

PROVINCE OF FAITH

The province of faith is to *apprehend truth*. Truth is independent; error is a perversion of truth. To believe a lie, never makes it true, but is a fraud on one's self. To believe a truth, does not make it true; to disbelieve it, cannot destroy it. It is independent of us, but we are dependent on it.

Truth is the proper food of man (Matt. 4:4.), and a large share of it must be received by faith, whether it pertains to the past, present or future. Thus it is true that we must *live* by faith. Faith is to truth, as eating is to bread. Without eating, man will die; but if he would have good health, he must do more than eat. Exercise is essential to life. So while we live by faith, it is not by faith *alone*. All faith and no work, will kill spiritually, as truly as all eating and no work will kill naturally. We greatly value faith, „For *without* it, it is *impossible* to please God; he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him,” (Heb. 11:6.) We please God when we obey him, and by this means we form a character like His own. In an important sense it is the Christian's *life-work* to *come* to God, and success is to the diligent seeker. He is revealed in one sense in the *statements* of His word, but he is revealed to the heart, when his statements are understood, and the spirit of *obedience* is essential to understanding. (John 7:17.) We are to grow in *grace* and in *knowledge*.

Faith is fundamental; it is the basis of character and life, and also of hope. The death and resurrection of Christ are primary facts of the gospel, and, rightly understood, are a key to the plan of salvation. He was put to death in the flesh and quickened by the Spirit into a new and immortal life. The cross was to him the turning point between the natural and the spiritual. It was thus the key of hope for the world. When He died He met man's *legal* necessities, or removed all legal encumbrances. He destroyed the enmity between the world and God's law, which enmity was *represented* in the typical dispensation by the law of carnal ordinances. That law was the „middle wall” between Jew and Gentile—a typical distinction which is not recognized under the gospel. As soon as *it* is out of the way, the Jew and Gentile are *alike* before God, and *both* are reconciled to God by the cross. (Eph. 2:16.) The death of Christ thus met the legal claim on universal man, and secured his deliverance from the legal curse, which was death. Christ arose a conqueror, leading captivity captive. He brought life and immortality to light, as He had also made both possible for man. When He rose, it was the dawn of light on our dark world, the key of hope, a glimpse of immortality. These great facts of the past we receive by faith, and the past and the future are linked together. What has been done for Jesus is God's promise unto us. „He that raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also, by Jesus.” (2 Cor. 4:14.) He has given him the key—the power over death, and in addition, „the power of an endless life.” (Heb. 7:16.)

Faith is thus shown to be the foundation of hope, and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us." (Rom. 5:5.) We can thus see the relation of faith, hope and love; „the greatest of these is love." Without faith, neither hope or love would be possible; but love, by which faith now works, will continue when faith is ended in sight, and hope has been realized. Faith and hope are temporal, but love is eternal. Faith as a foundation is essential, but without love as a working power, a faith that could even remove mountains is worthless. (1 Cor. 13:2.)

„Through faith we understand that the ages (worlds) were framed by the word of God." These and „all things were made by Him (Christ) and for Him." All that God has done is in reference to the plan of the ages, of which, as we have seen, the death and resurrection of Christ is the key. So by faith we grasp the fullness of Christ in the work of the ages, which is a glorious expression of the infinite wisdom, power and love. „Faith is the substance (basis) of things hoped for; the evidence of things unseen." Faith deals with the *future* and with the *invisible*. The future is our hope, our reward; the invisible is our strength for the work of life. It makes the invisible as if it were visible, and the future as if it were present. We are enabled to „look not at the things which are seen, but at the unseen." (2 Cor. 4:18.) Faith explains this paradox, and by the presence of the invisible, strengthens us to bear the afflictions of this life, which are but for a moment, and enables us to lay hold upon the eternal. There are given us in the bible and also in the Christian's experience, many illustrations of the action of faith in reference to the unseen, present and future. The examples of faith given in the eleventh of Hebrews show the combination. They acted because they believed in the *invisible* God, and because they looked *forward* for the fulfillment of his word. They believed „that God *is*, and that He is the *rewarder*." Faith works; work secures reward. We observe that God did not say to the ancients, „believe." but he gave them something to do; and yet their obedience was the best possible evidence that they did believe, and their faith was approved. By faith Abel offered the sacrifice, which was valuable because it pointed forward to the sacrifice of Christ, for which his body was prepared.

Enoch walked with God; he did not stand still, but *walked*; grasping by faith the presence and companionship of the invisible God, and was rewarded by translation, „that he should not see death." Abraham obeyed God, on account of his faith, both in going out to the unknown land, and in the offering of his son Isaac. In both cases he grasped the future, seeing Christ and the heavenly country. (John 8:56 and Heb. 11:16.) The Lord's appearing to Abraham and others in human form doubtless illustrated the presence of the invisible.

Moses refused royal honor in the court of Pharaoh, choosing to suffer affliction; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he had respect unto the reward, and endured *as seeing* Him who is *invisible*. (Heb. 11:23-27.)

The unseen world is the source of wisdom, strength and comfort to the pilgrims as disciples, as soldiers and as afflicted ones. The ministration of angels, under the all-wise and loving care of our Lord, is a great revealed truth, and full of comfort.

We do not believe in the ministration of departed human spirits, but regard *that* idea as a *perversion* of the Bible teaching. The angels are not disembodied men. Man, when created, was „made a little lower than the angels.” The angels rule in *this* world; „but unto the angels hath He not put in subjection the *world to come* ... but what is *man* that thou art mindful of him?” „Thou hast put all things in subjection under *his* feet.” (Heb. 2:5-8.) If angels are disembodied men, the above statement cannot be true, for in such a case the „world to come” would, as well as the present, be subject to angels. While we believe Paul, then we must discard the ministration of human spirits. But *angelic* ministration is a great and important fact in God’s plan for the development of the ruling element of the *future* world. It doubtless deserves more

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implicit faith than it often receives. When we are permitted from the standpoint of future glory to look back, we may see how much more fully they served us than we realized. In hours of danger and affliction their services are needed, and freely tendered. Their services might be not only more fully *realized*, but more *common*, were they expected. Unbelief, self-confidence and self-protection by foul means, doubtless grieve our angels, „which do always behold the face of our Father in heaven.” (Matt. 18:10.) We cannot doubt that in hours of deep affliction, comfort and strength are often experienced, coming from the invisible, though not expected and its source not fully acknowledged. Our Saviour himself in his earth life needed and received the help of angels. In His mental agony, in view of the coming ordeal, while he was in the garden praying that *if it were possible* the cup might pass from him, and sweating, as it were, great drops of blood, „there appeared an angel unto Him from heaven, strengthening Him.” (Luke 22:43.) It was *not* possible for the cup to pass. He must drink it to the very dregs. His life was needed, but it was not *enough*; He must be obedient unto death, even the death of the cross,” and he obeyed. (Phil. 2:8.) He could not escape, but He could receive strength to endure; and it seems that as soon as His help was withdrawn, He died. His *death*, not the *pain* He endured, met the legal necessities of the race. „The wages of sin is *death*.” Many followers of Christ have found help in time of need by coming to the throne of grace. He who suffered and was supported by angels is now their Lord, and, as His servants, they now minister to the heirs of salvation. (Heb. 1:14.)

The importance of faith cannot be over-estimated, unless other things of importance are in our estimate crowded out. The past, present and future, we grasp by faith; we *work* by faith; we *live* by faith; we *walk* by faith; we *endure* by faith, as seeing the invisible; and waiting for our reward, are carried *forward*, so that all we expect to realize in the eternal life is now, by faith, possessed

and enjoyed.

Thanks be to God for the earnest of our inheritance.

J. H. P.

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