "The Law Covenant was added because of transgressions, until the promised Seed should come." – Galatians 3:19.

In other words, God started this work with Israel, in a typical manner, long centuries before the real Spiritual Israel would be developed. But He did not thereby do injury to the people who had covenanted to keep the Law, but who were unable to do so. On the contrary, they as a people were blessed by their endeavors to keep that Law, and blessed also by the chastisements which came upon them because of their failures and lack of faith.

But God especially blessed all of that people who shared Abraham's faith, so that the Apostle Paul could enumerate, in addition to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, a considerable number who

pleased God because of their faith, long centuries before Christ, the Spiritual Seed of Abraham came. Those Ancient Worthies, although they will not be the Seed of Abraham in the highest sense, on the spirit plane, will be the seed of blessing on the earthly plane – the channel through which the heavenly blessings will ultimately be extended to all nations.

What was it that impelled the Jewish people during all those centuries past? Was it not faith in God – faith that He would fulfil the Promise made to Abraham? It surely was! And it is that Promise that still actuates such of the Jews as have not lost their faith – such of them as are still Jews. Those who have lost the faith of Abraham are no longer in any sense of the word related to the Promise; for the Promise was according to faith.

St. Paul speaks sympathetically of the Jewish nation, in respect to that original Promise which God made to them, saying: "Unto which Promise our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come." (Acts 26:7.) And all the Jews, in proportion as they still maintain that hope, may still expect to come to a realization of all and more than they ever dreamed of.

## **FAITH SINCE CHRIST CAME**

The coming of Christ did not change the Divine Purpose, and therefore did not change the faith of God's people. Jesus and the Apostles believed and taught the very Gospel which, St. Paul says, God preached in the beginning to Abraham. (Galatians 3:8.) The Apostolic Message also was that all the families of the earth were to be blessed through the Seed of Abraham. But there was an additional feature then to be proclaimed and to be believed; viz., that God had begun the work of providing this Seed of Abraham, The Messiah – that God had sent the Logos, His Son, into the world, that He **[R5244 : page 158]** might become the Seed of Abraham on the spirit plane, and eventually fulfil every feature of the original Promise.

All the Jews were in expectation of the Messiah, but they were not all Israelites indeed; they did not all have the proper faith. God preferred, therefore, to allow some of them to remain in a measure of blindness on the subject, while others were granted a special anointing of the eyes of their understanding, their eyes of faith. To this class Jesus said, "To you it is given to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of God" – the Messianic Kingdom, through which the Seed of Abraham is to bless all the families of the earth.

Then came another step of faith. The early disciples said: We desire to believe that Jesus, the Son of God, is the foretold Seed of Abraham, but we do not see Him doing the work of blessing the world. Instead of reigning in triumph to dispense to the world the blessings secured by His sacrifice, He has gone to Heaven. How shall we understand this?

### **THE MYSTERY – CHRIST IN YOU**

The answer of God through the Apostles was that "the faith once delivered to the saints" was still the same, but that now, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, they were to understand that The Messiah would not be one person, but many persons – not Jesus alone would be the Seed of Abraham, but Jesus as the Head and the Church **[R5245 : page 158]** as His members, or Body, would be that Seed. St. Paul says, "Ye, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of Promise." Jesus was represented by the head of Isaac, the Church was represented by the body of Isaac, in that figure. It has taken the entire Gospel Age to develop the Body of Christ, the Church.

Under another figure, Jesus was represented in Isaac, and the Church was represented in Rebecca, his bride. According to this figure, the antitypical Isaac has entered into glory, but waits for the development of the antitypical Rebecca. At the appointed and appropriate time He will come, the Seed of Abraham, and receive His Bride to Himself, and they twain will be one. And through the One, through the Kingdom of Glory, will come to all the families of

the earth the blessing promised nearly four thousand years ago to Abraham.

This is "the faith once delivered to the saints," the hope set before us in the Gospel – the faith that God will use the Seed of Abraham to bless all humanity, and the hope that we by faithful perseverance and trust may become joint-heirs with Jesus, the Redeemer, in all that glorious inheritance of the Messianic Kingdom.

Let us not doubt the Wisdom of God in the arrangement which He has made, and which He has caused to be set forth in the Scriptures; viz., that this faith, based upon the Abrahamic Promise, is the Power of God by which it is His will that all His people shall be sanctified – separated so far as possible from the world and from sin; sanctified to Himself in Christ Jesus, their Lord. This is "the faith once delivered to the saints." This is the faith which enables us to gain the victory over the spirit of the world, and to be separate, sanctified to God, for service here and hereafter.

