

WHAT IS FAITH?

By Herbert W. Armstrong

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

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 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.

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!