

# FAITH

ONE of the qualities on which the fundamental rules of Christianity are based and without which no one can please God Almighty, is FAITH. By it miracles have been wrought and changes most desirable for their worth in righteousness have been effected in the lives of men. All acts of holiness for which the ancient patriarchs, prophets and some women had good reputation as recorded in the Scriptures for our learning, were influenced and dictated by faith.

The assent of the mind to, or a firm belief in the truth of God's word as contained in the Holy Bible, or trust in God, is known as *FAITH*. Thus through faith we can hope for and be certain of realities we do not see.

St. Paul in his letter to the Hebrews stated: "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good report." And he added: "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear." – Hebrews 11: 1-3.

## Importance

The importance of faith in the Lord's service cannot be overstated. We do not see God yet we firmly believe in His existence in that there are thousand and one evidences from the things we see around us that make us know that there is God. "For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made", said St. Paul, "even His eternal power and Godhead; so that they (the faithless and the wicked) are without excuse." – Romans 1: 20.

Again, there are many good things including eternal life God promised His people as there are also evil things with which He has purposed to reward those who trouble the earth. Although we have not seen these things meant for the future, we are constant in our belief and hope that He will surely do them because we trust in Him and have seen proofs of what He did in time past and what He is doing in our time. Such belief or hope is faith, and St. Paul said: "For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it." – Romans 8: 24-25.

## Illogical Ignorance

From all these we can appreciate why people who suffer from "mental doubts" such as agnostics and atheists have always found themselves in internal as well as open conflict with the things of the Spirit of God. There are certain academicians and students who out of *illogical ignorance* consider it scholarly or scientific to denounce everything that is sacred. Some of them having imbibed certain vain philosophies based on "the method of systematic doubt" of Rene Descartes

(1596-1650) can hardly believe in the existence of anything else other than themselves. And so it is no surprise that those who are entrapped in this worldly school of thought never know God.

St. Paul had a very clear picture of the godless sort of intellectuals who deride the gospel of Christ even though it is the power of salvation to the believers. He stated: "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God the world by (its) wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." – 1 Corinthians 1: 18-21.

We as Christians cannot please God unless we have faith. As it is written: "But without faith it is impossible to please Him: 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) And St. Paul also said: "For we walk by faith, not by sight." – 2 Corinthians 5: 7.

### **Grace**

It is through faith, by the grace of God, that Christians will be justified and saved. "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law," stated St. Paul, "but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ. and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.' (Galatians 2: 16) Furthermore, he said: "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works lest any man should boast." – Ephesians 2: 8. 9.

Some people interpret the texts just cited to mean that once anybody believes in Jesus Christ and confesses him he is already saved and that our salvation does not depend on what we do but simply a matter of grace. This is very wrong. Anyone who continues to sin even though he professes to believe in Christ cannot be saved. St. Paul clarified the point enough when he added: "But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid." – Galatians 2: 17.

A converted sinner who claims that he believes in Jesus Christ as his personal saviour but still indulges in sin or gets into the bad company of those who love sinful pleasures, DOES NOT stand any chance of obtaining the grace of salvation. The reason is that the very *grace* conveys the divine instruction that we should abstain from the life of sin and turn to the practice of righteousness. As it is written: "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify, unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." – Titus 2: 11-14.

The statement of the apostle that “by grace are ye saved through faith” gives the understanding vividly that for the grace to be effectual on any individual worshipper of God *faith* must be present. And faith does not mean a mere oral declaration of belief in God or Christ. “Not every one that saith unto me. Lord. Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of heaven,” said Jesus, “but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.” – Matthew 7: 21.

## **Works**

The doing of the will of God stressed by Jesus Christ calls for good works which we must do to demonstrate our faith. A person who claims to have faith in God but does no work to justify his claim is deceiving himself and cannot be saved. Concerning this issue. James the apostle wrote: “What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them. Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead being alone” The apostle went on: “Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works. Thou believest that there is one God: thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?” – James 2: 14-20.

St. James also gave practical examples of people such as Abraham and the woman Rahab who were justified by works of faith. Concerning Abraham he stated: “Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? seest thou how faith wrought with works, and by works was faith made perfect? And the Scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God. Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, AND NOT BY FAITH ONLY.” – James 2: 21-24.

There are many other instances in the Bible of men and women who showed their faith by what they did. Sarah, Abraham’s wife, had faith in God. When the Lord through His angel told her that she would conceive and bear a son, she believed despite the fact that she was already old and past age. Because of her faith God gave her strength to conceive and deliver a male child, Isaac. – Genesis 17: 19; 21: 1-3; Hebrews 11: 11, 12.

In Hebrews chapter 11, St Paul gave a catalogue of some of the ancient faithful, starting from Abel to Rahab, whose acts of faith were marvellous. In addition, he stated: “And what shall I more say? for time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance: that they might obtain a better resurrection....” – Hebrews 11: 32-40.

## Great Faith

In the days of Jesus Christ on earth he healed many people – both men and women – who had faith in him. When he entered Capernaum, a centurion (that is, a Roman army officer over a 100 men) came to him to ask for help. He said: “Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented.” Jesus told him that he would go to his house and cure his servant. But the officer replied: “Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed “

Jesus was greatly impressed by the faith implicit in what the officer said, and he told those who followed him: “Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.” Turning to the centurion, he said: “Go thy way; and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee.” At that very moment his servant recovered. – Read Matthew 8:5-13.

A certain woman who suffered from an “issue of blood” (slow bleeding) for 12 years was healed instantaneously when she touched the edge of the garment of Jesus with faith. And Christ said to her: “Daughter, be of good comfort: thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace.” -Luke 8: 43-48.

There are other instances of people cured by Christ’s saying: “According to your faith be it unto you.” What we should learn from all these is the same importance of faith. If the people had no faith they would not have been healed.

It is by faith through the grace and power of God we can resist and overcome the temptations and troubles of the devil. Said St. Paul: “In every battle you will need faith as your shield to stop the fiery arrows aimed at you by Satan ” (Ephesians 6:16, *Living Letters*) And St. Peter spoke of the trial of our faith and showed that if our faith remained strong after the tests, it would bring us praise, glory and honour. (1 Peter. 1: 17) He admonished the Christians: “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: whom resist steadfast in the faith ...” – 1 Peter 5:8, 9.

Before our prayers can be answered by God, there must be an element of genuine faith. Jesus said: “And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.” (Matthew 21: 22; Mark 11: 24) James the apostle said that if any man lacked wisdom he should ask God for it. “But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering,” he added. – James. 1: 5-8.

However, some may ask as to how one can get faith. St. Paul gave the answer when he said: “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” (Romans 10: 17) This is one of the reasons why much importance is attached by understanding Christians to the assemblies where God’s word is preached in truth. Said St. Paul: “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, the just shall live by faith.” – Romans 1: 16-17.

## **Full Reward**

We therefore exhort every true Christian to hold fast his faith, and never to do anything in violation of it. "Stand fast in the faith", charged St. Paul. (1 Corinthians 16: 13; see also Colossians 2: 7) He further exhorted: "Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water (the truth of God's word). Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for He (God) is faithful that promised)." – Hebrews 10:22-23.

If we are to obtain a full reward for our faith in God then we must be steadfast in His service till the end. "For we are made partakers of Christ," said St. Paul, "if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end." (Hebrews 3: 14) For this reason he gave the following counsel: "Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward. For ye have need of patience, that after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise." (Hebrews 10: 35,36) He went on to show that to do otherwise by shrinking back from the faith is disastrous. Said he: "Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul." – Hebrews 10: 38, 39.

What is more, St. Peter showed that the end of our faith in Christ Jesus-though we do not see him – is salvation. He stated: "Whom (Christ) having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls." – 1 Peter 1: 8, 9.