

The Faith that Overcomes the World

(1 John v. 4).

The God of Israel is reasonable and just in all His ways; and in nothing more so than in the faith and obedience He demands as the condition of His favour. He does not ask us for our confidence and trust before giving us abundant evidences of His personal existence, wisdom, power, and goodness, in His revelation of His sovereign will and purpose with the earth and man. In the wonders wrought in ages past in the midst of His people Israel, of which we have an infallible record in His Word, He laid a foundation deep and broad upon which faith may build unto life eternal. As bro. Roberts, who being dead yet speaketh, has said, "We require the visible hand of God to give us faith in the invisible". God does not ask us to trust the one without showing us the other. It is the visible hand of God in the past that has laid the foundation of faith in the invisible one in the present. It is what God has openly, visibly, manifestly, undoubtedly done, in the beginnings of things, that furnishes the ground for the wholesome belief in His present and continued operation in a way not manifest but necessary, for the guidance of affairs to their appointed issue in that morning of brightness and peace which is to succeed the present night of darkness and confusion.

There is a constant appeal of this sort in the Scriptures. Throughout their entire course there is a recognition of the reasonable view that the obligation to obey an invisible God arises out of the fact that He has made Himself visible in His acts before calling upon us to submit to Him (*Visible Hand of God* p. 2.). It is the Facts recorded in God's Word that supply the foundation for faith. Faith is confidence based upon evidence. All men understand it in this sense as applied to ordinary affairs. It is the same in things divine. "Without faith it is impossible to please God, for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him" (Heb. xi. 6). As Dr. Thomas wrote: "Although a Scriptural faith is the scarcest thing among men, it is exceedingly simple, and by no means difficult to acquire when it is sought for aright. Paul gives the best definition of faith. He says "Faith is the confident anticipation of things hoped for, the full persuasion of events not seen". This is the faith without which, he tells us afterwards, God is not, and cannot by any possibility, be pleased. It is a faith which lays hold of the past and the future. The person who possesses it knows what is testified concerning Jesus by the apostles, and is fully persuaded of its truth; he also knows the exceeding great and precious promises which God has made concerning things to come, and he confidently anticipates the literal fulfilment of them. Laying hold of these things with a firm faith, he acquires a mode of thinking and a disposition which are estimable in the sight of God; and being like Abraham in these particulars, he is prepared, by induction into Christ, to become a son of the father of the faithful and of the friend of God" (*Elpis Israel*, p. 145).

Faith, as defined above, can only come as the result of an intelligent understanding and affectionate belief of God's "exceeding great and precious promises". Such a faith is divinely regarded as the most precious thing that mortal man can possess. Those who have it and keep it, enduring to the end, are styled "The precious sons of Zion comparable to fine gold" (Lam. iv. 2). In 1 Peter i. 7, it is said to be more precious than gold that perisheth. Consequently, gold, the most precious of metals known to the ancients, is its fitting symbol throughout the Scriptures.

God's people, in all ages, have been strengthened and sustained by their confidence and trust in His Word, otherwise they could not have successfully engaged in the conflict styled by the apostle Paul "The good fight of faith" (1 Tim. vi. 12). Among these Abraham, "the friend of God", stands pre-eminent, who under the most trying and untoward circumstances "staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith giving glory to God; being fully persuaded that what He had promised He was able also to perform" (Rom. iv. 20). In his case we have a practical demonstration of what constitutes true saving faith; "The faith that overcomes the world"; that gives us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ (1 John v. 4; 1 Cor. xv. 57).

The fight which God's people have to wage consists largely in restraining their natural impulses in obedience to His commands; "crucifying the flesh with its affections and lusts"; thus keeping themselves "unspotted from the world", and "separate from it" (Jas. i. 27); "a world that lieth in wickedness". Jesus said to

his disciples: "in the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" (Jno. xvi. 33). "We must, through much tribulation, enter the Kingdom of God" (Acts xiv. 22). This tribulation is elsewhere called "Our light affliction which is but for a moment, worketh out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (2 Cor. iv. 17).

The reward to the victors is "great" and "precious"; hence it is written: "He that overcometh and keepeth my works to the end, to him will I give power over the nations, and he shall rule them". Again, "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life which is in the midst of the paradise of God" (Rev. ii. 7, 26); and many other such like "precious promises" there are in God's infallible Word. In short, everything that the best of men and women could desire is promised to them that "overcome"; honour, riches, glory, power, with eternal life that their possessors may enjoy them for ever; "An inheritance incorruptible and undefiled that fadeth not away" (1 Pet. i. 4).

The battle cannot be fought, nor the victory won, without faith, "unfeigned faith"; "The faith that works by love" (Gal. v. 6). This faith cometh by hearing the Word of God (Rom. x. 17). None but reverent, diligent students of this Word can be properly equipped for "The good fight of faith". Therefore, ye who would be victors in the fight, "Put on the whole armour of God that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil; having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness, and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, whereby ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked" (Eph. vi. 11, 14-16). Many of past generations who girded themselves have been able to fight successfully and obtain the victory over the enemy within and the world without; of whom the apostle Paul was a notable example, and who could say: "I keep my body under and bring it into subjection, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway" (1 Cor. ix. 27).

Concerning the prospects of himself and his faithful fellow-soldiers in Christ He wrote: "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Rom. viii. 18). At the end of his probation he could confidently affirm: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day" (2 Tim. iv. 7).

As a result of the revival of the Truth in these "latter days" through the providentially directed labours of Dr. Thomas, there is still a "remnant of the woman's seed" upon the earth, fighting "the good fight of faith" that they may "lay hold on eternal life". As in past ages, God has "hidden these things from the wise and prudent" and "revealed them unto babes" (Luke x. 21). Consequently, now, as then, "Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called" (1 Cor. i. 26), so that it is still true that "God hath chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, to be heirs of the kingdom which He has promised to them that love Him" (Jas. ii. 5).

It remains for these latter day soldiers of Christ to be "faithful unto death", that they may, at last, receive the coronal wreath of victory from the captain of their salvation (Rev. ii. 10). This they will be able to do if careful to emulate the noble example of the illustrious "fellow servants" who have preceded them; and who, because of their faithfulness, have been highly commended by God in His Word, having been strong in faith, giving glory to Him, jealous of His honour and His truth. It is the duty of such to do their utmost to preserve God's Word from corruption. Faithfulness in dealing with this Word will be the test of their fitness in the day of inspection, at the hands of the righteous Judge, to be numbered with that great multitude of righteous immortals who "Sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways thou king of nations. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify Thy name, for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest" (Rev. xv. 3, 4).

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