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What is Faith?
by Herbert W. Armstrong
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Millions lack faith to receive answers to their prayers -- to free their minds from fears and worries. To a large extent this is due to lack of understanding what faith is. Read this simple but thorough explanation of the subject.

THE WHOLE WORLD is now shaking with convulsions, preparatory to a tremendous event.

This present world breakdown, following the greatest, most destructive wars in history, with world economic collapse, social unrest, religious confusion, is merely the WARNING SIGNAL that the END of the present civilization is here. The second coming of Christ to establish a new order of world peace on earth is near -- much nearer than people think!

Any Faith Today?

And speaking of His own second appearance on earth, Jesus Himself asked, prophetically:

"When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?"

When Jesus uttered those words He was looking into the future -- into our very present generation which He clearly foresaw. And, foreseeing the almost total absence of FAITH in our time, He asked this question!

Certainly the world has almost lost sight of real FAITH. No wonder so few have any -- no wonder so many say, "My faith isn't very strong" -- or, "I just can't seem to work up the faith." People today do not know what faith is, or why they do not possess it. Yet without FAITH none can even be saved!

Jesus Had Faith!

When Jesus walked the earth in human flesh, HE possessed faith!

Yet He said plainly, "Of myself, I can do NOTHING!"

Few realize that what He did -- the miracles He performed -- He did not do by any supernatural power of His own. Everything He did, every miracle He performed, was done literally through FAITH, setting us a beautiful example.

But how, then, did He perform His miracles, accomplish His mighty works?

"The FATHER that dwelleth in me," explained Jesus, "HE doeth the works."

Yes, even as you and I may be, Jesus was filled with God's Holy Spirit -- God's dynamic supernatural Power! This power of God Almighty, the Creator, was literally in Jesus; and the same identical power of the same identical Living God may be within you today!

All the apostles and evangelists of the first century true Church of God did perform miracles, and even greater miracles than Jesus had performed, until even Peter's shadow passing over the sick and afflicted caused them to be healed!

Peter, Stephen, Philip, Paul -- all common, humble, ordinary men themselves -- all had that power, the SAME identical power Jesus had, because they lived and walked CLOSE TO GOD and were

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filled with the Holy Spirit!

And we seem to LACK that power today, NOT because God denies us that power, but because we are so close to a modern, materialistic world -- our minds are so filled with the material interests of this life; our minds and our hearts are so far from God; we are so out of touch with Him, through lack of enough time spent in the study of His word and lack of enough of the right kind of surrendered, submissive, earnest and heartrending PRAYER--and consequently, because we are not filled with the HOLY SPIRIT!

So now let's ask two questions:

First, what is faith?

And second, How may we have it, and how may it be increased?

What Faith IS

Now notice, faith is the substance -- the marginal rendering says "ASSURANCE" -- of things hoped for (Heb. 11:1). SO FAITH comes before possession.

Once you have received the possession, you no longer hope for it. But even before you receive it, you have it in SUBSTANCE; and that substance -- that ASSURANCE that you shall possess it -- is FAITH.

Then again, faith is an EVIDENCE -- the "evidence of things not seen." Faith precedes the actual receiving of what you ask for. And faith is the EVIDENCE YOU shall have it, before you even SEE it. It is the EVIDENCE of things not yet seen. You do not have it. You do not see it, or feel it -- yet faith is your EVIDENCE that you have, or shall have it. Faith is the substance--the ASSURANCE -- of receiving that which you still HOPE for.

How to KNOW You Are Healed

So I want you to notice that when you hope for things or ask God for things, there is an EVIDENCE -- a proof because, where God is involved, His evidence is proof -- that you shall receive what you have asked. And what is that proof -- that evidence? Is it the actual receiving of the answer, so you see, or feel, or hear that you have it? No!

Suppose, for instance, you were ill -- taken with a disease. Now Jesus healed the sick continually. And, He said, the works that He did -- and this was one of them -- we should do also. Now suppose you ask God to heal you. Naturally, you want some evidence that you are going to be healed.

So what is that evidence, that proof? Is it the evidence of the pain ceasing -- or the swelling going down -- something you can feel, and see? I know a man who said, "When I can see anyone healed by direct prayer, then I'll believe in it." This man said he wanted to BELIEVE in it -- he wanted to have FAITH in it! He was looking for an EVIDENCE that he could SEE -- and he died without ever seeing it!

Because what we SEE -- what we FEEL -- is not the true EVIDENCE. Having the thing -- SEEING it -- is not faith. Faith precedes possession because FAITH is confidence -- ASSURANCE -- you shall possess it.

The human mind, naturally, can receive KNOWLEDGE only through the five senses. These are five sole channels capable of transmitting knowledge, by natural processes, to the human mind. The senses of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, feeling.

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But that is not FAITH! Faith is a spiritual matter, and it

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has nothing to do with the five senses, which are physical.

Prayer is a spiritual matter. God is a spirit! And when we ask, for instance, for healing, we do have an evidence -- proof positive -- that the healing will be done; but that evidence is not something seen, or felt, or heard -- it is not a physical evidence -- it is rather the spiritual evidence of FAITH. FAITH is our evidence.

An Unusual Trial

Let's picture a trial in a courtroom. It's a very strange -- a most unusual trial, for the One being tried is none other than GOD ALMIGHTY! And you, yourself, are sitting as JUDGE and JURY. The prosecuting attorney is your human nature. Attorney for the defense is the Holy Spirit. God is accused of lying -- of unfaithfulness -- of obtaining things more valuable than money under false pretenses! God is accused of willful non-payment of PROMISSORY NOTES.

You, now sitting as judge and jury, have read God's command and written PROMISE, in James 5:14, for your physical healing when sick. You have prayed for healing, according to God's written promise. You have followed God's instructions and called the elders of the Church, who have prayed over you the prayer of faith and anointed you with oil.

The prosecuting attorney, your human nature, attempting to convict God of obtaining your allegiance under false pretenses -- of breaking His contract -- of Lying -- presents before you, as judge and jury, his evidence.

"My evidence," says your nature, "is literal, tangible evidence that is real -- evidence you can see and feel. You can see for yourself that you are not healed. The pain is still there! In fact, perhaps it has grown worse! God gave you a written promise, as certainly as anyone ever gave a promissory note. You conformed to all His conditions. You prayed. You called the elders of the Church, and they prayed. You believed! But you can now see my evidence -- you can feel my evidence -- you are still suffering -- you are not healed! Therefore God did not heal you! God did not keep His word. God's word, the Bible, lied to you. God FAILED! My evidence is that which you plainly see and feel! You are not healed. Therefore I demand you bring in a verdict of GUILTY! -- guilty in the first degree -- I demand you find Almighty God GUILTY of lying, of obtaining your allegiance under false pretenses, of not performing what He promised in His written promise."

But now the attorney for the defense -- God's Holy Spirit -- speaks to you, quietly, calmly.

He says to you: "I now present MY evidence that God's word is TRUE -- that God is faithful -- that God cannot lie. My evidence is not anything you can see or feel. My evidence is simple FAITH -- patient trust in the veracity of God's word. It is impossible for God to lie. My evidence is YOUR FAITH in that fact, and in His promise. And FAITH is the evidence of that which is not seen, not felt!

"Let's review the case to see clearly what happened. Let's understand plainly where your human nature has clouded the issue and deceived you. God has told you, in Exodus 15, that HE is your healer -- your GOD-healer -- that is one of His names, and God is named what He is. God sent His Son into the world to be beaten with stripes, to suffer the penalty of your transgressions of

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nature's laws, in your stead -- His body was broken for you, and by His stripes, you are healed! God gave you His word that it is His

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will to heal you. He commanded you to call the elders of the Church, which you did. He promised to heal you. But God has also made it a part of this contract, in His word, that "according to your faith, be it unto you" -- in the very words of Christ!

"Now FAITH is your evidence that God will do what He promised. You can't see faith -- you can't feel it. What you see or feel has nothing to do with faith. But the point your human nature wants you to overlook is that God did not promise WHEN, or HOW, He would heal you!

"God's purpose in your life is to transform you from what you've been into the very image of His son -- into the very character of God Himself. Part of this character is the learning of PATIENCE! And God instructs you, in James 1:3, that the trying of your faith works PATIENCE into your character. God has revealed to you in this and other Scriptures that He will sometimes delay healing you in order to TRY your faith and to teach you to be patient! Your healing, God has promised, shall be according to your faith.

"Faith is trusting God to do that which HE has not yet done. After the healing is completed, you no longer need to exercise faith. Faith is the ingredient you must exercise until God heals you -- until you can see and feel that you are healed. After God has healed you, then you won't need FAITH in it any longer, but your faith must remain firm and steadfast, and patient, regardless of what you see or feel, until God actually heals you, as He has promised to do.

"Now the prosecuting attorney in this case, your human nature, wants you to believe that faith is something you exercise about 30 seconds, while you are still praying, and then if God has not done what He promised as soon as you expect, you are to find God guilty of lying. The instant you yield to the devil's influence over your human nature and render a verdict that God will not do what He promised just because He has not done it yet -- that moment you make God out a liar -- you lose all FAITH in God; and you thereupon break your part of the agreement, which is to have faith and keep on having faith, and trusting God, and relying upon Him, UNTIL He performs what He promised.

"Faith is simple reliance upon GOD'S WORD. It is the evidence of what you do not see or feel. Therefore I call upon you to have patience -- to keep on TRUSTING GOD, until He heals you, and then HE will heal you! I call upon you to find God innocent of this charge of lying -- I call upon you to find Him FAITHFUL to His promises, and then you shall have them."

The evidence is now all in. You will now render the VERDICT!

You must render your verdict based upon the evidence.

Which, now, is the evidence you believe? That which you see and feel -- the physical evidences that often are deceptive -- or your faith that God's word is true, that His promises are sure, that it is impossible for God to lie?

If you BELIEVE this latter spiritual evidence, and reject the physical evidences of sight and of feeling, you pronounce sentence that His word has been VINDICATED by your verdict -- you shall be RELEASED from the disease, and what He promised shall be carried out.

But, if you decide that the physical evidences of sight or feeling are to be trusted over and above the word of ALMIGHTY GOD -- and you reject His word and His promise, and refuse to

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believe in it -- refuse, in other words, to accept and trust in the evidence of FAITH until God completes it, then you yourself must render your verdict, "NOT HEALED," and you will not be healed!

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You see, God does not promise healing, or anything else, unless we BELIEVE. "According to your FAITH be it unto you," said Jesus. And remember the FAITH must precede, and therefore is a condition to, the possession.

One man expressed it very well: "FAITH is the assurance that the things which God said in His word are true: and that God will act according to what He has said in His word. This assurance, this reliance on GOD'S WORD, this confidence, is FAITH!" And it is a true Bible definition. This work of GOD has been built by putting it into actual practice!

Learning God's WILL

Remember, whatever your need, the first thing to do, to be sure of receiving an answer to your prayer, is to search the Scriptures, to learn whether it is GOD'S WILL (Eph. 5:17; II Tim. 3:14-17).

The BIBLE reveals God's will. We need never say, "well, I know GOD could heal me IF IT IS HIS WILL." You can know His will. And so far as healing is concerned, I can tell you definitely that His word says plainly and emphatically that it is His will. The Bible is full of promises -- literally FULL of them. If you need anything, study to see whether God promised it, and if He has, HE CAN'T BREAK A PROMISE!

The Importance of CLAIMING a PROMISE

I remember one time several years ago when my two sons came to me and asked me to do something for them -- I don't remember now what. They were then around seven and nine years old. I do remember I didn't want to do it.

"But, Daddy, You PROMISED," they said, "and you've GOT TO KEEP YOUR PROMISE."

And then I remembered I had promised. Well, what do you think? Do you think I could break a promise when my two sons came to me and put it like that? No, and if you'll just as boldly tell God HE has promised and then CLAIM that promise as applied to your case and TRUST God to keep it and quit worrying about it -- quit trying to work up faith -- just RELAX, and let God take over from there -- leave it with Him -- let Him do it -- He'll do it, every time!

I know whereof I speak, because I've put what I'm now telling you to the test not once, but literally hundreds and thousands of times, and God has never failed to keep His promise once. I've seen the answers come so often and so frequently that I expect the answer when I ask!

God promises to supply every need -- that if we'll seek first the Kingdom of God and His RIGHTEOUSNESS -- which is right doing -- He will provide every material need (Matt. 6:33).

This WORK a Living Example of FAITH

Why, this very work we conduct is a direct answer to prayer! This work -- The WORLD TOMORROW broadcast, The PLAIN TRUTH magazine and AMBASSADOR COLLEGE -- which now has grown to national and international scope and influence, started as small as any work

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could start -- literally from NOTHING.

It has been from the start 100 percent a work of FAITH -- and we had to really learn this lesson of faith before it had even started.

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WHY People Lack Faith

And now, very briefly, WHY don't we have FAITH, and how may we get it, and how may it be increased? So many say, "well, I have no impression -- I have no feeling, no conviction -- that I shall get the answer."

They want to wait until they get a certain CONVICTION, a certain FEELING, a sort of assurance they can FEEL -- before they really believe they shall have the answer.

But THAT is not faith!

That is FEELING!

Your feeling, your convictions, your impressions, have absolutely not one thing or the other to do with FAITH. FAITH HAS ONLY TO DO WITH GOD'S WORD! The one question is, Has God promised it in the Bible? If He has, then probabilities, possibilities, feelings, convictions, impressions, have nothing whatsoever to do with it. God has a thousand ways we know nothing of, of answering and providing whatever He has promised. We don't need to see HOW He is going to do it.

And that's another thing -- He almost never will do it the WAY we expect. So don't try to figure out how it is possible for God to do it. You are trusting in SUPER-NATURAL POWER! Then BELIEVE in that power. God works in mysterious ways His wonders to perform. What He has promised, He will perform; but He will do it HIS way, and in HIS TIME. Leave all that to HIM and just TRUST HIM. Rely upon His word.

God's GIFT

And let us remember, FAITH is the GIFT OF GOD.

So many think that everything else that comes from God is His gift, but the FAITH required to receive these things is something we ourselves must somehow work up, or strain and strive for. But we have to just relax and TRUST GOD, even for the FAITH by which we receive everything else! (Eph. 2:8).

In Revelation 14:12 is a description of the true Church of THIS DAY. Those in this Church have the FAITH OF JESUS. Notice, the FAITH OF JESUS! It is not just our faith in HIM, but His faith -- the very faith with which He performed His miracles -- placed in us and acting in us.

How can you get it? Draw closer to God. Get to know God. Surrender all the way to HIM, and do His will. And then PRAY. YOU get to know Him in PRAYER. We are too close to the material things. Through PRAYER, much more prayer, you can come closer to GOD and the spiritual things. And what a happy, joyous experience it is, once you have really done it!

PART II

What Kind of Faith is Required for Salvation?

No subject pertaining to Christian salvation is more generally misunderstood than that of saving FAITH!

Just "BELIEVE in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved," is the popular teaching today. And that statement is

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absolutely true -- if you understand what kind of BELIEVING is required!

Unfortunately millions are being deceived -- led to trust in a faith that will never save one single soul -- by a very popular and very false teaching.

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It is customary to quote only a PART of the Scriptures on this subject -- reading a false meaning into them -- and thus by subtle half-truths, popular teachings shackle most of Christendom to spiritual blindness and deceptions.

Do These Scriptures Contradict?

God does not usually reveal all the truth respecting a particular subject in any one passage alone. "whom shall He teach knowledge? and whom shall He make to understand doctrine? ... Precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little and there a little" (Isa. 28:9-10). To understand any general subject in the Bible, it is necessary to view all the scriptural evidence touching that particular subject. And we cannot read our inherited or desired meaning into any particular passage; for "no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation" (II Peter 1:20), but each passage is interpreted by, and in the light of, other texts.

For example. It is quite popular to quote Romans 3:20: "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight," and from this passage alone assume that salvation comes by faith, in disobedience to God's Law! Those who thus interpret this passage never tell you that in Romans 2:13 the same Apostle Paul was inspired to write: "Not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the DOERS of the law shall be justified."

Is there contradiction here? If the one scripture is intended to reveal that we do not have to make an effort to obey God's Law to be justified and then saved -- but that we are saved by faith without obedience to God's Law -- then, indeed, God contradicts Himself in His Word! And if you wish to make Romans 3:20 say that, you must consistently acknowledge there is contradiction in the Scriptures, and if this be true, you have no basis for your faith!

Again, Ephesians 2:8-9: "By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast." But those who quote this text so freely to teach the doctrine of "no works," never tell you that the same inspired Scriptures say also:

"What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? ... Even so FAITH, if it hath not works, IS DEAD, being alone ... I will show thee my faith BY my works. Thou BELIEVEST that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, AND tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works IS DEAD?" (James 2:14-20).

There is no contradiction here!

Rather, by putting all the scriptures on the subject of "Saving Faith" together, we learn that there are TWO KINDS of faith. And the kind so blindly trusted in by the majority of this day is nothing but a DEAD faith -- and a DEAD faith never will save one soul! Notice! James 2:20: "Faith without works is DEAD" -- just a DEAD faith.

James continues: "Was not Abraham our father JUSTIFIED by

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works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how FAITH wrought with his works, and BY WORKS was faith made perfect?.. You see then how that BY WORKS A MAN IS JUSTIFIED, and not by faith only" (James 2:21-24). Then are we saved by works instead of faith? No, Never! We are saved by FAITH! But faith functions with our works and BY WORKS our FAITH

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is MADE PERFECT! That is LIVING FAITH!

Why do we even need salvation? Because we have SINNED, and the penalty of sin is DEATH!

But how have we sinned? What IS sin, anyhow? "Sin is the transgression of THE LAW," is God's answer (I John 3:4).

"Yes." answers the victim of modern fables, "But we are not under the law today, but UNDER GRACE! why certainly! "What then?" asks the inspired Paul, "shall we SIN [transgress the LAW] because we are not under the law but under grace?" And Paul's answer is. GOD FORBID"! (Rom. 6:15). And again, "shall we continue in SIN [transgressing the Law] that grace may abound? GOD FORBID! How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" (Romans 6:1-2).

The Law has a penalty -- DEATH. It claims the life of the one who transgresses it. The Law has power to take the life of the transgressor. It therefore is more powerful than the sinner -- and is OVER the sinner, holding a claim on his life. It is the SINNER who is UNDER the law. But when the sinner REPENTS of his transgression, and accepts the sacrifice of Christ as payment of the penalty of the Law, then he is PARDONED -- UNDER GRACE -- the Law no longer stands OVER him, claiming his life. Those who are still sinning are still UNDER the Law! And those who, through repentance, obedience and FAITH have turned from disobedience and are, through faith, KEEPING the Law, are the only ones who are UNDER GRACE!

God's Spiritual Mirror

Let us understand it! "By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified, in His sight." No, certainly not! That scripture is 100% true, and there is no contradiction! You cannot be justified BY the deeds of the Law -- not at all!

WHY? The last half of this same verse gives the answer -- why do most preachers never quote it? "For By the law is the KNOWLEDGE of sin" (Rom. 3:20). THAT'S WHY!

The purpose of the Law is not to forgive, to justify, to wash away, to cleanse. Only THE BLOOD OF CHRIST can do that! The purpose of the Law is to tell us what sin is -- to define it, to REVEAL it -- so we can quit it. Sin is the transgression of the Law -- that's what sin IS.

All women ought to understand this. In every woman's handbag is a little mirror. She knows what it is for. Every little while she takes out this mirror and steals a glance at her face. Sometimes it reveals a speck of dirt. And we might truthfully say, "by the use of these mirrors are no dirty faces washed clean." You women understand what we mean! But do you throw your mirrors away because by them your faces are not washed? Of course not -- what a silly question it seems, when applied to a MATERIAL case! And if we ask you WHY your faces are not washed clean by your mirrors, you answer: "Because by the mirror comes the KNOWLEDGE OF THE DIRT."

God's LAW is His spiritual mirror. We look into it. and see the dirt on our hearts! But by looking at the Law, or keeping it,

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no dirt is WASHED from our hearts -- only Christ's BLOOD can do that. By the Law comes the KNOWLEDGE OF SIN!

Listen to James explain it! "But be ye DOERS OF the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way and straightway forgetteth what manner of man

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he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect LAW of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer but a DOER of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed" (James 1:22-25).

Is It Possible to Keep the Law?

"But," argues the "no law" deceiver, "no man can keep the Commandments. It is not humanly possible. Since FAITH has come, we keep no law -- faith has made it VOID."

Thus even "Satan himself is transformed into an angel of LIGHT. Therefore it is no great thing if HIS MINISTERS also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness -- for such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of CHRIST" (II Cor. 11:13-15).

"Do we then make void the law through faith?" comes the question in inspired Scripture -- and the answer: "GOD FORBID: yea, we ESTABLISH THE LAW!" (Rom. 3:31).

Yes, faith establishes the Law! By keeping it, is faith made PERFECT!

Yet, can we keep the Commandments? Is it possible? Satan's "No Law" deceivers say No! What is the PLAIN TRUTH?

A man came to Jesus and asked how to be saved. The Saviour Himself replied, "If thou wilt enter into life, KEEP THE COMMANDMENTS" (Matt. 19:17). "When his disciples heard it, they were exceedingly amazed, saying, who then can be saved? But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, with men this is impossible; but with God, all things are possible" (verses 25-26).

There is Christ's own answer! With men it IS impossible -- utterly impossible to really KEEP His Commandments. But -- here's the blessed truth -- WITH GOD, it is possible, even to keep His Commandments. Do you begin to see? IT TAKES FAITH -- faith in the power of GOD! And, just as your own diligent effort coupled with faith makes faith perfect, so faith coupled with your effort makes PERFECT OBEDIENCE! The two go hand in hand. And you cannot have the one without the other!

A LIVING FAITH -- the only kind that will SAVE -- is an active faith -- one that TRUSTS GOD to make it possible to OBEY HIM -- to live the true Christian life -- to KEEP His blessed Commandments!

Think! Could a just God command men to do what is IMPOSSIBLE to do? Or can we conceive of Jesus as a smart-aleck young man who knew more than His FATHER, and who did away with His Father's Commandments? How absurd! Yet this is the popular conception today!

The Law Is Eternal

God's Law is not a horrible monster! Just and right laws are a terror only to the criminal -- they are made to PROTECT the good! God's Law is Perfect (Psalm 19:7), it is a SPIRITUAL law, (Rom. 7:14), HOLY, and just, and good (Rom. 7:12). ALL His commandments are SURE, and stand fast FOREVER AND EVER (Psalm 111:7-8). Don't you believe it, when men tell you differently!

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God's Law is, simply, LOVE! It is the perfect way of life. Every particle of human suffering, unhappiness, misery and death has come solely from its transgression! It was given to make man HAPPY, and is the only philosophy of life that can do so! It came from a God of LOVE, and LOVE is the fulfilling of the law (Rom. 13:10)!

But not YOUR own natural love! It requires "the love of GOD, shed abroad in our hearts BY THE HOLY Ghost" (Rom. 5:5). God has,

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and will give you, the love that will fulfill His LAW. And so it is possible through FAITH, and the GIFT of God's Holy Spirit, for man to keep His Commandments! And whoever claims differently, God calls a plain LIAR (I John 2:4).

The true Commandment-keeper is forced to trust God to make obedience possible. And thus faith does not void, but establishes the Law! And to keep the Law requires FAITH!

A thrilling example of this eternal truth is recorded in the Book of Daniel. Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, erected a great golden image.

"Then an herald cried aloud, To you it is commanded, O people, nations and languages that at what time ye hear the sound of the [band] ... ye fall down and worship the golden image" (Dan. 3:4-5). "And whoso fallth not down and worshipping shall the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace" (verse 6).

Set over the affairs of the province of Babylon were Daniel's three young Jewish friends, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. One of the Commandments of God's eternal spiritual Law forbids such worship of images.

Had you been in their place, what would YOU have done? would you not have said, "well, I have to bow down to this image -- I have to do it or be killed!" And perhaps you would have excused yourself by reasoning thus: "I don't think God would be fair if He punished me for this, when He knows I am FORCED to do it. Anyway, He tells us to be subject to the power of the state!" Yes, it is easy to use reason to excuse disobedience to God. But God is not looking for chances to punish us -- but rather for opportunities to SAVE us through faith to save us from the folly of SIN and the sad consequence our own acts impose!

God's Law is intended to protect us from suffering. Whatever we sow we shall reap. It is not God who punishes us when we do wrong, it is merely our own acts rebounding like a boomerang!

But these three young Jews knew the truth -- that we should OBEY GOD rather than men, that through FAITH God makes it possible. When they firmly REFUSED to bow down to worship the king's image, Nebuchadnezzar in his rage and fury commanded they be brought before him (verse 13).

Listen to the quiet, trusting, unafraid answer of these lads. "O Nebuchadnezzar ... our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace"! (Verses 16-18).

Sometimes God tries our faith. He tried theirs. You might think He failed them, but He only permitted their faith to be tested.

"Then was Nebuchadnezzar full of fury and the form of his visage was changed ... therefore he spake, and commanded that they should heat the furnace one seven times more than it was wont to be heated ... Then these men were bound in their coats, their hosen, and their hats, and their other garments," -- surely the (God whom they trusted would have them released now? But no -- there was no physical evidence whatever that God so much as

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heard! -- "and were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace"! (Verses 19-21).

The furnace was so hot the flames leaped out and "slew those men that took up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego." And they fell down "bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace!"

God permitted them actually to be thrown in! Was He unmindful of those who trusted in Him to make possible the keeping of His Commandments? Not God!

The king looked into the furnace, and said, "Lo, I, see four

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men loose walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of GOD"! (Verse 25). So Nebuchadnezzar came near the mouth of the furnace and called to them.

"Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, ye servants of the most high God, come forth, and come hither! Then Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego came forth of the midst of the fire these men, upon whose bodies the fire had no power, nor was an hair of their head singed, neither were their coats changed, nor the smell of fire had passed on them. Then Nebuchadnezzar spake, and said Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who hath sent his angel, and DELIVERED his servants that TRUSTED IN HIM"! (Verses 26-28).

THERE was an example of living FAITH -- a faith that TRUSTED God to make it possible to live the way of His Law! Yes, WITH GOD, it is possible to keep all His Commandments -- don't let any man deceive you to the contrary!

Can You Believe and worship Christ in Vain?

When God's word says, "BELIEVE on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved," it does not mean the DEAD faith now popularly taught! The common teachings of this day distort this to mean a mere belief in the FACTS of Christ's existence, His sacrifice, and His saving work. Just accept these FACTS, and accept HIM -- without any obedience to God's Laws! But the demons believe these things -- and they TREMBLE -- but they are not thereby saved!

Christ was the Messenger of the New Covenant -- a Messenger sent from God. You cannot BELIEVE on such a divine Messenger unless you believe, and obey the MESSAGE that He brought! "If thou wilt enter into LIFE," was His teaching. "KEEP THE COMMANDMENTS!"

"REPENT" said the inspired Peter, and "ye SHALL receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:38). God gives His Holy Spirit only to them that OBEY HIM (Acts 5:32). And His Holy Spirit is the LOVE which God gives us to fulfill and to keep His Commandments! And it all comes BY FAITH!

Christ came to save us FROM, not in, our sins! To FREE us from the enslavement of sin and the unhappiness and wretchedness it brings -- not to make us free to commit sin!

Is it possible to BELIEVE in Christ -- to worship Him -- in the customary manner of the day, and yet be lost? Christ Himself says, "YES!"

"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord! Lord! shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that DOETH the will of my Father which is in heaven," He said (Matt. 7:21).

Hear Him again!

"Howbeit IN VAIN do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men"! (Mark 7:7-8).

There it is! From Jesus' own lips! Such a dead faith -- such

FAITH

worship -- is IN vain! Those who trust in it, and in the men and denominations which teach it, ARE LOST! And the quicker we come to realize it, the better!

God's PURPOSE in salvation is to rescue men from SIN, and its resulting unhappiness, misery, and death! To REPENT of sin is the first step! Then the BLOOD OF CHRIST, upon acceptance and faith, cleanses of all past sins. And by FAITH we are kept from sin in the future. Thus the resulting righteousness is of FAITH -- the righteousness imparted from God.

We are not justified BY THE LAW -- we are justified by the

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blood of Jesus Christ! But this justification will be given only on condition that we REPENT of our transgressions of God's Law -- and so it is, after all, only the DOERS of the Law that shall be JUSTIFIED (Rom. 2:13).

How plain, and how beautiful is God's TRUTH!

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