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FAITH DEMONSTRATED BY WORKS

"I will show thee my faith by my works." – James 2:18.

FAITH is a mental conviction respecting things not positively proven to the senses, but received on supposedly good authority. There is another quality that seems very closely allied to faith; namely, credulity. The difference between these two appears to be that faith requires, and inquires for, good, sound evidence and authority for its basis. There are people who are very much prejudiced, and who seem to reason very little about anything. Sometimes they are credited with having a great deal of faith, whereas the truth is that they have a great deal of credulity. The faith that is of the responsible kind is that which the Christian is called upon to exercise. He exercises faith in God. If he doubted God's existence, God's character, he would not be in any sense prepared to receive the Message which the Father has to send at this time.

Having gotten a glimpse of the great Divine Character through the Book of Nature, we properly enough, before exercising faith in the Bible, make inquiry into the personnel of the writers – who they were, what were their characters, who did they claim to be, what evidences are there that they were true, and do these evidences agree. In other words, faith does not jump at conclusions, but makes investigations and sees that it has some reasonable ground for its existence. If it were solid ground, it would be knowledge. *Faith* is not *knowledge*. Therefore Faith inquires for reasonable ground upon which to build.

FAITH DISTINGUISHED FROM CREDULITY

With the Bible open, the Christian has before him a field of *faith-knowledge* – *knowledge* of things not seen by the natural eye – all of which he may continually be proving. While ever satisfied with what

he has been demonstrating, he must necessarily be manifesting his faith by the way, proving that which is good. His mental processes being active, he should realize how one feature of the Divine Plan fits into another. Thus his faith grows into larger faith, deeper faith, stronger faith. In time his faith becomes a conviction so strong that he might be willing to stake his life on what he believes to be the truth in the Divine promises. He accepts those promises as something real, something that he knows about – not something received in a vague, unsatisfactory manner.

On the other hand, credulity is *prejudice*. The heathen are credulous; for they are blindly prejudiced. Many Christian people seem to be beset by the same spirit of credulity, and seem to mistake it for *faith*. We are not to forget that there are two great powers at the present time – the power of Good and the power of Evil. We are not to forget that for six thousand years the power of Evil has had the upper hand on earth. God has permitted Satan to have a great deal of power in the world. But it is a deceptive power. To Satan's misleading spirit powers we accredit much of the superstition that has fastened itself upon humanity.

For instance, there was a time when we thought it a manifestation of great faith to see three gods in one God, and one God in three gods. From our mistaken viewpoint we said, "One cannot reason this out; it is all of faith." The fact that somebody had said that there are three gods in one God, and one God in three gods, was not a basis for *faith*. So then, it was not *faith* that we had in a Trinity, but *credulity*. With many other things it was the same; we were not exercising faith. And so it would seem to have been with very many in the past. They must have swallowed many things with a very slight amount of mental mastication. We believe that such conditions still exist.

We notice our Christian Science friends. Many of them are very noble people, very estimable people in some respects; yet in our judgment they hold certain doctrines that are not matters of faith, but

of credulity. They have theories respecting sin, respecting error. Because these theories seem to fit certain experiences in life, they have accepted these as a basis for what they call faith, and have seemed to receive them aside from all processes of reasoning. The basis for their doctrine seems to be that they have experienced healing as a result of faith. They do not seem to see that Satan has power to mislead. We fear that many of them are being misled by Satan's deceptions. We see a similar condition amongst Mormons. They too have theories, and have healing. It is the same with the Seventh Day Adventists. The Adversary is misleading all these people as respects the Call of this present Age; they are being side-tracked. They are not, therefore, to receive the highest blessing, which goes only to the faithful who walk in the footsteps of Jesus.

COMBATTING WRONG DEDUCTIONS IN EARLY CHURCH

The Apostle in our text says, "I will show thee my faith by my **works**." This is part of an argument that he has been putting up. There was a theory prevalent in the days of the Apostle, that works amounted to nothing – that it was **faith** which counted. The Apostle James is combatting that thought. Faith is all very well; but you must have works also! The Apostle says, "You show me your faith **without** works, but I prefer to show you my faith **by** my works." There was some perversion of St. Paul's teachings that had gotten into circulation at that time. St. Paul had said that by the works of the Law no [R5892 : page 140] flesh could be justified. The Jews, who had the Law, had not been able to keep that Law; neither would St. Paul or any other human being be able to keep that Law, in order to justify himself in God's sight. The only way to do this was by **faith** in the Lord Jesus Christ, and not by the Law of works.

We are not to understand St. James as in any sense of the word opposing St. Paul in this thought, but rather as opposing the wrong deductions from St. Paul's teaching; to wit, "It does not matter what

kind of works I have. I have strong *faith*; God will not pay any attention to the *works*. I can work the works of the flesh; and having plenty of faith in God, I shall be all right." St. James points out that this is not true. Faith in God and in Christ and in the forgiveness of sins is proper; but there must be works to accompany it. Just as surely as we have faith it will manifest itself in some way, and these works, if not *good*, will be bad works, indifferent works. A good tree will produce good fruit. A pure fountain will send forth pure water.

This seems to be the Apostle's argument. Surely we all agree with him, and are all seeking to show forth our works. The world cannot appreciate our faith, because they cannot read our hearts. But God appreciates our faith. Abraham was the father of the faithful. God loved him and treated him as a friend. He was called the "Friend of God." But, says the Apostle, God required that Abraham should show his faith by doing some works; he must have some works to prove that he had *faith*; he will test us by our *works* as to the strength of our *faith*.
