

ARE We Back on the Track? - When We Lack Faith?

Is it because there is no God in the homes of our families, that we rely on "the god of Ekron"?

By Herbert W. Armstrong

I am shocked - saddened - discouraged -hurt!

I am writing this in flight. We just took off from Orr, Minn., flying back to Pasadena. At the SEP camp I spoke to 728, including 280 brethren from surrounding churches. I was informed that the youths in camp habitually demand a doctor for every little thing. It seems they have been taught at home to rely on doctors rather than God.

When it is suggested that they may be anointed by a minister of God, in prayer for God to heal, as God PROMISES in James 5:14-15, they will consent, but seem to regard it as a perfunctory ritual of no effectuality, and still demand a doctor who can make them well. Their faith is wholly in the human doctor, not in God. Apparently their parents have no faith that God can keep His promises, and have not relied on God for healing their children.

Brethren, I was shocked. It was like being stabbed in the heart. We are the generation looking for the coming of Christ and the Kingdom of God. We are the Bride of Christ. We have to be READY for His coming, or the door to eternal life and salvation will be SLAMMED IN OUR FACES (Matt. 25:10-12)! Jesus said, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches"!

Read again these solemn scriptures: "Christ... loved the church, and gave himself for it... That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Eph. 5:25-27).

And, "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready" (Rev. 19:7). The Church as a whole will be ready. But the passage in Matthew 25 shows those individuals in it - or who profess to be in it - and are lukewarm and lacking in faith in God's Word will have the door slammed in their faces!

Brethren, ARE YOU READY? I believe the Church as a whole is rapidly getting ready. But apparently some are not. God says, "WITHOUT FAITH IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO PLEASE HIM" (Heb. 11:6).

Work up faith?

But some will make the excuse, "I just can't seem to work up enough faith." What you mean is, "I don't believe God will keep His promises - I don't believe God's Word, the Bible." God says, "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17).

Jesus ministered as the Son of man. He said: "Of myself I can do nothing. The father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works." Jesus had, by the Spirit of God, the GIFT of healing, as mentioned in I Corinthians 12:9. Peter had it. Paul had it. Only a few had it.

But to MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH, God says: "Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, 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 hath committed sins, they shall be forgiven him" (Jas. 5:14-15).

God wants us to BELIEVE Him - believe what He says - believe He is able - believe it IS His WILL to do what He promises and believe He WILL do it! Do you have to "work up faith" to believe God is able - God will keep His PROMISES?

A woman who called me to anoint and pray for her healing once said, "Well, I know God is able to heal me, but I don't know whether it is His will."

I read to her, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: Who forgiveth all thine iniquities" (Ps. 103:2-3) and I stopped there.

"Do you believe that? Do you believe it is HIS WILL to forgive all your sins?"

"Oh, yes," she replied.

"But WHY do you believe it?" I asked.

"Because it says so in the Bible," she answered.

"Then do you think God lied in the other half of that verse, which says, 'who healeth all thy diseases'?"

How about YOU? Do YOU who read this believe God? Do you have to struggle and try to work up faith to believe God MEANS what He says, and will DO what He says?

"Yes," some will answer, "but what about times when people called the elders of the Church, who anointed and prayed for healing, and they were not healed?"

But HOW DO YOU KNOW they were not healed? Well, they reply, because the pain was still there. They could still FEEL it. They could SEE that they were not healed.

But, God answers, "We walk by FAITH, not by sight" (II Cor. 5:7). What one sees or feels has nothing to do with it. Jesus said, "According to your FAITH be it unto you" (Matt. 9:29).

A trying experience

I had to learn this, personally, by a trying experience. I was visiting my parent's home. In the evening

my father was suddenly stricken. Another minister was with me. We anointed and prayed for him. He did not improve immediately so we continued to pray. We prayed without ceasing all night.

I prayed in positive faith. I KNEW God would heal my father. Occasionally I opened the Bible, and each time I opened it to a scripture that seemed to imply God heard and he would be healed. My faith was actually strengthened through the night. Yet at 9:40 next morning my father died.

It was a traumatic shock and blow to my faith. For a while I simply couldn't understand it! I knew God had PROMISED. I had obeyed His command in James 5:14 in implicit FAITH. I had not doubted. I prayed for understanding. I turned to the "faith chapter" of the Bible - Hebrews 11.

There I was reminded again, "Faith is the... evidence of things NOT SEEN" (verse 1). I could SEE that my father was not healed. But that was not the evidence proving whether he was healed. FAITH is the evidence - the PROOF - that God's Word is good.

Then, reading on, I saw again that God had made the PROMISES on which our salvation and eternal life depend to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The only PROOF we have of eternal life is GOD'S PROMISES according to His conditions.

But Abraham, Isaac and Jacob all died IN FAITH, not (yet) having received the promises. But verse 40 shows God's promises are SURE! They SHALL receive the promises in the resurrection.

There I saw the TRUTH! God opened my eyes to see. God did not tell Abraham HOW or WHEN He would fulfill His promises. He will do it HOW and WHEN He wills, not when we will. My father will have the healing I prayed for in the resurrection. That will be the next split second of his consciousness.

God keeps His promises

This fact - that God keeps His promises HIS WAY and in HIS TIME - I realize, means a great test of faith to our people today. But faith is RELYING ON GOD'S WORD!

Let me repeat that: FAITH is RELYING ON GOD'S WORD!

Sometimes the things God expects of us by FAITH seem IMPOSSIBLE! Look at Abraham's case. Abraham had wanted a son. He had yielded to temptation, and sired an illegitimate son by his wife's handmaid, Hagar. He wanted God's promises to Abraham to be carried out through Ishmael, Hagar's son.

But God refused. God keeps His promises God's way. God's way required a miracle. When Abraham was 99 years old and his wife Sarah was 90, God caused the barren Sarah at last to have a son. All God's promises had to be fulfilled through this son Isaac.

Then God put Abraham's FAITH in God's word to a severe TEST. God told Abraham to offer up Isaac as a sacrifice. Now most people would have used human reason. If Isaac were killed as a

sacrifice, how could God keep His promises through a dead son? There was NO WAY except if God performed a MIRACLE to keep His word.

But, impossible as it must have seemed to Abraham, he RELIED ON GOD'S WORD! HE OBEYED! At the very last second, God caused a ram to be caught by its horns in the bushes behind Abraham, and God told Abraham to offer the ram as a burnt offering instead of his son.

WHAT A TEST OF FAITH!

Believe God's Word

Yet God expects you and me today to BELIEVE HIS WORD - to RELY ON HIM to keep His promises! Jesus Christ was beaten with stripes terribly, suffering indescribable pain and agony, to pay the PENALTY of physical sin, so that you and I and our children may be HEALED. And by His stripes we are healed (I Pet. 2:24).

Jesus' suffering by being beaten with stripes was in vain unless God's Word is good - unless we are healed!

James 5:15 says the prayer of FAITH shall save the sick, and the Lord WILL HEAL.

Yes, there are conditions to God's promises. Jesus said, "According to your FAITH be it unto you." He said to a young woman, "Thy FAITH hath made thee whole." When you don't believe, you do two things: 1) You nullify His promise by not performing His condition to healing and 2) you make God a liar - you don't believe His Word!

There is another condition: "And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight" (I John 3:22). You must be yielded to obedience to His commandments. And you must be doing what is pleasing in His sight - and that includes BELIEVING He will do what He promised.

YOU MUST BELIEVE God will heal! You can believe another human person if he promises to do something for you. WHY can't you believe God will do what He has promised - what Jesus suffered a terrible beating with stripes for, that you may be healed? WHY is it hard for you to believe God means what He says - that He WILL DO what He has promised? WHY can you believe a human doctor who is a sinner (for all have sinned) - and cannot believe GOD? WHY?

Medicines can't heal. Drugs can't heal and always have side effects, which often are harmful. Surgeon's knives can't heal. A famous doctor said, "If all the medicines in the world were thrown into the ocean, it would be so much better for humanity, and so much worse for the fishes."

According to your faith

But, brethren, "According to YOUR faith be it unto you." If you can't believe God when He speaks and promises, you simply have no hope of salvation and eternal life!

These are the LAST DAYS! These are days of trying and testing. We are taking FINAL EXAMS to see whether we make it into God's Kingdom. Must some of you FAIL?

When I was in school, in the hours before final exams, I really "crammed." I "crammed" desperately, for I had lagged somewhat during the school year. But by the last spurt of effort, I usually got close to 100 percent in final exams - and I passed after all.

Fasting and prayer often will restore faith. It will bring faith from God if you never had it before.

I fasted and prayed for two days once in a serious emergency when the lives of two members of my family were at stake. I spent the first hour in prayer. The second hour in Bible reading to try to see why I lacked faith. The third hour in contemplation, self-examination, trying to THINK where I was wrong and why my faith had weakened. The next hour again in prayer, then an hour in Bible study, an hour in contemplation and so on for two days, while fasting. At the end of that time, slightly less than two days. FIVE miracles happened. and a few days later a sixth I had not asked.

We are all now in the time of final exams. Looking down into this very time. Jesus said. "Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh. shall he find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:8).

Brethren. are some of you going to Baal-zebul. the god of Ekron? King Ahaziah of Israel was severely injured and in sickness. But he sent for Baal-zebul. the god of Ekron, for healing (II Kings 1:1-4).

But God said through the prophet Elijah. "Isn't it because there is not a God in Israel that you go to Baal-zebul, the god of Ekron?" This Baal-zebul was known as, "the god of flies" - the medical god of that day. So God said the king must die because of lack of faith.

Is it because there is no GOD whose Word is good for healing, that some of YOU brethren rear your children relying on Baal-zebul in the form of the doctors of our day? Which God is In YOUR home? In which do you have FAITH?

Brethren, let us be READY when Christ comes. Do your cramming to learn FAITH now, for the time is short. Let's all make it into His Kingdom!