

The Body and Its Testings

“In which you rejoice, if now for a little time it is necessary having been made sorry by manifold testings, in order that the trial of your faith being much more precious than of gold that perishes, though it be tried through fire, might be found unto praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ . . .” (I Peter 1:6,7).

“Manifold testings” is the lot of believers as long as they are on the earth. On the one hand that presents a rather bleak picture, but on the other hand it affords us the satisfaction of a string of victories. But the true victories do not come in the deliverance **from** troubles but deliverance **in** troubles—a vastly different thing. It is assumed by many that the evidence of faith is in getting God to make our lives better on the earth. It is thought that faith is expressed in the stilling of the waves or in the provision of the abundance of bread. The apostle Paul in recounting to Timothy all of the afflictions and persecutions he had suffered, said that the Lord *“delivered me out of the them all”* (II Timothy 3:11). In fact, Paul told the Churches that *“through much affliction we must enter the Kingdom of God”* (Acts 14:22). So then what is the deliverance? The deliverance is in lifting our spirits above the earthly odyssey. In a sense our spirits can “ride above the roller coaster.” The flesh is a seething caldron of trouble and distress and anxieties and infirmities. But the spirit, through it all, is at peace in the grace and strength of Christ.

In the famous narrative of the storm at sea, Jesus stilled the waves because of the panic of the disciples, but He would have preferred to have had them realize that as long as He was in the boat, it wasn't going to sink. The challenge to their faith was based on the fact that they didn't have any—a point He often made. The reason they didn't have any was because the Spirit had not as yet come to them. Human confidence is a product of the fleshly emotions, and as such is very unreliable and easily shaken.

And so again we must understand what faith is, in order to grasp the meaning of the passage. The English word “faith” has been bandied about so carelessly, and so constantly laden with human concepts as to be practically useless. The phrase “keep the faith”—a universal “catch phrase” on the lips of believer and unbeliever alike, is an illustration of its own inanity. Unfortunately, it has become such a hallmark of Christendom that we can hardly do away with it. Instead, we must understand what its deepest meaning is. Paul does not use the word, but instead uses a Greek word *pistos*, which really means “to put one's weight on something.” In the Hebrews passage (11:1) faith is seen as “substance” rather than feeling. In Christendom, faith is commonly understood as a feeling of trust or confidence—a product of the mind. Such a human-sided concept robs the believer of the peace of mind that comes from seeing faith as a “Divine-sided” energy process. The word “substance” both in Greek and Latin has to do with the essence of something—“that which stands under.” The substance or essence of an electric conduit is the energy flowing through it and not the surrounding sheaths, which is only an evidence of that energy. The essence of our faith is the energy of Christ flowing through us and not the human vehicle through which it flows.

And this is the sense with which the word is used with all of the characters in Hebrews 11. We have often used Sarah as an example. The text says that it was

by faith that Sarah conceived Isaac. The truth of the matter is that she did not feel at all confident—in fact she laughed and had to name her child Isaac, which means “she laughed.” The energy of God flowing through Sarah accomplished the deed, apart from her feelings. The Old Testament is filled with such narratives of those whom God used to accomplish mighty deeds, and yet who in the flesh were faulty and failing. Far from being “heroes of faith” they were more like “channels of faith,” that is, those through whom the energy of God accomplished His purpose in spite of themselves. Paul catches this thought in II Corinthians 4:6,7—“*For God who commanded the light shine out of darkness hath shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the presence of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us.*” In the feeding of the five thousand, five loaves and two fish touched by the energy of God, were enough. Whatever you have, bring it to Christ. It will be enough.

The power of God works in us **through faith** unto salvation. That does not mean in any way that the power of God works in us only so long as we hold onto Him by human trust. God’s power is effective in energizing us forever. Salvation is a result, not of human performance, but of Divine power. “*And what is the surpassing majesty of His power unto us who believe according to the energy of the might of His strength, with which He energized Christ when He raised Him from the dead . . .*” (Ephesians 1:19,20). We could not even believe without the energy of Christ flowing through us. And once we open our spirits to Him, He takes it from there and sustains us throughout eternity. Thus we are kept by His energy process and not by our feeble performance in the flesh.

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