

THE WORD OF TRUTH

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"And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free"—Jno. 8:32.

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"Of His own will begat He us with the Word of Truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures" (James 1:18).

SET FOR THE DEFENSE OF THE GOSPEL

A RELIGION OF PERSUASION

There is a sense in which all religions incorporate persuasive concepts; i.e., concepts that are received by a firm persuasion of their reality. But, this general sense is not the object of this discourse. Indeed, the persuasion of many is but a form of self deception, in which a person is deluded into affirming that those things which are propounded to him are truth. This sort of persuasion is to be held forth as damnable, because it roots men's hope and belief in men and their conceptions. However, the "pure religion" (James 1:27) of Jesus contains truths of which we may be genuinely persuaded; truths that will stand after all of this world has been shaken (Heb. 12:27-28). The persuasion of which I speak is quite distinct from delusion; *it speaks of reality to the heart of the believer.* It is, in reality, faith, which is "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1). *Here such an assurance is granted to the heart, of unseen reality, that virtually every vestige of doubt is removed, and the whole life is centered around the truth that "makes" free (John 8:32, 36).* Still, many false religions hold forth what they say is persuasion, and being exceedingly zealous for their sect, appear to be firm beyond any doubt in their attitude toward their creed. How can we be sure that we are persuaded properly; that our heart is not deluding us? It appears to me that the persuasiveness of which we are speaking is distinctive in at least two ways; (1. It is rooted in God, the Father, who has been revealed to us by the Lord Jesus Christ (Matt. 11:27; I John 5:20); (2. It is contemporary in its application; i.e., it touches upon our present lives.

First, observe that it is rooted in the Lord God. That, to me, is a most incomprehensible thing; for this God is alone, and stands above "all gods" in that He "created the heaven and the earth." When we, who are in Christ, consider Him and what He has declared, we affirm with Abraham that we are "persuaded, that what He hath promised, He is also able to do" (Rom. 4:21). There is the separation point between false religion and pure religion. *Religions of error are always based on a system of merit; upon a method of human accomplishment, which, when met, will bring the good pleasure of their particular God. But the persuasion of the saints of God finds its firm foundation upon the promises of God, "exceeding precious", and by which we "become partakers of the Divine nature" (II Pet. 1:4). It looks not to men, but to "the man, Christ Jesus" (I Tim. 2:5);*

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**THE INSUFFICIENCY OF WORKS
DELIVERED FAITH**

The Word of Truth

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A RELIGION OF PERSUASION

(From page 1)

there it lays hold of the promises of Deity, and declares confidently that what the Lord has promised, He Himself is able to perform. You see, then, how that persuasion after a godly sort, *finds refuge in the abilities of Lord*. Paul affirmed elsewhere; "I am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I've committed unto Him against that day" (II Tim. 1:12). *To the child of God, doubt is found within the spring of self-attainment, while confidence is found in the Lord*. There is only one thing which may cause the saint to doubt, and that is a reliance on his own personal ability, achievements, or attainments. Therefore, we are admonished to "trust in the Lord with ALL of your heart AND LEAN NOT UNTO YOUR OWN UNDERSTANDING; in all of thy ways acknowledge HIM, and HE SHALL DIRECT thy paths" (Prov. 3:5-6). That is the distinctive of the religion of Jesus; *it takes men out of themselves and "hides them with Christ in God"* (Col. 3:3). "Christianity," if I may use that term, is the only religion that finds its roots cast in a person; the Lord Jesus Christ. All other religions are founded upon SYSTEMS developed by a certain person; but the constituents of those religions are never said to be found "IN" their founder. But, praise God, we are found "IN CHRIST, not having a righteousness of our own, but the righteousness which is of God by faith" (Phil. 3:9). *God has placed us in a Person, not in a system of theology* (I Cor. 1:30). Isn't it a marvelous thing that there, "in Him", we may be found possessed of a persuasion that the Lord can and will, according to His Infinite ability, fulfill what He has promised, and that He will retain before His face all that we have in faith committed unto Him? I say, to be persuaded of that is worth far more than can be measured by silver and gold! Are you persuaded of these things? But, this persuasion (and it is given from heaven), is also contemporary; that it, it is not merely historical, but touches on our everyday life. Here is another blessed feature of the "truth as it is in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 4:20-21); it is applicable to the present, to MY circumstances, to MY daily walk. Do not the Scriptures declare; "For I am

persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus OUR Lord" (Romans 8:38-39). There is abundant evidence that the "things of the Spirit of God" (I Cor. 2:14) cannot be received by the natural mind (Rom. 8:5-7). Men will wrestle with that text, and attempt to declare that it does not mean what it says; denying that nothing at all may be able to sever us from God's love, wherein we were chosen (Eph. 1:4-6). But is that not what it says, and *by faith, may you not also be persuaded of its truth*. Here is the contemporary side of the matter; this touches your life every day. You are not wrestling against flesh and blood, but against "principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Eph. 6:12). God holds forth this "precious promise", that *none of these possess the power to wrest you from His hand; praise the Lord!* Can you not, armed with this truth, go forth into the very heat of the battle with joy and confidence? Is there aught that can uproot you from "the land of the living" when you are fully persuaded of this? Praise God, you may be *consciously "more than conquerors"* with this knowledge wrapped about your loins! I should not be neglectful in telling you that this persuasiveness is for you - *personally!* You may have it from the hand of the Lord, and I bid you to obtain it. It is elsewhere called "the full assurance of understanding" (Col. 2:2). Another facet of the contemporary view of our persuasion pertains to the promises. While ensnared by a humanistic religion, I viewed the promises of God as either in the past or in the future; either they were for people that lived before me, or people that would live after me. It seemed that nothing was actually for me, but to "put out", while "taking in" nothing. How refreshing it was to my spirit to be illuminated on the *present applicability* of God's promises. Like the saints of old, I found that I too could be "persuaded" of the "promises" (Heb. 11:13). To them, much of it was future; they saw them "afar off"; but, praise God, I am living in the day when the Lord has given *Himself* to His people. Oh, what grand exultation of spirit is brought by a persuasion of the promises. Ah, many recoil from this; that I know right well. But let them once experience the fulfillment of the promises of God within their heart, and they shall never again doubt their present effectuality and efficacy. These "exceeding great and precious promises" are the *means* whereby we "become partakers of the Divine nature" (II Pet. 1:4). *If we may not experience their fulfillment today, then we may not become partakers of the Divine nature*. If such be the portion of we poor mortals today, we are all men most miserable, for who could hope to dwell with the Lord without the possession of His nature, which thing He has most certainly predestinated (Rom. 8:29-20). View the promises of God; *view them in relation to your life!* Read such promises as Phil. 1:6; II Thess. 3:3; II Cor. 6:6; John 14:19, 20, 23; I John 1:9; Heb. 9:14; Isa. 1:18-19; Nah. 1:6; Eph. 1:7; Heb. 13: 5, 6. See their applicability to your own life; these are for YOU! Be persuaded of them; *i.e., be convinced of their reality, and of their direction youward!* See if your heart will not leap for joy when their reality dawns upon you!

I praise God for the knowledge and for the participation He has given me in His religion of persuasion. Armed with such faith and knowledge, what is there that can discourage us from fighting that "good fight of faith?" May these thoughts bring home to you the blessedness that is yours in Him.

THE INSUFFICIENCY OF WORKS

"But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained unto the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, **BUT, AS IT WERE BY THE WORKS OF THE LAW**" — Romans 9:31-32

Zeal and determination are so much at a premium in our day, that we tend to over-evaluate them when they are found. **Paul instructs us in this text to estimate worth by accomplishment, not by the external show made in its pursuit.** How radically does the Holy Spirit change our mode of evaluation! He will not have us to think like men, but as the Father which is in heaven. The text which we have before us, when perceived with the "mind of Christ" (I Cor. 2:16) will overturn many misconceptions which are prevalent in the "churches" about us. As a matter of fact, it thoroughly destroys the whole basis of the majority of religion which we have come into contact with. I believe I remarked once before, and it seems in order to make mention of it again, that upon an honest and spiritual perusal of the Word of God, I found a strange absence of almost every emphasis that I had ever heard mentioned in the name of Christ. To implement that observation, there seems to be a growing discernment in my soul that not only are these various emphasis absent, but they are violently opposed by the apostles, and exposed to be systems and orders designed to take men away from the Lord rather than bring them to Him. Permit me to take this opportunity to exhort you to "prove all things" and to hold fast to that which is good" (I Thess. 5:21).

Israel was the chosen nation of God. The things of God all concerned them in their day, as the Apostle put it; "To whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the Law, and the service of God, and the promises . . ." (Rom. 9:4-5). Little wonder that the Apostle Paul had "great heaviness and continual sorrow of heart" for them, his "kinsmen according to the flesh" (9:2-3). **They had their vision obscured because of their fleshly minds;** a "veil" being over them so that they discerned not the real implications of the Law given to them (II Cor. 3:14). It is not that these people were slothful or lethargic; God forbid! Paul bore them record that "they had a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge" (Rom. 10:2). They were engaged in a most incessant pursuit of the "righteousness of the Law" — they "followed after" it! It must be admitted that in this respect they outshined that indolent and dilatory group today which seeks identification as the "church of the living God." Suppose not for a moment that these people were not earnest in their quest! They wanted to see the righteousness of the Law (i.e., that standard of uprightness depicted in the Law) fulfilled in their own lives, and so "followed hard" after it. Yet, they did not attain unto it. Still their lives were filled with spiritual avarice, indifference, hate, disobedience, and shortcomings. Notice, they "followed" hard after it, but did not attain to it; **they accomplished absolutely nothing by their strenuous efforts,** because by

running out of the way, they wearied themselves to no purpose. **They sought to fulfill the law by legal means, by a legal righteousness, and thus fell short of the true righteousness of the Law.** Depending upon their own strength, and their own conceptions, they sought to lift themselves up from a life of disobedience to a life of righteousness. Isn't that exactly the course that is being pursued by millions today; perhaps by even you? Men are seeking righteousness by the "works of the Law," even as Israel did, and they are being frustrated in their efforts, as even they will admit.

By "work" the product of human ingenuity is meant; the effort of man to lift himself up to the standard of God's righteous law. It is an action, word, or thought which is put forth in an attempt to fulfill the will of the Lord, but which is devoid of the power of the Holy Spirit for effectuality. This "work" is any deed which is originated by man, supposedly Godward, which is wrought apart from a cognizance of the Lord of glory. By "insufficiency" I mean that all such works are incapable of proving meritorious before the Lord of hosts; that they shall be meant with Divine Disapproval (Matt. 7:20-21), and that they shall never be effectual in the ultimate sense. **Any effort which is expended by man in an attempt to appease the Lord; any work that is performed with the aim of fulfilling the Lord's Law, is completely inadequate of doing those things apart from the personal motivating power of the Holy Spirit, and the blessed "knowledge of God" (II Pet. 1:5-11).** Either God is satisfied by your personal achievement, or by His achievement through the Son. Either the Lord bestows salvation and honor by merit, or by grace! Either everlasting life is conferred by grace or by works; the two cannot be mixed. "Work", in this connection, speaks of man fitting himself for God. "Grace" speaks of God fitting man for the Divine Presence.

This discourse is not meant to reflect upon those "good works" for which we were created, and in which we were "before ordained" that we "should walk in them" (Eph. 2:10). Equally true, it must be pointed out that there is meant to be no discouragement of the practice of "provoking one another to love and good works" (Heb. 10:34) by a holy and righteous conversation. The Lord has declared His people to be "zealous of good works" (Titus 2:14), and those who "walk in the light as He is in the light" (I John 1:7) know it to be the truth. It is also to be observed that the Scriptures have been given to us, among other things, in order that we might be "thoroughly furnished unto every good work" (II Tim. 3:16-17). **We are viewing works from the standpoint of MERIT, not from the standpoint of participation.** It is our prayer that all of our readers will be found within the framework of "good works" which will magnify the Lord, and bring honor and glory to His name, as He "works" in them, both to "will and to do of His own good pleasure" (Phil. 2:13).

There is a very basic and fundamental lesson to be learned in this text; one which will, when received in the Spirit, bring an appreciation of the instruction of the Lord on "works". Israel sought to fulfill the Law through the means of "work". Now, the natural man will see nothing wrong with that, because he believes that to be

the only way in which the Law may be fulfilled. But, here is a very serious error. **If they had managed to establish a righteousness through doing, then they would have completely uprooted the righteousness of faith, i.e., the righteousness which "is by the faith of the Son of God" (Phil. 3:9) All such workers are doing all within their strength to destroy the faith, without which no salvation can be hoped for. If righteousness may be attained by doing, then there shall be an annihilation of true righteousness before God and we shall have made man his own savior.** You see, there are drastic consequences to the exaltation of human effort. God has declared "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy" (Rom. 9:16). Paul teaches us in this text that **THE CHIEF OBSTACLE TO OUR ATTAINMENT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS IS TRUST IN OUR OWN WORKS.** How swiftly ought we, therefore, to abandon such trust, and seek to attain unto "the righteousness of faith." **We are to seek by "faith", not by "works"!** By nature man greatly admires his own work, and glories in his own achievement. It is no small wonder, therefore, that the "pure religion" (James 1:27) of Christ is so hardly received by the multitudes; **it calls upon man to repudiate the validity of his own work and accomplishment, and rest in the work of the Son.** He is told: "trust in the Lord with all of your heart, and LEAN NOT TO YOUR OWN UNDERSTANDING; in all of thy ways acknowledge HIM, and HE SHALL DIRECT THY PATHS" (Prov. 3:5-6). Admittedly, this is not a popular conception of things, for it minimizes man and his work, and magnifies the Lord and His work — **Praise the Lord!**

It cannot be denied that those who emphasize human effort are guilty of bringing people to trust in the merit of such efforts; men are brought to believe that they may be justified, or pronounced righteous, on the basis of their conformity to the standard of God's law through the means of self attainment. Nothing could be further from the truth. The Holy Spirit emphatically asserts that "man is justified by faith WITHOUT the deeds of the law" (Rom. 3:28). **Whatever position deeds and works play, they are not causative in relation to our just state before the Lord.** It is further witnessed to us: "TO HIM THAT WORKETH NOT, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his FAITH IS COUNTED FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS" (Rom. 4:5). **This is a highly emphatic circumlocution! Paul explicitly shows us that faith brings us righteousness, not because of its meritorious value, but because it lays ahold of the grace of God! HOW CAN A MAN BE SAVED WITHOUT GRACE?** The legalist is bound to answer that question for us, and we aim to press him to the wall until he does! "By grace are ye saved through faith . . ." (Eph. 2:8-9); and again; "the grace of God that bringeth salvation" (Titus 2:11-14). I do not believe there is a sound student of the Scriptures that will not emphatically deny that salvation may be sought apart from the grace of God. **Grace is the vehicle for salvation,** and without it, there can be no experience of it. But, here is the real issue; **faith is pictured as that which lays ahold of grace;** "by grace THROUGH FAITH" (Eph. 2:8); "it is BY FAITH that it might be THROUGH GRACE" (Rom. 4:16). If a man sup-

poses that he may obtain the unmerited favor of God through works, then he is sadly lacking in spiritual perception, for grace and works are pictured as opposites, not able to be joined together; "And if it is by grace, then it is no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more of grace: otherwise work is no more work" (Rom. 11:6). It appears clear to me (especially since I long embraced an erroneous conception of salvation) that **the only reason why men refuse to believe that works are insufficient as an influence upon the Lord is because they have not yet been convinced of the need of grace!** They entertain false notions of their capability to make God indebted to them, and unless they are liberated from such a view, they shall surely be under the curse, for it is witnessed; "**As many as are of the works of the Law are under the curse**" (Gal. 3:10). It is quite true that if your personal achievement can receive recognition by the Lord, then He has become indebted to you; "Now to him that worketh is the reward NOT reckoned of grace, but of debt" (Rom. 4:4). By "worketh" Paul does not mean that man who is involved in "maintaining good works" (Titus 3:8, 14), in which we are to be "rich" (I Tim. 6:18).

It is a mistaken notion that we fail to recognize the position of "good works" within the framework of God's Kingdom; we were "ordained" and "created" "unto good works" (Eph. 2:10), and it is a great manifestation of haughtiness to maintain that it was not essential to be found walking in them. We but embrace the doctrine of the Holy Spirit on works, that **they are not meritorious before the Lord;** that if we glory in anything, we glory "in the Lord" (I Cor. 1:30-31). **The child of God is brought by the Spirit to realize that all merit is in the Son; and that his own works are a "sacrifice" (Heb. 13:16) rather than a means of obtaining the favor of God. It seems to me to be a notion which evidences great "simplicity", as "simple ones" are prone to embrace (Prov. 1:22), to suppose that unmerited favor may be obtained by effort!** The very notion of grace indicates that it is bestowed in spite of the fact that it is undeserved; that is the glory of our salvation. We were described as "finding Him whom we sought not" (Isa. 65:1). Rather than our works contributing to our salvation, they actually militated against it, as is put to us in Titus 3:3-4; "For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. But after that the kindness and love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us . . ." If it is to be affirmed that after we have "tasted" of the grace of God, our works somehow take on a new glow of merit, there is surely a blindness to the truth of Romans 7, which teaches us that our efforts and works are, even against our will, too often mingled with selfish and fleshly interests. We cannot stand before the Lord God of heaven and earth on the basis of our works or achievements; **we shall be saved by grace, or not at all!** We are instructed of the Lord that "a man is not justified by the works of the law" (Gal. 2:16); he does not say by mere moral works; but by the works of the Law; i.e., by

fulfilling the requirements of the Holy Law as dictated by the Lord God Himself — even that will not save you! It is superfluous to even suppose that you can perfectly, or even in part, keep and do the Law within your own strength, but if there be one that is stupid enough to entertain such a notion, there is yet a word from the Lord for him — even him; “For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; **BUT NOT BEFORE GOD**” (Rom. 4:2.) The solemn truth is that “the Lord regardeth no man’s person” (II Sam. 14:14; Duet. 10:17); i.e., **the Lord does not receive into His presence and in His favor men because of their own personal development. The only work in you that God recognizes as worthy of His honor is that which He Himself has done in you** (Phil. 2:13; Heb. 13:20-21).

It has been my observation that all false religions agree in this single matter; **they make human achievement the basis of blessedness.** They teach men that they may, within their own strength, render themselves fit for the blessing of God. Such a system (and it is being perpetrated throughout the world in the name of “conservatism”) is nothing more than an attempt of Satan to obscure **the effectuality of the work of Jesus Christ**, and is to be opposed with all of the vigor of the Holy Spirit. In the various emphasis that are found in the religious world, there are heard tones of spiritualism, power, intellect, Bible scholarship, obedience, etc. The points of emphasis, were they properly undergirded with Divine Truth, would be beneficial; but as it is, they are almost without exception undergirded with teachings of the acceptability of human works. People are told of receiving the Spirit; that they receive Him because of what **they do**. What must they say to the inquiry of the Spirit Himself; “Receivest thou the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by the hearing of faith?” (Gal. 3:2). Steps, requirements, systems, and elaborate doctrines are erected to make the way easy for the people. “Meet these standards, and God will bless your life”, is the promise held out to poor wandering sheep. But this is not all the promise that the Lord holds out. “With the heart man **BELIEVETH UNTO RIGHTEOUSNESS**” is the testimony of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 10:9-10). “He that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He the Rewarder of Him that diligently seek Him” (Heb. 11:6). **The avenue of faith is the only approach to God, because it is the only thing that may effectually lay hold of the grace of God “which bringeth salvation.”**

Israel sought to fulfill the Law by **doing** instead of **believing**, and Paul vehemently denounces them for it. **They relied upon merit instead of favor**, and thus completely missed “the righteousness of the law”, i.e., the holy standard depicted in the law of God. They pursued with vigor what they felt to be the plain implication of the commandments, and thus came short of them. They did not cry out with David; “Teach me Thy statutes” (Psa. 119:12, 26, 33, 64, 68, 124, 135), and “Teach me Thy Judgements” (Psa. 119: 108); i.e., teach me to incorporate their standard within my own personal life; “Teach me to do Thy will” (Psa. 143:10). As the word “follow” indicates (they “followed after the righteousness of the law”),

they were always behind, never quite able to come up to that standard written in tablets of stone, and **fulfilled in Christ’s life.** Perhaps in your own life, you find a parallel to this passage of Scripture. Is it so? You should be brought to see with great spiritual clarity the **sufficiency of God**, and the **insufficiency of self!** Righteousness is by faith (Phil. 3:9), not by works!

Israel, testifies Paul, sought righteousness apart from faith; i.e., **they were not motivated by an implicit trust in the Lord.** It is true that “unless the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it” (Psa. 127:1), and how greatly that truth is displayed in Israel’s case. They sought righteousness, but found it not. Why? **Because God wasn’t building that house; they were!** Nothing, **absolutely nothing**, will stand unless the Lord constructs it, and **ordains its permanency.** If the Lord Himself is not “working in you both to will and to do of His own good pleasure” (Phil. 2:13), then your work will not stand, but shall be consumed in the “fire” of judgement. Over them all shall be inscribed the epitaph with the finger of God; “I will declare thy righteousness and thy works; **FOR THEY SHALL NOT PROFIT THEE**” (Isa. 57:12). And, did not Jesus instruct us on this wise; “So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you say, **WE ARE UNPROFITABLE SERVANTS: WE HAVE DONE THAT WHICH IT WAS OUR DUTY TO DO**” (Luke 17:10). Admittedly, this flies straight into the face of legalistic religion; but be that as it may, “Let God be found true, and every man a liar” (Rom. 3:4).

Certainly in these few thoughts I do not seek to promote an attitude of slothfulness and lethargy in connection with the commandments of God. God forbid! **Rather, we seek to remove from men the notion that God is obligated toward them because of their works.** Boasting is thus “excluded” (Rom. 3:27) on the basis of “the law of faith.” **Let faith be the working factor, and works shall become an evidence of rather than a means of obtaining favor.** God’s people are “zealous of good works” (Titus 2:14), not because they seek to obtain merit by them, but because they love the ways of God, and “delight in the Law of God” (Rom. 7:22). They “delight to do God’s will” (Psa. 40:8), even as their Precious Lord. **God has given them a glorious affinity with His Law and Mind, and their joy consists in walking in the commandments.** Praise the Lord for such a work as this! This is what is meant by “writing the Law upon the heart and putting it in the mind” (Heb. 8:8-13; Jer. 31:31-34). **The person that has been convinced of the reality of His Lord and His Lord’s efficacious work in his behalf, will be found possessed of the “zeal of the Lord”, and it shall not be easily quenched!** Realizing that the Lord’s own right arm has brought salvation (Isa. 59:16; 63:5), and knowing that his righteousness consists in the obedience of Christ (Rom. 5:19), he joyously enters into the work of the Lord as an expression of his love for Christ. As it is written; “The love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge that if one died for all, then were all dead (died with Him)” — II Cor. 5:14). **You cannot obligate God toward yourself; God has already obligated Himself in the Son. Be found in Him, and you shall obtain righteousness and favor!**

DELIVERED FAITH

" . . . earnestly contend for the faith
once (for all) delivered to the saints"

—Jude 3

Faith is a vital possession to the child of God. By it he gains access to God (Rom. 5:2; Eph. 3:12), joy and peace (Rom. 15:13), righteousness (Phil. 3:9), and understanding (Heb. 11:3). This is the only means that we possess of gaining "all things that pertain to life and godliness" (II Pet. 1:3), i.e., things associated with the fellowship and knowledge of God and the conformity to the Divine Image (John 17:3; Romans 8:29). We are frequently admonished by the Holy Spirit to engage in such activities as have to do with the development and maintenance of our faith: "fight the good fight of faith" (I Tim. 6:12); "Looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith" (Heb. 12:2); ". . . building up yourselves in the most holy faith" (Jude 20); ". . . follow after faith . . ." (I Tim. 6:11); ". . . hold fast the profession of our faith" (Heb. 10:23); "add to your faith" (II Pet. 1:5-10), etc. Faith deals with the unseen, being "the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen" (Heb 11:1). It is this classification of things that we are to seek, as the Apostle Paul admonishes: "not looking to the things which are seen, but to the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal" (II Cor. 4:18). These things have no appeal to the carnal mind, which loves to dote upon the seen; flesh, and the world, all of which "pass away with the using" (Col. 2:19-22). The natural mind can see no true and lasting value in "contending for the faith." This, like all of the other things "of the Spirit of God" are "foolishness" to such a mind (II Cor. 2:14). But, praise God, in we who "walk in the light as He is in the light" (I John 1:7), who have "tasted" and seen that "the Lord is good" (Psa. 34:8), there has been implanted within an inner realization that faith is substance and evidence; the "SUBSTANCE of things hoped for, and EVIDENCE of things not seen." We are not therefore, dealing with some vague and ethereal something that is divorced from reality! Faith is substance and evidence of the only reality there is; spiritual reality! It is the unseen and invisible world of reality substantiated within the heart by the power of the Holy Spirit. It is a God-sent conviction of things unknown to the natural order!! Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ for such a precious endowment; it is a gift beyond human comprehension to possess the certainty of unseen reality. Being compassed about with tangibles, and a world that is basically sensual, there is a continual need for mutual exhortation concerning the quest for the unseen. "But, put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof" (Rom. 13:14); "Abstain from fleshly lusts that war against the soul" (I Pet. 2:11); "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world; if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in Him; for all that is in the world, the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life, are not of the Father, but of the world; and the world passeth away, and the lust therefore, but he that doeth the will of

the Father abideth forever" (I John 2:15-17). The Lord has seen fit to constantly put us in remembrance of that "city to come," which "hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God" (Heb. 11:10). **Were it not for the incessant urging within the natural mind to go after the seen, there would be no need for such exhortations.** But it is declared, and attested in the hearts of all believers, that "the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are contrary the one to the other, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would" (Gal. 5:17). **God would dislodge us from this fleeting world, and prepare us for the world to come, "wherein dwelleth righteousness" (II Pet. 3:13), and He moves upon us to do so by exhorting us in the Spirit to "earnestly contend for the faith . . ."** By "earnestly contend", the Lord expresses vehement desire; a burning passion and overwhelming desire to find our faith "growing exceedingly" (II Thess. 1:3). The burden of this admonition is to stir us up to **get excited about faith**, and to seek a full and glorious development of it within our heart; "Lord, increase our faith" (Luke 17:5). In circles where I once traveled, there was a shallow and insipid conception of faith: it was considered as a "step" into the kingdom, from which advancement was made to more mature things. The fruitage of such a carnal doctrine was faithlessness, and it was, and continues to be, rampant in those circles. There is little talk of invisible things, of the "city" that is to come, of the "God" who "dwelleth in light which no man can approach" (I Tim. 6:17), or of the "things of the Spirit of God" (I Cor. 2:14). There is no contending for the faith, simply because it is not held as a valuable thing; there are other quests, other programs and desires that have supplanted the one grand desire to have faith "grow exceedingly." Affiliation with the seen is put forth as an adequate substitute for access to the unseen. This situation is not limited, however, to any one group. It appears to be prevalent throughout church-circles, and has proved to be a completely adequate subversion to spiritual growth as declared in II Peter 1:5-10. **There is nothing more vital to you than your connection to the Lord; and that connection is wrought ONLY by faith.** You see, therefore, the necessity for "contending" for it! Elsewhere, the Apostle tells us to "continue in the faith" (Acts 14:22), and to "fight the good fight of faith" (I Tim. 6:12). **We are to be eager to maintain our faith at all costs; to prepare to wage war against our "Adversary" (I Pet. 5:8), and to continue in faith; i.e., to keep on believing.** This is an "earnest" quest; one that involves the whole heart of man. **Spiritual contention for the faith may not be accomplished through a half-hearted, half-witted attempt; there is mental and spiritual energy exerted in such an exercise, and it calls for a heart wholly devoted to the kingdom of God.** (Matt. 6:33). Peter states it another way in I Peter 5:9 when he speaks of resisting the Devil: "stedfast in the faith."

Observe, however, that this is a special faith for which we are to contend; it is the "faith once (for all) delivered to the saints." The creed of your particular church, or the dogma which your given denomination accepts, whether written or unwritten, is not at all the subject here. I have been told, and have read, that the word "faith"

sometimes stands for the doctrine, or body of principles which are embraced by the people of God. I admittedly do not wholly subscribe to such a conception of faith and there is certainly no need to limit the meaning of this text by such a narrow boundry of interpretation. I do not know that the apostles ever so define the word, and there is no need to wrest any passage of Scripture to mean a cold set of facts as standing synonymous with faith. **Once it is seen that faith is "delivered"; that the "conviction of things not seen" is actually a grant from God; there comes upon the mind a whole new conception, borne by the Holy Spirit, of believing. Faith is really a heavenly element within the soul, as is evidenced by the statements made of it;** " . . . having PURIFIED their hearts by faith . . ." (Acts 15:9; " . . . faith COMETH . . ." (Rome. 10:17); "The grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith . . ." (I Tim. 1:14); " . . . the common faith" . . . (Titus 1:4); " . . . the full assurance of faith" (Heb. 10:22); " . . . Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith . . ." (Heb. 12:2); " . . . the faith of Jesus" (Rev. 14:12); " . . . the faith of the Son of God" (Gal. 2:20). These verses, together with myriads more, indicate that **faith is something accomplished outside of our initiative; fulfilled within us by a power other than our own.** No mortal could gain such a firm and resolute conviction of things unseen of himself; **this requires an act of God.** For this reason the faith is called a "delivered faith"; **it came from without, being placed within.** Now, I am well aware that this truth is not so readily received by some of my colleagues; but that is only because it militates against their creedal beliefs and dogmas. "Let God be true and every man a liar" (Rom. 3:4); if the Lord says that faith is "delivered," who, then, will dispute with Him? But, let us hear what the Holy Spirit witnesses on the subject. "To you it is GIVEN to believe . . ." (Phil. 1:29); "By grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God" (Eph. 2:8-9); " . . . unto you that have OBTAINED like precious faith" (II Pet. 1:1); " . . . according as God hath DEALT to every man the measure of faith . . ." (Rom. 12:3); The Lord "OPENED" Lydia's "heart, that she might attend to the things that were spoken" (Acts 16:14); "Peace be to the brethren, WITH FAITH . . ." (Eph. 6:23); "The grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith" (I Tim. 1:14). **When we speak of faith, we are speaking of a firm persuasion of the Lord, His death, His resurrection, and His intercessory work.** It is not difficult to have a mere imagination and thinking about the death of Christ, but to bring the soul and Christ together requires the power of God (Eph. 1:19); and that is what faith really is — the bringing of the soul and Christ together. A glorious cognizance of Deity is brought, so that we may say; "I am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him . . ." (II Tim. 1:12). To a person who has lived in doubt and fear (and all men either have or still do), the pervading "faith of Christ" is precious beyond words; to be found groping in spiritual darkness, wondering whether or not God is there, whether or not He hears and answers prayer, whether or not Christ actually did pay the debt of my sin — this is not a pleasant experience, nor is it intended to be!

Faith dispells these things and brings full assurance; called in Scripture, "The full assurance of faith" (Heb. 10:22).

One of the wonderful things about faith is that it is personal! It is referred to as "YOUR FAITH" (Eph. 1:15; Col. 1:4; 2:5; I Thess. 1:8; 3:6). Not all men possess it; "for all men have not faith" (II Thess. 3:2). It is "delivered" to you; not invented by you! It is not the fruit of fancy or human devising, but has its original with God; it was "delivered" by Him to His people, "chosen in Christ Jesus before the foundation of the world" (Eph. 1:2-5). While it is true that we are to "strive together for the faith of the Gospel" (Phil. 1:27), it is equally true that we are to "examine ourselves to see if WE (personally) be in the faith" (II Cor. 13:5), so that personal faith may make way for a glorious harmony in believers. It is true that this conviction of things unseen comes through the instrumentality of the Word of God; "So then, faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God" (Rom. 10:17). However, "faith" must never be viewed as doctrine apart from reception! **We cannot contend for that which we have not received, for that would be the very height of folly.** But, praise God, we may earnestly contend for that which we have received; "like precious faith." When the Lord "opens your heart like He did the heart of Lydia, so that you may attend (give heed) unto the things that are made manifest through "preaching" (Titus 1:3), it becomes imperative for you to not "depart from the faith," but to "give the more earnest heed, lest at any time you let these things slip." Like the vine of Solomon's vineyard, our relationship to the Lord (the "True Vine" — John 15:1, "hath tender grapes" (Song of Sol. 2:13, 15); i.e., the relationship must continually be nurtured and not left desolate, lest the "little foxes" of earthly cares and lusts, together with the very imps of hell, devour them and leave us "without God and without hope in this world." Faith is not something you receive and then abandon for higher and more notable pursuits! Here is an area where you are to expend your life-energies; "The just justified) shall LIVE by faith" (Rom. 1:17-18).

The opposite of "contending for the faith," is "drawing back," or recoiling from spiritual reality. It is almost disconcerting to see such a prevailing withdrawal from the faith among churchmen of our day. Hearts appear to be more eager for the tangible, the sensual, the seen, than for those things invisible, yet eternal, which feed and nurture up the soul for eternal fellowship with God. Is it not written in scripture; "Now, the just shall live by faith: but if ANY MAN draw back, MY SOUL SHALL HAVE NO PLEASURE IN HIM. But we are not of them that draw back unto perdition; but of them which believe unto the saving of the soul" (Heb. 10:38-39). **Let no one make a mistake about it; any hesitancy to move toward the "invisible" God, which "dwelleth in light which no man can approach unto" (I Tim. 6:16), is clearly met with the displeasure of God Almighty.** He is pleased only with those that "draw nigh", and exhorts them in these words; "draw nigh unto God, and He will draw nigh unto you" (James 4:8). Now, that is "contending

for the faith;" it is **pressing forward to the Throne; overcoming the myriads of false prophets that pervade the land, because "greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world" (I John 4:1-5).**

Jude's exhortation was given in view of the fact that false teaching, and "misguided guides" were harrassing God's people. He saw the necessity of urging upon them to seek development of their mainstay with God — faith! It is axiomatic to say that his exhortation is much in order today; it is contemporary if ever anything was! "Suffer the word of exhortation" (Heb. 13:22), and "press toward the mark of the prize of your high calling in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:14). "Continue in the faith" (Acts 14:22), and continue to wage an incessant war against **everything** that militates against your hold upon ultimate reality. "Cast down imaginations, and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God" (II Cor. 10:3-6), and may God grant you strength in that pursuit of wholesome "contention!"

THE IMPERATIVE OF FAITH

There is no substitute for faith; "For without faith, it is **IMPOSSIBLE TO PLEASE GOD**; for he that **cometh** to God must believe that He **IS**, and that He is the **REWARDER** of them that diligently seek Him" (Heb. 11:6). Among other things in this text, we see that pleasing God is a matter of "COMING" to Him; read the verse again, and see if that is not what it says! "Cometh" is here used as a synonym for "please", and thus is unfolded the whole purpose of redemption; to "**bring us to God**" (I Pet. 3:18). Faith is, then, an absolute imperative to any association with God at all! This is not a blind intellectual assent; but rather a firm "substance of things hoped for and evidence of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1). **It is the actual persuasion of the reality of the unseen world; a solid conviction implanted in the heart by God Himself which reveals the transitoriness of the seen, and thus compels one to seek after that which shall "endure forever."** Faith, or "believing", is the true sphere of activity for the saint; here is where he is to spend and be spent! This is the "work of God, that ye believe on the name of His only begotten Son" (John 6:29).

Satan has promulgated divers religious systems in the world that are offered as convenient substitutes for "life". However, they all have one thing in common — they count faith as a small thing, if they count it at all! **Mark it well that any system which tends to minimize faith is borne from hell, and not from heaven; for faith is a weighty thing with the Lord.** Myriads now ensnared by the empire of Babylon (which has "departed from the faith, and given heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of demons" — I Tim. 4:1-2) count faith as an elementary thing — something for mere children. The more advanced area, to them, is that of man's activity, his accomplishments and exploits. Oh, that the "dry bones" would have a great shaking from heaven, and come together to the "valley of decision" wherein the revelation might be given them of the imperative of faith. Here is the channel to glory; a channel to swim in, and deeper it grows

all the way! This is the true connection with the Throne of God; we have access "**through faith**" (Rom. 5:2; Eph. 2:18; 3:12). Herein is to be found the true grasp of reality. How convinced are you of the unseen realities of Scripture, the promises of the Father; the power of the Holy Spirit; the guidance of the Son? "Without faith, it is impossible to please Him!" You cannot come to Him for cleansing, fellowship, or tutelage until you possess it! Seek it; pray for it — "Lord, help thou my unbelief!" He will honor the prayer of the humble and contrite heart!

FOR FULL GROWN

"For strong meat **belongeth** to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of **use** have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil" — Heb. 5:14

While musing upon this truth, it came to me how precious life in Christ really is. It becomes more agile, more potent, powerful, and useful as it advances. The strongest food is not merely for those who **need** growth, but for those who are **advancing**, and **have** advanced, and are **nearing**, at this present time, the parting shore. "Strong meat" is not a special set of doctrines within the teachings of the apostles; nor is it a higher form of work to be engaged in. This is that "meat" which feeds the soul; **an insight into the deeper and more significant message of the word of the Lord; a fellowship in and participation with the Lord in His Throne-room.** It involves meditation and spiritual appreciation for the words of the Lord Jesus which are "spirit and life" (John 6:63). I will tell you that **the difference between meat and milk is not to be found in the content, but rather in the way in which it is received.** You may rest assured that the Word of the Lord — thoughts conceived and brought forth from the inner-chambers of heaven itself, are deep and profound, while at the same time, covered with spiritual "milk" that may be lapped up by the novice, until the real body of the truth appear to be eaten. The following thought came to me in association with this truth, which I offer for your edification:

Epitomizing Scriptural truth
in proper summary
May not be done by novices
whose minds not clearly see,
But as you grow up in the Lord
truth's spectrum also grows:
Our eyes are opened up to see —
the mind,, mystery knows.
Meticulous observation brings
a picture whole and clear
A scanty vision brings a state
that I am taught to fear
Depth is found in what appears
shallowness to the one
Who has no knowledge of the depth
that's hidden in the Son.

God is not dependent upon men; that would make Him inferior to them. Cast forever away from your mind any theory or notion, or system, that makes God's program fluctuate according to the fickle activities of man.