

THE PRESENT ADVANTAGES OF FAITH

"Without faith it is impossible to please God; for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." – Hebrews 11:6.

PAUL the Apostle is in this text laying down a general principle as to what is the Divine pleasure. God is not pleased to deal with humanity as with the brute beasts. He did not make man to live a mere animal existence, appreciating only the enjoyment of his physical senses. Man was made to glorify his Creator and to have a knowledge of Him, in order to obtain the fullest happiness and blessing from the enjoyment of his God-given faculties.

As man shall in due time come to see his Creator's glorious character and the object of his own existence, and as he grows in ability to appreciate these, he will be most highly blessed. The knowledge gained will bring full confidence in God to all who become upright in heart and who desire to conform themselves to the grand purpose of their Maker in creation. Mankind are now bowed down with the weight of the sin and the accumulated infirmities of the ages, in bondage to Satan and his evil reign. Man has been the spectacle of the Universe. He has been the source of astonishment and sorrow to all the holy beings in God's infinite domain. His experiences, his weaknesses, his degradation, his sufferings under sin, have through all the centuries been preaching most powerful sermons, and have been giving impressive object lessons as to the effects of disobedience to God.

Throughout the Millennial Age, the great Jehovah will do a mighty work through the Messiah. It will be a work of opening all the eyes long blinded to the glorious light of the goodness of God. It will be a work of unstopping all the ears long deaf to the voice of Truth. The sons of men shall be washed from their pollution;

their wounds and putrefying sores shall be anointed, bound up and gradually healed by the Great Physician; their tattered raiment shall be exchanged for the garments of righteousness. By the close of the Golden Age of Blessing man shall stand forth clothed and in his right mind, a glorious image of his Creator in the flesh.

When man shall have attained the full likeness of God, he will not need any special development of faith; for faith will be inherent in him. He will have communion with his Maker; he will once more be a son of God. He will know his Creator as even Adam in his perfection did not know Him. He will have had such revelations of the terrible nature and results of sin, of the marvelous love of God in his deliverance from sin, that he will have an established character, fixed for righteousness, and a hatred of sin that will be an all-sufficient safeguard throughout eternity. After all this manifestation of the contrast between righteousness and iniquity, between the glorious sunshine of God's love and the horrible darkness and gloom of the pit from which they were lifted, any who still love and prefer the bondage of corruption will be destroyed in the Second Death.

When man first fell from his perfect estate, and the penalty of death was pronounced, the conditions did not manifest Jehovah as a loving God; and man thought he would be happier in his alienation and sin if he did not know about God at all. God gave, indeed, a hint of a coming time of restoration, when the Seed of the woman should crush the serpent's head; but the statement was vague. So, with very few exceptions, men tried to forget God, to give Him no place in their thoughts or their affections. Gradually they drifted further and further away from Him.

"WITHOUT GOD, HAVING NO HOPE!"

St. Paul in commenting upon this fact, declares that God gave mankind over to a reprobate mind. As they did not wish to retain Him in their knowledge, He left them to their evil course, to pursue

the lusts of their depraved minds, and to learn by sad experience the bitter fruitage of sin, and the misery, vanity and woe which it brings. Man's perverse heart must be broken, before he can be brought to a realization of his condition as declared by the Apostle in the words, "Without God, and having no hope in the world"! Humanity has had bitter experiences, [R5717 : page 197] and has gone down from one depth of depravity to another, until now mankind have become so alienated from God by wicked works and self-will that many do not know that there *is* a God. Others conjure up in their minds a demon, whom they worship as God. So the poor world is today in a sadly confused, benighted condition.

Many believe that there is some law of Nature, some law of development and progression; and thus they speak of Nature as God – an impersonal god. They cannot worship such a god; for an impersonal god could not sympathize with them nor deliver them from their troubles. The Bible, however, presents a God of intelligence, a God of sympathy, a God who cares for His creatures and who has a marvelous Plan for their restoration to His own glorious likeness. How glad we are that we know this loving, living God! How glad we are that He has let us into the secrets of His counsels, that He has made known His wonderful Plan to us in advance of the inauguration of the great work! How it rejoices our hearts, to know not only of our own glorious share and place in this great Plan, but to know also of the blessings so soon to come to the poor groaning creation!

BLESSINGS PROPORTIONATE TO FAITH

In proportion as the people of God come into close heart-fellowship with Him, in proportion as they hear His voice speaking to them through the Prophets of old, through Jesus and His Apostles, and through His daily providences, they hear a good Message, a glorious Message, one that assures them of His loving sympathy, of His great Power and of His purpose to exercise

that [R5717 : page 198] Power for the deliverance and blessing of all the world. As the Scriptures themselves assure us, it is a Message of "great joy to *all people*." Some can believe and receive this Message of good more readily than can others, and the more fully one receives it the more fully he will be blessed. Both knowledge and faith are necessary for that blessing. Some have not now the capacity for faith and some have not the knowledge. Those who have no faith will have to wait over for the next Age.

Some can look out into the realms of space and by modern appliances and mathematical calculations determine the distance to the sun, the center of our own solar system. With the aid of the telescope they can sweep through the vast expanse of the Universe and see something of its grandeur and its glory. They can study the movements of the planets in their various orbits, and forecast their future positions. They can ascertain also that there is a vast system of systems in the great material Universe. Truly, "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth His handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge. There is no speech nor language. (But) their melody extendeth through all the earth, and to the end of the world their words!" – See Leeser and R.V.

But these wise men who study these wonderful works of the Almighty do not realize nor appreciate the love of God as manifested in His Son, our Redeemer. They have a certain knowledge of the Power of God, but very few of them appreciate His character. As the Apostle Paul has truly said: "In the Wisdom of God, the world through its *wisdom* knows not God." (1 Corinthians 1:21. R.V.) Jehovah does not purpose that any shall *know Him* save in *His own appointed way*. The wisdom of man *cannot* find Him out.

God is now seeking only those who have the true wisdom, in that they realize their own insufficiency, their need of instruction

and guidance, and who can exercise the necessary faith when the Message of God is brought to them. All others will be able to appreciate the Message in the incoming Age of Blessing. Those who are now too wise in their own conceits will be brought through humiliating experiences to a contrite and humble condition of mind. The credulous will be given the true knowledge which will lead to a real faith.

Many noble minds are filled with the wisdom of this world. They think of the mighty Universe with its millions upon millions of systems of worlds rolling through infinite space. They look at the earth, and think of the comparatively insignificant size of the little planet on which we live. By the power of the microscope, they examine the wonderful construction of plant and flower. They scrutinize the marvels of the structure of molecules and atoms of matter, and of midgets, mites and microbes. Then they shake their heads and say: "The idea that a God of such infinite Power would concern Himself about humanity! He is far too busy to trouble Himself about us!" These must wait a further and more favorable time for their enlightenment. The Lord can deal as yet only with those who have naturally some faith and who have gained a sufficient knowledge of Himself and of His character to believe in His Love and to be desirous of coming into fellowship and communion with Him.

A SPECIAL CLASS NOW DEALT WITH

The basis of the Apostle's argument in our text is that faith is the essential thing in coming to God. God will not receive any one who does not exercise faith. St. Paul recounts the faith of the worthies of old, who gained such victories through their faith, and who received the testimony that they pleased God. Then he declares that whoever would come to God *now* must *believe*. There are some who are drawn to the Lord, who desire to come to Him. There are others who desire to get away from Him as far as possible

and to keep away. These have no real knowledge of God, but are grossly blinded by "the god of this world." – 2 Corinthians 4:3,4.

The class referred to in our text as coming to God or as willing to come to Him, have a heart-hunger for their Creator – a longing for Him that nothing else can satisfy. They say to themselves, "There is a God who made me. The more I learn respecting the vast Universe and of my own anatomy, the more I see the Wisdom and the Power of God, and the more I realize my own littleness and weakness and need. For this great God my soul is crying out, and I have been told that He has made a revelation of Himself, that to certain Prophets of old He revealed the fact that He takes an interest in His human creatures. I mean to study what He has declared through these His servants. I am also told that He has revealed Himself and His love further through Jesus Christ His Son; and that this Son of God came to earth and died for sinful man that he might live. If God has really given man His Message, I want that Message; I will draw near to this God, that I also may receive His blessing."

The Lord encourages all such through His Word. He says, "Draw nigh to Me, and I will draw nigh to you." And as these come, seeking to know His will, He becomes the Rewarder of their faith. He points them to the one who is the Propitiation for the sins of all who come to Him. He makes known to them that those who come to Him through His appointed Channel may have the Savior as their Advocate, upon the terms of faith and consecration to lay down their lives in sacrifice with Him. Thus step by step they come into the fulness of salvation, and enter into the Holiest by the blood of the cross. They are accepted in the Beloved.

CREDULITY NOT FAITH

Many imagine that they have faith when in reality they have only credulity. Their so-called faith is not founded upon the Word of God and upon His promises. Such credulity will surely fail when

the great testing time comes. Credulity is the acceptance of a thing without good reason, without sure evidence. Faith, on the contrary, is the acceptance of a thing because we have indisputable evidence of its reality, its truthfulness and its reliability. As we exercise faith in God, we come nearer and nearer to Him.

"According to your faith be it unto you," are the Master's words. Every exercise of faith is based upon something real and tangible to faith. There is a mental tangibility for faith and also a physical, or outward, tangibility. True wisdom searches out the two grounds for faith. "The secret of the Lord is with them that reverence Him; and He will show them His Covenant."

These increase in faith as they go on in the path of obedience. Faith and obedience are like our two feet. We put one forward, and then the other, and then the first one forward; and so we develop in faith by continuing in the spirit of obedience, following on wherever the Lord points the way. "We walk by faith and not by sight." But we have good, tangible evidences all along our Heavenward journey. Outside of all other evidences, the true Christian has in his own personal experiences abundant proof of our Father's love and care. The Master said, "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and not one of them shall fall upon the ground without your Father...But ye are of more value than many [R5717 : page 199] sparrows." (Matthew 10:29.) As he progresses in the narrow way the child of God comes to learn the fulness of meaning in these words of our Lord.

FAITH A REAL SUBSTANCE

So the Christian who walks closely with the Master finds the truth of the Apostle's words that "faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence [proof, conviction] of things not seen." (Hebrews 11:1.) Faith is not only a groundwork, or basis, for our hopes (itself also having a groundwork in proven facts), but it is a real substance – a mental substance, so to speak, which stimulates

and clarifies the mind. Faith is not a substance that we can hold in our hand or walk on with our feet. But it becomes a strength to our minds as we progress in the knowledge of God and of the things which God has to give to those who love Him above all else and who seek to render Him loving, devoted service. Faith becomes as real and tangible to us as any material substance – even more so; for the things upon which our faith lays hold are eternal.

