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FAITH

Faith is one of the principles of the doctrine of Christ (see Hebrews 6:1-2). It is also listed as a gift of the Spirit of God in 1 Corinthians 12:9. The Master taught faith by precept and by example. Man, on occasion, has moved by faith to the achievement of greatness in relation to the purpose of God. However, far too often the real power of faith and the appreciation thereof have remained hidden to man's vision.

WHAT IS FAITH IN GOD?

"Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1). It is the witness of the Spirit within us. In this thought we can see plainly that faith is truly one of the gifts of the Spirit. This is consistent with all we read in the Scriptures. Without this spiritual sense of reality, which is a gift of God's Spirit, the principle of faith could not function fully in our lives.

There is some evidence that truth seems to be born within us; other truth comes as we move forward in search of it. Some truth can be proven by experience; but there is some that can be known only by faith—the spiritual sense of reality.

As an active principle within our lives, faith can be defined in a number of ways. "Hope in action" indicates that we move in accord with the assurance that is within us. "The dynamic of action" defines faith as the power to move according to this assurance. "Vision plus valor" points to the strength which carries man toward that which he has not yet reached but has visioned by faith. "Adventuring for a divine possibility that we believe to exist" carries the connotation of moving forward toward the achievement of that which has not been experienced but which the gift of faith has assured us is possible.

In the light of the foregoing, we see something of the meaning of the statement, "Even so, faith, if it have not works, is dead, being alone" (James 2:17). If faith, a gift of the Spirit, gives us the spiritual sense of reality, and faith as an active principle does not cause us to move forward to achieve that which is not seen, then the gift becomes dead within us. Without the active principle of faith giving us power, moving us to achievement of divine purpose, the sense of divine purpose accomplishes little—if anything—in our lives. No matter how much we may believe in the possibility of Zion, if we have not the power to adventure with our lives toward that possibility, the belief is of little effect or result in our lives.

It is indeed unfortunate that we have too often tried to separate "faith, the gift" and "faith, the principle." They are dependent upon each other; and if either of the two is missing, faith can have no power for us. Just as achievement of divine purpose (of which we are assured by the gift of faith) is impossible without the active principle of faith working within us and moving us toward this achievement, so also is it impossible for the active principle of faith to move us toward achievement of that divine purpose of which we have no vision or assurance.

We realize that if the principle of faith is to be the power it ought to be to us, there needs to be some spiritual assurance of God's will in us. The active principle of faith cannot operate against the will of God. Jesus said, "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove to yonder place, and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you" (Matthew 17:20). This statement has often been misunderstood because we have interpreted it in the sense of the active principle of faith and forgotten that faith is also a gift which brings spiritual assurance of divine will. It is not logical to think that man by any thought or prayer could cause that to happen which was in opposition to this will.

The power of the faith of Jesus was possible because of His knowledge of God's will. Jesus said, "And he that sent me is with me; the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him" (John 8:29) and "For I can of mine own self do nothing because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father who hath sent me" (John 5:31). In keeping with these statements by the Master, does it seem likely that He could have healed the sick and caused the blind

to see if it had not been in accord with the Father's will? Just prior to the raising of Lazarus, Jesus said, "Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. And I knew that thou hearest me always; but because of the people which stand by, I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me" (John 11:41-42).

The principle of faith was powerful in the life of Christ because He always subjected His will to the will of the Father. In the agony of prayer concerning His own crucifixion, He said, "Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me; nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done" (Luke 22:42).

FAITH IN OTHER THAN GOD

We have thus far spoken of faith in the sense of faith in God. We must recognize that with few exceptions all men have some faith, although many do not have faith in God. Only those who wander aimlessly through life have no faith at all. Some men have faith in humanity. Such faith as this works as a principle, often moving men to heights of achievement, yet it can never move them to the fullest possibilities of divine purpose for it lacks divine assurance and revelation of that purpose. However, whether it be faith in God or faith in something else, strong faith involves confident trust.

WHY HAVE FAITH IN GOD?

The words of Christ, "Have faith in God" (Mark 11:24), were more than advice and counsel. They were more in the nature of command. We read, "Without faith it is impossible to please him [God]" (Hebrews 11:6). Our loving, heavenly Father cannot be pleased unless we avail ourselves of every opportunity for the achievement of eternal life. Eternal life is a quality of life which the Scriptures indicate will make us worthy of dwelling with Him. Therefore, our faith must be centered in that which will produce in us the best about the things that matter most. Nothing short of faith in God can do this. It was out of compassionate concern for man that Jesus said, "Have faith in God."

Faith in God becomes a shield to protect us against the fiery darts of the wicked (Ephesians 6:16). The forces of evil are constantly around us and seeking to destroy us. "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Ephesians 6:12). Only as the gift of faith brings divine assurance can the principle of faith move us positively in the direction of God and protect us from the evil of which idle, purposeless men are susceptible.

Men whose lives are not caught up in the onward movement of accomplishment of God's purposes—not having the protection of faith—stand in grave danger of becoming victims of the deceit by which "the devil cheateth their souls and leadeth them away carefully down to hell" (2 Nephi 12:26). It must have been with the knowledge of this that Christ said, "Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired you, that he may sift the children of the kingdom as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not" (Luke 22:31-32).

Faith in God brings the assurance and strength that helps us through times of crisis. The vision of faith challenges us beyond the crises of our day to the possibility of a loftier race, a better day, a greater life. The assurance of faith calls us on beyond momentary doubt, discouragement, and fear. The confident trust of faith witnesses that "The works, and the designs, and the purposes of God cannot be frustrated; neither can they come to naught" (D&C 2:1a).

Faith in God offers the best explanation of our universe and our place in it. It answers more questions more inspiringly than any other belief has done. True faith in God challenges men above mediocracy. It does not permit us to be satisfied with contributing less than the best there is within us to the enrichment of life. Such faith clarifies the relationship of man with God and his fellow man, creating within us compassionate concern for all. Enlightened faith in God calls men to become the sons of God. Why have faith in God? Without it, man can never know the joy for which he was created.

THE POWER OF FAITH

The power of faith is not a hypothetical idea. Evidences of this power in the lives of men are abundant. Throughout the Scriptures we find testimony of the faith and the fruits thereof. In Hebrews

11 many of these are recorded. The author calls our attention to the fruits of faith in the lives of Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Moses, and others. By the power of faith, the brother of Jared beheld the person of our Lord and was shown all things (see Ether 5:19-21).

FAITH IN CHRIST

“Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God; believe also in me” (John 14:1). As we must have faith in God, so also is faith in Jesus Christ necessary. Faith in God points to Christ, our Savior, Who paid the price of atonement that we might have power to achieve the divine purpose. In His gospel we find the guideposts pointing to the path of our return to God. Faith in Christ, His promises, and His instructions changes our entire sense of values. By faith, we so adjust our lives that the Holy Spirit can dwell within, renewing and transforming each of us into the “new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness” (Ephesians 4:24).

CONCLUDING THOUGHT

Faith, as a gift of the Spirit, provides us the spiritual sense of reality toward which the principle of faith can move. Just as we limit by our lives the manifestation of the other gifts of the Spirit, so also we limit the manifestations of the gift of faith. As Paul has admonished, we ought to “covet earnestly the best gifts” (1 Corinthians 12:31). This is most surely true of the gift of faith. As we seek the gift of faith, we should also actively accept the principle of faith and make possible its working in our lives. If we will seek this faith and nurture it, it will grow in our lives; and through it we will gain strength and stability for our growth toward perfection.

Questions for Discussion

1. What is the purpose of the six principles of the gospel in the life of man?
2. Are faith and belief the same thing? Explain.
3. What is the purpose of faith?
4. Why can it be said, “All men have a form of faith”?
5. How does our faith affect our work?