

FAITH: WHAT IS IT; HOW PRODUCED?

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"But without faith it is impossible to please Him."—Heb. xi. 6.

This is a subject that has been the basis of very many sermons, essays, etc. Yet it is quite certain that all who profess to be Christians do not fully understand what faith is. It is evident that very many have overlooked the plain teaching of Christ and the apostles. In Heb. xi. 6, we read "That he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." This adds strength to the first part of the verse.

It is often said that there are many kinds of faith. But the Scriptures do not so teach. In order to get a correct view of this important matter, we must turn to the Book that guides us into the way of truth. Then, what is faith? and how produced?

In Romans x. 17, we read that "Faith cometh by hearing." Hearing what? Hearing the word of God. This is very plain; for if the people in Rome had never heard of Christ, how could they have believed on him? (See Romans x. 14, 17.)

When Paul preached the gospel to them, they heard—they believed (or had faith in Christ) they were justified, and had peace with God through Christ.

Now we turn to Ephesians, iv. 5, and there we read, "There is one faith." This is a positive statement and will admit of no debate. So we say that there is only one faith.

The objects of faith may be many; yet it holds the same relation to them all. All faith is based on testimony and testimony upon fact (or facts). A fact is something said or done. So before there can be testimony there must be something said or done. This is then reported. People hear, believe, or have faith in what is announced, because those who testify are persons whose veracity cannot be questioned. This is then how faith cometh by hearing. Faith, then, is the assent of the mind to what we hear (or read). Sometimes persons hear things that are false, and they believe them. Why? Because it was supported by evidence (though false).

The same faculty is used to believe a lie as the truth. It was faith in or belief of a lie that led our first parents to transgress the commands of God, bringing death upon themselves and all the human family. So faith or belief in Christ brings us back into fellowship with God, and we are made "joint heirs with Christ Jesus."

Christ is then the object of the Christian's faith. Those who lived before his advent looked forward through faith to the time when he should appear. We who live in the gospel dispensation look back to the cross where Christ made an atonement for our sins.

To believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God, is all that is required of us in regard to faith. When we believe the record that God has given of his Son, we are pleasing him.

On the day of Pentecost the Apostles testified that Christ had risen from the dead, tha

he had ascended to heaven where he was then reigning a Prince and a Saviour, to grant repentance and remission of sins. And that he had sent down the Holy Spirit as was foretold by the prophets and promised by himself. The multitude heard, they believed, repented, and obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine delivered to them by the Apostles. They were then united to God through faith in Christ. (See Gal. iii. 26, 27). So it is quite easy to understand how that without faith we cannot please God; for it (faith) precedes all other commands of the gospel. No one can believe the gospel before he hears it, nor can he repent before he believes, nor obey before he repents of his sins. Preaching the gospel is designed to produce faith, to be followed by repentance, baptism for the remission of sins.

Christ dwells in our hearts by faith. Eph. iii. 17. By faith the saints live, stand, walk, obtain a good report, overcome the world.

How cheering to be able to say,

"My faith looks up to Thee,
Thou Lamb of Calvary
Saviour Divine."

"OUR FATHER."

T. H. BLENUS.

"When ye pray, say Our Father": In these words the Master, our elder brother, teaches us what is the comprehensiveness of prayer. The care of a father is as wide as the necessities of a child. In our communings as children we may tell our heavenly father all that concerns us. This is a most precious thought, and a very valuable one, if we properly use it. We need sympathy—some loving one to whom we may unburden our heart of all its trials and cares. We often seek some human friend to whom we can tell our sorrows and difficulties; but human friends are not always sympathetic, nor always near, besides, we feel that every human heart has its own troubles, and is not, perhaps, in a condition to help us bear ours. The ear of God is never wearied by the appeals of his children, nor is his heart ever too full to receive us.

It is to be feared that we have yet to learn, many of us at least, the full meaning of divine sympathy. If we are but factors in nature, and of no more importance than any of the parts of creation—if we are but the results of natural law, with no more dignity attached to us than there is to any other organized or unorganized bodies, then, of course, there is no such thing as effectual prayer, and its whole philosophy is a simple delusion. If man is no closer to God than a dumb brute, then there is no reason why man should pray and the brute not. But if we are the children of God, then it follows that prayer is both natural and necessary. It is both natural and necessary for the child to feel and know its dependence upon the parent. There is a close and intimate relationship between parental love and care, and filial trust and affection; this relationship manifests itself and is brought out in prayer and supplication. We do not express wonderment that the cries of a child move an earthly parent's heart. The appeal of a child to parental love is the strongest appeal that can be made on earth. We have the most conclusive and abundant evidence of this all around us. Here we have strong testimony from the animal creation. The birds of the

air and the beasts of the forests will forget their fears and brave any danger at the cry of their offspring. It is the cry of helpless dependence and stirs the depths of parental nature. Take this same truth and divest it of the limitations and weaknesses with which it is associated in the creature, and link it with the perfection of the divine nature, and the power of prayer is found to be measured only by the wants of him who prays. Prayer, in this sense, is omnipotent. There is nothing incredible in this. The great wonder is that we "should be called the sons of God"—and not that, as children, we can "Move the arm that moves the world."

The world of matter and law is arranged on this basis. The fatherhood of God is not an afterthought that is out of harmony with the constitution of things. The world is made in harmony with this relation of man to God, and it is governed in the same way. It is an unfathomable, inexhaustible truth, that "all things work together for good to them that love God." How little, how sadly little do we appreciate and use our privileges. We need the ennobling truth in our lives that we are allied to the divine. We need to remember that our enjoyment of the blessings which flow from the divine fatherhood depend largely upon our possession of the responsive spirit of worship. The filial spirit is the Christly spirit.

THE GOSPEL VS. UNLEARNED QUESTIONS.

HENRY W. STEWART.

"Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing and that there be no divisions among you, but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." I Cor. 1:10.

"Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches, deceive the hearts of the simple." Romans xvi. : 17, 18.

"As we said before, so now say I again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed." Gal. 1:9.

"If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine that is according to godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing, but dotting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmising, perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness; from such withdraw thyself." I Tim. vi. 3-5.

"Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart and of a good conscience and of faith unfeigned; from which some having swerved have turned aside into vain jangling; desiring to be teachers of the law, understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm." I Tim. i. 5-7.

"Now I fear, lest, when I come, I shall not find you such as I would, and that I shall be found unto you such as ye would not; lest