

The

Good News

APRIL 1989

**Do You Have Faith
To Move Mountains?**

**History of the Worldwide
Church of God
By Herbert W.
Armstrong**

The Good News

April 1980

ISSN 0432-0818 CIRCULATION: 110,000 VOL. XXVII, NO. 4

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Published by the Worldwide Church of God
PUBLISHER: Herbert W. Armstrong
TREASURER: Stanley R. Rader
PRODUCTION AND CIRCULATION: Roger Uppross

The Good News is published monthly (except combined June-July and October-November issues) by the Worldwide Church of God, 300 W. Green St., Pasadena, Calif., 91123. Copyright © 1980 Worldwide Church of God, except "You Can Have Living Faith!", copyright © 1964 Worldwide Church of God. All rights reserved. Second-class postage paid at Pasadena, Calif., and at additional mailing offices. Reentered as second-class matter at the Manila Central Post Office on Jan. 18, 1974.

ADDRESS ALL COMMUNICATIONS TO THE GOOD NEWS OFFICE NEAREST YOU. PRINTED IN U.S.A.

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Colombia: Apartado Aéreo 11430, Bogotá 1, D.E.
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COVER: Is your faith in God as solid and enduring as this mountain range? If you had the faith of a grain of mustard seed, these mountains would move at your command (Matt. 17:20)! Nothing would be impossible for you! What is true Christian faith all about and what part should it play in your life? Read the "GN Special" beginning on page 7. Photo by Wilbur Berg.

Letters

Mr. Armstrong's Personal

I thought the "Personal" from the December, 1979, *Good News* was great! I pray that the Father and His Son help all of us to overcome till the end!

Joann Bergeron
New Orleans, La.

"GN Special"

This "Bible Special" [January] was very helpful — I especially appreciated "Motivating Yourself to Study the Bible." I have come to understand in my own study how important it is to have a goal and purpose, something you're finding an answer to, but it hadn't ever dawned on me, to actually make a list with priorities (and I'm always making lists!).

The whole issue was very uplifting to me — it's amazing how these magazines are so timely!

Rachel Gaston
San Gabriel, Calif.

The *Good News* has received numerous responses to our request for suggestions for "GN Specials." We wish to thank you, our readers, for your input. We are considering various subjects for in-depth treatment in future issues. This month we are publishing a "GN Special" on the important Christian quality of faith (see page 7).

Better and better

We received our recent [September-October] issue of *The Good News*. It is the best issue yet. Especially the articles on divorce and remarriage, "Are You A Servant or Hireling?", "Europe and Our Prophetic Message" and "Does God Ever Forsake Us?"

We also enjoy the "Close-Up" series. It's a good way to meet new brethren. And it's also very inspiring! All the articles are good — they just keep getting better and better.

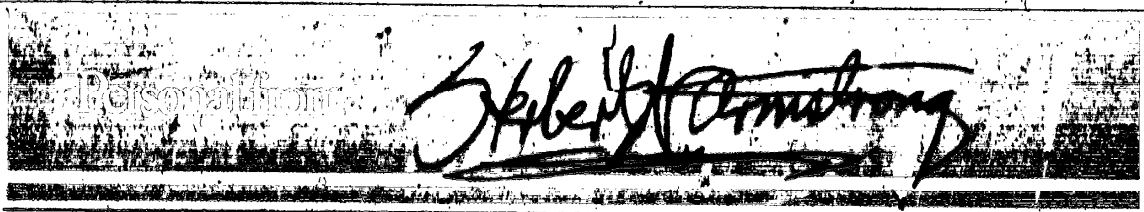
David and Marilyn Schirtzinger
Gahanna, Ohio

"Thy Kingdom Come"

Received my *Good News* [December] and read "Thy Kingdom Come" by Les McCullough.

I personally feel it was a very valuable article for us in our unique era of history. I am sure I'll be more inspired in the days ahead because of the contents of an article like this.

Dan Wilson
Portland, Ore.



How You Are Being Tested!

EVERY ONE OF us is being regularly TESTED! In school and college we had to take tests or exams every so often. But GOD has a special system by which He puts every one of us through a special examination week after week.

Let me tell you an experience of some 45 years ago. I was holding a series of Sunday night public meetings in the Chamber of Commerce auditorium in Seattle, Wash.

It was not a large auditorium, but I had it filled — around 300 present. At the close of the service, I hurried through a side aisle to the front door to shake hands with the people as they were leaving.

One woman paused and said: "Mr. Armstrong, someone told me that Saturday is *your* day instead of Sunday. I do hope that was a false rumor."

"No," I replied, smiling. "Saturday is *NOT* my day — SUNDAY is *my* day." She was greatly relieved.

"Oh, Mr. Armstrong, I'm so glad to know that."

"Yes," I was still smiling. "SUNDAY is *my* day. And Monday is also *MY* day, and Tuesday and Wednesday and Thursday and Friday. But Saturday is *NOT* my day. It is GOD's day. He made it HOLY TIME and commanded us to KEEP it holy."

The lady did not like my answer and with a jerk of her head sideways, walked on out.

The one thing uppermost in God's mind, and in His PURPOSE, is to RESTORE HIS GOVERNMENT in the KINGDOM OF GOD. His GOVERNMENT is based on HIS LAW. God's law is the basic SPIRITUAL law of LOVE. It is love to GOD and love to neighbor. It is further magnified into the TEN

COMMANDMENTS. And there is one test commandment.

All sects and denominations of Christianity will accept the First Commandment — we should have no other gods before the true Creator. All will accept the Second Commandment against bowing down to worship idols. All admit it is wrong to take God's name in vain — even those who do it. All accept the Commandment about honoring one's parents. All accept stealing as a sin, all will accept the Seventh Commandment against committing adultery, the Sixth against murder, the Ninth against lying and the Tenth against coveting.

But that Fourth Commandment! It is not one of the negative commandments — it is POSITIVE! It says REMEMBER that God made the Sabbath day HOLY TIME, and told us to keep it holy! That Commandment people definitely *don't* want to keep!

The FOURTH Commandment is God's TEST Commandment! Not that many people do obey the other Nine. But they are willing to admit they *should*.

The Fourth Commandment is the one they will argue about. They will find every reason why they CAN'T obey that Fourth Command! How can we know time has not been mixed up? How can we know that Friday sunset today, until Saturday sunset is the SAME identical time, in succession of weeks, that God rested on and blest? How can one keep it on a round earth? Saturday in San Francisco is not the same as Saturday in Tokyo. How could one keep it on the north pole where there are two days a year, and a day lasts about six months?

All those questions — and more — I asked my wife when she first began keeping God's Sabbath, and I thought it was religious fanaticism.

But I found the answers. On a round earth we keep the Sabbath *when* the Sabbath comes to us wherever we are on earth. North pole? Who lives there? There is proof ABSOLUTE the weekly cycle of TIME has never been changed from the time of Adam's creation. All arguments evaporated! I had no excuse. NOR HAVE YOU!

Suppose you were invited to visit a royal king in his sumptuous palace. On entering you are filled with awe at the shiny polished floors, the rich rugs, the ornate ceilings and plush and luxurious chairs and tables.

Suppose you enter with muddy shoes from a rainy day outside, and track mud all over his beautiful polished floors and carpeting. You whip out a jackknife and begin carving your initials on his finest cabinets, tables and chairs.

Now the king has seen to it that all these things are in perfect immaculate condition, and he wants you to KEEP THEM THAT WAY! Would you not expect the king to be angered when you besmear and destroy the beauty of his palace? You would expect to be thrown out!

And when you besmirch and trample all over God's holy Sabbath — His day — HOLY TO *Him*, YOU MAY EXPECT TO BE THROWN OUT OF HIS KINGDOM — or rather, never allowed to ENTER!

Suppose you visit a very humble home of financially poor folk. The woman has one prized possession — a beautiful lace tablecloth. It was made painstakingly by her grandmother, and she prizes it highly. If you enter with muddy shoes, jump on that table, smear up that precious cloth, tear it, ruin it, how do you expect the poor lady of the house to feel? It has been made immaculate, and she wants it to be kept that way!

(Continued on page 27)

Chapter 1

The History of the Beginning and Growth of the Worldwide Church of God

By Herbert W. Armstrong

THE BEGINNING AND growth of the Worldwide CHURCH OF GOD is an exciting story of faith under hardship, opposition, persecution. It is a history bringing Jesus' parable of the mustard seed into real life in the turbulent 20th century. This mustard seed was born in the midst of the Great Depression.

What GOD has done through man in this world of Satan, He has always carried out through one man. Even before man, God put one archangel, Lucifer, over all angels on the earth.

When Satan's world had come to a population explosion, with violence, destruction, evils and consequent human suffering, God decided to SAVE all mankind from the agonies of universal sin in a manner understood by FEW. God decided to blot out all human life, except for eight souls, to bring them all back to life in a happier world millennia later, ruled by the Kingdom of God. God chose ONE MAN to keep humanity alive — Noah, and his family.

A few generations later God called ONE MAN, Abraham. Then Isaac, then Jacob, then Joseph.

Four hundred thirty years after Abraham, God chose Moses to lead

Abraham's descendants out of Egyptian slavery, into the promised land. God had prepared Moses in advance, as a prince in the pharaoh's palace.

When Moses' job was finished, God chose ONE MAN, Joshua, to lead the Israelites across the Jordan River into their promised land.

The Israelites continually disobeyed God. When they got themselves into trouble, and became a vassal people under neighbor nations, God would raise up ONE MAN to lead them back, upon their repentance.

After this God chose ONE MAN, Samuel, by whom GOD would rule this people. But the people wanted a king like all other nations. God gave them Saul, then David and David's dynasty.

After Solomon's death, the people chose Jeroboam as king — but they had departed from God.

Meanwhile God had sent them prophets, one at a time. Israel became divided: Each kingdom was, in turn, conquered in war and removed from their promised land as slaves.

God was no longer ruling over either of the houses of Israel and Judah. But He did send a colony out of Judah: 70 years after Judah's captivity, to build a second temple, replacing Solomon's temple. And even then, one man, Zerubbabel, was governor and leader.

We come to the time of Jesus, the Christ. Jesus chose 12 to become His first apostles — but ONE MAN, Peter,

was unquestionably the leader. Many do not realize this. But if you go through the "four gospels," the book of Acts and epistles of Paul, checking how often Peter is mentioned as leader, there is no doubt.

First notice Matthew 4:18, (Revised Standard Version), "As he [Jesus] walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon *who is called Peter* and Andrew . . ." Peter was not his original name from birth, but Simon. Jesus called him "Peter" — that is, "the Peter," or Pater or leader. This for centuries had been the TITLE of the religious LEADER. The Roman Catholics have adopted the title. In English we use the word *pope*, but in Rome the people call him *Papa*. It is also called Pater or Papa. In Rome I have heard crowds of thousands shouting out, when the pope appeared: "Viva Papa! Viva Papa! Viva Papa!" over and over in unison.

In Numbers 22:5, the king of the Moabites "sent messengers therefore unto Balaam the son of Beor to Pethor." Pethor was the center of Babylonian religion on the banks of the Euphrates. It compared to the Vatican today, which is a city but only as the Catholic religious center or capital. This originally was written in Hebrew and in Hebrew the *h* was not pronounced. Hence, Pethor becomes Pator or Peter — the *e* being pronounced as a long *a*.

Peter, then pronounced like *Pater*,

was a long established TITLE, center or headquarters, of religious leadership — not necessarily pagan.

• Now notice: The first place in the Bible where Peter is mentioned is Matthew 4:18, quoted above. The second place his name appears is Matthew 10:2, "Now the names of the twelve apostles are these; *The first, Simon, who is called Peter* (or, who is called "the Peter")."

Notice, "And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, *Simon Barjona*" — that is, Simon the son of Jona, giving his name from birth (Matt. 16:17). "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter" — or, the Peter. Jesus was here giving him the TITLE OF LEADERSHIP or apostolic HEAD under Christ.

Continue, verse 19: "And I will give unto thee [Peter] the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou [Peter] shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou [Peter] shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

I have given English derivations of the title *Peter*. Its Greek derivation means *rock*. The word in Matthew 16:18 in original Greek is *Petras* or *Petra*, meaning *rock*.

Peter is first mentioned in John's gospel. It speaks of "Andrew, Simon, Peter's brother. . . first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ. And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona [John]: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone" (John 1:40-42). Cephas (pronounced Kaphas) is the Aramaic equivalent of *petra* in the Greek, meaning a rock or stone. Cephas, then, also is the TITLE, not an original name.

You will find the titles, Peter and Cephas, and the man they represent, Simon, mentioned far more often in the four gospels and Acts than any other apostle. Paul used the title, or name, Peter, but once, in Galatians 1, otherwise always using the title Cephas.

I will mention only a couple more, here. In Acts 5:15 it was even Peter's shadow passing over people that healed them.

Christ chose Peter to first open up the Gospel to gentiles — Acts 10 and

11. Paul wrote, Galatians 1:18-19: "Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days. But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother."

Then, Galatians 2:7, "But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter . . ."

Yet when Paul went up to Jerusalem from Antioch (Acts 15), to settle the matter of circumcision among gentiles, it was PETER who gave the decision after much dissension (verses 7-12). James, as Jerusalem pastor, as a matter of protocol was chairman of the meeting, so James made Peter's decision official.

There is no doubt, Peter was the LEADER among the apostles — even, as in Acts 15, over Paul. He was Christ's chosen apostle.

Before leaving the subject of Peter, notice Mark 3:16, "And Simon he [Jesus] surnamed Peter." A surname, *Webster's Dictionary*, is "an added name derived from occupation or circumstance." Jesus had chosen Simon for the "occupation" of chief apostle. Peter — or Pater — had long been the title of a religious head or headquarters.

Since this bears on the relationship in the Church of God today, I dwell a little further on Jesus' choice of His chief apostle.

I quote briefly from the *Dictionary of the Bible*, edited by James Hastings, revised edition, article "PETER": "Simon, surnamed Peter, has been justly called the Prince of the Apostles. . . Simon first met Jesus at Bethany beyond the Jordan (John 1:28) . . . Jesus was there . . . Jesus 'looked at him,' and he became a disciple from that moment. Jesus seemed to know at once both what Peter was then, and what with God's help he could become, and He gave him a surname prophetic of the moral and spiritual strength he would eventually demonstrate. 'So you are Simon, the son of John? You shall be called Cephas' (John 1:42). Cephas was the Aramaic equivalent of the Greek *petros* or *petra*, which means *rock*. It is thus given as a descriptive title, and not as a proper name. He was not yet Peter, but only Simon, impulsive and vacillating, and Jesus,

bestowed upon him the new name, before he had earned it so that it might be an incentive to him to realize what Jesus had expected."

In other words, Simon was human. He had his faults and weaknesses. But his ATTITUDE was right! His heart was in the right place. Even after being under Jesus' teaching 3½ years he denied Jesus three times. But Jesus helped him over his faults and weaknesses, and later having received the Holy Spirit, Simon Peter did, indeed, become a solid rock of an apostle.

So — in like manner — does God have to deal with all humans. The great prophet Elijah was "a man subject to like passions as we are" (Jas. 5:17). David was a man after God's own heart, yet he had weaknesses and sinned — but repented and turned from his sins. It has always been thus. It is today. Only one human was perfect — Jesus Christ.

Persecution, Church underground

Soon, in the first century, a great persecution set in against the Church. Before A.D. 60 the churches in Galatia had turned to another gospel (Gal. 1:6-7).

The Gospel message God had sent by Jesus Christ had been suppressed!

The Church was largely scattered, many went "underground" — had to hold meetings on the Sabbath secretly.

By about A.D. 70, the Church of God entered "the lost century." For about a hundred years no trace of the history of the true Church of God could be found. This gave evidence that an organized thorough search had been made to destroy all historic evidence of the existence or activities of God's Church. The curtain had been brought completely down over all records of Church activity.

When the curtain lifted, in the second century, a church calling itself "Christian" came into focus — but a totally different church. It was the Babylonian mystery religion, then calling itself "Christian," professing to be the true Church. Sunday was being observed early Sunday mornings instead of the Sabbath, Easter

(Continued on page 25)

When One Is Disfellowshipped— WHICH FAMILY COMES FIRST?

*Which FAMILY must the Christian put first —
the natural human family or the GOD
Family into which he is begotten?*

By Herbert W. Armstrong

IF YOU ARE really a Christian, you are a begotten child of God — begotten into the GOD FAMILY.

God says, through the apostle John, "Beloved, *now* are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be..." (1 John 3:2).

We, if Christians, are NOW in this present physical life, already begotten sons of God. What we shall be when Christ appears — at His soon Second Coming — cannot now be SEEN — does not yet APPEAR. But, "we shall be like Him" (same verse). How does He *appear*? If our mortal physical eyes could see Him, we would see His eyes as flames of fire and His countenance as the sun — full strength.

Verse 1 says, "the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not." Other members of your human family, unconverted, cannot see Christ in you.

What is a Christian?

Now what is a Christian? Romans 8:9 says, "Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." If one is not being led by the Spirit of God he is not a Christian.

Those, then, in your own human family who do not have God's Holy Spirit active in them — who are not being led by the Holy Spirit — simply *cannot* see or recognize Christ *IN YOU* — if you are a Christian. Now where does that lead us?

You, who do have and are led by

"Now we COMMAND YOU, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye WITHDRAW yourselves from *every brother* that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us."

God's Spirit — who are Christians — are now members of a TOTALLY DIFFERENT FAMILY — the begotten (not yet born), FAMILY OF GOD! Other members of your human family — your parents, your brothers and sisters — your children — who are *not* led by God's Spirit — are NOT members of the begotten FAMILY OF GOD.

Now does that of itself cut you off from your human family?

Of itself, NO! For example, your children may be too young to be converted into the begotten FAMILY OF GOD. Yet they are your RESPONSIBILITY. How about your parents? God's Fifth Commandment tells you to HONOR your parents, and it does not say dishonor them if they are not begotten into the GOD FAMILY!

What, then? Your membership in the FAMILY OF GOD does not cut off your membership in your human family.

But, can the actions of one of them cut them off from you? THAT IS THE BIG QUESTION HERE!

Your conversion into the GOD FAMILY does not, of itself, cut you off from a right and proper family love and relationship with your natural human family. You must still love them.

BUT, you CANNOT have true Christian fellowship with them. Through John, God says also, 1 John 1:7, that we Christians who "walk in the light" have fellowship one with another.

That is, with other like *believers*, led by God's Spirit. But verse 3 of this same chapter says, "and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ."

Now assuredly the still carnal and unconverted members of our human

family do not, and CANNOT, have this fellowship with God the Father and with the living Jesus Christ.

We are also commanded, "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness" (Eph. 5:11).

We cannot have 1) Christian and spiritual fellowship with members of our human family who are unconverted, 2) we cannot have even non-spiritual fellowship with them, if the association with them takes us into things contrary to the Christian life or things of evil — the "unfruitful works [or conduct] of darkness."

We CAN have an association with them that avoids either the extreme of participating in things evil (like, for example, telling dirty stories) — or trying to speak with them about the Bible or about God or spiritual things.

If one of them shows an interest and asks a question about the Bible or the Church, answer the question in a noncontroversial manner, but do not try to continue "getting them interested" — for you will only turn them away and cause hard feelings or worse. YOU CANNOT "CONVERT" YOUR HUMAN FAMILY. DON'T TRY!

What, then, can you talk about with the unconverted members of your physical family? The things THEY are interested in — so long as it is neither evil, nor controversial spiritually.

What of a DISFELLOWSHIPED MEMBER?

But what of a member of your human family who had come into the Church and is excommunicated for causing discord and division or other spiritual offense in the Church?

Ah, now we really DO have a question loaded with dynamite! But if we let GOD and His Word give us direction, we shall DO WHAT IS RIGHT IN HIS EYES!

In Romans 16:17 it speaks of marking "them which cause DIVISIONS and OFFENCES CONTRARY TO THE DOCTRINE WHICH YE HAVE LEARNED". It does not say, "all except members of your flesh-and-blood family." It speaks of ANY who has been a Church member. And it says, "AVOID THEM"! Look now further.

In II Thessalonians 3:6, 14-15 is the COMMAND: "Now we COMMAND YOU, brethren, in the name of our

Lord Jesus Christ, that ye WITHDRAW yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us... And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet count him not as an enemy" (verses 14-15).

That is speaking of any brother, whether in the Lord — or in the human family.

It is a COMMAND. And if we try to be MORE KIND — MORE RIGHTEOUS — than GOD and DISOBEY THAT COMMAND, we convict ourselves of disobedience of God's COMMAND!

Yet we are not to treat such a one as an enemy!

This is a question that never has been expounded to the Church before to my knowledge. I have tried to make it PLAIN, as GOD instructs.

Jesus said, "And a man's foes shall be they of his own household. He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me" (Matt. 10:36-37).

"We must love Christ MORE! □



WHERE IS GOD'S TRUE CHURCH TODAY?

Jesus said, "I will build my church!" But does Jesus Christ have many different church denominations doing His Work? Is Christ divided? How, when, and where did today's religious babylon of multiple denominations get started? And how does one recognize the true Church? Our free booklet *This Is The Worldwide Church of God*

answers these questions. We think you'll find it most enlightening. To request your copy, write to *The Good News* at the address nearest you. (See inside front cover for addresses worldwide.) Your copy will be sent as soon as we receive your request.

THIS IS THE
WORLDWIDE
CHURCH OF GOD

Let God Handle It!

Are you resisting God because you don't understand some facet of His truth? Obedience to your Creator must come through faith.

By Dbar Apartian

The Bible, in no uncertain terms, relates the stories of two different kinds of people: those who questioned God and disobeyed His orders because they were displeased with His answers, and those who obeyed Him without questioning. The first way leads to eternal death; the second way leads to eternal life.

Be honest with yourself! How do you ask questions about the Bible? How do you seek the truth? Is it wrong to ask questions? Why do you ask questions? Is it to learn or to argue? To understand or to rationalize? To obey or to rebel?

More often than not, people ask questions not because they are truly interested in the answer, but because they are looking for an excuse to disagree — to not submit themselves to an order — or simply to pretend they are smart.

For instance, to the carnal mind, Sabbath-keeping doesn't make much sense. What's so holy about the seventh day of the week? Why should the Sabbath be different than any other day? What difference does it make whether God rested on that day or not?

The answer, of course, is utterly simple for those who believe in God and are honestly searching for the truth. If for no other reason, we keep the Sabbath because God says to!

Faith does not require understanding

Strange as it may seem, your obedience to God does not depend upon His answers to your "whys."

"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1). Notice! The Bible does not say, "Faith is the answer to all of your questions" or "the satisfaction of your intellectual

curiosity." Faith is implicit trust in God and His Word — whether you understand its meaning or not. You believe God without questioning — and do what He says.

"For by it the elders obtained a good report. Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear" (verses 2-3). The understanding is through faith, and not by arriving at some answer that is plausible to you — the answer that humanly you may have wanted.

When you grasp this truth, your attitude will change, and you will have a totally different outlook on life — a depth of faith in God that you have never experienced before.

Adam and Eve missed the point

Our first parents questioned God's orders and refused to believe Him. God commanded Adam: "Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Gen. 2:16-17).

And as Adam and Eve let doubts enter their minds, they gradually became vulnerable to Satan's destructive deceptions. Why, indeed, had God given them such an unfair order? Why didn't He want them to eat of that particular fruit? Why, of all the trees in the garden, should this one be forbidden? The couple was unable — actually unwilling — to understand God's reasons, and they refused to obey Him without fully grasping the purpose of His order — and agreeing with it.

And so came about, as Herbert W. Armstrong has called it, the first "scientific experiment." It was based on distrust of God's Word! Adam

and Eve yielded to their intellectual curiosity — to vanity. "And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat" (Gen. 3:6).

Think. Where did the pair get the idea that the tree was good for food and would "make one wise"? Had God told them that? No. Under Satan's influence, Adam and Eve convinced themselves that it was possible for them to reach the goal of Godship without submitting to God's order. They rejected the Holy Spirit — which, in time, would have caused them to understand everything they needed to know for salvation.

Do you see how this can also affect all of us as Christians? If your obedience to God depends upon His answers to your questions — answers that will satisfy you — then you are most vulnerable to Satan's attacks. Satan is today trying to divide the Church by putting doubts in God's people's minds!

Noah didn't ask why

Noah was righteous before God. How can we be? The Bible simply states, "Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God" (Gen. 6:9).

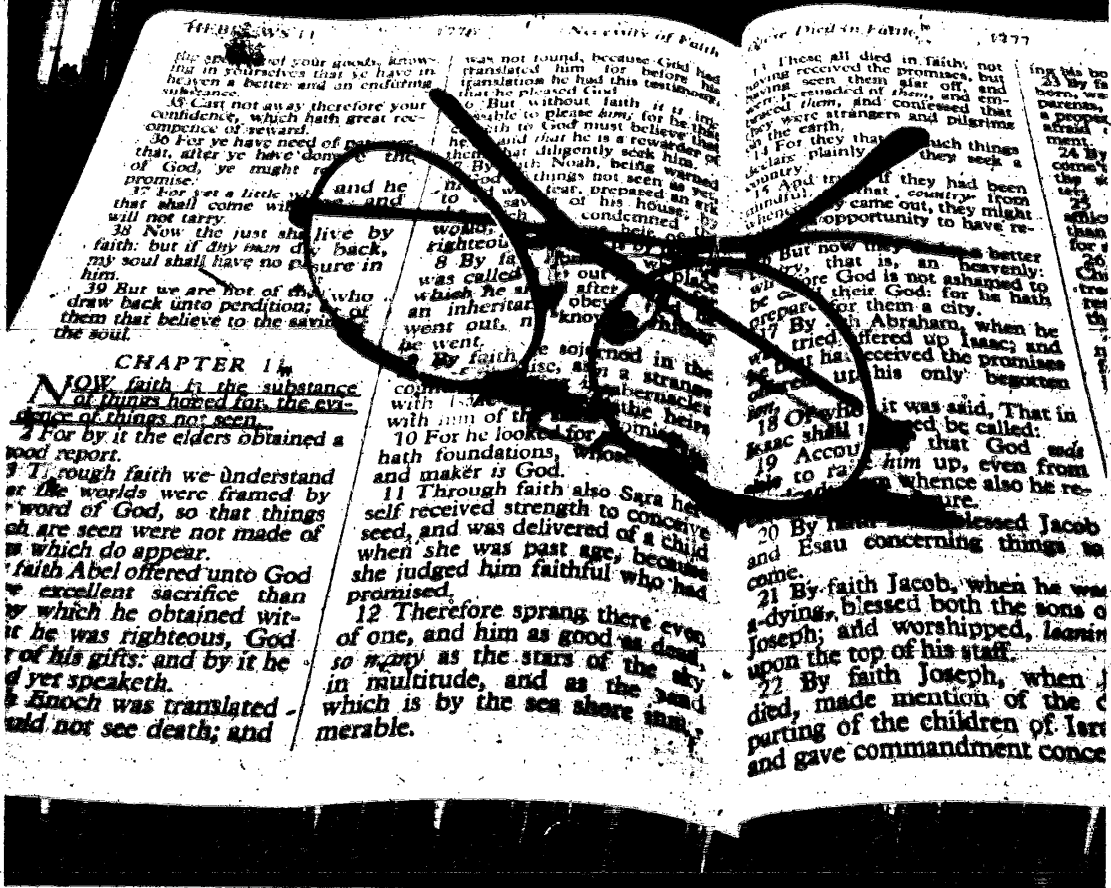
Unlike Adam and Eve, Noah did not question God's orders. He didn't doubt His Creator's intentions and Word. "Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he" (verse 22).

Simple, isn't it? A childlike faith. Yet, ironic as it may seem, many people today, swayed by their intellectual vanity, claim that the biblical account of Noah's ark is not scientific.

(Continued on page 28)

GN BIBLE SPECIAL

FAITH



THE HEBREW LETTERS

Necessity of Faith

How They Died in Faith

1277

the spirit of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance.
25 Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward.
26 For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.
27 For ye have seen a little while, and he will not tarry.
28 Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.
29 But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.

CHAPTER 11

NOW faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.
2 For by it the elders obtained a good report.
3 Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of old, but of things which do appear.
4 By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God being in evidence of his gifts: and by it he was justified, when he should have been afraid, because he did not see death; and

was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.
5 But without faith it is impossible to please him, for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he rewardeth them that diligently seek him.
6 By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, builded an ark to save his house; by which he condemned the world, and he himself was justified, when he had obeyed.
7 By faith Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed, because they refused to obey: but they themselves were justified, when they saw the fire and brimstone, because they were obedient to the angels.
8 By faith Lot dwelt in Sodom, when he saw and heard, and he was justified, when he chose to dwell in Sodom, because he was obedient to the angels.
9 By faith Isaac received the blessing of God, when he was asked of his father, saying, What wilt thou do? because he answered, I will obey.
10 For he looked for the city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.
11 Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised.
12 Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky, in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore, innumerable.

13 These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.
14 For they that thus use the world, declare plainly that they seek a better country.
15 And truly if they had been desirous of that country, from whence they came out, they might have had an opportunity to have returned: but now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.
16 By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son.
17 It was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called.
18 Account that God was trying him, when he said, Offer up thy son: because he knew that he would raise him up, even from the dead: whence also he received him again.
19 By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.
20 By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph, and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff.
21 By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel, and gave commandment concerning

Photo by Warren Watson

You Can Have Living Faith!

How can you know God is intervening to help you? What should you be looking for? How can you do your part? Here are answers to these questions of daily need and eternal import.

By Herbert W. Armstrong

Some time ago a young man came from some distance to see me. He had written two or three times asking me to pray for his healing of an affliction caused by an accident, and each time I had prayed for him and sent him an anointed cloth, according to the example set by the apostle Paul (Acts 19:11-12).

"I came to see you," he said, "to ask you to pray for me again. I simply can't understand why I wasn't healed."

"Oh, weren't you healed?" I asked. "How do you know you weren't?"

"Why, I still have this nervousness. I still FEEL it."

"Is that how you KNOW?" I asked.

"Of course," he replied.

Well, there was his trouble.

Priceless knowledge

What would it be worth to you if I could tell you exactly how you could always pray to God for every need, for help and deliverance from every trouble and *always get the answer*? If I could show you a way to always know you are going to actually get what you ask of God?

I can tell you that. I have found the way, myself. Of course, in some cases, like that of this young man, where I have interceded for others and asked God to do something for them, they have failed to receive the answer — while, on the other hand,

What would it be worth to you if I could tell you exactly how you could always pray to God for every need, for help and deliverance from every trouble, and always get the answer? . . . I have found the way, myself.

many others have received the answer I asked for them.

But as of the moment I write, there is not one thing I have had to rely upon God for and ask Him for in prayer, for myself and family or this wonderful Work of His, which He has committed to me, that has not been answered.

I remember how my first wife Loma and I had to depend upon God for just about everything.

Once I had to ask God for a dime. We had to have it immediately. Believe it or not, in less than two minutes God sent it to our house.

At another time I had to ask God to send us \$50,000 by a certain date — for the Work — and He sent it.

Once, more than 35 years ago, I remember, before retiring at night, asking God to remove some painful canker sores inside my mouth. When I awoke, they were gone.

Once we had to ask God to heal my wife of four or five serious afflictions, which had come upon her simultaneously — quinsy with lockjaw, blood poison from a rose thorn, a dog bite and two serious internal ailments. Her condition was so critical doctors did not expect her to live another 24 hours. She was completely healed of all these things *instantly!*

When our youngest son was 2 years and 4 months old he still could not talk. Either from birth or as a result of a fall, something obstructed his speech. When we became sure of the fact of the affliction, we asked God to heal him and let him talk, and the very next day he was beginning to talk, and in a week he was speaking whole sentences like any boy his age.

God answers every need

I have had to ask God to deliver us, and His Work, from enemies. I have asked Him for *understanding* of His will, and His Word. I have had to ask for wisdom where I had none, and for guidance. I have been at my wit's end in desperate trouble and cried out to God for deliverance. God has answered every time. Never once has there been a failure to get the answer.

Once when we were returning from Europe, we found ourselves in a hurricane in the middle of the Atlantic. When it became known that we were in great danger — and no lifeboat could have been launched in those angry 65-foot waves — I went to my cabin and earnestly asked God to calm the storm. In two or three hours the sea was calm again.

You can get the same results — if you will be willing to learn what I

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have had to learn, and to do what God has shown me I have to do.

If money could buy you the absolute GUARANTEE that you would always get whatever you ask of God — ALWAYS receive the answer to your prayers, how much would this magic be worth? You'd be willing to pay a great deal for it, wouldn't you? Ah, but this is something far too precious to be purchased with money. The richest man on earth does not have enough money to buy it. Yet you can have it, if you'll pay the price of conforming to God's terms and conditions.

Another young man, almost like a son to me, could not understand why God refused to heal him. He told me he had read in our office many letters from people who have been miraculously healed of many ailments and diseases after I had prayed for them and just sent them anointed pieces of cloth.

I had also prayed for this young man, at least three times or more. Yet he knew God had refused to heal him. He couldn't understand why — was much discouraged. And how did he know? Why, by the EVIDENCE — he could still FEEL the affliction and that PROVED God had not healed him.

I had no difficulty at all in seeing at once why these two fine, earnest, young men were not healed.

Know God's conditions

Before you ask God for anything, you must first know whether it is His will. He tells us His will in the Bible. He has made us hundreds of definite PROMISES — and He absolutely GUARANTEES He will keep them! Among them, He has promised to supply every NEED — not desire or want, but every NEED. He has promised to give us wisdom, to deliver us from every affliction, trouble or temptation, to fight our enemies for us and deliver us from their power, to guide and direct us in making right and wise decisions. He has promised to heal us when we are sick.

Those are a few of the things we know it is God's will to do for us — things for which we may ask and be sure we shall get the answer! But THERE ARE CONDITIONS! It is like a contract or agreement. God promises

to always do these things for us, IF we do just two things He demands of us! And an uncle of mine once impressed on me, so indelibly I shall never forget, that that little two-letter word IF is the biggest word in the English language. That great big little IF is the obstruction that stands between you and getting the answer from God!

First, you must OBEY. "Whatsoever we ask, we receive of him because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing IN HIS SIGHT" (1 John 3:22). Second, you must BELIEVE, "According to your faith be it unto you" (Matt. 9:29).

It is sufficient
for you that God
has promised! Take it
to Him . . . rely on Him
— trust Him, serene
and unshaken in
the definite assurance
it is now in
God's hands, and
He has promised and
He will attend
to it without fail.

Now these two young men were both sincere fellows who had surrendered to God, who sought to know His will and to keep His commandments and live His way through His power and strength. And both of them had sincerely SUPPOSED that they had FAITH.

But, like at least 99 out of every 100 earnest, surrendered Christians, they have not fully realized just what faith is or how to exercise it.

The Bible definition of SIN is this, "Sin is the transgression of the law" (1 John 3:4).

The Bible definition of FAITH is this, "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1). God PROMISES to heal you when you are sick. You follow His instruction, you call for the elders of the church, they pray over you the prayer of faith, anointing you with oil and God

PROMISES that when this is done, "the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the LORD SHALL RAISE HIM UP" (Jas. 5:14-15).

What is evidence?

Now these two young men confronted me with the fact God had not done as He had promised. How did they know — what evidence convinced them God had not done what He promised? Why, their EVIDENCE, in both cases, was that they could FEEL the pain, the nervousness, the weakness. They could see they were not healed. There was the EVIDENCE that God had not healed them.

But once again, what is FAITH? Faith is the EVIDENCE of healing that is NOT SEEN — or felt! It is impossible for God to lie. Impossible for God to break His promise. Do you believe that?

"Oh, yes, of course," you answer — or do you, now?

I know these two young men thought they had faith. As a matter of fact, at the time I prayed for them, undoubtedly they both believed: At the time, that is. Yes, they did have faith — at the time!

But what they did not realize about FAITH is that faith must not waver. It must abide. It must remain constant — unwavering! It must ENDURE — it must CONTINUE! Through James, God instructs us to ask "in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord" (Jas. 1:6-7).

Yes, these young men really did believe — at the time!

But they did not come to the real TEST of their faith until the devil presented his evidence, a few days later. When, after a few days, they could still FEEL and SEE they were not healed, then Satan was presenting his evidence to their minds! It was evidence they could FEEL and SEE!

And at just that point these young men took their eyes off Jesus — off God's PROMISE — they looked at the MATERIAL, SENSUAL evidence, and right then and there, without realizing what was taking place in their minds, they WAVED in their belief in God's promise. Instead of BELIEV-

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ING God's evidence, which is FAITH in what they certainly did not yet FEEL or SEE, they just simply could not doubt the material evidence of the human flesh and the senses of feel and sight! What they felt and saw therefore convinced them THEY WERE NOT HEALED!

God determines when

They began to ask, "Why didn't God heal me?" and their faith was then gone. Yes, they wavered, and God says, "Let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord."

So here is the lesson you must learn — the lesson of faith — if you would get answers to your prayers. First, search the Bible to see whether God has PROMISED to DO what you ask — *but REMEMBER, God nowhere promises WHEN or HOW He will do it!*

That's the thing to remember! Never forget it! God has not promised He will do it *instantly*, or when you expect or how you expect. ALL He has promised is to DO IT! He does things in His own time. And sometimes I have found God is not in so great a hurry as we. And God works in mysterious ways to perform His wonders — not in the ways nor at the time we expect.

It is sufficient for you that God HAS PROMISED! Take it to Him; claim His promise, ask Him to do what He has promised — *and then leave it in His hands* — RELY ON HIM — trust Him, serene and unshaken in the definite assurance it is now in GOD'S HANDS, and HE HAS PROMISED and He will attend to it without fail.

He may perform what He has promised instantaneously. Or, He may not. He may TEST YOUR FAITH and permit Satan to tempt you with his physical, sensual evidence to see if you will doubt God's Word.

If it is healing you have asked, and two or three days go by, and you do not yet see the answer, but rather still feel the pain or affliction, DON'T YOU BELIEVE IT! Jesus promised that the SIGN shall FOLLOW. It will if you remain steadfast and unwavering in LEAVING IT IN GOD'S HANDS. Meet this TEST of faith by disbelieving what you feel and see and instead BELIEVING God's promise! God can't

lie. Faith is merely believing that what God has promised He will do (Rom. 4:21). Faith is your assurance of what you are still hoping for — your evidence of what is not yet visible — what you cannot yet feel.

Always remember that appearances, circumstances, evidences of the physical senses, have absolutely NOTHING to do with the performance of a miracle by God.

Faith not physical

Several years ago every physical evidence literally shouted at us that there was absolutely NOTHING that could save Ambassador College and

So if God . . . tries
your faith, rejoice and
praise Him for using
this experience to
create in you more
enduring faith, greater
patience — two very high
points of holy character!
Instead of grumbling,
doubting, see the loving
hand of God in it
and be thankful!

this Work of God. Nothing could have APPEARED more impossible. The amount of money we had to have was just too great. No such sums ever had come to us in so short a time. But I knew God had PROMISED to provide every need — and PROMISED He would not drop the Work He had begun — had PROMISED to deliver His servants out of every trouble — and *I knew these promises of God were stronger than all appearances, or all things seen, heard or felt!*

No matter how impossible it appeared, I knew God's PROMISES were stronger and mightier than appearances or circumstances. I knew that and believed it implicitly. I couldn't see HOW it was possible for God to do it — but I didn't need to see how. Others said, "I can't see how it's possible" — and quit believing — but not all others, for some believed as I did.

Meanwhile, I did everything in my

power to do my part. I was literally "on my toes," alert, tense, trying to overlook nothing — and all the while wondering whether God would use ANY of the lines of activity I was employing or provide the need some altogether different way. Well, the way He did it was totally unexpected — BUT HE DID IT! That's all that matters, isn't it? I didn't do it. HE DID IT! He kept His promise — HE ALWAYS DOES!

The fate of Ambassador College and its first piece of property was at stake. Our income then averaged \$500 per day. We thought we needed \$35,000. Actually it turned out we needed \$50,000.

Suddenly one day \$3,000 came in. Next day and each day for 17 days \$3,000 (average) was received every day. By the due date the entire \$50,000 had been sent in.

In my personal experience, we have seen the answer come instantaneously, and we have had to endure the trial of faith and be patient. While God *instantly* healed my wife in the instance mentioned above and has done it also at other times, while He immediately sent that dime, there have been other times when some member of our family was healed only after we endured the test of faith and where the supplying of financial need seemed long delayed. God often tries our patience. But He has never failed me, and He never will fail YOU — if you will obey, and can BELIEVE, unwavering!

If the answer seems delayed in coming, remember, "the trying of your faith worketh PATIENCE!" (Jas. 1:3). And the development of PATIENCE is one of the purposes of your existence! So if God puts you to the test and TRIES your faith, rejoice and praise Him for using this experience to create in you more enduring faith, greater PATIENCE — two high points of holy CHARACTER! Instead of grumbling, see the loving hand of God in it and be thankful!

If God has PROMISED, that's all you need! If God delays, HE HAS A REASON! It's *only* a delay, not a refusal. SO TRUST HIM! Keep on trusting Him! BE PATIENT! The answer is SURE! Arise! from your bed of doubt and WALK the walk of FAITH!

Your Faith Must Have a Foundation

The faith you are clinging to may do you absolutely no good against Satan's fiery darts — unless it meets several specific conditions. Your faith must rest on the solid foundation described here.

By Raymond F. McNair

A man checked into a room on the 30th floor of a big hotel on a warm, foggy night. The room was too hot, so he forced open a window and stepped through it into the thick darkness, thinking he was stepping onto a balcony. But, to his horror, he quickly realized (too late) that nothing was under his feet! The terrified guest fell headlong to his death on the sidewalk below.

Did the man's *belief* that he was stepping onto a balcony save him?

If a person unwittingly drinks some deadly poison, not realizing it is poison, will his ignorance (his misplaced *belief* or faith), prevent his untimely death?

If people sincerely *believe* a lie, will it profit them? Millions of Germans really believed in the promises of Adolf Hitler and his Nazi party before and during World War II. They trusted that the fuhrer would bring them peace, prosperity and happiness. But by mid-1945, they were disillusioned. The deluded masses of Germany came to see that they had placed their faith in a man and a party that could not deliver what they had promised. The result? A ravaged, divided Germany.

Faith is simply confidence and assurance in God — the absolute certainty that something will happen according to our unshakable belief based on God's *promise* or knowledge of His will. It is trust in God, not in man — not in one's own unfounded supposition. Faith is *assurance* that what God has promised He will perform (Rom. 4:21). It is "the substance of things hoped for,

the evidence of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1).

But how can we make sure that our faith is not "dead" or "in vain"? (Jas. 2:17; 1 Cor. 15:14, 17). How can we make sure that our faith does more for us than it did for the man who only *believed* there was a balcony outside his hotel window?

A solid foundation

Faith, or belief, in order to be effectual, must be solidly based. It must have a sure foundation if it is to stand. Sincerity alone is not enough. It is possible to be ever so sincere — like those people who believed in Adolf Hitler — and yet be sincerely *wrong* — to have a misplaced trust.

If we are to have real, living, effective faith, we must learn to put our faith in God, not in men!

"Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord" (Jer. 17:5). And we are also told, "Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help" (Ps. 146:3). Jesus Christ commanded us to "Have faith in God" (Mark 11:22).

But why put our faith in God rather than in someone or something else? Because God is the only sure foundation for belief!

Even when men are well intentioned, you never really know whether they will be able to keep their promises. And many people are not well intentioned.

But God will never break His Word. He is totally reliable. When He makes a promise, you can depend on it. Men are limited in knowledge

and understanding, and also in their ability to keep their word. But God is always 100 percent faithful (1 Cor. 1:9, 10:13; 1 Pet. 4:19).

It is utterly impossible for God to lie (Heb. 6:18). Once He makes a promise, He will stand by it (Heb. 10:23). Whatever God promises — whatever His will is — He will bring it to pass.

Knowing God's will

The patriarch Abraham was "not weak in faith." He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God. And being fully persuaded that what he had promised, he was able also to perform" (Rom. 4:19-21). God made an oral promise to Abraham, and faithful Abraham simply believed his Creator. He knew God would not lie — that His Word was good.

Can we follow Abraham's example? Some of us may be prone to say, "Well, I could believe God, too, if He would speak directly to me as He spoke to Abraham. Abraham had perfect faith in God because He had revealed His will to him. He told Abraham what He was going to do and what He wanted Abraham to do. But God hasn't spoken to me. He hasn't made His will known to me."

Hasn't He? God *has* made it possible for us to know exactly what His will today is — He has spoken to us in as direct a manner and with the same authority as when He spoke personally to Abraham. How?

Through His written Word, the Bible — the Holy Scriptures. The Bible reveals the will of God. What

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we call the Old Testament and the New Testament (the word *testament* means *covenant* or *contractual agreement* involving promises on God's part and trusting obedience on man's part) contains the complete revelation of God to mankind — His revealed will to man.

Real, living faith must be based on God's will as revealed in the Bible.

If professing Christians would obey Christ's command to "Search the scriptures" (John 5:39) — if they would, like the noble Bereans, study the Bible daily (Acts 17:11) — they would know what God has — and has not — promised.

For instance, most people who claim to follow Christ sincerely believe that they will go to heaven when they die. But does the Word of God promise any such thing? No!

Christ said that *no man* has ascended into heaven, and that those who develop proper Christian character will inherit *the earth* (Ps. 115:16, Isa. 60:21).

But is this what most of "Christianity" has been taught? No. True Christians must rightly divide "the word of truth" to know exactly what God's will really is and thus be able to have faith in that solid foundation. (1 Tim. 2:15, Eph. 5:17). Belief in whatever is stated in the Bible is a properly based belief. Faith cannot be based on faulty human reason, but must be placed in God's Word.

Then we can pray properly and expect to receive answers from God: "And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that he have the petitions that we desired of him" (1 John 5:14-15).

When we fail to petition God according to His will, we can expect no answer to our prayers — we do not have the proper faith God requires for answered prayer (Jas. 4:3, 1:6-7). This proper faith, of course, must also include keeping God's commandments, which are also revealed in the Bible (1 John 3:22).

The promise of healing

Many people who think they have perfect faith are forced to realize that their faith is worthless because

they do not receive what they pray for — because they misunderstand what God has actually promised. A good illustration of this problem is to be found in the subject of healing.

Many Christianity-professing churches believe in divine healing. That is fine, because the Bible teaches that God can and does heal. But many churches misunderstand God's promises to heal and misapply them to their own distress and discouragement.

The apostle James instructs Christians as follows: "Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him,

Faith, or belief, in order to be effectual, must be solidly based. It must have a sure foundation if it is to stand. Sincerity alone is not enough. It is possible to be ever so sincere and yet be sincerely wrong — to have a 'misplaced trust.'

anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him" (Jas. 5:14-15).

Those who truly believe the Word of God know that God has made certain promises concerning healing. But it is vital that we do not misunderstand what God promises.

Does God anywhere in the Bible promise to heal everyone of every sickness and every disease in this life? Does God's Word say when God will heal? Or, after praying for healing, do we not have to wait patiently for God to heal us in His own good time and way?

James said the prayer of faith would save the sick and that God would raise them up, but he did not say when God would do so.

On numerous occasions in the Bi-

ble, Christ, the apostles and the prophets healed people instantly. But there are other examples when God took a longer period of time before He raised up the ill and healed them (II Kings 20:1-7, John 4:52). In some instances, God did not heal the people at all. But is His Word still good? Is it ever too late for God to "raise him up" and make a sick person completely whole?

When does God heal?

King David of Israel was a great man in God's sight, yet God allowed him to contract some kind of "a loathsome disease" (Ps. 38:7, 41:8). Near the end of David's life, he was so infirm that his body temperature wouldn't stay high enough, so his servants "sought for a fair damsel" to keep the king warm (1 Kings 1:1-4).

Nothing indicates that God healed David's infirmity. But he died in faith and was coming when God will raise him up. "But they [Israel] shall see the Lord their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up unto them" (Jer. 30:9).

The prophet Elisha also died in faith — unhealed, "Now Elisha was fallen sick of his sickness whereof he died" (II Kings 13:14).

Both David and Elisha were men of God. Why, then, did God — who had worked mighty acts and miracles through these men — not heal them? Only God can answer that. But God will heal them both — will raise them up in the soon-coming resurrection. Christ said that at that time, men shall "see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God..." (Luke 13:28).

The apostle Paul was another man whom God used mightily. Through Paul, God healed many people: "And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul: So that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them" (Acts 19:11-12).

Yet, when Paul himself was sick, God didn't heal him. Why? Paul himself gives us the answer: "And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a

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thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me" (II Cor. 12:7-9).

Paul had asked God on three occasions to heal him, but God had refused, knowing that his infirmities would keep him humble. Paul therefore said, "I take pleasure in infirmities . . . for when I am weak, then am I strong" (verse 10).

Sometimes God heals people instantly. Sometimes He delays their healing, until the resurrection. In some instances He heals a person in this life after a certain delay.

When Miriam, the sister of Moses, rebelled and was smitten with leprosy, Moses prayed to God, "And Moses cried unto the Lord, saying, Heal her now, O God, I beseech thee" (Num. 12:13).

But God didn't grant Moses his request. "And the Lord said unto Moses, If her father had but spit in her face, should she not be ashamed seven days? let her be shut out from the camp seven days, and after that let her be received in again." One week later, Miriam was healed by God and was brought back into the camp (verses 14-16).

Three important ingredients

There are three vital ingredients necessary in healing: 1) faith, 2) obedience and 3) patience. When a person prays for healing, he must believe, obey God and then, because God has not promised when He will heal, he must patiently wait for God's intervention.

It is only "through faith and patience [that we shall] inherit the promises" (Heb. 6:12). And we must sometimes exercise a lot of patience waiting for God to act when He knows the time is best.

After all, the people in Hebrews' long list of biblical heroes patiently trusted in God and "died in faith, not having received the [fulfillment of the] promises" (Heb. 11:13). We must have faith like these people.

Faith is of prime importance to anyone who would truly worship God. "Without faith it is impossible to please him [God]" (Heb. 11:6). How, then, does one get more of the kind of faith everyone needs?

How to obtain saving faith

The apostles knew they needed more of the understanding and peace that true faith in God could give them, and realizing this, they implored Christ, "Increase our faith" (Luke 17:5). We, too, need to ask for the power to overcome our doubts and faithlessness, as one man did, "And straightway the father of the

God will never break His Word. He is totally reliable. When He makes a promise, you can depend on it. Men are limited in knowledge and understanding, and also in their ability to keep their word. But God is always 100 percent faithful.

child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief" (Mark 9:24).

No one of himself has the kind of faith necessary to be saved. This saving power can come only from God and Jesus Christ, "the author and finisher of our faith" (Heb. 12:2).

Jesus Christ is the source of living faith, "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law" (Gal. 2:16).

Paul goes on to say, "And the life which I now live [as a Christian] in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God; who loved me, and gave himself for me" (verse 20).

Notice the source of the faith necessary for justification, character development, and salvation: "For by

grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it [faith] is the gift of God" (Eph. 2:8).

Faith is one of the fruits of God's Holy Spirit and is imparted to us by the indwelling of that Spirit (Gal. 5:22, I Cor. 12:9). We need to ask God for more of His Holy Spirit, which He is more than willing to give us (Luke 11:13). Jesus Christ, through the inexhaustible "supply of the Spirit" (Phil. 1:19), can give us the faith we need to trust and obey Him at all times.

Also, we need to remember that "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). Hearing and studying God's Word will increase our faith.

Our spiritual radar

Faith is an important component of our Christian armor. "Be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love" (I Thess. 5:8). "Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked" (Eph. 6:16).

If we, as Christian soldiers, ever lay aside our breastplate and shield of faith, then we will be unable to ward off all the frantic thrusts of Satan in his efforts to destroy us.

Faith is like a compass. It is like the radar used on ships or planes. Paul commanded the young Christian warrior Timothy to "war a good warfare; holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck" (I Tim. 1:18-19).

Without this spiritual power to direct us, we will all suffer "shipwreck" sooner or later. According to the Word of God, our faith can be overthrown if we are not alert and vigilant (II Tim. 2:18).

A Christian must believe in God and believe what His Word says. He needs to realize that his own faith is not sufficient to save him — he needs to have the very faith of the Son of God added to his limited human strength. Faith — a gift of God — comes as a result of God's grace, prayer and Bible study.

A Christian must be sure to base his faith on the foundation of God and His Word. If he does this, his faith will forever remain unshakable! □

Teaching Children to Have Faith in God

The faith of little children can warm the sternest heart. But where, as children grow up; does that faith go? Don't fail, as parents, to nurture your children's faith in God!

By Selmer Hagvoid.

Little Denice lay bundled in blankets, propped up in a corner of the couch in the living room. Her face was flushed and hot to the touch and her eyes were faded with fever. She had been sick through the long hours of the night.

I sat on the couch's edge alongside her and told her that, as one of God's ministers, I had come to anoint and pray for her. She nodded her head in appreciation. She readily explained, "I hurt awful all over!" Yet, she knew God loved her and did not want her to hurt and that He could and would make her well!

Saying a simple prayer she could understand, I anointed her fevered forehead with olive oil. I assured her that God had promised to take away her sickness and pain and that very soon she would be up and playing about the house. Snuggled in her warm blankets, she quietly looked at me and nodded weakly. She understood and believed with all her 5-year-old mind and heart.

I chatted a few minutes with her mother at the door, but before I could leave, we heard a commotion in the living room we had just left. We rushed in. There on the floor in her pajamas was little Denice, now surrounded with her toys and playing happily. To her mother's startled exclamation, Denice smilingly stated:

"God made me well again! I don't hurt anymore. He [pointing to me] said I could get up and play when God made me so I don't hurt." Her brick-hot fever was entirely gone! God had performed His grand miracle of healing just as Denice knew He

would. She was already busy with her activities for the day. God had rewarded her childlike faith.

As a small child, Denice had an unshakable faith in God. Sadly, as she matured, her faith weakened. She became like so many other children whose faith dwindles and sometimes disappears between the time they are preschoolers and the time they become young adults.

What causes this tragedy in our youngsters? Can we find and correct the problem before their young attitudes are shaken or damaged? What kind of examples are we, as parents, setting for them? How can we expand our children's faith in God and keep that faith growing?

"Little ones which believe"

Notice what Christ revealed about the nature of those who would enter the Kingdom of God: "At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them. And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me. But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea" (Matt. 18:1-6).

Christ delighted in the trustfulness of little children. We all need this childlike faith, the faith that reveals the give principle of God's own nature! Faith is a gift from God — protect and nourish it when you see it displayed in your children, the "heritage of the Lord" (Ps. 127:3).

Unfortunately, this world goes to the opposite extreme, destroying innocent trust and thus earning Christ's condemnation for offending "these little ones." Children today are the victims of a society that frowns on discipline. Parents are taught to give children free rein during their formative years.

As Satan pumps his evil nature into children and it becomes their nature — human nature — any childlike faith is turned into discouragement, selfishness and rebellion against authority. Permissiveness is reaping a bitter harvest of rebels running amok and plaguing us.

Parental responsibility

Parenthood is a great responsibility. The duties involved include teaching your children, and teaching a child to have faith in God must begin at the cradle and continue throughout the child's developing years.

God required Abram to prove himself to be a worthy trainer of men for a full 100 years before He gave him his own son, Isaac, through his wife Sarai. And Abram qualified by proving to God that he could love, nourish and train a son of his own.

Abram was a wealthy merchant who dealt with all who traversed the Palestinian trade routes. He pos-

Photo by Warren Phillips



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sessed vast flocks and had the status of a king everywhere he went. He had many servants in his household — and he carefully tutored every one of them to believe as he believed and to worship as he worshiped. Abram's household, which must have numbered well over a thousand, was courageous and loyal to him (Gen. 14:14-16). Abram set the example of righteous living for everyone. He taught his entire household well, and they followed his leadership.

And so it was through Abram and his wife Sarai that God began to develop a people to serve Him. God knew that Abram would train his own son just as he had trained his entire household, and so, in Abram's hundredth year, Isaac was born to him.

No words of reproof are recorded in the Bible about his son. God became known throughout the Bible as "the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob." And just as Abraham taught his son's faith in God, you can build faith in your children from which they will never depart.

Explaining the angels

Teaching children about angels is a powerful way to build their faith in God. Children are enthralled with the concept of these spiritual helpers God created.

Explain God's purpose for angels. Tell your children how important angels are to God's vast creation and to them personally.

Angels serve as God's messengers. Read to your children about Moses' startling encounter with an angel of God within the burning bush. Young minds relate marvelously to accounts such as this. You must successfully vie with television and its fascinating adventures, or TV's fictional spectacles will hold the minds of your youths. The incredible Bible stories are real! They can serve as springboards to explaining the awesome future God has in store for all who will love and obey Him.

Describe how the angels protect God's people from harm. Apparently angels play a special role in watching over children: "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the

face of my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 18:10).

God speeds His holy angels to aid those who worship Him. Impress upon your child that nothing is more powerful than God, and relate the stories of Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego. Explain that the fourth individual in the blazing, fiery furnace along with Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego was a powerful angel of the living God!

The angel, more powerful than the flames, shielded the three men so thoroughly that not a hair on their bodies was singed. The great world ruler, Nebuchadnezzar, stood aghast and dumbfounded at this great attestation of God's unlimited power. He exclaimed, "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, who hath sent his angel, and delivered his servants that trusted in him" (Dan. 3:28).

The enemies of King Darius were thrown to hungry lions. But even strong, famished lions are no match for God's angels: Daniel, God's servant, had his faith tested when he was shut up in a den of several such starving lions. He trusted God to deliver him and God responded.

Next morning, when Darius rushed to the den to see how Daniel fared, "he cried with a lamentable voice unto Daniel . . . O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?"

"Then said Daniel unto the king, O king, live for ever. My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me: forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me, and also before thee, O King, have I done no hurt" (Dan. 6:20-22).

Search the Bible for similar accounts that will build a strong basis for faith in your child. Begin as soon as your son or daughter wants you to read to him or her. As he develops his reading skills, he will want to read these stories for himself.

If you start with these biblical stories and progress in time to deeper topics, your child will fill his mind with the very real adventures of the Bible and not some make-believe television program. There is no better way to build your child's faith in God.

When your children come to you with problems, discuss them. Tell them to pray to God about them and promise that your prayers will also be going up along with theirs for Him to grant them the right results. Frequently invite them to join in your private prayers to God. The knowledge that you pray often and are not embarrassed to be discovered in prayer helps remove inhibitions they might have about prayer.

When results come, make them aware that the answers to their prayers have arrived. This is the strongest tool to increase faith that can come your way. If the answers come in unexpected ways, be alert to this and clarify those answers. Help them to see God answers all prayers, but sometimes He answers in ways not immediately evident.

Positive rewards of faith

God has blessed His Church today with many children. What this desperately sick and chaotic world around us needs is the loving, strong and well-trained generation of young people that is at this moment growing up under your tutelage. Their wisdom and foresight in the decades to come, in the wonderful world tomorrow, will lead the entire world back to the worship of its great and wonderful God.

Because you are today a member of God's Church, engaged in announcing to the world the good news of the coming of God's Kingdom to put down Satan's evil devices, your children are very special to God. As I Corinthians 7 shows, your children are totally unlike their peers in the unconverted world about them. They are set apart in a different category. They are not cut off from God! If you stimulate continued growth in faith in them until they come to physical, mental and emotional maturity, then God may call them to His Work.

And what a thrill it is to see conversion — the miracle of a totally changed attitude — begin to take place in your children! You will know that God has gained these dedicated servants to fill great needs in His important Work for this age. This joy will be your reward for faith, and for a job well done in the sight of Christ and our Father in heaven. □

The Heroes of Hebrews 11

Do you sometimes wonder if you will be able to qualify for God's Kingdom? The testimony of a "great cloud of witnesses" who did it through faith shows that — no matter what your problems — you can too!

By Clayton Steep

If only I had faith like the people mentioned in Hebrews 11!" some have thought. "Life would be one continuous series of dramatic miracles. Obstacles in my Christian life would vanish as suddenly as the walls of Jericho crumbled, and life would be pretty easy."

Just think — immediate answers to every prayer. Speedy deliverance from every problem. No need for patience or perseverance. Is that what Hebrews 11 is all about?

Not really.

None of the pilgrims of faith listed in Hebrews 11 had an easy life! They all had to overcome problems — big problems. Yet they exercised quiet, patient, persevering faith. Faith tested over long periods of time. Faith proved by works. Faith purified in the fires of trial and affliction. Faith that claimed promises that were sometimes miraculously fulfilled or, on the other hand, sometimes not fulfilled at all in this life. Nevertheless, God affirmed that "these all died in faith" (verse 13).

Together these witnesses testify with a common voice that they have overcome — and so can we.

The witnesses testify

Abel is the first witness to offer his example (verse 4). In faith, he gave the best he had to God. This is the kind of faith we need when we are tested in the area of giving.

Abel is contrasted with his brother Cain. The "way of Cain" (Jude 11) was the selfish way of getting. Cain wanted to keep for himself what was of greatest value and offer God a few

vegetables instead (Gen. 4:3). That way — human reasoning — does not require any faith at all.

Abel lived the opposite way — God's way — the way of giving. He gave God the best he had (verse 4). It requires faith to live that way.

But in spite of Abel's faith, God allowed him to suffer a brutal, untimely death (verse 8). The first man of faith was also the first murder victim. That God would permit such a thing would be hard to accept if we did not know through faith that "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" (Rom. 8:28).

Too long to endure?

Enoch is a reminder to us to retain our faith at times when we are tempted to feel that 20 or even 10 years is too long to endure. Enoch walked with God for at least 300 years (Gen. 5:22). That's a long time. What is more, the final result of Enoch's faith — the promise of eternal life — he never received — yet!

We are told that Enoch pleased God. That means he had faith, because "without faith it is impossible to please him" (Heb. 11:6).

How much faith does one need to please God? "He that cometh to God must believe that he is [as Christians we all have this much faith], and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." All the pilgrims of faith whose testimony we are reviewing believed that God was actively interested and involved in their lives.

At times circumstances do not allow some individuals to have regular contact with other Christians. This makes them feel "alone" and may lead to discouragement. Listen to the witness of Noah (Heb. 11:7).

Faith in the invisible

In his day Noah was the only godly person on the face of the earth (Gen. 6:9-13). The Bible doesn't even use the word *righteous* in describing his wife and sons. Noah was surrounded by carnal, wicked people devoted to revelry and merrymaking (Matt. 24:37-38). But God had given him a job!

Day after brilliant, cloudless day he ventured out of his house to construct a "boat" on dry land. You can imagine the ridicule he had to bear. He toiled on the project for up to 80 years, at the same time preaching to the mocking crowds that came to watch (11 Pet. 2:5). Everyone on earth must have known and laughed about "poor old Noah."

The only evidence Noah had of the flood to come was God's promise; he wasn't even told exactly when the waters would appear! Noah believed in the invisible and endured. Even after the flood was over, he continued to live a righteous life for another 350 years (Gen. 9:28).

Abraham also had faith in what he could not see. Whether it was packing up and heading toward an unknown destination (Heb. 11:8) or obeying God even if it would cost his son's life (verse 17), Abraham acted on his faith. An accompanying article discusses his story. The faith of

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Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph testifies to us because they believed in what they did not yet have. They died without seeing or receiving what they hoped for, just as some of us may have to do (verses 20-22).

Faith plus works

The faith of Moses' parents (verse 23) is particularly noteworthy in light of recent events in God's Church. For three months Moses' parents hid the baby Moses — in spite of orders by the government to the contrary. Some might have thought that they should have handed baby Moses over to the authorities and just "trusted God." They trusted God all right, but they also acted to keep Moses safe.

As an adult, Moses in faith chose to please God rather than please himself (verses 24-28).

It was no easy task for him to have to appear before the powerful pha-

raoh time after time with only bad news to give him. Moses must have wished that he could be anywhere else. It was a lot harder than having to tell one's boss or the school principal about the Sabbath and Holy Days. But Moses "endured, as seeing him who is invisible" (verse 27). And the same faith that parted the Red Sea will work for us.

Those people by whose faith the walls of Jericho fell give their testimony next (Heb. 11:30). This impressive miracle occurred only after a test lasting seven days.

Each day the Israelites, led by Joshua, had to march around the walls of the city. What they were doing just didn't seem logical. Each day when the Israelites had finished marching, the walls stood just as strong as ever — until the Israelites finished doing the will of God. They then received the promise. With a rumble the fortified ramparts sud-

denly collapsed into piles of broken brick and plumes of dust.

Do you sometimes feel that God is not hearing your prayers because you haven't yet received what you are praying for? If you are a child of God there is no doubt that God hears your prayers (Ps. 34:15). And if He hears your prayers, He answers them (1 John 5:14-15). But the answer may not always be "Yes." Often it may be "Not yet." God may have something for you to learn first. "For ye have need of patience, that, after he have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise" (Heb. 10:36).

Rahab and her family would have perished with the rest of Jericho's inhabitants (Heb. 11:31), but in spite of her questionable background and the little she knew about Israel's God, she had enough faith to recognize Him as the true God (Josh. 2:11). She believed the Israelite spies when they instructed her to hang a

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ropé in her window (verses 18-21), and as a result, her house, which formed part of the wall around Jericho, did not fall.

The sum of the matter

In Hebrews 11:32, the apostle Paul begins to sum up the matter. He lists various individuals who through faith performed great deeds, won victories and wrought miracles. We all know faith can accomplish dramatic results such as these.

Notice, however, in verses 35 to 38, that faith has another aspect. Many in the "cloud of witnesses" suffered. In faith! They were tested. They were afflicted. They had trials from which they were not delivered in this life. Many were struck down with painful, horrible deaths. But faith in God and His promises gave them the strength to endure to the end. They came through with flying colors. So can you!

It's as though you are in a great track meet. Jesus is waiting for you at the finish line. On the sidelines is a crowd of cheering spectators. They have all run — and won — the race. They are there to urge you on to victory. You fix your eyes on Jesus. You throw aside everything that could in any possible way slow you down. And you run — mightily. This is one race you must not lose.

"Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith" (Heb. 12:1-2, Revised Standard Version).

When you begin to tire of running, think again about what Jesus endured (verse 3). Think about Abel and Enoch. Remember Noah and Moses and all the other pilgrims who

- 1) Abel, the first faithful human, was murdered in cold blood by his selfish brother, Cain.
- 2) Isaac meets Rebekah
- 3) Sold into Egypt by his brothers, Joseph became one of the world's greatest rulers
- 4) Moses chose to please God rather than himself and delivered His messages to Pharaoh
- 5) Samson, empowered by God's Spirit, rent a lion as though it had been a kid
- 6) Evil King Saul made numerous attempts to destroy David, a man after God's own heart

Illustrations by G. Dore

in faith have gone this way before. Remind yourself that even when God must chasten and correct you, it is to train you so that you can win even a bigger prize (verses 4-11).

"Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees" (verse 12, RSV). The others did it. You can, too! Bear down and finish the race of faith.

And then, amidst shouts of triumph, go over and take your place among the "great cloud of witnesses." □

Abraham and Sarah

By Art Ferdig

The lives of this remarkable man and woman began 352 years after the flood — about 251 years after the nations were scattered from Babel.

Abraham (originally known as Abram) was the son of Terah. He was born in the city of Ur, in Chaldea (c. 2017 B.C.), the ninth generation of Shem, son of Noah. Abram's birth occurred only two years after Noah's death.

Out of Idolatry

As was common in Chaldea, Terah and his family were steeped in idolatry. Worship of the one true God had been obscured by a religion spawned of human imagination — adoration of dumb idols, service to the sun, moon and stars, immoral fertility rites and other heathen practices, which were continued this side of the flood by the family of Cush, Noah's grandson. The religious and political headquarters of the day was Babylon (founded by Nimrod), a hotbed of corruption and immorality.

But tradition implies that Abram was a well-educated man, who had great understanding and insight into spiritual things. This prompted him to reason against other Chaldean wise men that there must be only one true God — a Creator of all life (Josephus, *Ant.*, Bk. I, Ch. VII). The more he expounded his rational arguments, the more angry his opponents became, until they actually threatened his life.

Terah finally had the good sense to move out of Ur and head south toward Canaan (Gen. 11:31). Abram, his wife Sarai (a half-sister), his orphan nephew Lot and their servants took all they owned and left with Terah for a city called Haran. They must have made a sizable caravan, because they were evidently a wealthy family with many servants (Gen. 14:14).

They reestablished themselves in Haran, and lived there until Terah died at the age of 205. Abram, according to Josephus, continued his

studying and teaching and earned himself a reputation for being a just and righteous man, as well as a skilled scientist.

Called of God

After Terah's death, God spoke directly to Abram — without doubt a memorable and frightening occasion. But it began a relationship — and a friendship — that was to last until Abram died.

God asked Abram to leave Haran and his relatives and go to a land farther south. He promised to make Abram a great nation, through which all the families of the earth would be blessed (speaking prophetically of the birth of Christ through the line of Abraham).

So, at the age of 75, without giving God any arguments or excuses, Abram moved again (Gen. 12:4). He took Sarai, Lot, several hundred servants and all his possessions and left for Canaan. This was an even greater procession than before.

In Canaan, God not only spoke to Abram, but actually appeared to him, promising that someday his descendants would own the very land where he now stood. Abram built an altar there and worshipped.

They set up camp at a nearby mountain and built another altar. But because of a famine in the area, they were unable to buy sufficient food for their household and servants and decided to go farther south to Egypt (Gen. 12:10).

A "little white lie"

Abram and his troop evidently lived in Egypt for several months. Josephus says he instructed Egyptian scholars in science and actually introduced them to arithmetic. The Bible, however, records a less favorable incident — Abram's and Sarai's calculated deception of the pharaoh.

It seems that Sarai was a strikingly beautiful woman. She probably had lighter skin than the women of Egypt, a lovely complexion and was possibly even a blonde — a prize for

any king's harem. (Even today in parts of the Arab world it is considered especially good luck to see or touch a blonde woman.)

Pharaoh's princes were so overwhelmed by Sarai's beauty and manner that they recommended he take her for a wife. Anticipating such a problem, Abram and Sarai agreed they should claim she was his sister and not his wife, for they feared that Sarai would be taken away by force and Abram killed.

When the pharaoh saw Sarai, being told she was Abram's sister (she really was his half-sister), he wanted her immediately. He gave Abram a small fortune in gifts — sheep, oxen, asses, camels, men and women servants — and took Sarai into his house. At 66, she must have been a well-preserved beauty.

But while Sarai was being prepared for her evening with the pharaoh, God struck him with sickness and told him not to lay a hand on her, for she was Abram's wife.

At that, the pharaoh called Abram and rebuked him for not telling the truth. He then gave Sarai back and sent them away, embarrassed and perturbed over the incident. He evidently didn't recall his gifts, however, for Abram went back to Canaan richer than before (Gen. 13:1-2).

In fact, Abram and Lot both had so many flocks now that their herdsmen were arguing over pasture. Abram suggested they split up and gave Lot his choice of territory. He chose the plain of Jordan, and Abram remained in Canaan. But God again told him that eventually he would possess all the land in the area, even the part Lot had taken.

Rescuing Lot

A remarkable chapter in Abram's life followed. Sodom and Gomorrah were beaten in battle by an alliance of four Assyrian kings. Lot helped fight against them, but he and his household were captured, to be taken with their possessions into Assyria as slaves (Gen. 14:12).

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When Abram heard the bad news, he armed 318 of his male servants, pursued and defeated the kings and rescued Lot and all others who were captive. He also recovered all the stolen possessions of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Upon Abram's return, one called *Melchizedek*, king of Salem (or *Peace*), met him and provided a meal of bread and wine. This Melchizedek, also called "priest of the most high God," blessed Abram and the most high God (God the Father) and then received of Abram a 10th of all the booty he had recovered from the battle. Melchizedek was undoubtedly a human manifestation of the very person and priestly office of the Son of God, the One who later became Jesus Christ (Ps. 110:4, Heb. 7:21).

Melchizedek had no recorded genealogy (Heb. 7:3), for He was a member of the Godhead. The same God (*Yahweh* to the Hebrews) who was present at creation, who appeared to him in Canaan, now revealed to Abram His royal priesthood (prophetic of the resurrected Christ).

After paying the tithe to Melchizedek and restoring Lot's possessions, Abram returned the remainder of the spoils to the king of Sodom. He refused to take anything for himself, though it was lawful for him to keep it all. He asked only to receive "what the young men had already eaten," and requested a fair share to be given to three allies who had joined him in battle.

God promises a male heir

One afternoon God came to Abram in a vision and promised him a son of his own, for Sarai was barren and Abram had no children. This was good news. Abram was actually beginning to think the steward of his household, Eliezer of Damascus, might end up being his only rightful heir, as Eliezer was the first male child born in his house.

But God told Abram the heir would be his own child. And again, He promised him descendants without number, as well as possession of all the surrounding land.

Abram believed God, but asked Him for a sign. God obliged. He instructed Abram to prepare several animals for a burnt offering, but to

place their carcasses on the ground without fire.

Abram did as he was told, guarding the flesh from scavenger birds until sundown. Suddenly he fell into a deep sleep, and God showed him in vision what would happen to his descendants during a 400-year period following his death (a prophecy that included Israel's slavery in Egypt and future conquest of the "promised land"). But God told Abram he would live to a ripe old age and die in peace (Gen. 15:13-15).

After the sun had completely set and it was dark, Abram watched,

What an opportunity he [Abram] had, getting to know God as a friend and companion, face to face.

We might have a tendency to envy that relationship, but would we have displayed the same humility as well as the attendant character to withstand the same trials and tests?

wide-eyed, as God consumed the animal flesh with a miracle of smoke and fire — a sign of His promise.

Abram, of course, later recounted all this to Sarai — the promise of a legal heir, their family growing into a nation of people and land from the Nile to the Euphrates! Sarai was happy about everything except that she was barren. How could she, now about 76 years old, have a son?

God appears again

Sarai was convinced and persuaded Abram that God must intend their heir be born of a concubine. She selected her handmaid, Hagar, and gave her to Abram for a wife (a wife of less rank than herself). Hagar gave birth to Ishmael, and they supposed he was the heir God had

promised. But this was not so.

When Abraham was 99 years old (Ishmael was now 13), God appeared to him again and repeated His promises of an heir, many descendants, land and blessings — but on the condition that Abram wholeheartedly serve God (Gen. 17:1-2). Abram lay prostrate on the ground, his face to the earth, as God spoke.

God explained that Abram's name would now be changed to *Abraham* (meaning *father of a multitude*), because he would be a father of many nations. He also asked that Abraham now show God a sign of good faith: that he and all the males of his household, including servants, be circumcised. This was done the very same day.

Next, God changed Sarai's name to *Sarah* (meaning *a princess*), for He said: "I will bless her, and give thee a son of her... she shall be a mother of nations."

This struck Abraham as terribly funny — that they should have a son in their old age. He was nearly 100 and Sarah was 90. He asked God to let Ishmael be their heir instead (verses 17-18).

But God replied that Sarah would, indeed, give birth to a son, and he would be called *Isaac* (meaning *laughter*), because Abraham laughed.

Three special guests

A short while later, God, accompanied by two angels, visited Abraham again — this time at his own tent (Gen. 18:1-2). They appeared in human form, had their feet washed by a servant and were served a delicious lunch of veal, biscuits, butter and milk. It was too warm in the tent, so they ate outdoors under a shade tree. There God again told Abraham that Sarah would have a son. And even though she had passed the age of child bearing, He would restore her reproductive processes for the purpose of giving them an heir.

Sarah, curious about the conversation, was eavesdropping while Abraham and his guests were eating. Hearing what was said, she began laughing quietly to herself. God knew she was laughing and asked Abraham why Sarah thought this was so funny. "Wherefore did Sarah

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laugh... is anything too hard for the Lord?" (verses 13-14).

Sarah, both embarrassed and frightened at being caught, denied that she laughed, for which she was gently rebuked.

As their guests prepared to leave, Abraham walked with them a short way. And God, knowing Abraham's concern for Lot, decided to tell him of the impending destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Abraham importuned God, in an interesting display of salesmanship, to spare the righteous. God agreed. But only Lot, his wife and two daughters were counted righteous. When they were literally forced out of the city to safety, Lot's wife looked back in remorse (disobeying God) and was changed into a pillar of salt. Josephus writes that he actually saw the pillar in his day, the first century, A.D. (*Ant.*, Bk. I, Ch. XI).

The honor of Abimelech

Needing better pasture for their flocks, Abraham and Sarah journeyed south into the country ruled by King Abimelech. But while there, Sarah's beauty and fair complexion once again became a topic of considerable conversation, even though she was now 90 years old!

She so impressed Abimelech that he took her into his harem, for Abraham, and Sarah, showing a lack of faith in God, told Abimelech she was Abraham's sister and not his wife. This was the second time they had told this half-truth for fear Abraham would be killed. And the scheme didn't work any better this time.

But God didn't allow the king to defile Sarah — or himself. God appeared to Abimelech in a dream and warned him that Sarah was Abraham's wife. He also struck all the women in the king's household with sterility that same night. God then told Abimelech to return Sarah to Abraham and ask Abraham to pay for himself and his household, and God would forgive him — otherwise he was as good as dead.

Abimelech called Abraham early in the morning and rebuked him for his deception, getting only feeble excuses in response. Then he further humbled Abraham by giving him gifts of friendship. He then turned to

Sarah, telling her that he paid her "brother" 1,000 pieces of silver to take her back, and that she should keep a veil over her eyes from now on as one betrothed (or married) Abraham.

Then Abraham humbly prayed that God would heal the malady He had placed on Abimelech's household, and the curse was removed.

The heir is born

Just as God foretold, Sarah conceived by Abraham and gave birth to a son, whom they named Isaac. The baby was circumcised on the eighth day, according to God's command, as a token of the covenant between God and Abraham.

Sarah, at the age of a grandmother, now laughed out of happiness and pride. She was barren no longer.

After Isaac was weaned at about 2½ years, Ishmael was caught mocking the new heir, apparently jealous of suddenly finding himself in second place. This caused his and Hagar's immediate removal from Abraham's household (Gen. 21:9-10).

Abraham tested by God

Nearly 30 years later, Abraham was subjected to his most severe test of character. He was commanded by God to sacrifice Isaac, now a young man, as a burnt offering at Mt. Moriah!

It's hard to imagine the surprise and mental agony Abraham must have suffered. Yet his deep respect for God and his promise of obedience weighed greater than the love for his own son. He didn't argue or try to talk God into changing His mind.

He took Isaac and sufficient wood for the burnt offering and went up the mountain as directed. There he built an altar, prepared the wood and tied Isaac. After placing his son on the wood, Abraham took his knife — determined to obey God — and would have completed the sacrifice had not God called to him from heaven to spare young Isaac's life.

God told him, instead, to sacrifice the ram whose horns were tangled in a nearby thicket, which Abraham and Isaac willingly did, rejoicing before God (Gen. 22:12-13).

God was now sure of Abraham's faithfulness. His promise of blessings

to Abraham and his heirs now became unconditional. They were as sure as the rising and setting of the sun — guaranteed!

A wife for Isaac

A few years after this traumatic test of faith, Sarah died, having passed her 127th birthday. Abraham buried her in a cave at Mechpelah, which he had purchased for a family burial place (Gen. 23:1-4). Then he began the task of finding a wife for his son.

He wanted Isaac to marry one of his own kindred, and that meant sending his servant to Mesopotamia to the family of Nahor, Abraham's brother. There he felt, by God's direction, he would find a suitable mate. The servant did as he was told and returned with Rebekah. She became Isaac's wife, replacing Sarah (now dead about three years) as mistress of the household.

Abraham's old age

With his son's marriage taken care of — a burden that had weighed heavily on his mind — Abraham, at the young age of 140, decided to find a wife for himself also. He chose a woman named Keturah. By her he had six additional sons. And because they, like Ishmael, were not heirs of the covenant, he gave them each a portion of his wealth and sent them into the east country, away from Isaac.

Abraham died at age 175 (c. 1842 B.C.) after a remarkable 100 years of literally walking and talking with God. What an opportunity he had, getting to know God as a friend and companion, face to face. We might have a tendency to envy that relationship, but would we have displayed the same humility as well as the attendant character to withstand the same trials and tests?

Abraham, after living long enough to see his two grandsons, Esau and Jacob, reach the age of 15 years, died and was buried by Isaac and Ishmael beside Sarah at Mechpelah (Gen. 25:7-9). He can truly be called the father of the faithful. Through him came Isaac, Jacob (called Israel) and Christ, the Savior of the world. □

Not By Faith Alone

Many people are relying on a dead faith and don't know it! Is your faith dead — of no worth whatsoever? Here's how to find out.

By Leroy Neff

One early Protestant theologian taught, "The just shall live by faith *alone*." Because of this widespread belief, many people have falsely concluded that all Christians must do is have faith or belief in God — and that faith alone will save them.

"Just believing"

This approach to Christianity of "just believing," without any action, has influenced many to live right on in their sins, without any real change in their lives. They have wrongly thought that living a Christian life is "just as easy as falling off a log" or that even "fools" can receive the reward of the saved, without changing their ways — if they just believe in Christ.

Just believing in or having faith in Christ is not enough. There are two opposite kinds of faith — *living* faith, and *dead* faith. Satan and his demons also believe in Christ. They know Christ is real, but that faith or belief will never save them! "You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that — and shudder" (Jas. 2:19, New International Version).

The Protestant leader added one word to the Bible text, "The just shall live by faith" (Rom. 1:17, Gal. 3:11, Heb. 10:38 as quoted from Hab. 2:4). He inserted the word *alone* at the end of this clause, entirely changing the God-inspired meaning.

The Christian must have faith — faith that is the gift of God, not something you work up yourself (Eph. 2:8) — but he must have more than faith alone. He must show that he has faith by what he does. "So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead. But some one will say, 'You have faith and I have works.' Show me your faith apart from your works,

and I by my works will show you my faith" (Jas 2:17-18, Revised Standard Version).

It is no wonder that because of such clear contradictions of the famed theologian's theory, he would brand James' letter "an epistle of straw." James does not agree with this man's "theory of straw" — the mistaken idea asserting that faith alone is all that God expects of His servants.

James closes his comments on this subject by stating, "So faith without works is dead also" (verse 26).

How are we justified?

Some of Paul's writings appear to conflict with the statements of James. James said Abraham was "justified by works" (Jas. 2:21). Paul says that we are "justified by faith" (Rom. 5:1). Does Paul disagree with James? The same Paul, in the same chapter, tells us that we are "justified by His blood" (verse 9). Why these three apparent contradictions — or are they really contradictions after all?

There is one rule of Bible study that should help clear this up. Remember the rule is that you *add*, instead of *subtract* when putting the scriptures together. One scripture does not contradict another; rather, it adds to or further clarifies what the other scripture says. This will be evident when we read another statement from James.

"You see that a man is justified by works and *not by faith alone*" (Jas. 2:24, RSV). This should make it clear that the Christian must have works and faith (and this verse diametrically opposes the Protestant theologian's misguided assumption). Putting this together with Romans 5:9, it should be clear that a third ingredient for justification is also

necessary, and that is to have the "blood" (sacrifice of Christ) also.

So a person is not justified by faith alone, any more than he is justified by works alone or by the blood of Christ alone. He is justified by *all three*.

Here is how the three fit together: A person whom God is calling must have faith in God, and ask for forgiveness of his past sins — that Christ's faith will be in him. Then, he must show his works by repenting and being baptized. Then God will apply the sacrifice of Jesus Christ (Christ's blood) to atone for or cover his sins. That is how a person is justified — made just — or forgiven of past sins.

No need for works?

Is this all that is required of a Christian? No! Justification is just the beginning. He must continue in faith, he must continue in *good works* and he must continue to have his sins covered.

One who believes in faith alone, without having good works, has a *dead faith* — not a living, saving faith. We show by our *good works* that we have living faith. When God tells us by His Word to do a particular thing or to refrain from doing a particular thing, we show that we believe Him or do not believe Him by our actions.

It is obvious from many scriptures that a Christian must have good works.

Jesus said, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 5:16, RSV). This positive statement shows clearly that He expects His disciples to have *good works* that can be seen by the world — by the unconverted people. Such works are not

GN SPECIAL

just nice thoughts or feelings that a person may have in his heart or mind.

Actually, everyone, including unconverted people, have works of one kind or another. A profitable servant of Christ will have good works that will endure the test of fire (1 Cor. 3:13-15). An evil person, or an unconverted person, produces the "works of the flesh" as Paul makes clear in Galatians 5:19-21, where he lists 17 bad "works" of sin.

Some professing Christians, even ministers, deny the Christ they claim to worship by their works. Notice Titus 1:16, "They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate."

In other words, they "believe on Christ" (that is, that He exists) but they do not believe Christ (that is, what He says, teaches or commands).

Titus reveals the nature of these evil works in verses 10-15: they include deception, false teaching, lying and teaching fables and commandments of men. The faithful Christian, on the other hand, should be just the opposite; he should be "zealous of good works" (Tit. 2:14).

Just what are good works?

What are these "good works" a Christian should have? James gives three examples. Let's examine them briefly so that we might better understand what James was talking about when he spoke of works with faith.

The first example concerns a Christian who sees one of his brethren without proper food or clothing: "Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, 'Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed,' but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it?" (Jas. 2:15-16, NIV)

If we have our needs supplied and then refuse to share them with a brother or sister who is lacking in even the minimum necessities of life, we do not have the right kind of works to go with our faith. We then have dead faith.

The second example that James gives is that of Abraham when he

offered Isaac (verses 21-23). There are several other instances in the life of Abraham that show this same trait, but this particular trial was undoubtedly the most difficult of Abraham's life. No matter what God asked Abraham to do, he did it. There is no record of disagreement — no argument, no back talk. He obeyed all of God's commandments and laws (Gen. 26:5).

It is rare today for even some members of God's Church to do just what God asks them to do in His Word without a little "bucking," complaining, arguing or backbiting.

In carrying out God's Work in this

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time, we are sometimes asked by Church leaders to perform some task, but we drag our feet or bring up all kinds of reasons why we shouldn't do it or why someone else should do it. Abraham was not that way. He just simply and quickly did what he was asked to do. In plain words, Abraham obeyed God. That showed that he had living, not dead, faith.

From Abraham's example, it should be evident that obedience to God and His laws and His instructions are "works" that must accompany faith.

The third example James gives relates to Rahab and her receiving and protecting the Israelite spies when Israel was about to cross the Jordan River into Canaan.

"And in the same way was not also

Rahab the harlot justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out another way?" (Jas. 2:25, RSV)

Notice the points James mentions. She 1) received the messengers and 2) sent them out another way. James does not mention Rahab's sinful past, nor the fact that she told a lie, which violated God's law. She surely repented of those deeds, and they were not held against her. James emphasizes the positive acts that she performed for God's servants of that day, even at the peril of her own life.

She guarded the messengers God's servant Joshua had sent on an important mission. She received them with respect and offered whatever protection she could. Then she gave them instructions on how they could best avoid the enemy and possible death on their return home.

This is an example of a person who respected God's representatives when they were on a physical mission. Today the servants sent from God have a much more important spiritual mission.

As a result of Rahab's "works" she and her family were saved from physical death and were able to receive the promise to Israel of physical inheritance in the land of Canaan. This is an ancient type of real salvation and inheritance in God's Kingdom as a result of having real faith and works.

We need living faith

These three examples should enlighten us as to the kind of works we should have along with faith. Works give our faith life.

We are saved by the life of Christ (Rom. 5:10) — not by our works — and are given salvation as a free gift from God. But we are rewarded, or given our particular responsibility in God's Kingdom, according to our works. "And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be" (Rev. 22:12).

Everyone has either good or bad works. As Christians we need to be sure that our works are good. Faith, along with good works, is a living faith, and that is the kind of faith we all need. □

The History

(Continued from page 3)

was being observed instead of the Passover.

However, a disciple of the apostle John, Polycarp, was contending with Roman bishops for the truth, and later an extremely heated controversy over these questions by Polycrates opposing Roman bishops.

Soon the "Trinity" doctrine was equally violent, and in A.D. 325 the Emperor Constantine of Rome called the Nicene Council and settled the controversies in favor of Sunday, Easter and the "Trinity."

About the middle of the 12th century, a businessman, Peter Waldo, of Lyons, France, rose up against the Roman Church, upholding the doctrines of the Scriptures. Waldo was eminent in learning and a philanthropist — one who practiced Christ's way of GIVING rather than Satan's way of GETTING. His work grew. The pope ordered him and his followers, called *Waldenses*, exterminated. But Waldo fled.

The Church went underground, meeting secretly. Later Peter Waldo escaped to the mountains of Dauphiny. As the Church grew, its presence was known, and the pope ordered all their property, private and collective, confiscated through the government of France. Some fled to Spain. Peter Waldo continued to preach boldly for the truth. Many Waldenses were tortured and martyred. They form part of the martyred saints mentioned in Revelation 6:9-11.

Fuller accounts of the history of the true Church during these times are available. But now we pick up the story in the present century.

We come to the latter part of the era of the "Sardis Church" (Rev. 3:1-6) and the beginning of the Philadelphia era (Rev. 3:7-13).

The Sardis era of the Church had greatly deteriorated by 1927, when I was converted and first came on the scene, searching for the one true Church of God.

The Philadelphia era was to take on new life, vigor and vitality, restoring truths that had been lost.

Again God raised up one man through whom the living Christ would work. Since God called me

and used me in an unusual manner, I deem it proper to outline here essential facts.

I did not know it as a young man, late teens, 20s and into my 30s, but God was guiding my life from birth.

Some of the things I shall record here have been published either in the *Autobiography* or in articles in *The Plain Truth* and *Good News* — but much has not been previously published.

I was born July 31, 1892, in Des Moines, Iowa, of respected and upright parents of Quaker ancestry. My ancestors had emigrated from England to Pennsylvania with William Penn, a hundred years before the United States became a nation. I have since learned of a foundation which has kept my ancestry, my father's, and his father's, all the way back to Edward I, king of England. Through the British Royal genealogy this ancestry is traced back to King David of Israel.

Thus I was born of the HOUSE OF DAVID, which has a certain biblical significance.

I well remember a grandfather, and a great-uncle, when I was age 3 — both of whom were between 92 and 94. And several uncles and aunts have lived into the 80s and 90s. My mother lived to be 95½.

As a boy and a youth I was normal and average. I was not a leader because my playmates were usually one or two years older than I. I was average in school, but always came up in final exams with near perfect grades.

At age 16, on my first summer vacation job away from Des Moines, my employer aroused the flame of ambition within me, due to work well performed. From that summer I had a burning desire to become a success in life. I did not crave money, but I did crave the satisfaction of accomplishment and true success.

At age 18 I put myself through a home-study course of self-analysis, and a survey of occupations and professions, to avoid ever becoming the proverbial "square peg in a round hole." I had come to realize by then that most people are victims of circumstance. Few ever plan where they belong, where they live, what they do. I wanted to PLAN my life for satisfying achievement.

The test led me into the advertising profession. From infancy I had been brought up in the First Friends Church of Des Moines. But I had never come to have any special religious interest. I had absorbed certain religious ideas or taken for granted beliefs taught me, but I had no burning interest in religion. At 18, launching into a business career, I dropped out of church attendance.

In business, I always chose the job where I would learn the most, as well as throw me into contact with successful men.

I worked hard. I studied diligently, burning "the midnight oil" as the saying went, instead of seeking pleasure and entertainment of evenings.

By age 23 I had become a publishers' representative, with the advertising representation of the nine principal and dominant bankers' magazines in the nation. I had my own office in Chicago's loop for seven years. I was unusually successful, using methods that were unique, pioneering in opinion surveys.

I had personal contact with presidents and board chairmen of such corporations as Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co., J.I. Case, Moline Plow, John Deere & Co., Avery Co. and many others. I attended state and national bankers' conventions. I had personal acquaintance with heads of the nation's largest banks, both Wall Street, New York and Chicago.

I was married at age 25 to Miss Loma Dillon. I was to learn later that God had brought us together, for a marriage to last 50 years, until her death at age 75½.

Loma was much more interested in religion and the Bible. She had been a Methodist, but was also of Quaker ancestry.

Within a week of our marriage my wife was shaken by a dream so unusual she was frightened. She dreamed of being on one of Chicago's busiest intersections. An angel had come down and put his arms around my wife and me, as thousands stopped to see the sight. My wife was struck with fear, knowing I had no special religious interest at the time. The angel in the dream said Jesus was returning in this generation, and He had work for us to do.

When my wife told me of the dream, I was embarrassed. I sug-

gested she tell the dream to the preacher of the church on the next corner, and perhaps he could tell her if it meant anything. I wanted to dismiss it from my mind, at the time.

It was to be nine years before Christ jarred me with a call I could not escape.

But I was eminently successful for a young man, making what, measured by the 1980 dollar value, would be about \$175,000 per year while still in my 20s.

All these years of business experience prepared me for Christ's call. I had been energetic. I had learned to THINK about what I was doing, while I was doing it. I had learned to think my way around unusual circumstances — to apply resourcefulness to arising problems. I had learned to deal with men.

In the autumn of 1926, when I was 34, my wife brought to me what at the moment was a terrifying CHALLENGE! I have told of this experience and published it so many times, I will skim through it here. She had begun to keep the seventh-day Sabbath! To me, then, that was "religious fanaticism." Also a sister-in-law challenged me on the theory of evolution. I have published the story repeatedly of the night-and-day research in-depth, trying to prove both of them wrong.

The important thing is that in this study Jesus Christ, through His written Word, opened my mind to the PRIME BASIC TRUTHS He wanted me to have in starting me out as His servant.

Basic in God's master plan for His PURPOSE through humans is the restoration of the GOVERNMENT OF GOD! God had established His government on earth through Lucifer and the angels. They had rebelled. God's government was no longer administered on earth.

Every government, even man's government, is based on a foundational LAW or constitution. The LAW of God is the principle and expansion of LOVE. Love is *outflowing*, the opposite of ingrasping lust, greed, coveting. For humans, it expands into LOVE toward God and LOVE toward fellow man. That, in turn, expands, in principle, into the Ten Commandments. Of the Ten, the Fourth is the *test* Commandment.

Humans will agree that transgression of any of the other nine is SIN. But men will *not* accept the Fourth, or admit that its transgression is SIN! There is one, and only one reason for any person to accept and obey the Fourth Commandment — keeping God's Sabbath holy. And that is to express love for and obedience to GOD.

Jesus Christ brought me to Him through a challenge on this Fourth Commandment. God had made a call I first did not recognize through my wife, only days after our marriage. I didn't "get the message" then. He now called me in a manner I could not shrug off, *through my wife!* He used her in my conversion — in bringing me to Him. And He used her as a partner with me in establishing His growing Work through His Church in the era of this *end time!*

God's TIME had come! His time for one, of whom John the Baptist was type and forerunner, to prepare the way for Christ's SECOND coming. For one of whom Zerubbabel, in building the second temple at Jerusalem, was type and forerunner, of one through whom Christ would build this era of God's CHURCH — the spiritual TEMPLE to which Christ will come the second time TO RULE and RESTORE THE GOVERNMENT OF GOD.

Jesus Christ used this *test Commandment* of the LAW of His government in order to bring me to Him and into His service!

That was first and most important. But more — during that initial six months in-depth study, Christ made plain to me the NAME of the true Church. He revealed to me the TRUTH about the "lost sheep" of the house of ISRAEL — the modern identity of which is the KEY that unlocked that whole THIRD of the Bible which is PROPHECY for NOW!

More, and also basically, He revealed to me the truth of the existence of angels under Lucifer. This was basically important because it opened my mind to the BACKGROUND making clear God's PURPOSE in creating MAN on the earth. Also He revealed God's annual Holy Days, which depict God's master plan.

Thus Jesus Christ, Head of God's Church, started His servant out with the basic foundation to UNDER-

STANDING of Christ's GOSPEL. And further, He revealed that GOSPEL which had not been proclaimed to the world for 18½ centuries.

ALWAYS God, in using MAN, has dealt through ONE MAN at a time. He has not used committees or groups. True, there was more than one apostle used in the founding of God's CHURCH, but one man, PETER, clearly was LEADER.

The Bible is constructed like a jigsaw puzzle. One must pick out a piece here and a piece there, each within the meaning of its context, and then put them together in order to see the WHOLE picture. But, in and during my conversion, Christ revealed to me the basic truths, and it was thereafter easier to accept and build the others around them.

In this conversion process, Jesus put me through the wringer. He squeezed out — cleared my mind — swept it clean of earlier false assumptions — such as going to heaven or hell — immortality of the soul — the false "Trinity" doctrine.

I was started out knowing WHO and WHAT God is — WHAT, and WHY man is — the TRUTH about Israel — WHAT is Christ's true Gospel — the coming Kingdom of God. Those are the BASICS, unknown by ANY religion, or any (other) of the sects and denominations of "Christianity."

HOW WONDERFUL ARE GOD'S WAYS!

I did not seek these basic foundations of TRUTH of my own volition! Jesus Christ revealed them, while I was trying to prove the very opposite of these precious TRUTHS!

But the living Jesus did sweep my mind CLEAN of false teachings and fables — of so-called "Christianity" — of evolution — of all foundational beliefs.

He was preparing one called and chosen by God, even against that one's will, for an important service in RESTORING THE LAW AND GOVERNMENT OF GOD to earth — even in the comparatively small Worldwide Church of God. He was preparing one whom He conquered and brought to repentance and faith, for this great END-TIME commission!

Yet, in the earliest days of my Christian life after conversion, the ministers of the then only true Church of God, Sardis, fought me at

every turn. Christ led me through continual PERSECUTION and OPPOSITION.

And, much later on — during the decade of the '70s, conspiracies arose within God's Church to DO AWAY WITH these basic truths. During the years 1968 and 1969, and the '70s up to 1977, I was overseas much of the time. During 1975 and 1976 I was overseas 300, out of the 365 days of those years — and the two or three years before about 200 to 250 days.

Those "intellectuals" surrounding my son, who was left to administer the Work from Pasadena headquarters, were conspiring to liberalize Church doctrines, to destroy and remove from circulation the articles, booklets, etc., I had written on BASIC TRUTHS. The Church of God was being molded more and more like a liberal Protestant denomination.

Satan never lets up! Church leaders had become DECEIVED! Finally, by 1977, a voluminous project, called the Systematic Theological Project (STP), was prepared in scholarly and systematic "university" style. It was prepared principally by those educated in this world's universities. It was prepared SECRETLY — those involved were warned not to let a word of it leak to me. It was given out to the entire field ministry at the ministers' conference in January, 1977, after I had been given solemn assurances nothing doctrinal would be brought up in the conference.

Later, in 1977, on learning of this conspiracy, I killed the project.

But let me say before leaving this most recent conspiracy, my son, as executive vice president, was surrounded and influenced by a group of liberal conspirators, all of whom had been receiving a large part or all of their "education" in this world's universities, where the "god" is evolution, and liberalism is the universal approach. Most, if not all, of the infamous STP was produced by one with a background of universities in New York, Washington and Los Angeles, and with a Ph.D. I do not accuse these men of dishonesty — they had been brainwashed by this world's much deceived "higher education" and "scholarship."

Now back to the early days with the "Sardis" era Church.

(To be continued)

The GOOD NEWS April 1980

PERSONAL

(Continued from page 1)

God took special pains to make every seventh day HOLY TIME. It is a space of time, from sunset to sunset. God gave mankind — gave YOU — the other SIX DAYS A WEEK for YOUR labor of earning a living; for YOUR pleasure, for YOUR interests and purposes.

But when you come, wherever you are on earth, to Friday sunset, you are entering GOD'S HOLY DAY. This is not YOUR time. Do not STEAL it from God. He made it HOLY TO HIM, so He commands you to KEEP it holy.

Whether YOU think it is holy — or whether it is holy TO YOU — makes

God took special pains to make every seventh day HOLY TIME. It is a space of time, from sunset to sunset. . . . This is not YOUR time. Do not STEAL it from God. He made it HOLY TO HIM, so He commands you to KEEP it holy. . . . It is holy to GOD!

no difference. It is holy to GOD! And you are desecrating something HOLY TO GOD when you use that time for your own work, pleasure or personal purpose, which ignores GOD.

On the other hand, God made the Sabbath to be a time of JOY — of DELIGHT — of REST, prayer, contemplation, Bible study, worship.

When I was 19 years of age I was timekeeper and paymaster in a southern Mississippi lumber mill. I had to do the job three men had been required to do before I came. I worked one night until 10, the next night until midnight, six days and nights a week, I was overworked. In six months I landed in the hospital with a severe case of typhoid fever. To just lie there in bed and REST was SO DELIGHTFUL, after that six months stint of 18-hours-a-day labor, I realized, as never before, how DELIGHTFUL rest from work can be!

God says, "If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on MY HOLY DAY; AND CALL THE sabbath a DELIGHT, the holy of the LORD, honourable; and shalt honour HIM, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own

pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: Then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father [eternal life]: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it" (Isa. 58:13-14).

That's quite an "IF" and quite a PROMISE!

I have kept God's Sabbath and taught thousands of others to do so, and God has opened doors so that I have walked on the high places of the earth, and I shall inherit the heritage of Jacob in the Kingdom of God. HOW ABOUT YOU?

In the last few years even apostate ministers have begun to COMPROMISE with God's Sabbath, and teach their local congregations so. It happened

in Britain. It happened in the United States. THOSE MINISTERS ARE NO LONGER IN GOD'S CHURCH.

God's Word says, "For if God spared not the natural branches [Israel], TAKE HEED lest he also spare not thee" (Rom. 11:21).

YOU, dear brother or sister in Christ — directly or indirectly my son or daughter IN THE LORD — YOU are being given a TEST — an examination as to your entrance into eternal life in God's Kingdom — every week!

WHAT KIND OF GRADES IS GOD GIVING YOU?

No matter how righteous you are in other matters, if you FAIL in this crucial TEST every week, you will inherit eternal DEATH in a lake of fire — not eternal life in God's KINGDOM!

IS God's Church a Sabbath-keeping Church? Are you a real Sabbath-keeping member?

JUDGMENT NOW IS UPON US. "For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God" (1 Pet. 4:17).

So, as next Sabbath comes, I say to you, "HAPPY SABBATH!" □

God Handle It!

(Continued from page 6)

tific. They are convinced — despite what God says — that the ark could not have been big enough to shelter all of the animals. Or they raise questions about how the animals of their own accord came into the ark. None of this, in the minds of the “wise” of this world, is scientific. In short, they distrust God’s Word.

But Noah didn’t. He faithfully obeyed the order, went ahead with the construction and after many years of hard labor, completed it — just in time, before the waters came. Noah trusted God’s scientific mind!

Abraham’s obedience

Abraham’s life is one of the most difficult stories for a carnal mind to accept. In some ways, it may even sound illogical to a converted mind. Just imagine! Abraham was 75 years old when God told him, “Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house, unto a land that I will shew thee” (Gen. 12:1).

But why? Why should an older man be ordered to leave his homeland and settle in an unknown country? Why couldn’t God choose a younger man? After all, Abraham was prosperous and blessed in his native country. He was a happy man. Why did he have to move? Couldn’t God have blessed him or his children in some other ways — ways that would have been more humane and more logical?

However valid these questions may seem, our forefather Abraham didn’t ask them. He trusted God and obeyed Him. “So Abram departed, as the Lord had spoken unto him” (verse 4).

And how about the unthinkable order God gave the old patriarch to sacrifice Isaac, the son he loved? Does that really make sense? Is it just — is it godly — to kill a son and burn him as an offering?

Let’s face it — Abraham could have found numerous reasons to argue with God — to even doubt Him. Why did God have to put him through such difficult tests? Can you possibly obey a God who tells you to kill your son, when He Himself has

emphatically ordered you, “Thou shalt not kill”? Why in the world would God give such an impossible order?

Again, humanly speaking, these are logical questions, but Abraham knew that his obedience to God was not subject to his perfect understanding of God’s orders. He unconditionally trusted and obeyed his Creator, who knows all things best.

“And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clave the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him” (Gen. 22:3).

* What an attitude! Would you have acted the same way? Would you have obeyed God without raising all kinds of objections? No wonder Abraham is called “the father of us all” (Rom. 4:16) — in faith! Now compare his attitude with that of Saul, the first human king of Israel.

Obedience is better than sacrifice

Unlike Abraham, King Saul did not choose to walk with God. He questioned the orders he received, rather than obeying in faith.

Saul was instructed by the prophet Samuel: “And thou shalt go down before me to Gilgal; and, behold, I will come down unto thee, to offer burnt offerings, and to sacrifice sacrifices of peace offerings: seven days shalt thou tarry, till I come to thee, and shew thee what thou shalt do” (I Sam. 10:8).

The order was clear. It needed no explanation. But Saul had neither Abraham’s obedient attitude nor Noah’s patience. He allowed his vanity to lead him into disobedience. He asked why Samuel — and not he, the king — should perform the burnt offerings. What difference would that really make? And why should the waiting period be seven days? What if Samuel were delayed? There was no obvious reason for him to follow the order exactly.

Actually, Samuel was delayed. For some reason, he did not show up at the appointed time. King Saul needed no better excuse to disobey. Since the prophet didn’t come at the appointed time — and since “the people were scattered from him” —

he took things in his own hands and offered the burnt offerings.

However, no sooner had he undertaken the task than Samuel arrived. “Thou hast done foolishly,” he told the king. “Thou hast not kept the commandment of the Lord thy God, which he commanded thee: for now would the Lord have established thy kingdom upon Israel for ever” (I Sam. 13:13). Saul failed to pass the test: His heart was not right and God rejected him.

Saul’s character was also tested when God ordered him to “go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass” (I Sam. 15:3).

Once again, Saul and his people had something to say. Why did God want to smite every single Amalekite and utterly destroy their belongings? Was that kind? Why not spare the children and women? What wrong had they done? Moreover, why take vengeance on the oxen, sheep, camels and asses?

To King Saul’s carnal mind none of this made sense. Any responsible human being could simply not obey such an order — even if it came from God. Consequently, “Saul and the people spared Agag, and the best of the sheep, and of the oxen, and of the fatlings, and the lambs, and all that was good, and would not utterly destroy them: but every thing that was vile and refuse, that they destroyed utterly” (verse 9).

Strange, isn’t it? King Saul and his people thought they knew better than God. This reasoning prevented them from obeying Him.

“And Samuel said, Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams” (verse 22).

What a lesson for all of us to learn. And what a pity that some of God’s people have forgotten it. Partial obedience is not sufficient. With God, it’s all or nothing.

How not to be healed

Naaman, a commander of the Syrian army, was a leper and sought to be healed. “So Naaman came with his horses and with his chariot, and

stood at the door of the house of Elisha. And Elisha sent a messenger unto him, saying, Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean" (II Kings 5:9-10).

Naaman's healing from leprosy required only that he wash himself seven times in the Jordan. But Naaman didn't like that. He disagreed with the procedure. Why the Jordan, he asked himself, instead of some other river? And why seven times? Wouldn't once be enough? He had totally different ideas as to how his healing should take place. He wouldn't accept the prophet's order. So "Naaman was wroth, and went away, and said, Behold, I thought, He [Elisha] will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the Lord his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper" (verse 11).

Fortunately, some of Naaman's soldiers had more sense than he and convinced him of his foolishness. "And his servants came near, and spake unto him, and said, My father, if the prophet had bid thee to do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? how much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean?" (verse 13)

So Naaman went down and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, "according to the saying of the man of God: and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean" (verse 14).

If Naaman had had to wait until he understood the exact reason for God's order, he probably would have never been healed. But there are, in God's Church today, some spiritual Naamans. They will only accept an answer if it pleases them. If they disagree, they may decide to turn away, dissatisfied, unhappy — and prone to leaving the Church!

Where shall we go?

Christ's disciples, before their conversion, also had some doubts about certain things. They would often question Jesus, expecting some answer that would satisfy their curiosity and carnal minds.

On one occasion, the disciples and several others were totally confused when Christ revealed to them that He was "the bread which came down

from heaven." Just what did He mean by that statement? Some murmured against Him while others argued with Him.

Patiently, Christ explained: "I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world" (John 6:51).

That was the breaking point. Not only could they not understand the explanation, but they were outraged. How could they follow a man whose teachings made so little sense? "From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him" (verse 66).

Does this remind you of the attitude of anyone you know? Yours, perhaps? Would you turn away from God or leave His Church because something is hard to understand?

When Jesus saw that some of His disciples left Him, He turned to the 12 and asked them: "Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life" (verses 67-68).

This is the basic, clear truth we all need to remember. If you have the same attitude, God will always be with you and protect you against doubts and fears.

Peter meant exactly what he said. During the last Passover, as Christ was washing His disciples' feet, Peter objected when his own turn came. It was unthinkable that Jesus, the Master, should wash their feet.

But Christ answered: "What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter. . . If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me" (John 13:7-8). Notice that Christ didn't stop to explain the exact spiritual meaning of the foot washing.

And what was Peter's sudden reaction? He said to him, "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head" (verse 9). Are you beginning to see what God expects of you? Whether your "whys" are answered or not, the question is, "Are you willing to obey God?"

God's way, not yours

There are some things that we in God's Church do not yet fully understand. We don't always know why

God does things the way He does them. But one thing is sure: He always knows best. *Let Him handle it* — His way, not yours!

Some in the Church today demand that all their questions be fully answered before submitting themselves to God and His government. They can't comprehend the Church's simple faith in God's leadership and thus get into bad attitudes.

Just remember: So-called "intellect" is not required for salvation. Curiosity for the sake of pleasing your intellect — your human vanity — will only draw you away from God and His truth.

God has already clearly revealed everything you need to know and understand for salvation. You don't have to search for the answers to those "whys" — they are already made plain in the Bible. However, for the time being, God has chosen not to reveal certain things — He has chosen not to answer some of your questions — for your own good. Let Him take care of things. Don't lose your salvation by demanding that He explain everything He is doing — God has no such responsibility.

God knows best

We have come to God's Church to learn His ways — not to impose ours on Him or on others. We didn't come to His Church to reason with Him, but to surrender to Him — totally and unconditionally. We have been called to obey and serve. Servants don't argue with their masters. They simply do what the masters say. Unfortunately, some of our friends and brethren have not quite understood this fundamental truth. That's why they are no longer with us.

Individually and collectively, we have a job to do. Are you doing your part? Or are you perhaps hindered by your doubts, questions and worries? Obviously, all of us would like to see God's Kingdom come as soon as possible. We may even wonder why the waiting is so long! But God knows best. Let Him do things His way. Wait patiently, trust Him, submit your will to His — and you will truly know that "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" (Rom. 8:28). □

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF HERBERT W. ARMSTRONG



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