

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast." (Ephesians 2:8,9)

D. Grace Glorifies God; Dependence Upon Works Seeks To Honor Man.

"To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved." (Ephesians 1:6)

So if, through your faith in Christ ye are dead to the principles of this world, why, as if you were still part and parcel of this world-wide system, do you take the slightest notice of these purely human prohibitions - "Don't touch this," "Don't touch that," and "Don't handle the other"? "This," "that" and "the other" will all pass away after use! These regulations look wise on the surface, with their self-inspired efforts at worship, their policy of self-humbling, and their studied neglect of the body. But in actual practice they bestow honor, not to God, but to man's own pride. (Colossians 2:20-23)

E. Grace Says That Christ Did It All For Us; Dead Works Declare That We Need Christ "And" Something Else.

Trying to mix grace and dependence on anything else, even the law, only nullifies the power of God's salvation.

"Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace." (Galatians 5:4)

IV. HOW DOES RELIANCE UPON DEAD WORKS MAKE REDEMPTION INEFFECTUAL IN OUR PERSONAL EXPERIENCE?

When we continue in dead works, we become enslaved to a legalistic system which demands of us works only the Holy Spirit can produce in us. The New Covenant is a new heart, not a new set of external demands. Since we cannot achieve these works on our own, we fail to meet our own standards. For this reason we experience constant bondage and condemnation.

Condemnation always produces a deep unsureness or lack of confidence toward God. We dread approaching him and find all kinds of

excuses not to draw near to him in prayer and communion. Even when we do make petition to God, we are unable to ask with confidence because of the internal nagging of condemnation. Instead of serving God out of love for him, we do so out of fear.

"Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage." (Galatians 5:1)

V. WHY DO WE NEED OUR CONSCIENCE PURGED FROM DEAD WORKS?

Our conscience will continue either to condemn us or to excuse us, as long as our reliance is upon works of merit that we think we can do. This keeps alive a consciousness of sin, because we never know when we have done enough. Also, we continue to disappoint ourselves by not meeting our own goals and standards. Awareness of sin can only be settled by the blood of Jesus.

The Lord removes from us the whole system of measuring ourselves according to attempts to merit righteousness. He reveals to us that all acceptance with God is on the basis of the blood of Jesus Christ. He alone is righteous and we are accepted in him. No other standards apply when we are dealing with God.

"How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" (Hebrews 9:14)

"But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour. If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work." (II Timothy 2:20-21)

A. We Are Freed To Serve The Living God - A New Dimension In Worship.

The word "serve" means "worship," and conveys the thought of our voluntary giving ourselves and all we have as a spiritual sacrifice to God. Once the Holy Spirit frees us from the legalistic demands of a system of

works, we spontaneously "want" to serve him. The realization of acceptance according to God's mercy releases us to delight in doing God's will.

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." (Romans 12:1)

"Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name: bring an offering, and come before him: worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness." (I Chronicles 16:29)

"Serve the LORD with gladness: come before his presence with singing." (Psalms 100:2)

B. We Are Freed To Enter Into The Rest Of Faith.

When we quit doing our own works, we find the rest of faith. Our assurance is based upon Christ's work for us and in us. We can afford to put an end to self-effort and to allow the Holy Spirit to produce Christ-likeness within us.

"For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his." (Hebrews 4:10)

C. We Have Confidence Toward God.

Once our conscience has been purged of guilt and dead works, we experience a confidence toward God which enables us to approach him boldly. The Greek word for "boldness" means "freedom of speech, unreservedness of utterance, plainness, openness, cheerful, courage, or confidence." We have this confidence, we can talk to God directly from our hearts without holding back in fear or guilt.

"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;)" (Hebrews 10:22-23)

D. We Relax Our Standards In Relation To Other People.

When we are no longer struggling over legalism, we are able to relax our standards in relation to others. We can stop being critical. We can enlarge our circle of friendship, knowing that differences in habits and practices not emphasized by the word need not be top priority to us. Fellowship is determined by a living relationship with God, not by the way we dress, the days we observe, our dietary habits and the like. We can afford to be tolerant of others.

PREPARE TO RECEIVE THE LORD OUR GOD

Golden Text:

Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. (Hebrews 6:1-2)

Lesson Text

Isaiah 40:3

(3) The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way

of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

I. HOW ESSENTIAL IS REPENTANCE TO BEGINNING A NEW LIFE IN CHRIST?

We cannot begin a new life in Christ without first turning from our old life of sin. Repentance is the inner transition from self-dependence and self-government to submission to God. The kingdom of God means having someone rule over us — having a real King. We cannot crown Jesus Lord of our lives in practical experience through the assistance of the Holy Spirit in the realm of repentance. Calling Jesus "Lord" with full biblical meaning requires the renouncing of self-rule or imagined "independence." It includes the acknowledgment that we are finished with the way we have been living and are ready to embrace his new life. This transference of dependence was

considered so basic in the New Testament that every major teacher introduced the gospel with the necessity of repentance.

"Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, Lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you." (Luke 17:21)

A. John The Baptist.

"In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Matthew 3:1-2)

B. Jesus Himself.

"From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Matthew 4:17)

"Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel." (Mark 1:14-15)

C. St. Luke.

"And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent:" (Acts 17:30)

D. The Twelve Disciples.

"And they went out, and preached that men should repent." (Mark 6:12)

E. Apostle Paul.

"But shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance." (Acts 26:20)

"Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins." (Colossians 1:12-14)

F. Apostle Peter.

"The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." (II Peter 3:9)

Both the Lord's "great commission" to his disciples, and their application of this commission, emphasize repentance.

"And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." (Luke 24:47)

"Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." (Acts 2:38)

II. IS REPENTANCE ONLY AN INITIAL EXPERIENCE?

Laying the foundation of repentance from dead works includes, first of all, the initial repentance which turns us from darkness to light. We see ourselves as sinners in God's sight and acknowledge this. We turn from our life of sin to God. But repentance is like a door into a whole new world of repentance. As we come to know God's love and holiness more and more, we see ourselves increasingly in need of change. Acknowledgment of our need to amend, and sorrow for being unlike God in character is a continuing part of repentance. The Lord Jesus continues to examine us for evidence of repentance today. We notice, for example, in the book of Revelation, Jesus is

walking in the midst of seven local churches. To five out of the seven, he warns them that he must see repentance on their part, or they will experience severe loss. The distinguishing factor of initial repentance is this: We first repent for what we are — sinners; after this we repent for what we do or fail to do — specific sins.

A. Ephesus.

"Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent." (Revelation 2:5)

"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God." (Revelation 2:7)

B. Pergamos.

"Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth." (Revelation 2:16)

C. Thyatira.

"And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not. Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds." (Revelation 2:21-22)

"And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works." (Revelation 2:23)

D. Sardis.

"Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not

watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee." (Revelation 3:3)

E. Laodicea.

"I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth." (Revelation 3:15-16)

"As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent." (Revelation 3:19)

III. WHY MUST REPENTANCE PRECEDE ANY OTHER FOUNDATION?

Repentance is the preparation of our hearts for God. Before God can build in our lives, he must first clear away the debris and clutter. Before he can plant good seed, he must remove the weeds. Otherwise we will always be a mixture. The seeds of sin will choke the good seed.

A. Repentance Eliminates Our Inner Deviousness, Enabling Us To Come Into Direct Contact With God.

"Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you." (Proverbs 1:23)

"I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." (Luke 13:3)

Until repentance has done a complete work, we avoid being fully open and direct with God about our need. We hide behind excuses and erect defenses to keep ourselves from knowing what is really going on inside. But repentance clears away all lies and rationalizing, and we are then able to call sin sin, and allow God to come to the heart of our need. We welcome his remaking of our inner landscaping.

"The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall

be made straight, and the rough places plain:" (Isaiah 40:3-4)

B. Repentance Cleanses The "Land Of Our Heart" From Bad Seeds.

It is not enough to cut down the bad plants of external sin; the roots must be pulled and the seeds must be destroyed. Land which has not been cultivated must be cleared by repeated plowing; once is not enough. Such fallow ground (uncultivated land) must undergo successful plowing to break up all hard clods and to deeply purge the soil of all remaining seeds dropped by birds or brought by the wind. Neglected land does not become a desert, but a wilderness. It grows bad seed if not used for good seed. This is what the prophet Jeremiah was talking about when he said:

"For thus saith the LORD to the men of Judah and Jerusalem, Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns. Circumcise yourselves to the LORD, and take away the foreskins of your heart, ye men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem:" (Jeremiah 4:3-4)

C. Repentance Digs Down Deep To Establish Foundations Of Solid Rock.

The taller a building, the deeper the foundation. The foundation must support the entire structure. For this reason, God does not attempt to build his new life upon our surface habits alone; he insists on stripping us to our base, and beginning "from scratch," as they say. Jeremiah's call as a prophet of repentance emphasizes the necessity of the destructive work of God before the building can begin.

"Then the LORD put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the LORD said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth. See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant." (Jeremiah 1:9-10)

IV. HOW DOES REPENTANCE DIFFER FROM REFORMATION?

Reformation deals only with the surface; repentance is a change of heart. During the history of the nation Israel, the prophets were constantly calling for a thorough repentance from idolatry and a return to God. Under

several of the kings, Judah experienced reformation. The idols were cut down and certain idolatrous practices, abominations to the Lord, were eliminated. But the people's hearts were not turned to God. Their affections were not captivated by him alone. While things looked good on the outside, they were doing the same things inside in subtle, disguised ways. But God is always concerned with the heart, the root of our conduct. Sinners can quit smoking and drinking and the like, but this does not make genuine new creatures.

Hosea the prophet paints a vivid picture of the difference between reformation and repentance when he urges the people not to merely plant new seeds, but to plow fresh ground. In other words, prepare the way for God's word. Jesus said much the same thing in his famous parable of the sower.

"Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground; for it is time to seek the LORD, till he come and rain righteousness upon you. Ye have plowed wickedness, ye have reaped iniquity; ye have eaten the fruit of lies: because thou didst trust in thy way, in the multitude of thy mighty men." (Hosea 10:12-13)

V. WHAT KIND OF FRUIT WILL A REPENTANT HEART BRING FORTH?

We call it repentance "unto life" because it is just that. We turn from dead works, from the futility of our own efforts to achieve righteousness. God gives us his own life. Stimulated by this new life, we bring forth fruit of Christ-likeness. We produce in our own lives his character. His seed and his life will grow up like himself. This is called "the fruit of the Spirit," which is the result of our union with him. Jesus periodically checks the fruit in our lives, just as he did in the case of the fig tree (Matthew 21:19). If our root has been changed, this will show in the fruit of our character.

"But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law." (Galatians 5:22-23)

A. Love (Agape).

God sheds his own love in our hearts by his Spirit. This is a self-giving love, demonstrated both in devotion to God and in concern for his people.

B. Joy.

God's Spirit shares Christ's own joy and gladness with us. This inner rejoicing is not dependent upon circumstances, but gives us the ability to bounce back in resiliency when pressures pile upon us.

C. Peace.

What the world must find in tranquilizers and other artificial means for producing relaxation, the Spirit does within us. This inner peace also makes for concord, or harmony, in relationships and unity in the assembly.

D. Longsuffering.

Longsuffering is exactly that. A better word is perhaps patience, or fortitude. It is the ability to endure in expectancy of God's help. It is slowness in avenging ourselves of injuries, and forbearance because we hope in God.

E. Gentleness.

We are obliging and easy to work with because of the Spirit's work in us, making us agreeable where most people would be touchy and ornery.

F. Goodness (Agathos).

This is more than the absence of evil; it is positive virtue. It makes us generous in attitude and profitable to the kingdom. We are morally upright but we also have blessings to impart.

G. Faith or Faithfulness.

Because we are at rest inside through the Spirit's in-working and possess a firm assurance and confidence toward God, we are able to deal with others in good faith. And we are known for faithfulness and truthfulness in all our dealings.

H. Meekness.

Meekness is not weakness, or Moses would not have been cited as the meekest man on the Earth. It is the ability to remain mild and gentle and forgiving under trying circumstances. It requires more strength to not react, than to react.

I. Temperance.

Self-mastery is the result of discipline, but this is only successful when stimulated by the indwelling Spirit. Self control grows out of a genuine relationship with God through the Spirit.

"Now he that ministereth seed to the sower both minister bread for your food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness;" (II Corinthians 9:10)

CONVINCED BEYOND ALL DOUBT

Golden Text: Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. (Hebrews 6:1-2)

Lesson Text Hebrews 11:1-6

(1) Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

(2) For by it the elders obtained a good report.

(3) Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.

(4) By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that

he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.

(5) By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.

(6) But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

I. THE BINDING RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN REPENTANCE AND FAITH.

The key words which give us understanding of this relationship are "from" and "to" or "toward." Notice that it is repentance *from* dead works, and faith *toward* God. These are two sides on the same coin, namely justification. Repentance is the negative or preparatory side of it; faith is the positive or receptive side of it. Both repentance and faith are gifts from God, initiated freely according to his grace. They are inseparable; one cannot exist without the other. Theologians often argue about sequence: which comes first, repentance or faith? Logically, turning from something precedes turning to something else. Experientially, repentance and faith work hand in hand. Scripture puts them in both orders, depending on the emphasis required by context. The Holy Spirit creates within us the response of repentance and the ability to believe.

"Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." (Acts 20:21)

"To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me." (Acts 26:18)

"For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak anything. For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols [repented] to serve the living and true God." (I Thessalonians 1:8-9)

II. FAITH: WHAT IT IS AND ITS STRENGTH

Faith is the ability to believe God: both to trust his character and to take his word as true and reliable. Faith is our response to the persuading, convincing work of the Holy Spirit as it enables us to hear God's word. Such persuasion results in an unshakable conviction or confidence that God's word is true.

A. Faith Is A Persuasion.

Faith comes from the Greek word *pistis* (pis-tis) which means "firm persuasion; strong and welcome belief; conviction of the truth of anything."

"...for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." (II Timothy 1:12)

"For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 8:38-39)

B. Faith Is Substance And Reality.

Faith is not imagination, nor the wishing of things into being. It is the conviction of truth by the inner working of the Holy Spirit, who only persuades us to believe what actually exists. If God gives us the faith for something, we can be sure that in the mind of God that thing really exists and is as good as ours. Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the proving of things not seen.

"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." (Hebrews 11:1)

"Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." (Hebrews 12:2)

C. Faith Is A Gift From God.

We cannot work ourselves up into believing. It is not the result of mental gymnastics. The Holy Spirit must place the ability to believe God within our hearts.

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God." (Ephesians 2:8)

D. Faith Is The Response To Hearing.

God communicates his thoughts through his word. When he enables us to hear what he is saying to us by the Spirit, this creates within us the response of believing, of being persuaded that what he is saying is indeed true and directed to us.

"So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." (Romans 10:17)

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." (John 5:24)

"Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock." (Matthew 7:24)

III. DOES FAITH BELIEVE THE PERSON OR HIS WORD?

Both. Unless we can depend upon the character of the one speaking, we cannot rely upon his word. God and his word are inseparable. God says that he magnifies his word even above his name (Psalms 138:2). Jesus Christ is the word or expression of God. This means that he in no way misrepresents his Father's character.

The Greek word for faith, *pistis*, includes both trusting God's character and taking his word at face value. The Hebrew language, however, uses four separate words to express the ideas wrapped up in the one Greek word for faith. These Hebrew words are usually translated "trust." Each one emphasizes a different aspect of the work of faith.

A. Faith Takes Refuge Within The Person.

The Hebrew verb meaning "to take refuge within" brings out the emphasis of the safety of trust.

"The LORD recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust." (Ruth 2:12)

"But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." (Hebrews 11:6)

B. Faith Means Relying Upon Someone Who Is Completely Trustworthy.

The Hebrew verb "to lean upon" refers to a personal reliance upon another. It adds the dimension of abandoning one's self in committal to the care of another. We only lean upon that which we are persuaded is dependable.

"What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee. In God I will praise his word, in God I have put my trust; I will not fear what flesh can do unto me." (Psalms 56:3-4)

"I will say of the LORD, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust." (Psalms 91:2)

"Cause me to hear thy lovingkindness in the morning; for in thee do I trust: cause me to know the way wherein I should walk; for I lift up my soul unto thee." (Psalms 143:8)

C. Faith Means Letting Go Of Our Burdens Into The Hands Of Another.

We will only let another take over our concerns when we are convinced he can handle them better than we can ourselves. The Hebrew verb "to roll upon" extends the idea of committal, emphasizing even more our act of relinquishing our concerns to another. We allow God to take full responsibility for us.

"He trusted on the LORD that he would deliver him..." (Psalms 22:8)

"But mine eyes are unto thee, O GOD the Lord: in thee is my trust; leave not my soul destitute." (Psalms 141:8)

D. Faith Frees Us From Our Own Efforts And Enables Us to Stay Put In God.

"Though I walk in the midst of trouble, thou wilt revive me: thou shalt stretch forth thine hand against the wrath of mine enemies, and thy right hand shall save me." (Psalms 138:7)

The Hebrew verb "to stay upon" brings out the aspect of rest from one's own efforts and repose in the knowledge that someone trustworthy is caring for us.

"...therefore trust thou in him." (Job 35:14)

IV. BY WHAT MEANS DOES GOD PERSUADE US TO BELIEVE?

God does not do everything from long distance by simple decree. He uses means, very often other people, and circumstances. The Holy Spirit is the active agent of redemption in the world today. He persuades us by his personal presence, but he uses a number of means to accomplish this.

A. He Uses The Preaching Of The Word.

Through the preaching of God's word, we are persuaded to believe and turn to God.

"For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." (I Corinthians 1:21)

"Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee." (Psalms 119:11)

B. God Works Directly Within Us.

This is to convince us that he is true and that his word is truth. Just as he turns us from sin in repentance, he turns us to him and his word by giving us faith.

"And when he (the Holy Spirit) is come, he will reprove (convict and convince) the world and bring demonstration to it about sin and about righteousness — uprightness of heart and right standing with God — and about judgment." (John 16:8 Ampl.)

"To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him. " (Jude 15)

C. He Makes The Scriptures Alive To Us.

We are persuaded through the reading of the scriptures, for they are the inspired or God-breathed word of God. The Old Testament prepares us for receiving the gospel message along with scriptures from the New Testament.

"For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?" (John 5:46-47)

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." (II Timothy 3:16)

D. The Lord's Miracles Are Meant To Help Our Faith.

The Lord's miraculous works confirm the supernatural source of his word, thereby persuading us to believe his claims. His claims to divine authority are more than authenticated through his signs.

"If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works: that ye

may know, and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in him." (John 10:37-38)

V. CAN WE BECOME PERSUADED BY ANYTHING OTHER THAN FAITH?

Yes. There are persuasions which do not originate with the Holy Spirit and God's living word. Some of these other seeming persuasions may even quote scripture, but not as God's living word to us now. We are exposed to many voices or impressions. If we expose our minds, emotions, and will to these, we can become convinced of something that is not true. Truth, you recall, is objective. Something does not become true or factual simply because we believe it.

A. Presumption Is Not Faith.

God warns us against presumption through the severe punishment he inflicted upon those who dared to be presumptuous toward him. This word comes from the Latin *praesumere*, which means "to anticipate, suppose, take in advance." The English definition is much closer to the Bible usage; it means "to dare, to take too much upon one's self."

Presumption violates God's holiness and sovereign authority. Presumption openly defies God's right to choose people and places for his purposes. Those who presume take upon themselves authority that was not given to them. They overstep the limits of propriety and courtesy and intrude themselves into places where they have no business. This is not aggressive faith, but blatant rebellion.

"And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the LORD, which he commanded them not. And there went out fire from the LORD, and devoured them, and they died before the LORD." (Leviticus 10:1-2)

"Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright,

*and I shall be innocent from the great transgression."
(Psalms 19:13)*

"But chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government. Presumptuous are they, selfwilled, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities." (II Peter 2:10)

B. Assumption Limits Faith.

Very often we come to situations with our minds already made up. We are so full of our assumptions or preconceived ideas that we are not really open to hear what God is saying to us now. We may miss what he is actually doing because we do not see what we expected to see. We may become too rigid in our expectations and limit God. Assumption means the act of taking something for granted or supposing that a thing is true without basis in fact. Many of the Jews missed their Messiah because of their assumption that he would be a nationalistic, military king who would lead them in overthrowing Roman rule. They were not prepared to accept a spiritual kingdom.