

June 4

That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ. 1 Peter 1:7

IT is your faith that is on trial now. In the calmer days, when the sun of favor

(1Pe 1:5 KJV) "Kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."

R1005 "Sufficiency of grace to help in every time of need is supplied mainly through God's Word, the exceeding great and precious promises of which are given us that thereby we may overcome self and the world, and become partakers of the divine nature.—2 Pet. 1:4.

It is thus that the Father deals with those to whom, through the Son, liberty to become sons is now granted, viz., by the word of his grace—the Scriptures. Granted the privilege, or liberty, or ability, to do so through their Redeemer's merit, these are then "begotten by the Word of Truth that they should become a kind of first fruits of God's creatures."—James 1:18.

The apostle Peter clearly tells the whole story saying: "The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ...hath begotten us...to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us, who are kept by the power of God [his exceeding great and precious promises and providences upon which we lay hold] through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time" [in the end of this age when the body, the "Royal Priesthood," the little flock of Sons of the "divine nature" shall be completed and glorified.] "Wherein ye rejoice greatly though now for a season if need be ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations, that the trial of your faith...might be found unto [or result in] praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ...Of which [special] salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace [peculiar favor] that should come unto you."—1 Pet. 1:2-10."

(Heb 11:1 Wilson Diaglott) "But Faith is a Basis of things hoped for, a Conviction of things unseen"

shone brightly upon you, you were quietly laying the foundation of a knowledge of the Truth, and rearing the superstructure of Christian character. Now you are in the furnace to be proved: summon therefore all your courage; fortify your patience; nerve yourself to endurance; hold fast to your hope; call to mind the promises, they are

Q774 "FAITH -- How Cultivated?"

Question -- How can I get faith when I don't have it naturally?

Answer... Man hopes for eternal life in happiness. A basis for that hope is found in the Word of God. A doubter may become a most earnest and tenacious believer upon receiving proper evidence. "Life is the gift of God through Jesus Christ." (Romans 6:23) His Word is the only evidence pointed out clearly the way of obtaining that gift. To increase our faith we must, therefore, study God's Word in a humble and prayerful manner, with the desire to know and do His will, and to rely upon His Word. One who knows the letter of His Word and fails to rely upon it has little faith. Another both knows the Word and relies upon it and strong faith results."

R2617 "He gives us a ground for faith, and then, as we exercise that faith and act in harmony with it, he gives fresh corroboration; meanwhile testing it, by permitting various difficulties..."

R2005 "True faith is not credulity. It is critical, and believes only upon good evidence. It criticizes closely and distinguishes clearly between the teachings of men and the substantiated Word of God. But, having found the Word of God, it trusts it implicitly, knowing that its Author cannot lie; and that all his purposes and promises will be accomplished."

(2 Cor 13:5 KJV) "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?"

R3104 "Sometimes the tests come in the way of trials of faith, and we are called upon to prove ourselves whether we be in the faith (2 Cor. 13:5) when some subtle errors are presented to us as advanced truth. But if we know the voice of the "Good Shepherd" we will not be easily beguiled.

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YOUR PRECIOUS FAITH

"That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ."--1 Pet. 1:7.

FAITH has in it the two elements of intellectual assurance and heart reliance. The former is faith in the abstract sense; the latter is its concrete form. It is in this latter, fullest sense we read that, "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness." (Rom. 10:10.) Both the head and the heart—the intellect and the affections—are necessary to that faith without which it is "impossible to please God" (Heb. 11:6); though many fancy they have faith when they have only one of its essential elements. With some it is all emotion; with others it is all intellectuality; but neither of these can stand the tests of fiery ordeal: they must abide together if they are to endure to the end and be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.

An intellectual grasp of the fundamental principles of divine truth--viz., of the existence of a personal, intelligent God, the Creator and Sustainer of all things, and of his purpose and plan of redemption through his only begotten and well-beloved Son, Jesus Christ--constitutes the *foundation* of faith; while trust and reliance to the extent of his promises, upon the personal God who is the author

still yours; and "cast not away your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward." "In quietness and confidence shall be your strength." "Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him," and faith has gained her victory. Z.'95-135 R1823:4

We remember the inspired counsel, "To the law and the testimony: if they speak not according to this word it is because there is no light in them" (Isa. 8:20); and to the law and the testimony we go, and, relying implicitly upon this as the infallible teaching of the Spirit of God, we are enabled to arrive at definite, clear and positive doctrine. We are not left in doubt as to what is truth, but are enabled to give a solid Scriptural reason for the hope that is in us, on which hope we dare implicitly to rest our faith, and with humble boldness to successfully withstand the assaults of error. But oh, how dead to selfish ambition, how fully devoted to the will of God such must be!

Let us, dearly beloved, as we realize that thus far God has counted us worthy to look upon the scroll of his plan which has been unsealed for us by our blessed Lord Jesus, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, prove our worthiness to continue to look therein and to read the wondrous things of his law, by faithful obedience and loyalty to it in all things. Let us not undervalue our great privilege in being counted worthy to suffer some reproach and some hardness as good soldiers for the truth's sake...faithfully enduring the severest pressure that God may permit to come upon us."

(1Co 10:23 KJV) "All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not.

R5860 "We have known Christians who, if they have a doubt about a certain feature of Truth or a weakness of faith, would discuss their doubts in the presence of those who were weak in the faith or who were of the world. This is a great mistake and productive of much harm. One never knows when a weak one may be present who might be greatly injured by words of doubt or distrust... We should not merely say that we have faith, but should manifest it."

of our being and who, as a Father, invites the implicit confidence and love of his children, make up the *superstructure* of our faith.

The trial of our faith to which the Lord and the apostles refer is therefore a trial, not only of our intellectual recognition of divine truth, but also of our heart reliance upon God. In both respects every true child of God will find his faith severely tried, and, as a soldier of Christ, let him not fail to be armed for the conflict. If an attack is made upon the intellectual foundation of our faith we should see to it that we have a, "Thus saith the Lord," for every item of our belief. Let the Word of God settle every question, and let no human philosophies, however ingenious, lead us into the labyrinths of error; for if the foundations of faith become unsettled, the superstructure cannot stand when the winds and the floods of adversity and temptation beat against it. Doubt and fear will cause it to tremble, and when it is thus weakened the vigilant adversary will surely send a blast of temptation against it, and great will be the soul's peril.

Let us, therefore, look well to the foundations of our faith--study the doctrine and get a clear intellectual conception of every

element of divine truth which the inspired Word presents to the people of God; let us become rooted, grounded, settled, established in the faith, the doctrines of God, and hold them fast: they are the divine credentials; and let us give earnest heed to them, lest at any time we should let them slip.--Heb. 2:1.

But having the doctrines clearly comprehended as foundations of faith, we need also to look well to the superstructure of heart reliance, which is really in greater danger from storms and floods than are the foundations, being more constantly exposed. The Apostle Peter tells us that a tried, proved faith, a faith that has stood the tests of fiery ordeal and come off victorious, is very precious in the sight of God. That is, that every time we pass through a conflict and still retain, not only the truth, but also our confidence in God and reliance upon his promises in the dark as well as in the light, our integrity of heart and of purpose, and our zeal for truth and righteousness, our characters have grown stronger, more symmetrical and more Christ-like, and hence more pleasing to God, who is thus subjecting us to discipline for this very thing.

Therefore, "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the *fiery trial* which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you. But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings, that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy." (1 Pet. 4:12,13.) It is worthy of notice here that special reference is made, not to the tests of intellectual belief brought about by the presentation of false doctrine, but to reproaches and persecution for Christ's sake, either for adherence to his doctrines or conformity to his righteousness; for, the Apostle adds, "If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you." He warns us to take heed only that we suffer not as evil-doers, "Yet," he says, "if any man suffer as a Christian [that is, either for Christian principles or Christian doctrine], let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God on this behalf."

R5114 (From Harvest Truth Database V5.0 2006)

THE DEVELOPMENT OF FAITH THROUGH FIERY TRIALS

"That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ."--1 Pet. 1:7.

FAITH MAY BE said to have in it the two elements of *intellectual assurance* and *heart-reliance*. Both the head and the heart--the intellect and the affections--are necessary to the faith without which it is impossible to please God. With some, faith is all *emotion*; with others, it is all *intellectuality*. But neither of these elements alone can withstand the fiery tests to which faith is subjected. Both must be *present* and *remain*, if our faith be that which will endure to the end and be found unto praise, honor and glory at the appearing of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

The trial of our faith to which our Lord and the Apostles refer is a trial, not only of our *intellectual knowledge* of Divine Truth, but also of our *heart-reliance upon God*. In both respects, the true child of God will find himself severely tried. Let him see to it that he has a "Thus saith the Lord" for every item of his belief. Let him study the doctrine and get a clear understanding of every element of the Truth. Let him become rooted, grounded, settled and established in the doctrines of God, and give earnest heed lest at any time he let them slip.--Heb. 2:1.

When he has his faith well grounded in the *fundamental principles* of Divine Truth, let every consecrated child of God see to it that he also continue to cultivate heart-reliance in the "*great and precious promises*." St. Peter tells us that a faith which has stood the tests of fiery ordeal and has come off victorious is very precious in the sight of the Heavenly Father. Whenever we pass through a fiery trial and still retain, not only our faith in the doctrines, but also our *confidence in God, our reliance in His promises*, our integrity of heart and purpose, and our zeal for Truth and righteousness, then our characters have grown more Christ-like and hence more pleasing to God, who subjects us to discipline for this very purpose.

St. Peter intimates in our text that the faith of those called throughout the Gospel Age will receive a severe testing. He says, "That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." In the present time, when gold is comparatively a rare metal, it has a special value. Therefore, the Apostle compares it to the faith of the Little Flock, to whom alone, of all humanity, will be given the glory, honor and immortality promised to those who overcome.

Hence the trial of the faith of this class is very important. None will be admitted to membership in the Body of Christ who has not been tested and proved by the Lord. But let us remember that our

The Prophet Daniel also says that particularly in this time of the end, "many shall be purified and made white and *tried*," and Malachi (3:2,3) compares the trials of this time to the "refiner's fire" and to "fuller's soap," which are designed to refine and purify the Lord's people. The Apostle Paul urges that we fight the good fight of faith, and patiently endure afflictions to the end. (1 Tim. 6:12; 2 Tim. 2:3.) And many are the words of consolation and blessed comfort offered by the Psalmist and others to the tempest-tossed and suffering people of God.--See Psa. 77:1-14; 116:1-14; 34:19; 31:24; 2 Thes. 3:3.

Are you then, dear brother or sister, hard pressed on every side with temptations to doubt that God's protection, love and care are *yours*, that his precious promises belong to *you*? have you grown discouraged and disheartened? do the foes seem too many and too strong for you? do the reproaches come with crushing weight, and do the clouds hang heavy over your seemingly defenseless head? Ah, it is just here that faith must claim her victory! Is it not promised, "This is the victory that overcometh,... even your faith?" ⁽¹⁾It is your faith that is on trial now. In the calmer days when the sun of favor shone brightly upon you, you were quietly laying the foundation of a knowledge of the truth, and rearing the superstructure of Christian character. Now you are in the furnace to be proved: summon therefore all your courage; fortify your patience; nerve yourself to endurance; hold fast to your hope; call to mind the promises, they are still yours; and "cast not away your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward." "In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength," "Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him," and faith has gained her victory. Then in due time the Lord's hand will be recognized in making all things work together for good to you according to his promise. This proof of your faith, says Peter, is more precious than gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire.

⁽¹⁾ Jun. 4 Manna, 1Pet. 1:7

testing is not to see whether we are perfect according to the *flesh*. On the contrary, God knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust.--Psa. 103:14.

What God is seeking in us is the development and perfection of faith. We are tested to see whether we believe in Him as a faithful, wise, loving and true God; and in His Son as our Redeemer, who purchased us with His own precious blood, and as our Advocate, who now covers our blemishes, past, present and future, with the Robe of His imputed Righteousness. These are the elements of faith which He will test thoroughly and which must grow stronger as time goes by. Without strong, well-tested faith in God and His promises, we cannot please Him and become members of the Elect class which He is now selecting.

THE PURPOSE FOR WHICH FAITH IS TRIED

The trial of our faith is not left to *chance*. It is supervised by our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, who is represented by the Prophet Malachi as a refiner and purifier of gold and of silver, that He may purify the antitypical House of Levi, and separate the dross from the precious metal. (Mal. 3:3.) In one sense of the word, He came as that refiner at the First Advent. During the entire Gospel Age, He has been doing the refining work in His people, that the offering to the Father might be an acceptable one.

First of all, our Lord laid down His life in *fulfilment* of the *types of the Law*, thus demonstrating His absolute trust, loyalty, and faith in God. The Church of Christ must be similarly tested and proved in respect to their obedience, trust, loyalty to the Father. They must be willing, not only to trust God when things are favorable, but to trust in His providences when they cannot see the outcome. To attain this degree of faith, they must pass through manifold trials and testings, that they may demonstrate their faith and loyalty.

During the Gospel Age a peculiar, special and called-out class is being dealt with. We can see that God is not dealing with the world, but allows it to "lie in the Wicked One." (1 John 5:19, *Diaglott*.) St. Paul tells us that during those times when the people were in ignorance, God paid no particular attention to their conduct, except when it went to an extreme. (Acts 17:30.) But during the next Age, whoever does not repent when he hears the Gospel will make no advancement; but will, in conjunction with the Divine Plan, have punishments, stripes, for anything that he knowingly does that is wrong. This Gospel Age, however, is for the development of a spe-

cially *called-out class--a people for a purpose--the Church of Christ.*

The question naturally arises, Why should God test *faith* rather than *works*? The answer is that all kinds of works are dependent upon the ability of the worker, and that the whole race of Adam has become unable to do perfect works, on account of the fall of their first parents. None can be perfectly just, perfectly wise, perfectly loving; to be so in our present imperfect condition is impossible.

Therefore, in His Wisdom and Love, God avoids making His test along those lines in which we are absolutely incompetent, and makes it along the line of faith --in His Wisdom, His Love and His promises. To doubt any of these would be to weaken the basis of our hope. We realize that we are in a fallen condition, that we are dying like the remainder of the race. We have heard through the Word of God that He has provided a Savior, but we see that things continue much as they were, despite all that God and Christ have done. Our faith, however, assures us that God, who knows the end from the beginning, is working all things according to the counsel of His own will and that in due time He will establish righteousness in the earth.--Eph. 1:11; Psa. 72:1-7.

The language of one without faith would be, "I cannot see that God or Christ is accomplishing anything for the world. Man now learns to control himself better than did his ancestors and so he does not fight as did the savages of old, but uses more modern weapons. He builds hospitals and insane asylums; in this way he gets the sick and the insane off his hands and so has more time to devote to business." Present conditions have a strong influence upon the world. Very much depends upon how we look at a matter.

TRUTH AND RIGHTEOUSNESS INTEGRAL PARTS OF CHARACTER

From the standpoint of faith we see that Christ has come into the world and during the Gospel Age has been carrying on the work of selecting the Church, which is His Body, and that from these a light has shone out into the surrounding darkness, which has been more or less dispelled by it. The light of the Holy Spirit, shed abroad by the example of many Christian lives, exerts an influence today, and many have a veneration of politeness which may be mistaken for the fruits of the Spirit of God. But the outward conduct alone is not evidence of acceptable heart condition. God desires that truth and righteousness shall become integral parts of our characters and that the principle of Love shall dominate in everything. This development of character we do not find among *all* who profess the name of Christ.

Our faith, looking out into the world, asks of the Lord, "When will the promised time come in which Thy will shall be done on earth as in heaven?" The Scriptures reply that the glorious time for the blessing of the world will not come until the Church shall have passed into glory; that Messiah will then reign for a thousand years in order to put down sin and opposition to Divine arrangements and to uplift those who desire to come into harmony with God; and that in order to accomplish this work He will establish a government based upon the principles of righteousness. By faith we accept this answer, and await God's due time for the blessing of all mankind.

Meantime, we will not permit ourselves to drift into unbelief while we delude ourselves with the thought that we or others are accomplishing something through "social uplift." We are glad to see efforts put forth to help the unfortunate; but we perceive that there is a force at work in the world that prevents success along this line. Present methods will not eradicate selfishness from the human heart; and until this is accomplished, God's will cannot be done on earth as it is in Heaven.

To bring about this desired result, the Kingdom of Heaven is soon to be established, according to the Word of God. If, while waiting for His due time to arrive, we participate in worldly ambitions and endeavors, our faith will become vague and perhaps die. Although the good that we may do will be in conflict with the darkness around us, nevertheless, it should always be shining forth in our words and in our conduct as the result of the glorious hopes that inspire our lives.

Faith is a quality possessed by all whom God is calling to membership in the Body of Christ, and the appeal of the Scriptures is only to those who have some faith and who are determined to increase it. When we begin our course as Christians, we have comparatively little faith, and it must be developed; our Christian experience is for the purpose of faith development. As St. Peter suggests, our faith, which is on trial, is much more precious than gold, although the gold be tried by fire. The exercise of faith tends to its development, and so our Father gives us numerous trials to test its strength.

THE FAITH OF THE ANGELS SEVERELY TESTED

God purposely permits us to be subject to manifold temptations

for the testing of our faith, which is necessary because of the outcome of the trial. We may suppose that *prior to the existence of man* the angels had no such trials of faith and patience as the Church has had, for the angels saw God and knew of His works. Nevertheless, God has been pleased to give them a test of faith, which has continued during all of man's experience.

The primary cause of Satan's deflection, which resulted in his rebellion, was that he lost his faith in God. He formed the idea that he could manage the Universe better than could the Almighty, and thought to secure to himself a little corner where he could show how affairs should be carried on. He succeeded in getting control of our first parents, only to find that, instead of bringing a blessing, he had brought upon the human family the curse of death--the penalty of sin--and all the misery and crime now on the pages of history.

Satan's career became a very important test to the angels. Believing that God had all power, they did not understand why He would permit Satan to pursue so evil a course. They would have restrained the Adversary altogether. So when they saw evil going on unrestrained for centuries, some of them also evidently lost their faith. Thus came about the conditions mentioned in the sixth chapter of Genesis, when some of the angels preferred to materialize and live in human conditions. This was in violation of the Divine arrangement, and was the result of their loss of faith in God's Wisdom and Power. They had seen what Satan had done, although he had not succeeded in doing anything great; and their sentiment was, "Apparently God does not control affairs so completely as we have thought."--Gen. 6:1-4; 2 Pet. 2:4,5; Jude 6,7.

Thus we see that God tested the faith of the holy angels, especially when we understand that the evil conditions prevailing before the flood have continued to some extent. The holy angels had occasion to doubt, to fear respecting God's Wisdom, Love and Power. Thus they were all thoroughly tested--more so than humanity; for they saw all that there was to be seen. We admit that there are a great many things that we do not know and cannot see, but the angels have apparently a much wider scope of knowledge. Thus the test of their faith was much greater than is ours.

God tested the faith of the angels because He wished to know which of them had that absolute confidence which would enable them to trust Him, whether it seemed that He *had* or had *not* the power to control affairs. The lesson of the exceeding sinfulness of sin was both wise and necessary. Had the fall of man resulted in the everlasting torture of even a small proportion of the human family, we could not think that God was either wise or just in permitting this test to come upon His creatures.

For more than four thousand years God permitted mankind to go down into death. Then came a manifestation of His Love when He provided for their redemption; and a still further manifestation of His Power will be given in the next Age, when they will be raised from the dead. Furthermore, in the Bride class He is making a special illustration, both to angels and to men, of His Love for those who manifest heart-loyalty to Him, and of His willingness to lift those faithful few far above the angels and even to make them "partakers of the Divine nature." We see, then, that in God's dealings with the angels He had respect to their *faith*.

FAITH PROPORTIONATE TO KNOWLEDGE OF GOD'S CHARACTER

The Scriptures say that "without *faith* it is *impossible* to please God." (Heb. 11:6.) If one lose his faith, there is no telling whither he may wander. The Apostle Peter's argument is that this special class who are being selected for exaltation to the Divine nature, must expect to have their faith tested, and that this testing is most important from the Divine point of view. If they have faith, it will control all of their affairs.--Compare Heb. 11:1,6.

Our faith will be in proportion to our knowledge of the character of God. We shall find, upon observation, that in proportion to our faith we can endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ. Since our test is for so brief a time--a few years--it must of necessity be a very severe, a crucial one. God is subjecting our faith to a great heat in order to separate the dross. If we had not the faith, we might fear to take the steps which would bring us into this crucial position. Fear would lead us to decline to take the course that God indicates to be His will. Without faith we would shrink from the fiery trials, the heated furnace. If we have not the faith to stand the trials, then we are not of the kind for whom God is at the present time looking.

If we appreciate this matter, we shall see that "without faith it is impossible to please God"; and that confidence in Him will lead us to weigh His words of precious promise. These promises will make clear to us the reason why these testings are upon us, and will enable us to appreciate our testings as marks of His love for us. The Lord would have us be "a peculiar people," tried and tested, "zealous of

good works," a people for a purpose; and so He develops us through suffering.

When the world is on trial during the Millennial Age, knowledge will have come in, and there will be *less opportunity* for the exercise of faith. Mankind will be in much the same condition as that in which the angels now are. For a thousand years, the world will be assisted upward, and at the same time they will have opportunities of cultivating faith--heart-reliance--in God. What *we* now see by *faith*, they will actually *know*--that the permission of sin has been working out a great Divine test for both men and angels. Thus gradually, throughout the thousand years, their faith will be established in practically the same way that the faith of the angels is now being established. They will *see* and will walk by *sight*, while we *believe* the promises and so walk by *faith*.

There is a difference between *intellectual belief* and *heart-reliance*. The person who knows God *best* will trust Him *most*. Our Lord Jesus in His glorified position trusts the Father most perfectly at all times. But with us, whose trust is imperfect, it is different. Not until the First Resurrection shall we have perfect trust. The greater the knowledge of God's character, the greater will be the heart-reliance upon Him.

During the Millennium, as *intellectual belief* gives place to *knowledge*, the heart-reliance of those who are loyal to the principles of righteousness will increase proportionately. It will *always* be in order to trust in God. The Great Creator is the Great Upholder of the Universe; and all of His creatures will ever be recipients of His bounty. If we understand the Scriptures, the only ones who will have deathlessness will be the Lord Jesus and the Church, which is His

Body. (I Cor. 15:53.) All others will have dependent lives, and so will be objects of Divine care. In order to have everlasting life, they will need to have a heart-reliance upon their Creator. The more they learn of the unchangeableness of the Divine promises and character, the greater will be their trust.

The faith of the Church will be of a higher character than is that of the angels or than will be that of the world restored. The faith of the Church will have been wrought out amidst the darkness and obscurity of this Age, which are being permitted for the very purpose of developing that faith; for the Church is called to occupy a place much higher than that of angels or men-- called to be partakers of the Divine nature.--2 Pet. 1:3,4.

When, during the Millennial Age, the world shall have learned their lessons along the lines of knowledge, God does not purpose to receive them everlastingly without a thorough test of their heart-reliance. In Rev. 20:3,7-10, we read that at the close of the thousand years, Satan shall be loosed for a little season. Mankind will then *know* what is right and what is wrong, for the principles of righteousness will have been implanted in their hearts. The experience with Satan will be a test of heart-reliance, of loyalty, in that God will apparently not be in control.

Then all those not in the fullest sympathy with God and His Divine Plan will be misled by this test of faith. Thus they will demonstrate their true character. Those who prove disobedient will be destroyed in the Second Death. God tells us that in the consummation every knee shall bow and every tongue confess to the glory of His Name, and that every creature in Heaven and in earth shall give honor and praise to the Son.--Rev. 5:13.

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THE POWER OF FAITH

"This is the victory [the conquering power] that overcometh the world, even our faith." --1 John 5:4.

BLESSED are the overcomers! "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne."--Rev. 3:21.

What a reward is this which is held out as an incentive and inspiration to urge us on to noble and heroic effort!--to reign with Christ, to be his bride and joint-heir, his beloved and confidential companion through all eternity, and to be partakers of his divine nature and glory. These promises are freighted with an "exceeding and eternal weight of glory," which "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard; neither hath it entered into the heart of man; but God hath revealed it unto us [brought it within the range of our appreciation] by his spirit." The words sound hollow and meaningless to those who have no appreciation of spiritual things, but to the consecrated children of God who are faithfully striving to meet the conditions upon which the fulfilment depends, and who have therefore a good hope, they are exceeding precious, and fill their hearts with a joy unspeakable and full of glory.

But between the present time and the realization of the promises there lies the necessity of *overcoming*. The word is strongly suggestive of a great conflict, and calls to mind also the Apostle Paul's expressions--"*Fight the good fight* of faith;" "*Endure hardness* as a good soldier of Christ;" "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, *quit you like men, be strong*." To overcome requires energy, force of character, perseverance and steadfast, patient endurance to the very end of the present life.

In the above text the Apostle John points to the only power which can sufficiently energize our whole being and nerve to patient endurance of tribulation, even to the end. That conquering power is *faith*. "Now," says the Apostle Paul, "faith is a basis of things hoped for, a conviction of things unseen." Faith is not merely belief or knowledge, but is knowledge applied, assimilated, appropriated--made a part of our habit of thought, a basis for our actions and a spur to all our energies. Such a faith is the overcoming power which all must have who would run successfully the race for the prize of our high calling, and be overcomers.

What is it that is to be overcome? John briefly comprehends it all in the expression, "*the world*." Then the whole world is against us in this battle. Yes, its spirit, its popular methods, its ambitions, ideas, hopes and aims are all at variance with the elect Church of God, who are not of this world, even as Christ is not of this world. The world is taking its own course, ignoring God, leaning to its own understanding and pursuing its own way. Consequently, our course is in direct opposition to that of the world, and we must pull hard against the current of the world's spirit which is deeply inwrought in our old nature, as well as surrounding us on every side. Yes, it is a hard pull; and we need all the inspiration and energy that faith can impart to accomplish it.

It is important, too, to see that our faith is a correct faith; for if

the faith be an erroneous one, inspiring false and delusive hopes built upon sandy foundations, the stronger this impelling power becomes, the more surely and quickly will it drive its deluded victim to shipwreck upon the rocks. Faith, like steam in an engine, is a power either for good or for evil. Hence the importance of a correct faith.

It was because of this importance of faith, and of recognition of it as the motive power, either for good or for evil, that the Apostle Paul was so solicitous for the continuance of his converts in the faith. (See *1 Thes. 3:2,5,6,7,10*.) He urged all to examine and prove themselves, whether they were in the faith, grounded and settled, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel, but rooted and built up in Christ and *established* in the faith; and to beware lest any man spoil them through philosophy and vain deceit, after the traditions of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. (Col. 1:23; 2:7,8.) He was deeply solicitous, too, that the faith of the Church should not stand in the wisdom (the vain philosophies) of men, but in the power of God. And, therefore, in his preaching, he did not launch out into foolish speculations or follow his own or any other men's reasonings, and so pander to the popular craving for something new; but he confined himself to the expounding of the sacred Scriptures and to exhortations, inspired, as they were, by the revelations made to himself--a prophet, as well as an apostle.--1 Cor. 2:4,13; 2 Cor. 12:1-7; Gal. 1:11,12; 2:2; 2 Pet. 3:15,16.

Let us see, then, that we have the faith of Christ--the faith well founded in the Word of God, a faith examined and proved, deeply rooted in the heart as well as in the head, and therefore *established* as the motive power of life. Such a faith is not nervously looking about for something new, and always probing the vain philosophies of men to see how skilfully they can withstand the Word of the Lord; for those who do so show plainly that their faith is not of sufficient influence to be the moving power in them, impelling them onward to full and complete victory over the world.

Faith, to be a conquering power in us, must go deeper than the head: it must go into the heart, and thus permeate and energize the whole being, bringing not only the outward conduct but every thought into subjection to Christ. Then indeed will faith impel to action, to works which clearly manifest it; for "faith without works is dead." A mere intellectual assent to the truth of God, which does not lead to activity in his service, is not faith, and can never overcome the world nor secure the prize of our high calling. But this is the conquering power that overcometh the world, even our faith. Let us examine ourselves and see that we have it pure and simple, and deeply inwrought in the fiber of our character, and that as an energizing principle it is moving us to faithful and persevering activity. Let it be the governor and inspiration of our lives--a living faith which purges and purifies and strengthens to diligence and patience to the end of the narrow way to life.