

PRECIOUS PEARLS

*Compiled by Doug and Lori Riggs
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"ALTHOUGH" AND "YET,"

A LESSON IN THE INTERIOR LIFE

In many of our store windows at Christmas time there stands a most significant picture. It is a dreary, desolate winter scene. There is a dark, stormy, wintry sky, bare trees, and brown grass and dead weeds, with patches of snow over them. On a leafless tree at one side of the picture is an empty and snow-covered nest, and on a branch near sits a little bird. All is cold, and dark, and desolate enough to daunt any bird, and drive it to some fairer clime, but this bird is sitting there in an attitude of perfect contentment, and has its little head bravely lifted up towards the sky, while a winter song is evidently about to burst forth from its tiny throat.

This picture, which always stands on my shelf, has preached me many a sermon. And the test is always the same, and finds its expression in the two words that stand at the head of this article, "Although" and "Yet."

"ALTHOUGH the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines: the labor of the olive shall fail, and the field shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stall: YET I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation."

There come times in many lives, when, like this bird in the winter, the soul finds itself bereft of every comfort both outward and inward; when all seems dark, and all seems wrong, even; when everything in which we have trusted seems to fail us; when the promises are apparently unfulfilled, and our prayers gain no response; when there seems nothing left to rest on in earth or Heaven. And it is at such times as these that the brave little bird

with its message is needed. "Although" all is wrong everywhere, "yet" there is still one thing left to rejoice in, and that is God; the "God of our salvation," who changes not, but is the same good, loving, tender God yesterday, today, and forever. We can joy in Him always, whether we have anything else to rejoice in or not. By rejoicing in Him, however, I do not mean rejoicing in ourselves, although I fear most people think this is really what is meant. It is their feelings or their revelations or their experiences that constitute the groundwork of their joy, and if none of these are satisfactory, they see no possibility of joy at all.

But the lesson the Lord is trying to teach us all the time is the lesson of self-effacement. He commands us to look away from self and all self's experiences, to crucify self and count it dead, to cease to be interested in self, and to know nothing and be interested in nothing but God.

The reason for this is that God has destined us for a higher life than the self-life. That just as He has destined the caterpillar to become the butterfly, and therefore has appointed the caterpillar life to die, in order that the butterfly life may take its place, so He has appointed our self-life to die in order that the divine life may become ours instead. The caterpillar effaces itself in its grub form, that it may evolve or develop into its butterfly form. It dies that it may live. And just so must we. Therefore, the one most essential thing in this stage of our existence must be the death to self and the resurrection to a life only in God. And it is for this reason that the lesson of joy in the Lord, and not in self, must be learned. Every advancing soul must come sooner or later to the place where it can trust God, the bare God, if I may be allowed the expression, simply and only because of what He is in Himself, and not because of His promises or His gifts. It must learn to have its joy in Him alone, and to rejoice in Him when all else in Heaven and earth shall seem

to fail. The only way in which this place can be reached I believe, is by the soul being compelled to face in its own experience the loss of all things both inward and outward. I do not mean necessarily that all one's friends must die, or all one's money be lost: but I do mean that the soul shall find itself, from either inward or outward causes, desolate, and bereft, and empty of all consolation. It must come to the end of everything that is not God; and must have nothing else left to rest on within or without. It must experience just what the prophet meant when he wrote that "Although." It must wade through the slough, and fall off of the precipice, and be swamped by the ocean, and at last find in the midst of them, and at the bottom of them, and behind them, the present, living, loving, omnipotent God! And then, and not until then, will it understand the prophet's exulting shout of triumph, and be able to join it: "YET I will rejoice in the Lord; I will joy in the God of my salvation." And then, also, and not until then, will it know the full meaning of the verse that follows: "The Lord God is my strength, and He will make my feet like hind's feet, and He will make me to walk upon mine high places."

The soul often walks on what seem high places, which are, however, largely self-evolved and emotional, and have but little of God in them; and in moments of loss and failure and darkness, these high places become precipices of failure. But the high places to which the Lord brings the soul that rejoices only in Him, can be touched by no darkness or loss, for their very foundations are laid in the midst of an utter loss and death of all that is not God.

If we want an unwavering experience, therefore, we can find it only in the Lord, apart from all else; apart from His gifts, apart from His blessings, apart from all that can change or be affected by the changing conditions of our earthly life. The prayer which is answered today, may seem to be unanswered tomorrow; the

promises once so gloriously fulfilled, may cease to be a reality to us; the spiritual blessing which was at one time such a joy, may be utterly lost; and nothing of all we once trusted to and rested on may be left us, but the hungry and longing memory of it all. But when all else is gone, God is still left. Nothing changes Him. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever, and in Him is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. And the soul that finds its joy in Him alone, can suffer no wavering.

It is grand to trust in the promises, but it is grander still to trust in the Promiser. The promises may be misunderstood or misapplied, and at the moment when we are leaning all our weight upon them, they may seem utterly to fail us. But no one ever trusted in the Promiser and was confounded.

The God who is behind His promises and is infinitely greater than His promises, can never fail us in any emergency, and the soul that is stayed on Him cannot know anything but perfect peace.

The little child does not always understand its mother's promises, but it knows its mother, and its childlike trust is founded not on her word, but upon herself. And just so it is with those of us who have learned the lesson of this "Although" and "Yet." There may not be a prayer answered or a promise fulfilled to our own consciousness, but what of that? Behind the prayers and behind the promises, there is God, and He is 101 enough. And to such a soul the simple words, GOD IS, answer every question and solve every doubt.

To the little trusting child the simple fact of the mother's existence is the answer to all its need. The mother may not make one single promise, or detail any plan, but she is, and that is enough for the child. The child rejoices in the mother; not in her promises, but in herself. And to the child, as to us, there is behind all that changes and can change, the one unchangeable joy

of the mother's existence. While the mother lives, the child must be cared for, and the child knows this, instinctively if not intelligently, and rejoices in knowing it. And while God lives, His children must be cared for as well, and His children ought to know this, and rejoice in it as instinctively and far more intelligently than the child of human parents. For what else can God do, being what He is? Neglect, indifference, forgetfulness, ignorance, are all impossible to Him. He knows everything, He cares about everything, He can manage everything; and He loves us; and what more could we ask? Therefore, come what may, we will lift our faces to our God, like our brave little bird teacher, and, in the midst of our darkest "Althoughs," will sing our glad and triumphant "Yet."

All of God's saints in all ages have done this. Job said, out of the depths of sorrow and trial which few can equal, "Though He slay me yet will I trust in Him." David could say in the moment of his keenest anguish, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death," yet "I will fear no evil; for Thou art with me." And again he could say, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore, will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled; though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof . . . God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved; God shall help her, and that right early." Paul could say in the midst of his sorrows, "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed . . . for which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look, not at the things which are seen, but at

the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal." All this and more can the soul say that learned this lesson of rejoicing in God alone.

Spiritual joy is not a thing, not a lump of joy, so to speak, stored away in one's heart to be looked at and rejoiced over. Joy is only the gladness that comes from the possession of something good, or the knowledge of something pleasant. And the Christian's joy is simply his gladness in knowing Christ, and in his possession of such a God and Saviour. We do not on an earthly plane rejoice in our joy, but in the thing that causes our joy. And on the heavenly plane it is the same. We are to "rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of our salvation"; and this joy no man nor devil can take from us, and no earthly sorrows can touch.

A writer on the interior life says, in effect, that our spiritual pathway is divided into three regions, very different from one another, and yet each one a necessary stage in the onward progress. First, there is the region of beginnings, which is a time full of sensible joys and delights, of fervent aspirations, of emotional experiences, and of many secret manifestations of God. Then comes a vast extent of wilderness, full of temptation, 102 and trial, and conflict, of the loss of sensible manifestations, of dryness, and of inward and outward darkness and distress. And then, finally, if this desert period is faithfully traversed, there comes on the further side of it a region of mountain heights of uninterrupted union and communion with God, of superhuman detachment from everything earthly, of infinite contentment with the Divine will, and of marvellous transformation into the image of Christ.

Whether this order is true or not, I cannot here discuss, but of one thing I am very sure, that to many souls who have tasted the joy of the "region of beginnings" here set forth, there has come

afterwards a period of desert experience at which they have been sorely amazed and perplexed. And I cannot but think such might, perhaps, in this explanation, find the answer to their trouble. They are being taught the lesson of detachment from all that is not God, in order that their souls may at last be brought into that interior union and oneness with Him which is set forth in the picture given of the third and last region of mountain heights of blessedness. The soul's pathway is always through death to life. The caterpillar cannot in the nature of things become the butterfly in any other way than by dying to the one life in order to live in the other. And neither can we. Therefore, it may well be that this region of death and desolation must needs be passed through, if we would reach the calm mountain heights beyond. And if we know this, we can walk triumphantly through the darkest experience, sure that all is well, since God is God. In the lives of many who read this paper there is, I feel sure, at least one of these desert "Althoughs," and in some lives there are many.

Dear friends, is the "Yet" there also? Have you learned the Prophet's lesson? Is God enough for you? Can you sing and mean it?

"Thou, O Christ, art all I want,
More than all in Thee I find?"

If not, you need the little bird to speak to you. And the song that he sings, as he sits on that bare and leafless tree, with the winter storm howling around him, must become your song also.

"Though the rain may fall and the wind be blowing,
And cold and chill is the wintry blast;
Though the cloudier sky is still cloudier growing,
And the dead leaves tell that summer is passed;
Yet my face I hold to the stormy heaven,

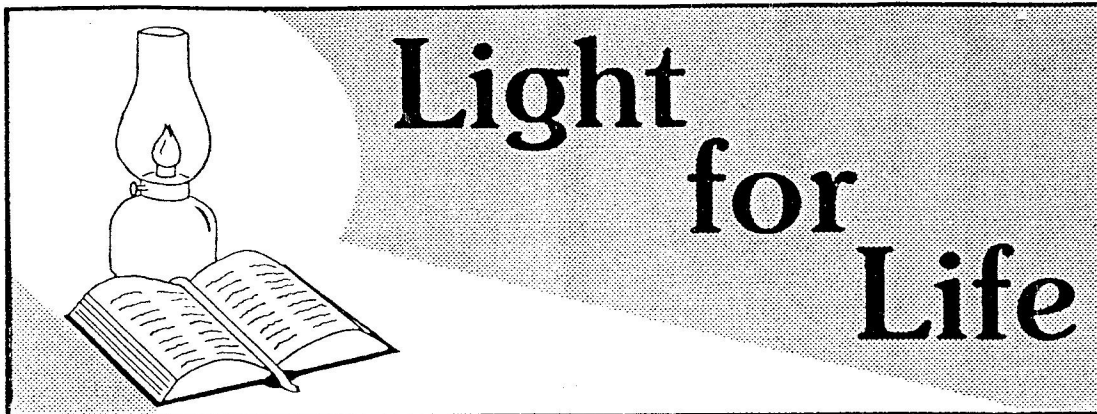
My heart is as calm as a summer sea;
Glad to receive what my God hath given,
Whate'er it be.

"When I feel the cold, I can say, 'He sends it,'
And His wind blows blessing I surely know;
For I've never a want but that He attends it;
And my heart beats warm, though the winds may blow
The soft sweet summer was warm and glowing,
Bright were the blossoms on every bough;

I trusted Him when the roses were blowing,
I trust Him now.

"Small were my faith should it weakly falter,
Now that the roses have ceased to blow;
Frail were the trust that now should alter,
Doubting His love when the storm-clouds grow.
If I trust Him once I must trust Him ever,
And His way is best, though I stand or fall,
Through wind or storm He will leave me never,
For He sends all."

Taken from Hannah Whitall Smith's *The Christian's Secret to a
Happy Life*



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Active Faith

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Faith And Believing

"After John was put into prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. 'The time has come,' He said. 'The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!' As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. 'Come, follow Me,' Jesus said, 'and I will make you fishers of men.' At once they left their nets and followed Him" (Mark 1:14-18).

Across the nations in every Christian denominational and non-denominational group, a passionate desire to do the things of God is clearly displayed. Whether in the extremes of the wildest sect, the apathy of the nominal Christian, or the contrariness of the apostate, we still find ample evidence of men desperately trying to be right with God. Today this desire is most prominently illustrated in the church societies' response to God's call to unity. Tremendous energy, organisation, and application involving a multiplicity of means have been used to achieve what is understood as Biblical unity. Many of the greatest intellects of the world have, over the centuries, applied everything they have to attain and then lead the churches into unity, all other aspects of the Christian ideal, and the receipt of every spiritual blessing.

Why then, in the face of all this activity, have the world's churches so little real testimony of any of these ideals and blessings? Why is it that what we see in the life of the church in early times is so little in evidence today? Ask yourself, "Where are we failing?"

The familiar text above has much to say in answer to these questions that have been asked of successive generations. Most know this text and understand it well ... theoretically. Yet what is the fruit of its "sowing" into our lives? What of these words have taken root within us? When we listen to Jesus' words, what is our point of focus? The answers to many of these questions can often be found in our actions and activities, as the scripture says: *"Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves"* (2 Corinthians 13:5).

There have been books written in abundance, and there are conferences galore on evangelism -- being "fishers of men," and all manner of Christian principles. This is just one symptom of the reality that so many have focussed

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True faith involves completely giving up one's self to the person Jesus Christ and being certain that He will fulfill all that has been promised.

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The way to fruitful Christian living is to abide in Christ and, by faith, to appropriate the life of His divine nature given to us in His great and precious promises.

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God is looking for a people who trust Him in the face of trial and difficulty and believe Him to bring them to a promised land of rest in Jesus Christ.

"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path." -- Psalm 119:105

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their energies on achieving the consequence, but they have ignored the root, the source. All is in the name of Christ, but the focus is on the result not the stimulus -- Christ Jesus Himself.

We have become function and cause-oriented. We cannot achieve Biblical unity by following the cause of Christ. Biblical reality can only be realised in the Person of Christ. As in the simple principle of cause and effect, there can be no effect without its corresponding cause. Aside from Jesus there can be nothing truly Christian.

The answer to nearly all of the "Why do we not see it now?" questions lies here in the issue of the focus of our belief and faith. So what do we really understand our faith and belief to be?

Trusting With Certainty

In the Old Testament the main word group that is translated as "faith" and "belief" is that which stems from the Hebrew word "*aman*." This root word, together with other forms of the root, indicates firmness and certainty. Other forms of the root speak of being certain or assured, and relate to faithfulness, fidelity, steadiness, and truth.

"Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, 'So shall your offspring be.' Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead -- since he was about a hundred years old -- and that Sarah's womb was also dead. Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that GOD had the power to do what He had promised. This is why 'it was credited to him as righteousness.' The words 'it was credited to him' were written not for him alone, but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness -- for us who believe in Him who raised Jesus from the dead" (Romans 4:18-24).

Paul is recounting the passage in

Genesis 15 that describes Abraham's faith. He points out that Abraham examined his and Sarah's circumstances and, despite the rational conclusions that he must have come up with, decided that in fact God was to be trusted. Abraham made a conscious decision and chose of his own free will to put his trust in God. It was this act of saving faith that was accepted by God in place of a righteousness that Abraham did not possess. Despite Abraham's imperfections, we see in his life that time and again he trusted God and acted on God's promises, clearly convinced that God could be counted on.

In the Old Testament, generally, the focus of faith and belief was in the ability of the Law to pacify a holy God. Faith and belief were primarily expressed through keeping the commandments and obeying the decrees that governed the life of the community of God's covenant people. Their lack of faith found its expression in their disobedience to the law. That is why Abraham's testimony of belief is so important for us in that he believed and had faith not in the law but in the God of the law and promise.

An accurate understanding of the Greek word group used in the New Testament as "faith" and "belief" is crucial to our lives as Christians, individually and corporately. This word group is based on the Greek "*pistis*," and it covers a wide range of secular and religious ideas. The main thrust is belief, faith, and related words dealing with relationships established by trust and maintained by a condition of consistent honesty in that trust.

Many today misunderstand the meaning of these words. For example, "faith" has come to be regarded by many as what is possible but uncertain; whereas the Bible uses faith to speak of what is assured, certain, and true. Believers often understand "belief" or "believing" as if it were some super-subjective effort, as though our act or strength of faith and belief were the crux of the issue.

Christians are often being urged by their leaders to believe for this, or believe for that -- to believe for all manner of things that they want from God or that they understand God wants for them. This is not what the Bible and Jesus' testimony show us. Biblical belief and faith focuses not on the subjective but on the object of our faith and belief -- Jesus Himself.

The Action Of Faith

"Jesus said, 'The work of God is this: to believe in the One He has sent'" (John 6:29).

The word "*believe*" here does not only mean belief in the passive sense -- to be convinced; to place confidence in and rely upon; not just credence, but to evoke complete trust. It is the active sense of the verb "to believe" which is important. It literally means "to give oneself up to," in the same way as Jesus gave Himself wholly up to the will of the Father.

It is only as we truly believe, that is, as we give ourselves up, as a continuous action, to the object of our faith -- the One He has sent: Jesus -- that we can expect any of the consequences of that faith. This is illustrated in the case of Abraham. The appropriation of that which is in Christ comes only by our belief and faith IN JESUS.

The enemy of God is applying all of his energies to leading us away from actually believing, and therefore following, Christ. Satan will have us giving everything of our whole being up to the cause of unity, the cause of evangelism, in fact to anything of the cause of Christ just so long as we do not give ourselves UP TO Jesus Himself.

Do you remember the situation when Jesus hung on the cross while His mocking watchers made the taunting pledge: "*Come down from the cross, and we will believe in Him*" (Matthew 27:42)? Yet when He rose from the dead, they still did not believe. They were consequence-oriented; they had no regard for Jesus Himself. Even in the

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face of the resurrection they remained in unbelief. They refused to give themselves up to Jesus as the only Son of God, our Saviour and Lord.

The Prince of the power of the air knows that when a soul truly believes and gives testimony to that belief through a state of being yielded and freely given in continuous worship and adoration to Christ, he is vanquished. When a soul is dwelling in the kingdom of light in true belief, then every consequence of that belief is not only available but is effected.

Jesus is Lord. Only believe, give yourself and your energies wholly to Him in active belief and faith, and see the glory of the Lord proclaimed to the furthest regions of all creation. This is what all creation is groaning for. Stand and see the glory of the Lord for He is risen; He is alive. He is able, and He reigns.

Mike Barton (1995)



Believing And Obeying

The truth is that so long as we hold both sides of the proposition together they contain nothing inconsistent with right belief, but as soon as one is divorced from the other, it is bound to prove a stumbling-block. "Only those who believe obey" is what we say to that part of a believer's soul which obeys, and "only those who obey believe" is what we say to that part of the soul of the obedient which believes. If the first half of the proposition stands alone, the believer is exposed to the danger of cheap grace, which is another word for damnation. If the second half stands alone, the believer is exposed to the danger of salvation through works, which is also another word for damnation.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1937)

The Obedience Of Faith

"By faith Abraham obeyed." -- Hebrews 11:8

"By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place, which he should after receive as an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing where he went." He believed that there was a land of Canaan, of which God had spoken. He believed in it as a "land of promise," secured to him as an inheritance. He believed that God would bring him there, would show it to him, and give it to him. In that faith he dared go out, not knowing where he went. In the blessed ignorance of faith he trusted God, and obeyed, and received the inheritance.

The land of promise that has been set before us is *the blessed life of obedience*. We have heard God's call to go out and dwell there -- about that there can be no mistake. We have heard the promise of Christ to bring us there, and to give us possession of the land -- that too is clear and sure.

Do we desire that all our life and work may be lifted up to the level of a holy and joyful obedience; and that through us God may make obedience the keynote of our Christian life? Our aim is high. We can only reach it by a new inflow of the power that comes from above. It is only by a faith that gets a new vision and hold of the powers of the heavenly world, secured to us in Christ, that we can obey and obtain the promise.

As we think of all this, of cultivating in ourselves and others the conviction that we only live to please Him, and to serve His purposes, some are ready to say, "This is not a land of promise we are called to enter, but a life of burden and difficulty and certain failure." Do not say so. God calls you indeed to a land of promise. Come and prove what He can work in you. Come and experience what the nobility is of a Christlike obedience unto death. Come and see what blessing God will give to him who, with Christ, gives himself to the uttermost unto the ever-blessed and most holy will of God. Only believe in the glory of this good land of whole-hearted obedience -- and in God, who calls you to it; and Christ, who will bring you in; and in the Holy Spirit, who dwells and works all there. He that believes enters in.

In thinking of our consecration, I wish to speak of the obedience of faith, and of faith as the sufficient power for all obedience. I would commend to you these five simple words as expressive of the disposition of a believing heart, entering on that life in the good land -- I see it; I desire it; I expect it; I accept it; I trust Christ for it.

Faith Sees It

When exploring the promised land of obedience, we need in faith to quietly and definitely settle the question: Is there really such a land of promise in which continuous obedience is certainly, is divinely possible? As long as there is any doubt on this point, it is out of the question to go up and possess the land.

Just think of Abraham's faith. It rested in God, in His omnipotence and His faithfulness. I have put before you the promises of God. Hear another of them: "I will give you a new heart, and *I will put my Spirit within you*, and *I will cause* you to walk in my judgments, and *you shall keep* them." Here is God's covenant engagement. He adds, "I the Lord have spoken, and *I will do it*." He undertakes to cause and enable you to obey. In Christ and the Holy Spirit, He has made the most

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wonderful provision for fulfilling His engagement.

Just do what Abraham did -- fix your heart upon God. "He was strong in faith, giving glory to God, being fully persuaded that what He had promised He was able to perform." God's omnipotence was Abraham's stay. Let it be yours. Look out on all the promises God's Word gives of a clean heart, a heart established blameless in holiness, of a life in righteousness and holiness, of a walk in all the commandments of the Lord unblamable and well-pleasing to Him, of God's working in us to will and to do, of His working in us that which is well-pleasing in His sight, in the simple faith -- God says this: His power can do it.

Let the assurance -- a life of full obedience is possible -- possess you. Faith can see the invisible and the impossible. Gaze on the vision until your hearts says, "It must be true; it is true. There is a life promised I have never yet known."

Faith Desires It

When I read the Gospel story and see how ready the sick and the blind and the needy were to believe Christ's word, I often ask myself what it was that made them so much more ready to believe than we are. The answer I get in the Word is this, that one great difference lies in the honesty and intensity of the desire. They did indeed desire deliverance with their whole heart. There was no need of pleading with them to make them willing to take His blessing.

Alas, that it should be so different with us! All indeed wish, in a sort of way, to be better than they are. But how few there are who really "hunger and thirst after righteousness." How few intensely long and cry after a life of close obedience and the continual consciousness of being pleasing to God.

There can be no strong faith without strong desire. Desire is the great motive-power in the universe. It was God's desire to save us which moved Him to send His Son. It is desire that moves men to study and work and suffer. It is desire for salvation alone that brings a sinner to Christ. It is the desire for God and the closest possible fellowship with Him, the desire to be just what He would have us be, and to have as much of His will as possible, that will make the promised land attractive to us. It is this will which makes us forsake everything to get our full share in the obedience of Christ.

And how can the desire be awakened? Shame on us, that we need to ask the question, that the most desirable of all things, likeness to God in union with His will and doing His will, has so little attraction for us!

Let us take it as a sign of our blindness and dullness, and beseech God to give us by His Spirit "enlightened eyes of the heart," that we may see and know "the riches of the glory of our inheritance" waiting upon the life of true obedience. Let us turn and gaze, in this light of God's Spirit, and gaze again on the life as possible, as certain, as divinely secured and

divinely blessed, until our faith begins to burn with desire, and to say, "I do long to have it -- with my whole heart will I seek it."

Faith Expects It

The difference between desire and expectation is great. There is often a strong desire after salvation in a soul who has little hope of really obtaining it. It is a great step in advance when desire passes into expectation, and the soul begins to say of spiritual blessing, "I am sure it is for me, and, though I do not see how, I confidently expect to obtain it." The life of obedience is no longer an unattainable ideal held out by God to make us strive to get at least a little closer to it. It has become a reality meant for the life in flesh and blood here on earth. Expect it as most certainly meant for you; expect God to make it true.

There is much indeed to hinder this expectation. Your past failure; your unfavourable temperament or circumstances; your feeble faith; your difficulty as to what such a devotion obedient unto death, may demand; your conscious lack of power for it. All this makes you say, "It may be for others; it is not for me, I fear." I beseech you, speak not in this way. You are leaving God out of account. Look up to His power and His love, and begin to say, "It is for me." Expect to get it.

Take courage from the lives of God's saints who have gone before you. Gerhard Tersteegen had from his youth sought and served the Lord. After a time the sense of God's grace was withdrawn from him, and for five long years he was alone far away on the great sea, where neither sun nor stars appear. "But my hope was in Jesus." All at once a light broke on him that never went out, and he wrote, with blood drawn from his veins, that letter to the Lord Jesus in which he said: "From this evening to all eternity, Thy will, not mine be done. Command and rule and reign in me. I yield up myself without reserve, and I promise, with Thy help and power, rather to give up the last drop of my blood, than knowingly or willingly be untrue or disobedient to Thee." That was his obedience unto death.

Set your heart upon it, and expect it. The same God lives still. Set your hope on Him; He will do it.

Faith Accepts It

To accept is more than to expect. Many wait and hope, and never possess, because they do not accept. To all who have not accepted, and feel as if they are not ready to accept, we say, "Expect." If the expectation is from the heart and is set indeed upon God Himself, it will lead the soul to accept. To all who say they do expect, we urgently say, "Accept." Faith has the wondrous God-given power of saying, "I accept; I take; I have."

The Obedience Of Faith

It is for the lack of this definite faith, that claims and appropriates the spiritual blessing we desire, that so many prayers appear to be fruitless. Not all are ready for such an act of faith. Where there is no true conviction of the sin of disobedience, and, alas, no true sorrow for it; where there is no strong longing or purpose really in everything to obey God; where there is no deep interest in the message of Holy Scripture -- that God wants to "perfect us to do His will" by Himself "working in us that which is pleasing in His sight" -- there is not the spiritual capacity to accept the blessing. The Christian is content to be a babe; he is not able to bear the strong meat of which Jesus ate, "doing the will of His Father."

And yet we come to all with the entreaty, "Accept it -- the grace for this wondrous new life of obedience -- accept it now." Without this, your act of consecration will come to little. Without this, your purpose to try and be more obedient must fail. Has not God shown you that there is an entirely new position for you to take -- a possible position of simple childlike obedience, day by day, to every command His voice speaks to you through the Spirit? Has He not shown you that there is a possible position of simple childlike dependence on and experience of His all-sufficient grace, day by day, for every command He gives?

I beg you, even now, take that position, make that surrender, take that grace. Accept and enter on the true life of faith and the unceasing obedience of faith. As unlimited and as sure as God's promises and power are, may your faith be. As unlimited as your faith is, will your simple childlike obedience be. Ask God for His aid, and accept all He has offered you.

Faith Trusts Christ For All

"All the promises of God are in Christ Jesus, and in Him, 'Amen,' unto the glory of God by us." It is possible that, as we have considered the life of obedience, there have been questions and difficulties rising to which you cannot at once give an answer. You may feel as if you cannot take it all in at once, or reconcile it with all the old habits of thought and speech and action. You fear you will not be able at once to bring all into subjection to this supreme all-controlling principle: "Do everything as the will of God; do all as obedience to Him." To all these questions there is one answer: one deliverance from all fears: Jesus Christ, the living Saviour, knows all and asks you to trust yourself to Him for the wisdom and the power to walk ever in the obedience of faith.

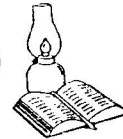
We have seen more than once how this whole redemption, as He effected it, is nothing but obedience. As He communicates it, it is still the same. He gives us the spirit of obedience as the spirit of our life. This spirit comes to us each moment through Him. He Himself keeps charge of our obedience;

there is none under Heaven but what He has and gives and works. He offers Himself to us as surety for its maintenance and asks us to trust Him for it.

It is in Jesus Himself that all our fears are removed, all our needs supplied, all our desires met. As He the righteous One is your righteousness, He the obedient One is your obedience. Will you not trust Him for it? What faith sees and desires and expects and accepts, surely it dares to trust Christ to give and to work.

Will you not take the opportunity of giving glory to God and His Son by trusting Jesus now to lead you into the promised land? Look up to your glorified Lord in heaven, and in His strength renew, with new meaning, your vow of allegiance, your vow never to do anything knowingly or willingly that would offend Him. Trust Him for the faith to make the vow, for the heart to keep it, for the strength to carry it out. Trust Him, the loving One, by His living presence, to secure both your faith and obedience. Trust Him and venture to join in an act of consecration, in the assurance that He undertakes to be its Yes and Amen, to the glory of God by us.

Andrew Murray (1828-1917)



Powerful Faith

Faith is not a pathetic sentiment, but robust vigorous confidence built on the fact that God is holy love. You cannot see Him just now; you cannot understand what He is doing, but you know *Him*. Shipwreck occurs where there is not that mental poise which comes from being established on the eternal truth that God is holy love. Faith is the heroic effort of your life; you fling yourself in reckless confidence on God.

God has ventured all in Jesus Christ to save us; now He wants us to venture our all in abandoned confidence in Him. There are spots where that faith has not worked in us as yet, places untouched by the life of God. There were none of those spots in Jesus Christ's life, and there are to be none in ours. "This is life eternal, that they might know You." The real meaning of eternal life is a life that can face anything it has to face without wavering. If we take this view, life becomes one great romance, a glorious opportunity for seeing marvelous things all the time. God is disciplining us to get us into this central place of power.

Oswald Chambers (1935)

Appropriating Faith

"Being rooted and grounded in love." The figure of the tree is singularly illuminating. The tree is the new man in Christ; the root is faith; the soil is God, the divine nature, Love.

The life-energy in a tree enables the tiny suckers at the extremities of the rootlets each to lay hold of its atom of soil. When this process is complete and the tree and the soil are thus firmly united, the tree is said to be "grounded." This is exactly to "apprehend," to take firm hold upon, the love of God.

Abiding By Faith

The next stage is that the life-chemistry transfuses into the tree the properties of the soil; and the growth and beauty and fruitfulness of the tree follow and are proportionate to the richness of the soil and the perfection of this process of appropriation. Thus the tree is in the soil and the soil is in the tree: "he that abideth in love abideth in God and God abideth in him" (1 John 4:16).

Moreover, the tree takes up from the soil the different elements needed at each season: in the springtime those for making wood and leaves, then later other properties for making flowers, and presently fruit. So does the new man find in God all qualities needed for fruitful living, as Christ said, "he that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit" (John 15:5).

And the Lord added, "apart from Me ye can do nothing," that is, in the way of fruit bearing. It is not at all a question of the tree being able of itself to grow and to fruit; if it be out of the soil this is impossible. It is a question of the soil containing the properties indispensable to these results, and of the tree taking full and unceasing advantage

of its right and power to appropriate these properties into itself.

Nor is this a question of effort, but simply of faith. The vital matter is that of contact between the rootlets and the soil; given this, and the process is sure: "he that abideth ... beareth."

Damage Caused By Sin

A gardener potted up several dozen begonias. All were grown from the same packet of seed and all had the same skilled care, but one plant refused to thrive. Carefully examining it he found that a tiny grub was worming itself among the rootlets, so preventing them from fastening upon the soil, and effectually retarding growth. It being removed, the plant improved. A single, and as we say insignificant, sin secretly cherished will cause faith to relax its hold on God.

Peter in the first chapter of his second epistle employs this same expressive picture. He speaks of the root, the divine nature (v.4); of its rich provision for our needs: "His divine power hath granted unto us all things that pertain to life and godliness" (v.3); of faith, the root that takes hold of the several atoms of soil, "the precious and exceeding great promises" (v.4). He urges that for the very reason that God has so fully provided we must "add on our part all diligence" in the use of the gifts, and thus draw out of the soil by faith the various graces there found and which we need -- virtue (manly vigour, virility), knowledge, self-control, godliness, love of the brethren, and love to all men (v.5-7). He adds that "if these things are yours and abound they make you to be not *idle nor unfruitful* unto [with the view of attaining] the

[full, experimental] knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."

The warning is added that it is possible to "lack these things" from want of diligence; and he pictures the state that ensues, and reasserts the supreme necessity for diligence on our part, so as to walk without stumbling on the Christian path and thus to arrive at the eternal kingdom via the millennial kingdom, as we understand is the force of the "rich entrance." For trees are known to stand in the soil for long periods, alive indeed, but with the life process mentioned above inactive, "idle," in which case though there is life there is no fruit.

Positive Faith

The believer is to say in faith: "In God I have all I need for a holy character and a holy walk, for He *has* blessed me with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, and *has* granted unto me all things that pertain to life and godliness" (Ephesians 1:3; 2 Peter 1:3).

Unbelief yields to the depressing sense of its own emptiness; faith lives in the invigorating sense of Christ's sufficiency. The former repeats *ad nauseum* "I cannot" -- I cannot be holy, I cannot be useful. Faith exclaims, "I can do all things in Him that strengthen me" (Philippians 4:13).

Even if the man of faith stumbles he says, "I will go unto my Father"; and if, alas, he has been willful, he says, "I will say unto Him, I have sinned." Faith refuses to settle down by the swine-trough of failure; it looks afresh unto the precious blood of Christ, and appropriates the Father's forgiveness. It depends afresh upon the power of the

Appropriating Faith

Spirit of Christ. It goes on the more safely because of being humbled and made cautious by discovered weakness.

Taking The Father's Provision

If love is needful because of persecution, or patience is taxed under trial, faith considers such words as these: "The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patience of Christ" (2 Thessalonians 3:5). The man of faith, knowing his own foolishness, follows the counsel, "If any of you lacks wisdom let him ask of God ... in faith," and being certain that "it shall be given" is without anxiety, though as yet in the dark as to his way (James 1:5). For when the believer knows not which way to go or what to do he remembers such an explicit promise as Psalm 25:9, "The meek will He guide in judgment, and the meek will He teach His way." So he waits without strain for this guidance and instruction, being careful only to see that he does truly delight in the will of God, which is the essence of meekness.

So for acquiring every needed quality of heart, and for meeting every duty and every difficulty, faith -- the root -- takes hold of just that quality in God which answers to the need. Thus the Christian "increaseth with the increase of God" (Colossians 2:19). And even as the tree becomes filled with the enriching properties of the soil, so the believer comes to be "filled unto all the fulness of God" (Ephesians 3:19).

Partaking Of The Divine Nature

For by this process something of all the qualities of the divine nature become ours -- not only in title in Christ, which is all that many seem to know of the matter, but in such a way that we reveal in our limited measure something of all those moral attributes which God exhibits in infinite degree. In this way, there is a showing forth of the excellencies of Him who has called us into His fellowship and life (1 Peter 2:9).

Thus does faith, by appropriating the "precious and exceeding great promises" given by God, make us to partake more and more of divine nature, as those conditions of heart and those ways of life which are natural to God become so to us. For having eternal life by faith in Christ, we are made to go on to partake of the divine nature, through the Spirit, by faith.

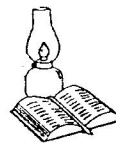
It is important thus to distinguish between life and nature. For example, all men equally have human life, but individual natures vary. One is naturally gentle, another boisterous; one by nature is generous, another is mean. God has given to the believer His life in order that those traits and ways which are natural to Him because of the quality of His life, may become so to us by sharing in that life. In this blessed process *trial* has a necessary and invaluable part, if accepted humbly by faith

(Hebrews 12:10; 1 Peter 4:1).

God's Great And Precious Promises

But it must never be forgotten that the promises of God, by means of which faith lives and acts, are given to us only in His Word, the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. Therefore to fill the mind with the words of God is indispensable to faith, as faith in its turn is indispensable to partaking of the divine nature. Faith can expect only what it knows is promised. An expectation not based upon a promise cannot be entertained in faith, for there can be no certainty that God will do that which He has not undertaken to do. Moreover, to neglect or to doubt the Bible results in an enfeebled faith and in impoverished experience; but if the Word of Christ dwell in us richly (Colossians 3:16), Christ will dwell in our hearts through faith.

G.H. Lang (1935)



Exchanging Weakness For Strength

Dr. F.B. Meyer once told me that when he was young he was very irritable, and an old man told him that he had found relief from this very thing by looking up the moment he felt it coming, and saying, "Thy sweetness, Lord." By telling this, that old man greatly helped Dr. Meyer, and he told it to tens of thousands. I pass it on to you because I have found it a certain and a quick way of escape. Take the opposite of your temptation and look up inwardly, naming that opposite: Untruth -- Thy truth, Lord; Unkindness -- Thy kindness, Lord; Impatience -- Thy patience, Lord; Selfishness -- Thy unselfishness, Lord; Roughness -- Thy gentleness, Lord; Discourtesy -- Thy courtesy, Lord; Resentment, inward heat, fuss -- Thy sweetness, Lord, Thy calmness, Thy peacefulness.

I think that no one who tries this very simple plan will ever give it up. (It takes for granted, of course, that all is yielded -- the "I" dethroned.) Will all to whom it is new try it for a day, a week, a month, and test it?

Amy Carmichael (1955)

Your Faith Is Going Into The Fire!

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

A very confused young pastor, whose faith was shattered, called me this past week for prayer and counseling. He was saved during the hippie revival of the late sixties and has been in the ministry more than 15 years. Over the years he became deeply impressed with the TV evangelists and their success in reaching the masses. Using similar methods, he had raised up a church of nearly 300.

When certain TV evangelists came under scrutiny and some were found to be in sin, his faith was staggered. At the same time the doctrine of prosperity had begun to disillusion both him and his congregation; and further doubts were setting in.

He then became involved with an independent group that believe they represent the new move of God on earth -- prophets! Everyone was prophesying to everyone else. Most of the prophecies did not come to pass but certain significant ones did and this impressed him. How could it be wrong if some of the prophecies were coming to pass? But there was a nagging in his soul that increased when they introduced choreographed ballet dancing in the conventions and associated churches.

He attended one of these conventions recently and had to walk out because it was a circus of flattery in the name of prophecy. The leaders would get up and prophecy great things of one another, as if led by an unseen spirit, saying, "You prophesy good of me, and I'll prophesy good of you!" It was fleshly, self-exalting, and frivolous. He

left the place totally shattered in his faith. Another supposed move of God was nothing but a disappointment.

He said, "My church would stand with me for hours: thundering over our city in tongues: binding strongholds, principalities, and powers. We've bound the enemy from the east, west, north, and south, but the city only gets worse. There is no evidence of a change!

"I have heard many voices. A month ago I heard a sweet voice saying to me, 'My son, from this day on I've released all the funds you need. You will never again lack funds!' It never happened and the financial situation got worse. Now I am afraid to listen to any voice; I am doubting the validity of the gifts of the Spirit, and I don't want to hear any more phony prophecies."

He went on, "My faith is shaking. I love the Lord, but I don't know what to believe anymore. I feel so out of place. I think, at times it's going to have to be just Jesus and me, because I'm so wary of falling into another deception."

This pastor's trial of faith is not an isolated experience. Right now multitudes of God's people are enduring the severest trials of faith since coming to Christ. Their faith has been cast into the fire of testing!

Satan has mounted a power assault on the faith of the chosen. It will only get hotter and more intense in the troubled days ahead. Peter warns of a "season of manifold temptations causing heaviness" (1 Peter 1:6).

Paul, writing to Timothy, said, "This command I entrust to you, Timothy, my son ... fight the good fight, keeping faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and suffered shipwreck in regard to their faith" (1 Timothy 1:18-19). We must

fight to keep our faith. We cannot give up when the fiery test comes, or it will lead to certain shipwreck.

The Children Of Israel Failed Their "Trial Of Faith"

When the fire was applied and the test became intense, the Israelites folded, succumbing to a spirit of unbelief.

"That is why I was angry with that generation, and I said, 'Their hearts are always going astray, and they have not known my ways.' So I declared on oath in my anger, 'They shall never enter my rest.'

"See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness. We have come to share in Christ if we hold firmly till the end the confidence we had at first. As has just been said:

"Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion."

"Who were they who heard and rebelled? Were they not all those Moses led out of Egypt? And with whom was He angry for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the desert? And to whom did God swear that they would never enter His rest if not to those who disobeyed? So we see that they were not able to enter, because of their unbelief" (Hebrews 3:7-19).

Their faith did not come forth "more precious than gold" but, rather, the fire of testing hardened them in unbelief. The carcasses of a whole generation fell in the wilderness. They ended up as blind, bitter, God-forsaken people who were full of unbelief. "So

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we see they could not enter in because of unbelief" (Hebrews 3:19).

Faith Is Not The Absence Of Distress And Sorrow!

It isn't an expression of doubt to cry or be crushed by a problem. Oh, what mind-games we play every time we face some great trial or test. We deny our feelings and try to erase all thoughts of distress. Some grit their teeth, take deep breaths, and act unmoved, undisturbed; and they say with a smile, "My heart is at ease; I believe; I'm OK; all is well." All the while their hearts condemn them because they are in reality heavy-hearted and distressed.

Peter was speaking to Christians "kept by the power of God through faith." These greatly rejoiced in the Lord; yet they "now for a season ... are in heaviness through manifold temptations."

To be "in heaviness of heart" means in great distress, sorrow, or grief. Jesus, in Gethsemane, expressed sorrow and heaviness of heart. "... and He began to be sorrowful and very heavy ... then He said unto them, 'My soul is exceeding sorrowful'" (Matthew 26:37-38).

Distress and doubt are not the same thing. Doubt is the belief or the fear that distress will win, that it will overwhelm and destroy -- that the trial will bring you down.

Faith is the means by which we come out of distress. It is the settled belief that "the season" of sorrow or the hour of temptation will not harm, overcome, or destroy you. Faith rests in the promise that God will make a way of escape.

Distress may fall suddenly on me in the form of unforeseen demonic attacks, storms that stir up the waves and pound my ship, causing me to have a season of heaviness of heart or moments of panic.

But I look to Jesus and faith says, "I am in no danger because Jesus is with me in the boat!"

Faith Cannot Be Divorced From God's Eternal Purpose

Canaan was a type or representative of God's eternal purpose. From the beginning, God has been looking for a people He could "bring in" to His rest, to a fulness in Jesus.

"For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken later about another day. There remains, therefore, a rest for the people of God" (Hebrews 4:8-9). What God promised is still mostly unclaimed!

God's purpose is not to simply deliver people from their sins and bring them out of Egypt nor to test their loyalty in a wilderness -- that is not even the half of it. God is interested in much more than getting you out of

Taking From Christ

What do you want? You have been praying for forgiveness. There it is! Now come up, and take it. You have been asking for the assurance of sonship. It is there! Take it. What do you want? Power over passionate thoughts and deliverance from an unholy appetite? Well, the purity of Christ will answer all that. What do *you* want? "I have a terrible temper, sir. I try to be pleasant at home, but when I am most determined I get easily put out, and I am ready to kill myself with remorse. If I could only keep my tongue still!" Well, here it is, the patience of Christ. What do *you* want? You have been asking for five years for the filling of the Holy Ghost. It is all ready, it has been here a long time but you have never come for it. Here it is. What do *you* want? Strength in your ankle bones? You want to walk in God's way, you want to leap a bit? Well, here it is, all the old, glad strength of earlier days, when you used to leap as the deer. It is here in Jesus Christ. He is the table; He is the gift; He is the cover too. His human nature, set free in death, is now glorified on His Father's throne. Is not that enough for you? The Lord Jesus is the complement of your need.

Let me give you a lesson in mathematics. If I draw an arc of a circle, the rest of the circumference required to make it a complete circle is called the complement. Complement is only an abbreviated form of complement. The bigger the arc, the smaller the complement. Those who want most will get most out of the complement of Christ. Christ is the complement of human need, and so blind men took seeing out of Christ, and deaf men took hearing out of Christ, and dead men (if I may so put it) took life out of Christ, and women who for twelve years had suffered much took virtue out of Christ. Everybody that wanted anything just took what they wanted, and He became the complement of their needs. His nature, through faith in His nature, made blind men see, and deaf men hear, and lame men walk, and dead men live. Everybody took out of Him just what they wanted; and He is here now, and you have only to take out what you need and go home with it; No, go home with Him.

F.B. Meyer (1847-1929)

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some present crisis after which you testify, "He brought me out! He delivered me! I was in a hopeless situation and God made a way!" No, this is not it! There is a greater glory.

God's eternal purpose is to bring to Christ a people who find Him to be all they will ever need. He is to be the end of faith.

He is a loving Father and will not let you suffer more than you are able to bear, but will make a way of escape in any temptation -- but that is not enough! To simply escape trials is not the triumph of faith.

In ten separate crises, the Israelites proved the Lord faithful to deliver them; yet still they were not "in the land." They did not know Him or understand His ways.

Many of us, like the children of Israel, have been delivered time and again out of one trouble after another, finding ourselves "out" of danger but not "into" rest. We have not learned Jesus and how to rest in Him, because we fail to see God's eternal purposes in these things. Our trials are not accidents; they are allowed by God, because He is trying to produce something in us. He has a plan and purpose and is going somewhere with us.

When we fall into trials or trouble our reaction is, "Oops! I must have grieved God. I did something wrong and now I'm paying for whatever sin or failure it was." Yet more important than where the trial came from is how we respond in the midst of it.

The giants in the promised land were not a result of Israel's sin, nor were the walled cities or iron chariots. They were opportunities to behold the Lord's power and might triumphing over the enemy. Many of our trials are not a result of personal failure -- but, like the giants, are opposing powers from the devil to keep us out of the place of rest in Christ.

The reason I have been so vehemently opposed to the modern-day gospel of prosperity is because much of it has been divorced from God's eternal

purpose, which is to be conformed in holiness to the image of Christ. You can't get the milk and honey, the good things that are promised, until you are "in the land." Many want all the blessings without going in, without spiritual warfare and victory over the flesh, which requires us to enter into His life!

The riches are all in Christ Jesus. In Him dwells all fulness of the Godhead; and when you truly enter into Christ, you then discover true riches. We miss the point entirely if we think Israel's inheritance was a piece of property. It was much, much more. The Lord Himself was to be their inheritance.

He brought them into a place where they would have an opportunity to live wholly devoted to the Lord with no other source to meet every need. It was a place where God would reveal Himself as all-sufficient.

"Some must enter in" (Hebrews 4:6). This is still God's purpose for us -- to bring us in, into Jesus and a place of total dependence on Him with no confidence placed in the flesh.

A Caleb Company

In Numbers 13 and 14 we find the language and definitions of unbelief and true faith. The ten spies who had gone up into the land had returned with a report of what they had seen. "We went into the land to which you sent us, and it does flow with milk and honey! ... But the people who live there are powerful, and the cities are fortified and very large" (Numbers 13:27-28).

Caleb, the voice of faith, said to the people, "Let us go up at once and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it."

The people cried out in fear and unbelief. "'We can't attack those people; they are stronger than we are.' And they spread among the Israelites a bad report about the land they had explored. They said, 'The land we explored devours those living in it. All

the people are of a great size. We saw giants there...'" (13:31-33).

This is the language of unbelief. "We are not able to cope this time! This crisis is different. It will eat us up! There is no hope to stand up against this enemy. We have experienced other victories, but this situation is bigger, too far above us!"

Consequently a cry of unbelief went up from the whole congregation, "Let's go back. We can't make it. There are too many strong enemies; we can't go in!" (Numbers 14:1-4).

And again faith speaks, "The land we passed through and explored is exceedingly good. If the Lord is pleased with us, He will lead us into that land, a land flowing with milk and honey, and will give it to us" (14:7-8). Even though the children of this unbelieving generation later went in -- they never fully possessed the land. If they had gone into the true rest, the Lord would not still be speaking of an unclaimed rest.

There still remains for us a place in Christ where we cease from all our works and self-effort: we stop trusting in men; we stop manipulating, struggling, and striving for things to happen. Before the Lord comes, He must have a people who go in, a people who will use faith to tear down everything that keeps them from the fulness of Jesus.

This is what the testing is all about. God wants to know what is in your heart. Is it fear of giants and a desire to go back to Egypt or an abandon to the Lord and His care of you? Satan does not want a people who cease from their own works and depend totally on Jesus as Lord.

Caleb understood God's purposes. He knew that the enemy had not power to stop God's people from going in if they stepped out in faith. "Only do not rebel against the Lord. And do not be afraid of the people of the land, because we will swallow them up. Their protection is gone, but the Lord is with us. Do not be afraid of them" (14:9).

Satan is using that giant of a trouble

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facing you not to keep you down but to keep you out! It's not an isolated trial; it is all hell raging against you to keep you from going on into the fulness of Christ, to a place of rest, a life of confidence, and a walk of peace under His lordship.

All heaven and hell behold you as you stand on the brink of the Jordan. How will they see you look into the future? Will you look with unbelief and say, "If going all the way with Jesus means one big battle with pain, heart-ache, and so many giant problems ... I am going back! At least I can party and drink and get stoned and find a little peace."

Or, will faith prevail and you say, "I will not rebel! I will not fear what man can do! My enemies have no power, for their power is stripped! By faith my God will devour them, for God is with me. I'm going in!"

Going On With Jesus Is A Very Serious Matter With God

"But the whole assembly talked about stoning them. Then the glory of the Lord appeared at the Tent of Meeting to all the Israelites. The Lord said to Moses, 'How long will these people treat me with contempt? How long will they refuse to believe in me, in spite of all the miraculous signs I have performed among them? I will strike them down with a plague and destroy them, but I will make you into a nation greater and stronger than they' (Numbers 14:10-12).

Moses appealed to God's longsuffering and great mercy as he prayed, "In accordance with your great love, forgive the sin of these people..." The Lord replied, "I have forgiven them, as you asked. But..." (14:19-21).

What a tragedy! To be forgiven, pardoned, and yet left to die in a dry, despairing wilderness, barred from going into the land of promise.

You have heard of the doctrine of eternal security: "Once forgiven always forgiven." This is not the issue. The

issue here isn't forgiveness but going on into the inheritance in Christ. Those children of God were fully pardoned but -- because of their unbelief, their unwillingness to go on, to go in -- they spent the rest of their lives forgiven, but robbed of intimacy. They had only a dead religion, a form of godliness with no power. They were a pardoned people with no place to go.

They will never see the glory of the Captain of the Lord's army as He brings walls down. They will never enjoy the cool streams and green pastures or the victories "in the land." The milk and honey of fulness will never be theirs.

There are literally millions of Christians in this very place today. God brought them to a place of decision by calling them to a deeper walk, a walk of complete faith, leaving behind the death of the wilderness. It is a call to obedience, devotion, and dependency by submitting to the Lord as captain.

They heard a "Caleb" somewhere calling them to continue to trust God for victory over self and the flesh. God is at work in their lives, but they have settled for forgiveness without growth. They go on living shallow lives of misery, cut off from the real work of the Holy Spirit. They are left behind to

a life of spiritual boredom, dryness, and death!

"As surely as I live and as surely as the glory of the Lord fills the whole earth, not one of the men who saw my glory and the miraculous signs I performed in Egypt and in the desert ... not one of them will ever see the land I promised on oath to their forefathers. No one who has treated me with contempt will ever see it. But because my servant Caleb has a different spirit and follows me wholeheartedly, I will bring him into the land he went to..." (14:21-24). God is always "moving on" with a people, a Caleb company. But those who go on are those whose faith endures the fire. They hold on when it looks hopeless.

"Morning-after Faith" Is Not Acceptable

After hearing warnings about their carcasses wasting in the wilderness, the Israelites slept on it. "Early the next morning they went up toward the high hill country. 'We have sinned,' they said. 'We will go up to the place the Lord promised'" (14:39-40).

But the test was over; the fire was dead. They had failed in the face of the

The Enthroned Life

If we would "reign in life by one, even Jesus," that we might more fully express the verities of the Christian life, and experiencing the liberation and exaltation of spirit which such a position entails, might bear more abundant fruit in which the Father may be glorified, then we must believe. We get nowhere, however, without an all-consuming passion for the realisation of this our blood-bought inheritance. We are told what befalls those who are neither hot nor cold (Revelation 3:16). We will get nowhere if our motives are wrong. God will not be mocked. Our object must ever and only be His glory. The greater the blessing, the more strictly must this principle be enforced. Such privileges as the Enthroned Life involve are not given that the fruits should be consumed upon our lusts. The flaming swords of the Cherubims which turn every way "to keep the way to the tree of life," must do their work. It is simple enough; these things are not for man's lust but for God's glory.

F.J. Huegel (1933)

Your Faith Is Going Into The Fire!

hopeless odds. It was too late.

The Lord will have a people who trust Him in the fire and who glorify Him when tested. It is not faith to obey when the trial is over -- it is presumption. There is no such thing as faith "after the fact."

In Luke 18:8 Jesus asked, "When the Son of Man cometh shall He find faith in the earth?" He will find faith for rights, faith for blessings, faith for prosperity -- but what Jesus is really asking is this: "Will I find a faith that brings a last-day people into full surren-

der to Me? How many will go on with Me into a walk that is submitted to the will of God? Will there be a people like Paul who count it all dung to win Christ? Will they have a faith to press on into a life of relying only on Me?"

Faith Is The Word; Rest Is The Evidence

Finally, in Hebrews 11:1 we read, "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." That substance, that evidence is the

Word of God! Jesus is the Word. The written word holds and records all the evidence we will ever need. Rest in the substance! Rely on the evidence! No one goes in without knowing the Word.

"Therefore, since the promise of entering His rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it ... for we who have believed enter that rest" (Hebrews 4:1-3).

David Wilkerson (1990)



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Faith's Persistency

by T. Austin-Sparks

"Now Elijah said to Ahab, 'Go up, eat and drink; for there is the sound of the roar of a heavy shower.' So Ahab went up to eat and drink. But Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; and he crouched down on the earth, and put his face between his knees. And he said to his servant, 'Go up now, look toward the sea.' So he went up and looked and said, 'There is nothing.' And he said, 'Go back' seven times. And it came about at the seventh time, that he said, 'Behold, a cloud as small as a man's hand is coming up from the sea.' And he said, 'Go up, say to Ahab, 'Prepare your chariot and go down, so that the heavy shower does not stop you.'"" (1 Kings 18:41-44)

Two of the major elements in the spiritual life and experience of God's people are the seemingly slow and hidden ways of God and the demand for persistent faith in His servants. As to the former, you will know quite well how much there is in the Bible about it. Again and again you will find the psalmist crying out because of God's seeming delay or indifference. Whole psalms are given up to this very problem, and also in other parts of Scripture we encounter the same phenomenon.

In our own spiritual experience we often find that not least of our trials is the fact that God seems so slow to respond, so inexplicable in His ways; sometimes it would appear that He is careless or indifferent. This is a common experience, even among the greatest and most devoted of God's servants. It is not an experience confined to novices; in fact perhaps they know little of it, but throughout the centuries even the most outstanding of God's servants have been confronted by this problem of the slow response of the Lord. It sometimes looks to His people as though He were unhurried to the point of being tardy, and that just when their needs were most acute.

Faith's Importance

In this short passage our attention is also drawn to the second point, namely the demand for persistent faith. It might be thought that the most critical moment on Mount Carmel was when the prophets of Baal had exhausted themselves in vain prayers and had to give way to Elijah with his water-saturated altar and his simple, dignified appeal to Israel's God. This was indeed, a breathless moment and the high point of the story the great miracle when fire fell from heaven; but supposing that had been the end! For we must remember that the country had been suffering from three years of intense drought, and if life were to be sustained it was not

fire that they wanted but water. What they needed was rain, and plenty of it. Wonderful and emotional as the burning sacrifice must have been, there could be no new hope if the rain did not come.

Now the Lord knew how critical their condition was and might have been expected to act, now that the people had repudiated Baal and committed their case to Him. When the crowd shouted, "The Lord, he is God" the reformation seemed to be complete, and the natural sequel should surely have been clouds, rain clouds, and water pouring down on a thirsty land.

Yet no rain came. Elijah was quite assured in his own heart, and he unhesitatingly told Ahab that it was coming. Nevertheless he did not relax at all but went higher up on this mountain of crisis, put his head between his knees, and set himself to pray the issue through. The reference in James' letter tells us that "he prayed earnestly" or 'he prayed with prayer,' implying that something more than ordinary prayer was needed on such an occasion; it seemed to call for concentration and persistency. There was no sign of rain. God seemed so slow at this time of crisis. How can we explain His apparent lack of response?

For my part I think that this has a close connection with the anonymous servant, giving us all a lesson concerning service. This man not only is given no name but there is no mention of where he came from. Until this experience on Mount Carmel it seems from the narrative that Elijah was alone. After this he was dismissed at Beer-sheba, and later it was Elisha who served Elijah as a servant. The anonymous servant is just mentioned in this episode and then passes off the scene, but not before he had helped to illustrate to us one of the principle features of service to God, which is persistency. The battle had been fought through: it seemed that a mighty victory had been obtained; and yet - still no rain!

Faith's Disappointments

This provides a very serious warning against anything in the nature of complacency. Even after we have poured ourselves out and been assured that we have succeeded, we must beware of letting go too soon. The principle or spirit of service surely demands a real persistence of faith. You will not find any servant of God of account or true value in the Bible who did not have developed in him this persistence of faith. We can see it in the case of this man, and strangely enough this was the very test put to the next servant, Elisha, whose real life's work started the day when Elijah was taken up to heaven. That was the time when Elijah said to Elisha, "Tarry here...the Lord hath sent me as far as Bethel" (2 Kings 2:2). The same

suggestion was repeated stage by stage, "Tarry here...Tarry here..." but Elisha would not agree to do so, his response being, "As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee." At last the whole matter was gathered up into this one issue, so that Elijah promised Elisha "If thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee" - a double portion of the Spirit for service was consequent upon this exercise of persistency.

Now, to return to Carmel, there was no doubt that Elijah's faith had produced a remarkable answer from God. The fire had fallen. We might think that he would have been perfectly justified in telling himself that all he now had to do was to see God working the whole matter out. He could have folded his arms, or taken his ease, while God did the rest. If you had gone successfully through an ordeal like Elijah's, seen such a tremendous victory and had an inner assurance that the end was reached, would you not have been inclined to sit back a bit and just watch events? Elijah, however, did nothing of the sort; he went higher up into the mountain to get closer to God. "Ahab went up to eat and drink. And Elijah went up to the top of Carmel" - to pray. He knew that his business was not finished yet, and was determined to see the matter right through.

At this point, our attention is drawn to the servant. He, too, must go up still higher, for there was something more to be done if the rain were to come. He was told to look toward the sea, the direction from which it would come. He looked and saw nothing, so he came back again to his master and reported, "There is nothing!" After all that spiritual battle, after all that prayer, that exhausting ordeal of laying hold of God and seeing the fire fall, was it possible that, after all, the skies were as closed as ever? "There is nothing!" Many of us have had to pass through similar experiences - we may be doing so just now - and we find it to be a most painful anticlimax. This is a moment of great peril for our faith, to have battled so far and expected so much, only to be disappointed to find a complete lack of any evidence of God's working.

What can you do? Well, one of two things. The first is to conclude that after all the whole thing has been an illusion, and to give way to the paralysis of despair because of the seeming unresponsiveness of God. The alternative is to keep going - if necessary seven times. There was nothing the first time, so the servant must go and look again. There is nothing! And yet a third time, but still a third time "There is nothing!" The man had to go a fourth time, but there was still no vestige of an answer. I try to imagine the tone of his voice as he returned the fifth and the sixth time, and think that he may even have added a few comments. 'What is the good of it all?' he might have questioned - 'there is nothing!' It would have been

natural enough if he had remonstrated, "I do not see the use of going right up there again; I am tired of continually coming back to report just nothing.' In any case he was sent a seventh time, just once more; this time he was able to report a tiny cloud. That was little enough in all conscience, to find that all there was to be seen in the expanse of the sky was just one little cloud the size of a man's hand. It is surprising that God went so far in pressing this matter of faith's persistency. Whether there is any significance in the number seven is of little importance, but certainly there had to be the full continuance in faith until at last the situation broke. The little cloud was only a token, but it was enough to Elijah who immediately warned Ahab to prepare for a deluge. Faith is the title deeds of things unseen, and accepts the token for the whole. It was right to do so, for soon the heavens were full of clouds.

Faith's Victory

I think that this makes the message plain. It is so easy to make a big start, with a good deal of noise and activity and high expectations of something big which we think God is going to do, and then to lose heart because of disappointments and delays. Our prayers are apt to wane and our energy and enthusiasms to decline just because God seems to be unresponsive. What is He doing? He is making a servant; to Him this is more important than the actual service which is being done. Such a servant has to learn that the Lord is more concerned about His own name than we are, and knows best how to vindicate it.

"The Lord, He is God." The Lord had to make that clear a second time, not only in the fire, but in the water, in the rain; not only in the judgment but in the mercy; not only in the death but in the resurrection life. His delays, His hiddenness, His seeming indifference, are all the testing means by which He develops true faith in His servants, and works something of His own Spirit into their very constitution. It was easy for Him to send the rain; what was more difficult but infinitely more worthwhile was to enable His servant to go on watching and praying for the full seven times, never despairing, never doubting, never giving up. In the end there was no lack of rain. But it came as the result of a second battle. First there was the battle with Baal, and then the battle with unbelief; the outside battle and the battle inside. It is on the last inward battle that the whole issue depends. Full victory comes as a result of faith's persistency.

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What is unbelief?

Read and x 4-21-05
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" 4th x 3-23-13

It is the absence, or perhaps I should say, the opposite of faith. Faith is a felt, conscious, practical confidence in the character, providence, and word of God; and conscious assurance that what God has said shall come to pass; such an inward and felt assurance, and hearty and joyful embracing of the truth, as to produce corresponding feeling and action, and to exclude doubt. Unbelief then is a real withholding of this inward, felt, conscious assurance or confidence--a state of mind that leaves the conduct uninfluenced by the truths of God--such a withholding of confidence as to leave both body and soul under the influence of error, to pursue a course as if the truths of God were not true.

A present refusal to enter into the rest of faith, is another of the developments of unbelief. God has said, "thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee." What multitudes there are, who are continually disquieting themselves, not only about their temporal but about their spiritual state, simply because they refuse to believe that in Christ they are complete; that in Him all fulness dwells; that in Him every demand of their nature, every thing that they can need for time and eternity, is made secure by the promise and oath of God. A state of unbelief is very like a mind in the midst of some agonizing dream,

Another development of unbelief is, a want of an inward assurance and felt confidence that God's promises will be fulfilled. Take for instance, James 1:5-7: "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord." Now who will pretend to call this truth in question? And yet, who believes it? Who has the inward assurance that is essential to faith, that he shall be taught of God? Who comes to Him with the same assurance that he will be taught, with which a student goes to his professor upon some question with which he knows him to be familiar? Why, the student goes to his teacher, with the felt and conscious expectation--with as much inward assurance as he has of his existence, that he shall be instructed. He does not go in a mere negative state of mind; but he knows that his teacher is himself informed upon the subject of his inquiry, and that he will at once lead him to an understanding of it. Now why does he expect this? Because this is the business of his teacher, and because he has pledged himself to instruct his pupils. So has God pledged Himself, in the strongest and most solemn manner, and have we not a right, nay, are we not bound to come to God for instruction, with as much felt assurance as we would exercise in going to a human teacher?

Causes or occasions of unbelief.

1. Selfishness prevents attention to the evidence of God's character. Men are so taken up with seeking their own private interests as to have very little time for consideration in regard to the real character of God as manifested in the works of creation, providence, and grace. Men in their delirious scramble after their selfish interests almost lose the idea even of the existence of God, and to all practical purposes they often quite do this.

2. The selfishness of men prevents their receiving the idea that God is benevolence. Being conscious of their own selfishness, and witnessing the same principle in all around them, they come to regard all intelligent beings as selfish. It is amazing to see how difficult it is to possess the human mind of the true knowledge of God. God charges mankind with thinking that he is altogether such a one as they are; and to judge others by ourselves is indeed very natural, however presumptuous and blasphemous it may be in respect to God.

3. Consciousness of our own hypocrisy in many things, and the constant developments of insincerity and hypocrisy in almost all around us, naturally begets in us distrust, or a want of confidence in the sincerity and disinterested benevolence of every body.

4. Consciousness of our own and evidence of others unmercifulness, renders it difficult to conceive of the infinite mercy of God.

5. The fact that men seek and think they find their happiness in getting all they can, blinds their minds in regard to the fact, that God's character is directly the reverse of this—that benevolence is His character—that doing, instead of getting good; and that giving instead of receiving good, constitute His happiness. Men cry continually, like the horse-leech, 'Give, give,' and are never satisfied with appropriating to themselves, but God on the other hand, finds His happiness in giving and in pouring out blessings from his infinite fulness upon all that can be persuaded to receive them. *"No good thing will He withhold from them who walk uprightly" (He defines what "good" is)*

6. Men are naturally unwilling to conceive of God's character as the direct opposite of their own. And this is one cause of their unbelief.

7. Unwillingness to believe whatever rebukes our sin, is another cause of unbelief.

8. A regard to our own reputation, is another fruitful source of unbelief. John 5:44: "How can ye believe, which receive honor one of another, and seek not the honor that cometh from God only?" Here Christ plainly teaches, that a regard to our own reputation will prevent our receiving and believing the testimony of God.

9. Prejudice is often a fruitful source of unbelief. To pre-judge or make up your mind on any question before you know all the facts, is of course in the highest degree calculated to bar the mind against a knowledge and belief of the truth.

10. Committed pride is another fruitful occasion of unbelief. When a man has committed himself in favor of any error, or against any truth, he is in the greatest danger of never coming to a knowledge of the truth. He will almost of course, reject in unbelief, any light that might correct his darkness.

11. Sensuality is another fruitful source of unbelief. Let any man give himself up to indulgence of his appetites, and his mind will become dark as midnight to all but sensible objects. He will "walk after the sight of his eyes, and the hearing of his ears;" but is never likely to believe or know any thing of God as he ought to know.

12. Confidence in the opinion of those who are themselves unbelieving will of course prevent our believing the testimony of God. This is an amazingly fruitful source of unbelief. There are great multitudes who confide more in men than in God, who suffer their confidence in God to be entirely destroyed or prevented, by the unbelieving evasions of those who profess to have, but who really have not faith in God.

13. The temptations of Satan, as every one knows, are the occasion of much unbelief. By contradicting God and shaking the confidence of our first parents in God, he ruined the world.

14. A want of a clear idea of what faith really is, is another fruitful source of unbelief. Many think that they already believe, because they admit the truths of the gospel, and have no consciousness of positive disbelief. They overlook the fact that faith is the minds' felt, and joyful assurance of the truth of God. ~~They are aware that they have no felt and conscious assurance~~ They would think

this a very high and rare attainment in religion, to have a felt, clear, conscious assurance, that God's promises would be fulfilled to them. Thus supposing that what really constitutes the faith of the gospel is some very high and rare attainment, they take up with something short, and rest in a state of mind that is the mere absence of felt disbelief.

15. Gluttony, and every species of intemperance, are sure causes of unbelief. They all grieve the Spirit of God. They sensualize and degrade the mind, and bring it into bondage to the flesh.

16. Our selfish will, more than any thing and every thing else, precludes the exercise of faith. The Jews could resist the evidence of miracles. And who has not observed how difficult it is, to beget confidence in any mind, against the will. Indeed the thing is impossible. Confidence is an act of the will itself; and it is often amazing to see what an amount of evidence may be accumulated before the mind, and yet the heart withhold its confidence. The truth is, that men do not believe God, because they will not.

V. The wickedness of unbelief.

1. It is the most unreasonable abomination in the Universe. I mean as I say. There is not so great a perversion of right reason in the whole universe of mind, as unbelief. Should the son of a great prince, who possessed immeasurable wealth, be filled with cares and great anxieties, lest he should want his daily bread, who would not say that this was a vastly unreasonable and ridiculous state of mind. And suppose, to quiet his anxiety, his father gave him a bond and mortgage of all that he possessed, and made him secure by every possible security; notwithstanding which his fears should still prevail, and he should say, "I cannot realize and feel assured in my own mind, that my temporal necessities shall be supplied." Who would not pronounce this to be a most unreasonable state of mind? But how would this begin to compare with the infinite unreasonableness of that state of mind, that complains that it does not realize and cannot feel assured, that all its wants, spiritual and temporal, shall be supplied by God?

2. It is the most injurious sin against God that can be committed. It implies and includes:

(1.) A flat denial of the integrity of His character.

(2.) It is denying His attributes.

(3.) It charges Him with hypocrisy, and actually says to God, "Thou makest high pretensions of love to me--of thine ability and willingness to supply all my wants. Thou professest infinite compassion, and boastest of thine infinite grace. Thou averrest, that thou are able and willing to meet the necessities of my nature--hast given thy pledge and thine oath, and sworn by two immutable things, by which thou sayest it is impossible for thee to lie; and yet, Lord, I do not feel in my heart, that there is a word of truth in all these professions. I have no confidence in them, and do not feel in my mind as if they were true."

(4.) It is plainly charging God with lying, and that too, under oath.

(5.) It is charging Him with infinite folly and inconsistency. Indeed unbelief, cannot lodge in any mind, without virtually charging home upon God, the very worst character of any being in the Universe. For when we take into consideration God's promises and professions, how can we possibly exercise unbelief, without virtually charging Him with the very opposite of all His promises and professions.

Take again the illustration of a student, whose father has again and again, by letter, assured him that all his wants should be supplied. Now if these assurances were full, often repeated, and even backed up by an oath, it is easy to see, this son could not doubt or make himself at all uneasy about his temporal support, without calling in question his father's ability or willingness. And now suppose the father had made as multiplied, and great, and various promises as God has; and suppose he had made as great a sacrifice, to promote the well-being of his son as God has to promote our well-being, could any thing be conceived more injurious to the father's feelings and character, than for him to have and manifest no confidence in his father's word.

3. Unbelief has the most injurious tendency of any sin in the Universe:

(1.) To ourselves, unbelief renders all heart-obedience impossible. How can we obey God from the heart, when we have no confidence in Him? All obedience to any government, parental or state government, or to the moral government of God, implies and must necessarily be based upon confidence in the ruler. If private or public confidence is destroyed, just in the same degree is the obedience of the heart rendered impossible. *How can my confidence in God be anything but of all these years of waiting for him to heal D.D.?*

(2.) It is in its tendency the most injurious sin to the universe of creatures that can be conceived. It is a most contagious abomination. How easily unbelief prevailed over our first parents, when the serpent suggested to Eve, that God was not sincere in his prohibition. It is truly wonderful to witness the contagious nature of unbelief. Let any one suggest a query and a doubt, or manifest in his conduct, that he has no confidence in God and His promises, and the influence seems to go forth almost with the power of omnipotence. If professors of religion manifest by their careless lives, their unbelief in the guilt and danger of sinners, it seems to act like a charm upon them. The most solemn assertions and threatenings of God are not regarded by them as any thing more than the baseless fabric of a dream. I have often been astonished to see, how the suggestions of unbelief could chill every thing to death, and put down the spirit of prayer and confidence in God, in a revival of religion. Let any one but suggest, under such circumstances, that the revival is going to decline; that God cannot work, because such and such things are in the way—let him but call in question the application or meaning of the promise; and it will be seen how easily confidence can be destroyed, and how unbelief in any case, if it finds vent, will be in a community like the letting out of waters.

4. Unbelief tends to annihilate Gods' influence over the Universe. His influence over mind consists in the estimation in which He is held by moral beings. Where ever there is not a felt confidence in God, His influence over that mind is destroyed. And thus unbelief tends to the complete annihilation of the government of God. One great design of the Atonement was to restore public confidence. Satan had suggested, and our first parents had believed him, that God was selfish, in prohibiting their eating a certain fruit, on the ground that they would "become as gods, knowing good and evil." The Atonement was designed to exhibit in the strongest manner, God's disinterested love to men, that He might restore their confidence in Him, and thus gain dominion over their hearts, for their good and His own glory. In the Atonement He has given the highest evidence that He possibly could give, both of the disinterested nature and infinite degree of his love. But unbelief sets this all aside, and declares after all, that it has no confidence whatever in God. Thus it completely annihilates the power of moral government, and renders the gospel the savor of death unto death. It is a direct refusal to be satisfied with the infinite evidence that God has given of His disinterested love to man. It is virtually saying, "I will not be satisfied with any evidence that God has given or can give, of the integrity of His character. He is not to be trusted. He shall not have my confidence, say or do what He may."

5. Unbelief is the most grievous to God of any sin that can be committed. Suppose a husband should find that his wife had no confidence at all in him and suppose him to entertain for her the

sincerest affection, and always to have manifested it in every possible way. Now what could be more grievous to his heart than to find that his wife had no confidence in him? If, under these circumstances, a husband would have cause of grief--would have reason to feel deeply injured, and wounded to the very heart; what must be the state of God's feelings, when He sees that His creatures have no confidence in Him, notwithstanding the infinite pains He has taken to secure their confidence, and thereby save their souls.

6. Unbelief "tramples the Son of God under foot, and counts the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing, and does despite to the Spirit of grace." It says, I have no confidence in the necessity, or nature, or reality of the Atonement, and as for Jesus Christ, I do not believe that "His blood cleanseth from all sin." I do not feel in my heart, that He is "my wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." I in fact do not realizingly believe any such thing.

7. It is the cause of all other sins. A little reflection will convince any one who will look at the subject, that unbelief or the withholding a felt confidence in the character, word, and promises of God, is the cause of worldly mindedness, and selfishness, under all the forms in which they exist in this world. Let the mind but have a conscious realizing assurance, that all the infinitely interesting things contained in the Bible are realities, and it instantly breaks the power of selfishness and pride, and every other abomination, and delivers the soul up to the entire dominion of truth.

8. It is the setting aside of infinite evidence, and therefore, the greatest conceivable departure from the law of our nature. It has been already remarked, that belief in testimony is natural to man; and the mind in an unperverted state is as yielding as air to the influence of evidence. But what must be the state of that mind that can withhold confidence in God, in the face of all the evidence He has given of the infinite/excellence of His character. It is the most outrageous mutiny against the laws of our being, the most abominable setting at nought and turning upside down all of the tendencies of unperverted mind that can be conceived.

9. It is the most horrible exhibition of prejudice that the universe any where presents, or ever witnessed. But for the appalling exhibition of the facts in the case, it would seem utterly incredible that mankind should not be entirely satisfied, and universally and continually exercise the most implicit confidence in the word, and character, and promises of God. We sometimes witness very shocking exhibitions of prejudice, in one human being towards another, insomuch that the prejudiced mind can really believe nothing good of him against whom the prejudice is entertained. Whatever appears to be fair, he suspects of hypocrisy; and accounts for any appearance of goodness, in any and every way, rather than admit the reality. Every one feels that there are few more hateful exhibitions of the human character than this. But how infinitely detestable is that state of mind that is so given up to prejudice against God, as at once to set aside the infinite weight of testimony in His favor and to withhold all practical and heartfelt confidence in His word and oath?

10. God has done all that the nature of the case admits, to secure and even compel the exercise of confidence in Him. Suppose some mischievous mind to have introduced rebellion into a human government, by insinuations, that had destroyed the confidence of the people in their ruler. And suppose, that while he had the power to overcome and crush, and slay them all at once, he should notwithstanding so pity them as to give his only begotten and well beloved son to atone for their sins. Suppose he had made every exhibition of his disinterested love that could be made, and yet, confidence was withholden, and his revolted subjects continued to maintain their pernicious distrust in his character. Well might he ask, "what more could I have done that I have not done to secure the confidence of this people?" I have laid down my life to do you good and how

is it that ye do not believe?" For one might think it impossible, that unbelief should have a place in this world, after all the manifestations of God's love that have been made to it. But O, what shall we say, when we find not only the heathen world, but the Christian world, and even the Christian Church, withholding confidence in God, and manifesting the most shocking unbelief, in regard to His providence and word? What more can God do to secure public and individual confidence? What higher evidence can He give? or, in His own emphatic language, "What more can I do for my vineyard that I have not done?"

11. Unbelief is eminently a willful sin. It is a matter of common observation, that it is exceedingly hard to make men believe what they are unwilling to believe. And when the will is strongly opposed to any truth it is next to impossible to retain the confidence of the mind in that truth. But what must be the strength of depravity in that heart—what must be the power of prejudice, what invincible strength must there be in the opposition of that will, when the confidence of the mind is not secured by infinite evidence; when the mind can look over the whole field and see mountains of evidence piled upon mountains, and yet feel not a particle of inward confidence and resting of heart in the character and word of the blessed God.

The influence of the will in modifying our belief, on almost any subject, is strikingly illustrated in a great many ways. A drunkard does not believe that alcohol is poison. A Universalist does not believe that there is any hell. An epicure does not believe that his innutricious condiments are injurious to his health. And it is often striking to observe the amount of influence which the will has in modifying the opinions of men. And when we come to speak of the faith of the gospel, which implies and includes volition, it is self-evident that there can be no faith where the will does not yield. And to talk of an unwilling faith is to speak of an unwilling willingness. The truth is that men are not influenced by evidence in cases where their will is opposed to the truth. They are stubborn and rebellious, not convinced, not humbled, and their confidence not gained, let God say what He will.