

# ◆ PRISONERS OF HOPE ◆

February 24, 2004

*“Turn you to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope” Zech. 9:12*

## My Faith in Christ

To many, faith is a mystery, and even a stumbling block to those who view it as the barrier between the soul and God, making righteousness unattainable without understanding “faith.” There can be two views of righteousness. The first is that a man can be righteous simply by being a law keeper; the second is that a man who is a lawbreaker may only come to righteousness via redemption by placing faith in Jesus Christ.

There was a man in church history named Pelagius who believed that a baby could be born without sin, thus righteous until the first act of disobedience. Pelagius believed that he had never disobeyed; therefore, he was righteous and did not need faith. But the Bible proclaims, “All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” It is a fundamental doctrine of the Christian faith that every person born since Adam is born in sin and unrighteousness. So in response to Pelagius, the

There are no two ways of believing. “Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God” (Romans 10:17). Faith by hearing: not reasoning and not by enticing words, but by hearing in the object of the Word of God. Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him for righteousness.

There are three characteristics to faith. The first is that faith is a belief in a testimony or a record. Secondly, faith is a belief in a person. And lastly, faith has the character of trust. A Christian places his faith in the Holy Scriptures and in the person of Jesus Christ, and he places his trust in the promises of eternal life. The redemption of our souls is a fact to every believer because we believe the record God has given of His Son.

I Timothy 4:10 states, “we *trust* in the living God who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that *believe*.” When you are asked to place your trust in someone, you first look to the character of that person. Your knowledge of what kind of person he is affects your trust in him. Trust springs from confidence in the person trusted. In this sense, faith may be great, or it may be little; it may be weak, or it may be strong. But when it comes to trust in God, our confidence in the character of God is great. We have no question of the character of God, for He is eternal, omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, holy, just, with all knowledge, wisdom, and power. He is Faithful; He is Truth, with mercy, goodness, and perfect love. Our faith in God depends upon our knowing Him and our communion with Him, for the faith of the Gospel comes by hearing Him. The person who truly hears the good news of Christ believes it just as the little child believes a mother’s word. In Luke 18:17 Christ states, “Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein.”

There is no mystery or virtue in the faith. To believe in the Gospel, one receives a word that is nothing less than “the power of God unto salvation” (Romans 1:16).



*“Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein.”*

Scriptures state in Romans 3:9-10, “What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; As it is written, there is none righteous, no not one.” The Apostle Paul also states in Galatians 3:22, “But the Scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.”

The fact remains that no man can believe apart from the work of the Holy Spirit. Faith is made the turning point of the sinners' return to God because it was distrust that was the turning point of his departure from God. The first step in Adam's fall was not his disobedience, but his unbelief. When we place our faith in the redemptive work of Christ, we have three witnesses to our salvation.

*And there are three that bear witness . . . the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one. If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar: because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son (I John 5:8-11).*

What do you place your trust and faith in today? Christ is worthy of our faith, and our trust in Him will bring eternal blessing.

### **Where Is the Point of No Return?**

Some years ago a terrible tragedy took place in Georgia at Stone Mountain, which is the largest boulder in the world. Atop the mountain, a young man walked unsuspectingly along, oblivious of the gradual and almost imperceptible downward curvature of the domelike mountain. Suddenly, he became aware of the fact that he was powerless to retrace his steps to safety. He had gone to the point of no return. Frantically, he cried, "Help! Help!" His piteous plea was to no avail. Horrified spectators saw him hurtle to his death below.

How often the heart of man goes for years unchecked by parents, teachers, and friends. His sins increase; hatred and bitterness take hold of his heart and mind until one day at the right moment he picks up a knife or a gun, or a crowbar and an irresistible impulse of anger lays hold; the precipice gives way and the act is performed. Once the act is committed it can never be retraced, retrieved, or restored. It is over! How often we have committed an act after which we deeply regretted, wishing we could rewind time and pull it back. But it cannot be; we live with the memory of it for the rest of our days.

Yet, the guilt of the sin can be taken away from our heart and mind by fully confessing it to God, repenting of it and pleading for Christ's blood, shed at the Cross of Calvary, to cover that sin. Yes, dear friend, God will forgive!

*Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised) And let us provoke unto love and to good works: Nor forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.*

Hebrews 10:22-25

### **Almost Persuaded**

"Almost persuaded" now to believe  
"Almost persuaded" Christ to receive;  
Seems now some soul to say,  
"Go, Spirit, go Thy way,  
Some more convenient day  
On Thee I'll call.

"Almost persuaded" come, come today;  
"Almost persuaded," turn not away;  
Jesus invites you here,  
Angels are lingering near,  
Prayers rise from hearts so dear,  
O wanderer, come.

"Almost persuaded," harvest is past!  
"Almost persuaded," doom comes at last  
"Almost" cannot avail;  
"Almost" is but to fail!  
Sad, sad, that bitter wail,  
"Almost"—but lost.

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