

FAITH THE BASIS OF TRUE REST

"We which have believed do enter into rest." – Hebrews 4:3.

IN OUR text St. Paul refers to the fact that the Law provided for the Jew a physical rest for the seventh day of the week, for the seventh year and for the forty-ninth and fiftieth years; and that these Sabbaths were typical of a better rest. He points out that all who believe in Christ enter into rest, and thus keep a continual Sabbath. As New Creatures we rest all the time, if so be we abide in the Lord and in His promises.

The Apostle says that faith is necessary to rest. He tells us what to do in order to avail ourselves of that which God has already provided for us. He shows us that God made promises to Abraham, and these were reiterated to Isaac and to Jacob. God declared His purpose to have a special, holy nation, and promised Abraham that the blessing of the world should come through his Seed, who would constitute this chosen nation. The promises were great and precious.

Abraham believed the Message and was glad. He rested. He did not know the way by which God would bring about the blessing, but he had the promise of God, confirmed by His Oath. He did not need to know then about the Lord Jesus or the Plan of Salvation. He had full rest in fully believing God; and so did as many of his posterity as exercised the same faith as Abraham. Isaac and Jacob and many of the Prophets, including the Prophet David, thus trusted God. Their writings show that they were fully in harmony with God. They realized that He had made a gracious provision for the future, and that this provision was for the world in general; yet they knew that they were to have a "better resurrection" than that of the world. They had a rest of faith in these things that God had not yet accomplished.

Our Lord Jesus declared that Abraham saw His day and was glad. He did not see it with his natural eye, but with the eye of faith. He saw the Day in which Christ, who has died for all men, will uplift the human family, raising the world up out of sin and death – first exalting His Bride, and finally causing the blessing of God to extend to every creature. This is just what God promised to Abraham – "In thee and in thy Seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed." Abraham was glad, and everybody else is glad who sees it. Abraham was content to see that there was to be a great blessing for his posterity, and through them for the world. He did not see God's Plan clearly, as we see it, but he saw enough to make him rejoice. – John 8:56.

INCREASING LIGHT AND GREATER TESTS

Coming down to our own Age, we see that a greater light, a greater privilege, has brought greater tests of faith in many respects. Abraham was tested in that he was told to offer his son Isaac in sacrifice. He knew that the promises were to be fulfilled through this son, but he said, It is for me to be obedient; God can raise my son from the dead. This shall not hinder my faith in the outworking of God's Plan.

We of the Gospel Age have not heard God's voice speaking to us audibly, as did Abraham; but we live in the time of a further development of the great Plan of God. He has sent His Son into the world, who was made flesh and dwelt among us, and who died, "the Just for the unjust."

Unbelief would assert that if Jesus had been the Son of God He would not have died; but there was a mortgage held on the human race by Justice, and their case was hopeless unless a Redeemer should be provided. So the eye of faith today is able to grasp God's purposes in a fuller way than did Abraham. Yet we do not know that our faith is any greater than his; for even if we have more trials and difficulties, we have also greater opportunities and greater light.

Abraham had full faith, full confidence in God, and no one could have more than this.

The Lord's people of the present time believe that mankind are to be rescued from sin and death. Some have more knowledge than others, and more testing; some who have less capacity cannot endure so severe testing, nor can they enjoy so fully. But all can have the same rest that Abraham had – the rest of faith in God. God has promised to His saints a resurrection to glory and honor and blessing. But these are not actual as yet. We have now only the earnest of this inheritance. It is for faith to triumph and to realize that God can bring us to that glorious condition which He has promised; and He will, if we are faithful. Each in proportion to his knowledge and faith will have rest. The most learned and the most ignorant can have this rest, if only they believe God.

REST PROPORTIONATE TO FAITH

The rest we have entered into is not our ultimate rest. If we have the faith today, we may have the rest today; if we lose the faith, we also lose the rest. But a perfect, permanent rest awaits us. God has promised us certain great and precious things. He is our Creator and our Father, and will do for us the things He has promised. And according to our *faith* it will be unto us – much faith, much rest; little faith, little rest. Those who are in harmony with God believe His testimony.

This does not imply that all who have been of God's children have believed all of the Divine Plan; for we see that this would not be possible. Some have had greater opportunity for believing; and some have had less. We who live today have much more advantage than those who lived prior to our day. Our test, then, does not come so much from lack of *knowledge*; but it is a test of faith in God, and obedience to the light now given us. Having this great flood of light now granted at the close of this Age, our faith should be very strong, and we should seek to increase it more and more by gaining all the

knowledge now due. We should grow in faith, grow in grace, grow in knowledge and grow in love. We enter into a deeper and more intelligent rest if we avail ourselves of the helps which the Lord has provided for us. If we truly *believe*, we will manifest our belief by works in harmony therewith. [R5433 : page 105]

In Scriptural usage the word *believe* implies much more than merely to acknowledge a fact or a truth. The great Truth before us all is what the Bible calls the Gospel, the Good Tidings. The belief referred to in our text is belief in this Gospel: We who believe the Gospel do enter into rest. What is the Gospel that we believe? It includes all the features of God's love and mercy to us as a fallen race – His proposition for eternal life through Christ, with all the blessings this involves. To the Church the Gospel – the Good Tidings – includes also the offer to us of joint-heirship with Christ in the Kingdom.

One might have an intellectual belief in these promised blessings without entering into the rest mentioned in our text. But this form of belief is evidently not in the Apostle's thought. To the extent that the individual recognizes those facts, accepts them and acts upon them, to that extent he enters into rest. If he believes partially, he rests in that proportion; if he believes more, he rests more; if he believes perfectly, he has perfect rest, and will show his faith by his works. The Gospel Message is so wonderful that any one who believes it will desire to avail himself of its blessings. If the opportunity is presented of becoming a joint-heir with Jesus to the Divine nature, and the mind can grasp the proposition, one would really be a fool if he did not accept such an offer. So any one who does not accept does not believe, in the sense the word is used in our text. All who *truly believe* will accept such an offer and will enter into rest by faith.

HEART CONFIDENCE ESSENTIAL

The expression of the text, "We who have believed," implies that the belief has reached the *heart*, and will thus affect our course in life. And the second part of the statement, "do enter into rest," implies that the rest is gradually coming to him because he has believed. He has first believed; and the fulness of rest is a condition to be attained gradually as his faith grows stronger, and as he learns to appreciate more fully what he has accepted.

"With the *heart* man believeth," and not merely with the *head*. It is not a mere *intellectual* belief. When we accept the Gospel as a *fact*, and enter fully into it, we begin at once to have a measure of this rest; and as we learn by our experiences how true the Lord is to all His promises to us, the rest becomes more deep and abiding. The belief was at first a full belief in the Message of God; but as we grow in grace and in the knowledge of God, the more firm and established does our faith become, and our rest is proportionate.

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