

The Body—Reborn in the Spirit

“Blessed is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again unto a living hope [expectation] through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (I Peter 1:3).

The most crucial issue of our identity with God and His universe is that our essential nature has been transformed through Christ into a Spirit being. That is to say that the ongoing reality of our persons is of the spirit realm and not of the flesh. We have thus been made part of the Spirit Kingdom of God. While we still remain on the earth and partake of certain natural physical characteristics, our real and ongoing person is of the spirit. Whatever happens in the world around us, happens to our earthly being. It is only a temporary thing and does not affect our eternal reality. If one asks what life is really all about, the answer is that, it is being part of the Spirit Kingdom of God. Paul tells the Corinthian believers that *“Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we focus not on the things that are seen, but the things that are not seen: for the things that are seen are temporal; but the things that are not seen are eternal”* (II Corinthians 4:17,18). That is at once our reality and our consolation. There is no way that the tragic actualities of this world can be softened, except in the realization of this great truth.

Neither the Scripture nor the realities of life support the idea that if Christians would only have enough faith, they could overcome all earthly ills and live a comfortable and pleasant life on the earth. Unfortunately tragedies strike the believer as well as the unbeliever. On a great many occasions, believers do get substantial assistance from Christ. A great many have been healed; circumstances have been altered; seemingly impossible situations have been resolved. However, after some fifty years of ministry, the author has participated in many healings, but has had to console a large number who were not healed or delivered. The latter of course is by far the hardest part of the ministry. Unfortunately it is severely complicated by that segment of Christendom which persists in pressing the unfounded claim that everyone should be healed or delivered if only they have enough faith. This of course brings a double burden. To the already distressing problem is added the burden of guilt that *“it would have been different if one had only had enough faith.”* Such an idea is born out of an irresponsible disregard of the welfare of the sheep, as well as a woeful ignorance of the Scripture. Paul is a classic example of a faithful servant of God, upon whom *“disaster followed fast and followed faster”* (Poe’s Raven). He was constantly badgered by Satan and consoled by the promise of God that His grace was sufficient for him. *“My grace is sufficient for thee for my strength is made perfect in weakness”* (II Corinthians 12:9). And that is our consolation also. However, such consolation is only valid if we recognize the temporal nature of our afflictions and the eternal reality of our spirit. In this connection it is also well to read Hebrews 11 in which there is a section devoted to those *“who did not receive deliverance”* but who are nonetheless catalogued among the *“heroes of faith.”*

Faith, as poignantly illustrated in Hebrews 11 must be seen as something of God more than of man. In reality, faith should be seen as an energy process from God and not an exercise in religious fervor and confidence. Faith really

does not have to do with the human psyche—the emotion of trust; but rather with the Spirit—a Force of energy from God. And thus we can see it prevailing in spite of how we may feel about things. Hebrews 11 is a classic illustration of this principle, since all of those listed were subject to the same human frailties as all of us. The significant exploits for which they are noted were, in every case, singularly based upon a Divine process beyond their own capacities or feelings. A good case in point, for example, was the experience of Sarah. The Hebrews 11 text indicates that it was by faith that Sarah received strength to conceive. The truth of the matter is that Sarah did not believe the word of the messenger who promised to her a child. In fact, she laughed to such a degree that the angel imposed on her a name for her child—Isaac—which is a Hebrew word meaning “she laughed.” Whenever she would call her son by name, she would be reminded that she had doubted God’s promise. Nevertheless, the text says that it was by faith. If we see the true meaning of faith as defined for us in Hebrews 11:1, we have to realize that it has to do more with a process of Divine Energy in us than with any human feelings of confidence or trust. So it was by the process of Divine Energy that Sarah received strength to conceive and not by some special effort to reach out in a human feeling of confidence. Thus, throughout Hebrews 11, we are dealing with God’s Energy working through human instrumentalities to accomplish a Divine purpose.

This should be very helpful for us in our own struggles with faith. It is commonly assumed that we must work up some emotion of confidence before God will help us. The reality of the matter is that God is already working in us to accomplish His purpose, whatever may be the vacillating human emotions that so often sweep uncontrollably in our minds. We humans are usually unable to tell with certainty just what it is that God is going to do. No matter how “spiritual” one may think oneself to be, the claim to know absolutely what God is going to do is quite presumptuous. The very fact that we seek out God’s help is itself an indication that the Spirit is working in us, else we would not have turned to Him in the first place. Thus, faith is not a work of the human mind, but a process of Divine Energy within our spirits. Satan seems to have the capacity to affect our thinking, which is itself part of our natural selves. Paul considers it to be part of the flesh. If we pay too much attention to how we feel about things, we may be misled.

We are reborn as spirit beings. In effect we have been endued with something of a “receiving set,” through which we are able to receive communication from God. The mind does not itself always participate in that communication and, in fact, may sometimes give us “static interference.” So how then can we trust our mind? We can’t. Faulty thinking is a constant threat to our well-being. So then what is the use of the mind? Do we have to turn it off? No indeed! It is like a computer, it directs all the functions of our body and receives all the signals from the outside environment through which it organizes and effects appropriate responses. It assimilates and integrates the data of knowledge and experience and translates it into attitudes and actions. It is a marvelous instrument, but it has definite limitations. It is the failure to recognize these limitations that so often gets us into trouble.

In view of this, flexibility is extremely important for humans. Obstinacy and adamancy are inappropriate for the human mind. They usually reflect a limited knowledge of the potentials and probabilities of a given subject. Remember that

only God has absolute truth. We must be content with functional truth, which is, in the nature of the case, subject to changing data.

So then what confidence do we have in anything? The only absolute confidence we can ever have is in the Spirit of Christ within us. Nor can we always be sure that our minds have accurately received what the Spirit of God has communicated to us. So then, what is our hope?

A Living Expectation... Our hope is more than a hope—it is an expectation. And the expectation is based upon the rebirth of our spirits. We have become essentially spirit beings. The mind is a functional organ for the earthly odyssey. Through it we are able to function acceptably in the milieu. But, it is limited, as we have suggested, and requires the ultimate direction of God for its successful operation. Human beings who function without God are in a truly risky and uncertain position as far as life on the earth is concerned; and face ultimate destruction as far as eternity is concerned.

But, what believers have is more than hope. The word “hope” is an unfortunate translation of the Greek word *elpidzo*. The more accurate translation is “expectation.” The English word “hope” is a much more uncertain word. It only touches base with the idea of certainty in a limited way. “Expectation” is a much stronger word and conveys something of the certainty of God’s commitment to us. We not only hope God will be with us, we expect Him to be with us. We not only hope for a change in our essential being from flesh to spirit, but we expect such a change. It is not based on human effort which can only engender a vague hope. It is based on a Divine effort which engenders an absolute reality. It is the kind of systemic change when we combine hydrogen and oxygen to form water. It is something other. It is a living expectation because it is both vital and eternal. It is vibrant with the life of God and identifies with Him forever.

David Morsey
February 1993
www.harvestermission.org