

DESTINY BULLETIN

A commentary sent to the supporters of the ministry of Christian Destiny.

Dear “Special Friend” of Christian Destiny,

June 2007

THE IMPERATIVE OF FAITH

Part 1

There are many precious things in this world. Some, such as diamonds, pearls, homes, cars, coins, and other valuables can be looked upon or held in the hand. Others, intangible and more difficult to perceive, become more valuable than the tangible things upon reflection. These include citizenship, safety, health, friendships, and relationships of various kinds. Without the intangibles, the tangibles would quickly lose their value. The wise person looks to the things that are unseen as well as the things that are seen. The things seen are temporal, but the things not seen are eternal.

God has told us that the first imperative, the most basic quality in the world, is faith. When beginning his discourse on the eight imperatives of life Peter names the first imperative: faith. We will begin by adding to our faith.

What is faith? How does it work in life? Why is it so important? These questions have been asked by Christians in every century. Because we are prone to believe what we see, confidence in something unseen seems mysterious. God repeatedly admonishes us to be not faithless but believing. We are called to accept divine truth and reject human falsehood. Often, however, the visible and appealing falsehood wins the race to capture our attention with the help of the evil one, who is a liar from the beginning. Thus the visible triumphs over the invisible, and we are deceived.

To discover the meaning of faith (the ability to perceive and the courage to believe the invisible things of God) and to anchor our souls in its solid substance is the beginning of understanding and the key to salvation itself.

To understand the imperative of faith we must remember that faith can be understood in at least two ways. The first way to understand it is as “*the faith*.”

This aspect of faith is implied by Peter’s opening statement in 2nd Peter. He said he was writing “*to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Savior Jesus Christ*” (1:1). Faith, in this sense, was referred to by Christ when He asked the question, “*When the Son of Man comes, shall He find [the] faith on the earth?*” (Luke 18:8). Clear also is the call that we are to be “*established in the faith*” (Acts 16:5). Indeed, the importance of this faith is emphasized by the reminder that in the last days, some shall depart from “*the faith*” (1 Tim. 4:1).

Faith is, therefore, presented in the Bible as, first of all, the body of truth that Christians believe. “The faith” is that set of facts, revealed in Scripture, dealing with the reality of God, and man’s

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relationship to Him. They must be understood, because there can be no personal faith without “*the faith.*”

What then is the body of truth that constitutes the faith? The foundations of the Christian faith include the following:

1. *There is a God.* The Bible teaches that above and beyond all other considerations in life stands one prime fact: God is. The first revelation of Scripture is “*In the beginning God*” (Gen. 1:1).

Having revealed Himself in nature and in the Bible, God has told us that He is omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, and is before all things. To become established in the faith, the inquirer would do well to open the pages of Scripture and read of how God has announced His existence and told us about Himself.

Under the first principle, then, we establish ourselves as theists and not atheists. We believe that God is.

2. *God is a Trinity.* The Lord has revealed Himself as eternally existent in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God has not explained to us how the Trinity is possible, for the word *possible* is only relevant to man. With God, nothing is impossible. Nevertheless, we have His word for it—God is three Persons and yet One. We Christians are not unitarians; we are trinitarians.

3. *God created the universe.* We know that the universe is not a self-existent entity that has always been and will always be. Rather, it was created out of nothing by the Lord Himself. To speak precisely, the world was created by Jesus Christ Himself. When Scripture refers to Christ it says, “*For by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him, and for Him: And He is before all things, and by Him all things consist*” (Col. 1:16-17).

We Christians, therefore, believe that creation is to be respected but not worshipped. We are not pantheists (who are, in essence, no different from atheists).

4. *Sin has come into the world.* Man was made in the image of God. That image, however, was defaced when Eve and then Adam ate the fruit forbidden to them by God. Scripture says, “*by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned*” (Romans 5:12).

As Christians, therefore, we must recognize that the sublime creation of God has been defaced by the cancer called sin. Sin has separated man from God, making it utterly impossible for human beings to have fellowship with the Lord except through the loving provision God has provided in the sacrifice of Christ on the cross.

5. *Jesus Christ is the Son of God.* With this affirmation, we come close to the core of Christianity. It is the conviction that Jesus Christ, born of a virgin, was indeed Emmanuel, God with

us. We are sure that God was in Christ and that He came for the purpose of reconciling the world to Himself.

The deity of Christ is one of the most fundamental building blocks of the faith. Marvelous vitality comes into the life of a person whose deepest conviction is the deity of Christ. “*Who is he that overcomes the world, but he that believes that Jesus is the Son of God?*” (1 John 5:5). As the Son of God, Jesus Christ is the Lord of history, and the provision He made for our salvation is sure and steadfast.

6. Christ offers salvation through His blood. We Christians are sure that the center point of history is a place called Calvary and that history’s greatest event transpired there. At Calvary Jesus Christ took on Himself the sins of the world. Indeed, He was made sin for us with the marvelous result that we should receive the gift of imputed righteousness. It is Calvary that becomes the sole basis of our salvation. The Christian means it when he sings, “Calvary covers it all” and “pardon there was multiplied to me.” It is the blood of Jesus Christ, God’s Son, that cleanses from all sin.

7. Salvation comes to the sinner by faith alone. The essence of Christianity is that salvation is by faith. In a sense, there are only two religions in the world—Christianity and all others. In one way or another, the religions of the world (and even some that are called Christianity) teach the production of human righteousness, the winning of merit before God on the basis of human works.

True Christianity, however, presents the gift of “*righteousness without works*” (Romans 4:6) to all who will exercise faith in the finished work of Christ on Calvary’s cross.

As Christians, we identify with the words of Robert Murray McCheyne in “Jehovah Tsidkenu”:

*I once was a stranger to grace and to God,
I knew not my danger and felt not my load;
Though friends spoke in rapture of Christ on the tree,
Jehovah Tsidkenu* was nothing to me.*

*I oft read with pleasure, to soothe or engage,
Isaiah’s wild measure and John’s simple page.
But e’en when they pictured the blood -sprinkled tree,
Jehovah Tsidkenu seemed nothing to me.*

*Like tears from the daughters of Zion that roll,
I wept when the waters went over His soul;
Yet thought not that my sins had nailed to the tree
Jehovah Tsidkenu—’twas nothing to me.*

*When free grace awoke me, by light from on high,
Then legal fear shook me, I trembled to die;
No refuge, no safety in self could I see—
Jehovah Tsidkenu my Saviour must be.*

*My terrors all vanished before the sweet name;
My guilty fears banished, with boldness I came
To drink at the fountain, life-giving and free—
Jehovah Tsidkenu is all things to me.*

*Jehovah Tsidkenu! My treasure and boast,
Jehovah Tsidkenu! I ne'er can be lost;
In Thee I shall conquer by flood and by field—
My cable, my anchor, my breastplate and shield!*

*Even treading the valley, the shadow of death,
This watchword shall rally my faltering breath;
For while from life's fever my God sets me free,
Jehovah Tsidkenu, my death-song shall be.*

* *“The Lord our righteousness”*

Beyond the basics, the Bible teaches many things about the faith. We can see that, above all other things, Christianity is a doctrinal religion. By that we mean it is a presentation of facts about actual people and events in history. Above every other consideration, it is a body of truth most surely to be believed.

No one is a Christian apart from believing this body of truth. An individual may be winsome, good, fine, and decent, but he is not a Christian because of those qualities. Nothing about ourselves makes us Christians. We are Christians only by the fact that we hold true objective facts about Jesus Christ and His finished work on the cross. There can be no faith, then, without *“the faith.”*

We might illustrate these facts by noting that we live in intransitive times. From our high school English classes, we remember that an intransitive verb is one that does not take an object. A transitive verb, therefore, is one that does take an object. There is a definite erosion in the English language today. In one such deviation, we have begun to see transitive verbs as if they were intransitive.

In the realm of religion, this tendency is practiced every day. We are told to have faith, but we are not told in whom or in what to have faith. We are told to pray without being told what or who should be the object of our prayers. We are counseled to “just believe” without being given an object of that belief. We are advised to trust without being told that it is impossible to trust without trusting something or someone. Under the influence of these existential times, Christianity itself is believed by some to be a faith that takes no object and is anchored in nothing. It then becomes the emotion of a moment, the good feeling of an evening, or a fleeting sense of the presence of God. Consequently, the salvation claimed by some could be without foundation. It may be nothing more than an imagined psychological experience with an imaginary Jesus.

To Be Continued in the August Bulletin

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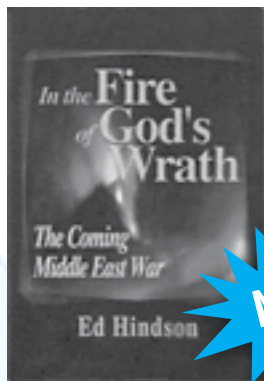
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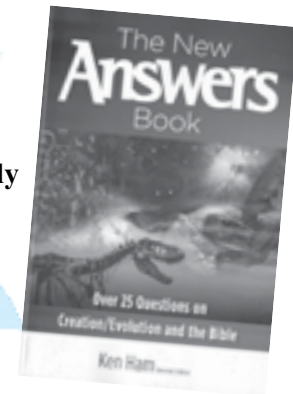
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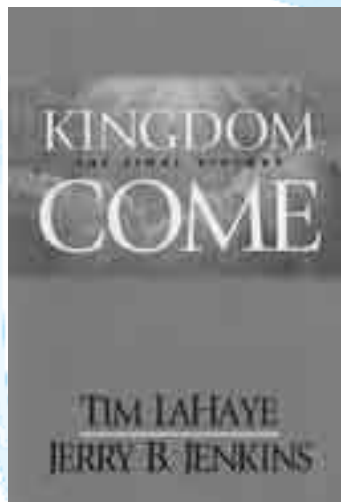
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