

Living Faith

By Elder Gregg Thompson

"But faith which worketh by love;" -- Galatians 5:6.

Our subject today is one of vital importance; one in which we should all feel a great interest, for without faith it is impossible to please God, or to come to him; Hebrews 11:6. Any service on our part that is not the work of faith, that is done without faith, or, "is not of faith, is sin;" Romans 14:23. This destroys every hope of the mere nominal professors, or them that put on the outward garb of Christianity, while they are destitute of the faith of God's elect. Christ tells us that, "*He that believeth not shall be damned;*" Mark 16:16. He shall suffer the endless burning. Then how carefully we should all discuss this subject, feeling that our eternal well-being is connected with it, but especially we who profess to be Christians, looking not to the things that are seen, but to the things that are unseen, and hoping to wear a crown of rejoicing in the world that is beyond human sight.

In the system of salvation through Jesus Christ, every hope of salvation or immortal joys is excluded but what springs from grace, and is received by faith. It is faith that receives every covenant blessing that flows from a gracious Lord. The faith of God's elect has Jesus for its author; Hebrews 12:2; and is an evidence that the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwells in us. It receives Jesus for its object, his word for its warrant - his power for its support. Its aim is his glory, and love is its inseparable companion. Faith is a fruit of the Spirit, and an evidence of our union with Christ, and of our justified state; Romans 5:1. Faith differs from a mere opinion, or rational conviction and acknowledgement of a fact forced upon us by testimony brought to the rational mind by words and arguments used by man; for it would then stand in the wisdom of man, and not in the power of God. Paul says, "*And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit, and of power; that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the*

power of God;" 1 Corinthians 2:4,5. Man can not believe just what he pleases, or believe against clear and unquestionable testimony, for truths may be so clearly demonstrated or proven to the mind that we are irresistibly forced to acknowledge them and believe them, when there is no love for them, and in our hearts we wish they were not true; Isaiah 53:3; James 2:19. This faith may confess the truth, but hate it at the same time. But the faith that is of God, and wrought in us by the same power that raised up Christ from the dead, is called "saving faith," and is wrought in us by the Spirit of God, and by it we receive Christ as he is revealed in the gospel, our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. This faith has hope and love for its companions, and is manifested by our humble and faithful obedience to the laws, and to Christ, its author and finisher.

Works of obedience to Christ are associated with faith as its fruits; so faith without works is dead, being alone, as the body is without the spirit. James and Paul both bring forward Abraham, in whom dwelt the faith of God's elect, to illustrate God's method of saving and justifying his chosen people. The eternal purpose of God in the salvation of lost and ruined sinners of Adam's race was embodied in the promise made to Abraham: "*In thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed;*" Acts 3:25. In this promise was embodied a "mystery," which was hid in God, and was the immutable purpose of his will, that in "*the fullness of the dispensation of the times*" he would gather in one all things in Christ, and that the Gentiles, who were not of the law, or the descendants of Abraham according to the flesh, should be made the children of Abraham, and, in Christ, heirs of the same blessings with the election of grace among the Jews; Ephesians 2:4-22; Romans 11:5-7. This mystery is made known to the saints by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, bearing witness with our spirits that we are the children of God; Romans 8:16; or as expressed in Colossians 1:26,27; "*Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages, and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: to whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.*"

It is clear, therefore, that according to the covenant of grace confirmed in Christ, and preached to Abraham before the giving of the law of circumcision, this mystery was embodied: that neither circumcision nor uncircumcision availed any thing; but that we must be "new creatures;" Galatians 6:15; "created in Christ Jesus;" Ephesians 2:10. This new creature is the work of God, for, *"Ye are his workmanship."* Their heir ship and relation to God as sons, and heirs to spiritual blessings, rests not upon their fleshly birth as the children of Adam, or creatures of God, nor upon external rites, services, ordinances, or works of righteousness which they do, but upon the second birth, or regeneration, which is being born of God, born of an incorruptible seed, and made new creatures in Christ.

The first birth brings us into this world with a life and sensibilities to enjoy the comforts of this world, and to suffer the pains and sorrows that flesh and blood are heir to. The second birth brings us into the spiritual kingdom with a life and sensibilities to enjoy the spiritual comforts and blessings of the spiritual kingdom of Christ, and to suffer the trials and afflictions of the saints, and the war of fleshly lusts against the soul. This work is an inward work, or the work of God in the soul; for, *"He is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter, whose praise is not of men, but of God:"* Romans 2:29. Abraham, who is a representative man, received the promise, and had faith in God before the law of circumcision was given, or he had yielded obedience to any external rite or ordinance. In speaking of this faith of Abraham while in uncircumcision, the apostle says, *"For if Abraham was justified by works, he hath whereof to glory, but not before God."* Now, that faith was not a work or condition wrought by Abraham, but a fruit of the Spirit wrought in him, is clearly taught by the apostle in the following language: *"Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt: but to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness."*

This faith begat in Abraham trust and confidence in God, so that he regarded not his own age, or the age of Sarah. He staggered not at the promise of God, although natural reason and fleshly evidence was against it. This faith, accompanied with love, wrought in Abraham a willing and obedient heart to do the commands of God. And his work wrought with his faith when he offered up Isaac on the altar, and he was now justified by works and not by faith only. When was it he was justified by works? It was forty years after God called him righteous, and confirmed to him by oath the immutable promise, or covenant, by which, in Christ Jesus, Abraham was an heir of eternal salvation, and justified in the sight of God. When James speaks of Abraham's justification by works and not by faith only, he is speaking of the offering up of Isaac, which was forty years after the justification that Paul speaks of that was without works. And to prove that this salvation and justification is not of works, nor a condition performed by Abraham, Paul says, *"To him that worketh, the reward is not of grace, but of Debt."* Abraham's justification by works being forty years after God had justified him by grace, made him an heir of eternal salvation, preached the gospel of the covenant to him, and constituted him the father of the faithful, could not be the means of his heir ship, eternal salvation, or justification by grace.

Faith without works is alone. Works of obedience are the manifest evidence before men that we are the children of God, the friends of our Lord Jesus Christ. This obedience to God distinguished Abraham as an obedient child of God, an heir of eternal salvation; it was the justification of obedience, and by it he is made a pattern for all the redeemed and regenerated family. Not as a condition upon which eternal salvation depends, but as a living fruit and evidence of their regenerated state, and that the Spirit of God is in them, working in them both to will and to do the good pleasure of God. Circumcision was given to Abraham after he was justified and blessed of God, and had faith in God, and righteousness was imputed to him, and circumcision of the flesh was given him as an external sign of the internal circumcision of the heart, or of the faith he had, yet

being uncircumcised in the flesh. "*As many as are led by the Spirit of God are the sons of God,*" and, "*If any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his.*" It is by our works of obedience to Christ we give evidence of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and that we are the sons of God; for, "*By their fruits ye shall know them.*" They who are of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham, are his children according to promise although they never existed in his loins as a seed, and are heirs to the promise and covenant of grace made sure to all the seed. Having been called by his grace, and cleansed by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Spirit, we shall walk in newness of life, and in obedience to the command of God, and observe and obey all the ordinances of his house just as he has commanded, without any change, alterations, adding to, or taking from. This is the obedience and work of faith, and in this way we lay up a good foundation against the time to come, and lay hold on eternal life. By doing the holy commandments of God we enter the holy city and have right to the tree of life.

According to these works we are judged, and shall come forth in the resurrection of life as one that has done good, one to whom Christ will say, "*Inasmuch as ye did it to the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me.*" "*Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.*" Thus all the saints should live, walk, and obey Christ. This is their character as set forth in the gospel, whether a representative man like Abraham is brought forth to illustrate their true character and what grace has made them, or whether the gospel be consulted to describe their works and character as the fruits and evidences of God's Spirit dwelling in them, for all our works are wrought in God, and are evidences of our gracious state. With such their works are the works of faith and labor of love, and all harmonize in the glorious plan of salvation by grace, and exhibit before all beholders;

1st, What the blessed God has done for us and in us to make us right and acceptable before him in the righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is to all, and upon all them that believe;

2nd, what we do in obedience to him as a proof of our heir ship and righteousness in him. When Christ went to John to be baptized he said, "*Thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness.*" All the commands and examples of our Lord are righteous commands and examples, and when his children obey him and imitate him, they are doing righteous works, and shall receive the reward, the answer of a good conscience toward God. In this way they are justified by works, and shall be blessed in their deed. The peaceable fruits of righteousness are enjoyed by those who do these things as they cannot be enjoyed by the disobedient. This should stimulate us to be followers of God as dear children, and walk in love, for if we abide in his word, and do the will of our Master, we shall abide in his love.

Thus good works are united with faith as the fruit of the Spirit, as beautiful adornments that distinguish the child of God from the world. They are called a white robe, by which they adorn themselves, the "*righteousness of the saints,*" by which they make themselves ready to meet the bridegroom; Revelation 19:7,8. The robe we wear is no part of our person, but its adornment. Our person is made righteous by the blood of Christ, - which cleanseth us from all sin. When we are called by his grace, and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son, and have our conscience purged from dead works to serve the living God, it is our duty and work to adorn ourselves with all Christian virtues; to put on the new man, which, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness; to give all diligence to add to faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, to godliness brotherly-kindness, and to brotherly-kindness charity. For if these things be in you and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ; 2 Peter 1:5-8. By

these works of faith we make our calling and election sure, and lay a good foundation against the time to come.

The present salvation and comfort of the Lord's children is inseparably connected with their obedience to Christ and their works of faith and love. Hence, Jesus tells us, *"If ye abide in my word, ye shall abide in my love,"* and the apostle exhorts us in language that can not be misunderstood, that we ought to be obedient to Christ Jesus, and to give earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip; and assures us that if every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward under the dispensation, spoken by angels, we shall not escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which was spoken unto us by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by them that heard him; Hebrews 2:1-4. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, and feel his chastening rod fall upon us. And upon the disobedient child it is certain to fall. There is no escape, only by taking heed to his word, walking in his statutes, and keeping his commandments. And in doing his commandments there is a great reward that the obedient child is sure to enjoy; for God, who can not lie, has said, *"They that wait upon the Lord SHALL renew their strength; they SHALL mount up with wings as eagles; they SHALL run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint;"* Isaiah 40:31. I have put an emphasis upon the SHALLS in this text. They are the Lord's SHALLS, and should strengthen the faith of God's children, and encourage them in the way of obedience, even in dark and trying times. Again it is said, *"For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord will give grace and glory; no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly;"* Psalms 84:11. These are the faithful and precious promises of our God, and the comforts will be felt and enjoyed in the heart of every child who lives in humble obedience to Christ, and learns of him, and not of men; for God's children are to have but one pattern, and their spiritual comfort and happiness are connected with and dependent upon their following the pattern.

In the religion of Jesus every comfort and blessing the child of God enjoys in this life is connected with the obedience of faith. For by faith we receive every covenant blessing and love of a gracious God. *"Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ;"* Romans 5:1. Faith is not a mere assent of the mind, a mere fancy or opinion, produced by arguments or testimony brought to the natural mind, for it is the *"substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen;"* Hebrews 11:1. It is wrought in us by the same power that raised up our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead, and is an evidence that we are born of God, have passed from death unto life, and shall not come into condemnation. Instead of being the fruit of testimony, it is a witness testifying in the souls of the children of God, their interest in Christ, and the virtues of his blood; by this witness they are enabled to "read their title clear to mansions in the skies." Some that hear me today will never forget when that witness first bore its testimony to their souls, and the dark cloud of guilt and despair passed away, and light and comfort filled their souls.

**When the heart did believe,
What a joy I received,
What a heaven In Jesus' name.**

There is a faith that is begotten by words and arguments addressed to the rational mind, and this faith differs nothing from the faith of devils. The Jews who said of Christ, that he was one of the prophets raised from the dead, came to a rational conclusion from the evidence before them; for the prophets had wrought miracles, and even raised the dead. They knew that these works were superhuman, and that no man could do them, except God was with him; and when Christ did these works they believed on him as a prophet or even as one of the prophets raised from the dead. But when he claimed to be the Son of God they called him a blasphemer and took up stones to cast at him. The spirit of an unclean devil had this faith, for he cried out, *"I know thee who thou art, the Holy one of God;"* Luke 4:34. His faith had no love in it, neither had the faith of the Jews, or they would not

have taken up stones to cast at him. This faith which stands in human wisdom and human argument abounds in the world, and Paul, in the tenth chapter of Romans, describes it and the character of those governed by it, and he says they have a great zeal of God, but not according to knowledge; *"For they, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God."*

This faith looks not to Christ, but to the law of works, and they who have it have no righteousness but what is derived from their obedience to the law. To them Christ and the atoning virtues of his blood are nothing; *"For if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain;"* Galatians 2:21. But the faith of God's elect looks to Christ as the end of the law for righteousness. The righteousness of the law is described by Moses; *"That the man that doeth these things shall live by them."* *"But the righteousness that is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:) or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.)"* It is true Christ died and was buried, and is risen from the dead, and now lives and reigns, and is giver or author, and the finisher of our faith. Faith as a fruit of the Spirit is wrought of God in our hearts. Therefore, *"With the heart man believeth unto righteousness."* This believer hath the Spirit of God in him, and under its influence *"confession is made unto salvation,"* for, *"Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God;"* 1 John 4:15. *"Wherefore,"* says Paul, *"I give you to understand that no man, speaking by the Spirit of God, calleth Jesus accursed," (anathema,)" and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost;"* 1 Corinthians 12:3. Faith in the heart, confession with the mouth, and prayer, are fruits of the Spirit, and evidences that God dwells in the man, and he in God.

"The preaching of the cross of Christ is to them that perish, foolishness, but unto us which are saved, it is the power of God;" 1

Corinthians 1:18. To every believer, to every one born of God, quickened into spiritual life, having the faith of God in his heart, it is the power of God unto salvation. *"For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, the just shall live by faith;"* Romans 1:17. There is light in the glorious gospel of God to enlighten and instruct the renewed mind, the regenerated sinner, and to reveal blessed truths and comforts to the eye prepared to receive light. But unto them whose minds are blinded by the god of this world, who are dead in sin, our gospel is hid; 2 Corinthians 4:3, 4. *"But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned;"* 1 Corinthians 2:14. If the gospel discerns spiritual things, gives spiritual instruction, we must have spiritual life to receive the instruction.

Human philosophy, or human wisdom, can never reveal these things. They are beyond its power of conception; it is hid from them. Christ says, *"I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes;"* Matthew 11:25. This truth is confirmed by Paul, when disputing with the Jews and devout persons in the synagogue at Athens; for it is said, *"Then certain philosophers of the Epicureans, and of the Stoics, encountered him. And some said, what will this babbling, (base fellow,) say? other some, He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods: because he preached unto them Jesus, and the resurrection;"* Acts 17:18. Human philosophy, or human teaching, never can reveal Christ to the unrenewed mind, or natural man, as the Son of God if Christ has taught the truth when he says, *"No man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him."* When Peter said, *"Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."* Jesus answered and said unto him, *"Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven;"* Matthew 16:16,17. There is nothing in human science, nor in the wisdom of men, that can reveal Christ and the resurrection to the natural man. Hence it is that Paul

exclaims, *"Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God;"* 1 Corinthians 1:20. *"He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life;"* 1 John 5:12. Where there is no life there can be no knowledge, or faith, and as eternal life is given us in Christ, and he is our life, we only have spiritual life when we possess Christ, for he is the resurrection and the life, and it is his voice that the dead hear and live; for his word is Spirit, and it is life, for when he speaks the dead hear and live. *"And if Christ be in you, the body is dead, because of sin, but the Spirit is life, because of righteousness."* *"In him was life, and the life was the light of men."*

Without this spiritual life there is no spiritual light within us. We may have the light of nature so that we can understand the things of man and of nature, but to understand the things of God, or of the Spirit, we must have the Spirit of God, for, *"It is the Spirit that takes of the things of Christ and reveals them unto his children."* Light may shine upon the dead with all its brilliancy, but it gives neither life nor sensibility; it reveals no beauties, and gives no instruction. But, *"He that hath the Son hath life,"* and where this life is, the eyes are opened and prepared to receive the light, and the ears are prepared to hear, and the heart is prepared to understand and receive the *"light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."* To this soul the glorious gospel of Christ can shine, and reveal to it the mystery of redemption, and the way of salvation through Jesus Christ. It is to it, the power of God unto salvation. To this soul it comes in power and demonstration of the Spirit, as evidence to the living, who are able to receive the testimony in all its divine force and power. This soul will tremble under the Word of the Lord, as it reveals to it the justice and purity of the divine law, and the corruption and sinfulness of its own nature. It will tremble and fall into despair, and confess the justice of its own condemnation. And it will be filled with joy inexpressible and full of glory by the same Word, as it reveals to it Christ Jesus, the way, the truth, and the

life. But this man hath the Son of God in him, and hath faith given him to receive the testimony of the gospel, and appropriate Christ to himself, as did the spouse when she cried, *"My beloved is mine, and I am his."* This is saving faith, wrought in the soul by the Spirit and power of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead, and by it we receive Christ as revealed in the gospel, to be our Prophet, Priest, and King; and our Lord, our Redeemer, and Savior; and trust in him, and rely upon him alone, as our righteousness, and justification, and salvation.

This faith begets within us sincere obedience to the laws and ordinances of Christ, in our lives and conversation. It assures us of the reality and worth of eternal and invisible things, and begets within the soul assured confidence in God, that he will infallibly perform what he has promised, whereby the believer is as confident of them as if they were before his eyes, or in his possession. For says Paul, *"I know in whom I have believed; and he will keep that which I have committed to him against that day."* Faith's firm foundation is the essential, supreme perfections, and immutability of God; his immutable truth, his unerring knowledge, his infinite goodness, almighty power, and unchanging love. This faith has a prevailing influence upon the will. It dwells in the heart, draws the affections of the soul, and renders the whole man obedient to the gospel; not as a slavish servitude, but the obedience of love. It is his meat and his drink to do the will of God.

**Would not my ardent spirit vie
with angels round thy throne,
To execute thy sacred will,
and make thy glory known?**

is the language of faith, the desires of the heart purged from an evil conscience. This soul finds its spiritual rest, its meat and its drink, its spiritual strength, and its comfort in doing the commands of Christ; in bearing the yoke, and learning of him. Thus the faith that is of God, the gift of God, the fruit of his Spirit, is ever distinguished from natural faith, or that

faith produced in the natural mind by words and arguments, and sometimes called historical faith. There being no love with this faith, whatever acts of obedience may be performed, are the acts of a slave prompted by fear, or the hope of reward. It is said, *"There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death."* Such is the blindness that it is natural for us to mistake error for truth, fancy for faith, the heat of animal passion for love. Yea, we may be so confident therein that we may scoff at doubts and fears of the saint when passing under dark clouds, or temptation, or through the refiner's furnace. But true faith ever worketh by love, even that love which suffereth long and is kind, envieth not, vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, does not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; 1 Corinthians 13:4-6. Jesus is essentially the truth. *"I am,"* says Christ, *"the way, and the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me."* All the love God has to us poor, fallen, sinful creatures centers in Christ, and flows to us through, him. It was this love that chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love; that predestinated us to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself; and hath made us accepted in the beloved, and we are made the righteousness of God in Christ. This is the sure and immutable foundation upon which faith is built, and upon which it rests. And when a knowledge of these truths is revealed to the regenerated heart, and faith embraces them, it fills that heart with love, and it will sing, -

**Thou knowest I love thee, dearest Lord,
But oh! I long to soar,
Far from the sphere of mortal joys,
That I may love thee more.**

This love in us is the fruit of God's Spirit; the saint knows it and will testify with John, *"We love him because he first loved us."* It is one of the great and deciding evidences of our being sons and heirs of God; for, *"He*

that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God." Without love there can be no union, and sweet fellowship. It is by this blessed fruit of the Spirit that we feel and know that our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. The Spirit of God beareth witness itself with our spirit that we are the children of God. This is the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father, and feel assured in our hearts of our filial relationship with God; for, *"Thereby we know we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us his Spirit."*

Our evidences of being heirs of God are not found in any good that is in our flesh, for the more we look there for it, the darker the scene will get, and the greater will be our fears that we are no child, that we are a poor, deceived creature. Neither is our evidences founded upon any acts of obedience we have done, for hypocrites and wicked persons have put on all the externals of religion. It is the Spirit given to us bearing its witness with our spirit, that strengthens us and comforts us, and gives us assurance of our heirship while here in the flesh. This love embraces the brotherhood, all the family of God; for *"He that loveth not his brother, abideth in death."* He is called a murderer, and hath not eternal life abiding in him. While the world is divided into sects and contending parties, this love embraces all who can speak the Shibboleth, or give Zion's password, and this the most illiterate can do, for they are all taught of the Lord, *"The secret of the Lord is with them,"* and there is no fierce language that extols human powers, and abilities, and virtues among them. Their peace is great; they love the Father; his voice is sweet to them, and they love the children, for they see the likeness of the Father in them, and will seek to meet often with them, and talk about the power, the riches, and fullness of God's grace, and the glory of his kingdom. We may talk about our church fellowship and peace, but there is no fellowship or peace that is worthy of the name where there is no love. Love is the sweet tie that binds our hearts together in fellowship.

Blessed be the tie that binds

Our hearts in Christian love,

**The fellowship of kindred minds
Is like to that above.
We share each other's woes,
Our mutual burdens bear,
And often for each other flows
The sympathizing tear.**

The more our hearts are filled with this love, the more of heaven shall we enjoy here below, and the brighter and stronger will be our evidences of union with Christ; for by this "*we know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.*" This love leads us to seek the society of God's humble poor, who are hated and scorned by the world, and by false professors, and false churches, for this is a sect everywhere spoken against. But to suffer with them, and with them bear the reproaches of Christ is greater honors than the world can give, and in them are sweeter comforts than the world can know any thing about. To be esteemed worthy to suffer reproaches with Christ, and enjoy the fellowship and love of his poor and despised children here on earth, is higher honors than the world can give. To be a doorkeeper in the house of my God would to me be higher honors and sweeter pleasures than the world can give. The house of God to me is such a lovely place, and his children are such lovely ones that one day with them is better than a thousand in the pleasures and vanities of the world. Their language to the saints will be as the word of Ruth to Naomi, "*Entreat me not to leave thee, nor to return from following after thee? for whither thou goest I will go; and where thou lodgest I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God; where thou diest I will die, and there will I be buried.*" Every acceptable act of obedience is prompted by this love in the soul. The world loses all its charms; we are willing to give it up and bear its frowns and hatred to be a disciple of Christ, enjoy his smiles and take his yoke upon us, and bear his cross, although the world may pity and despise.

**Men may trouble and distress me;
' Twill but drive me to thy breast:**

**Life with trials hard may press me;
Heaven will bring me sweeter rest.**

**O, 'tis not' in grief to harm me
While thy love is left to me;
O, 'twere not in joy to charm me,
Were that joy unmixed with thee.**

I feel that I am this day talking to some who have felt this love in their hearts, and are yet living in the world, and from the people they love, and hope to live with when the troubles and labors of life are over. O, how can you live away from them? Dear child, come home. This is your Father's house these are his children, and your brethren and kindred. They love you, and you love them. I know you do. The tear I now see stealing down the cheek tells the story. O, why do you stay away? You surely are not ashamed of the cross of Christ? I think I hear you say, "No! O, how gladly would I bear it! I would hold it to my heart, but the honor is too great for me; I am too unworthy." But, dear soul, I answer:

**If you tarry till you're better,
You will never come at all;
All the fitness he requireth,
Is to feel your need of him;
This he gives you,
'Tis the Spirit's rising beam.**

"You feel your need of him." You have no hiding place, no shelter from the storm, no living water, or shadow of a great rock in a weary land, but in Jesus. You feel unworthy; so do all his children. He came to save sinners; to seek and save that which was lost.

**Come ye weary, heavy laden,
Lost and ruined by the fall;**

**If you tarry till you're better,
You will never come at all;
Not the righteous—
Sinners Jesus came to call.**

His arms are ready to receive you, and the arms and hearts of his children are ready to embrace you, and bid you welcome to a place in the court of the Lord. It is sweet to sit in the banqueting house of Jesus, and beneath the banner of his love. This is the home of the saints, the bride of Jesus. It is here she meets her Beloved and hears his words of love, and her cup runneth over with joy. O, come and feast with her; the table is spread for you.

**Jesus, my Savior, let me share
The meanest of thy servants' fare;
May I at last approach to taste
The blessings of thy marriage feast.**

Yes, this feast is for you; come and taste with us the comforts that the obedient and loving child shall feel in obeying his Lord, and in sitting with His family, and feasting upon the good things he has prepared for you. For the One you love above all others says, "*Eat, O friends; drink; yea, drink abundantly, O beloved.*" Have you joys in the world? have you delights, then, that you can not give up for communion with the saints, and the peace of conscience you would feel in the way of obedience to Christ.? Answer these questions in your own heart, and be obedient to Him who has called you by his grace.

O, my brethren, do you love our God? Do you love the dear Savior who freely shed his precious blood for you? Do you love his kingdom, his laws, his ordinances, and his people? O, is Zion, the city of our God, your delight? Then let your faith be joined with love, and be made manifest by your works and labors of love, for true faith only works by love. All devourings, bitings, and evil speaking are of the flesh, and are not of faith. If

you have the faith that works by love, you will love your enemies, and pray for them. Your Savior, when on the cross, suffering the cruel tortures of that shameful death, prayed for his unfeeling persecutors and murderers. Your brother, Stephen, when his body was bruised by the stones cast at him by his enemies, and his soul was departing to his God, prayed for his murderers. O, could the Spirit of our Master dwell with us all, at all times, and we be led and controlled by it, it would save us from many regrets and sorrowful days and nights. It would give us sweeter joy than to see our persecutors and enemies punished. Prayer is the desire of the soul, prompted by a knowledge of our needs and holy desires begotten within us by the Holy Spirit, and when we are imitating our Lord, in a life of obedience, we can approach the throne of grace with filial boldness, and there receive the mercy and grace we need; for he has said, "*Seek, and ye shall find; ask, and it shall be given.*" O, what a privilege it is to come to a loving God, whose ears are ever open to our complaints and humble prayers! and you must come in faith, believing that he is, and is a rewarder of them that seek him.

Dear sinner, how do you feel? Is your heart so hard that love cannot move it? Are your eyes so blind that you cannot see the slippery place upon which you stand, with fiery billows beneath you? Can you hear the groans, see the sweat-like drops of blood, and hear the prayer of the sinner's Friend, and feel no love for him in your heart? Can you sit and witness the tears and prayers of these dear saints, and feel no tender emotions? If this be the case, what can I say, what can I do, to melt your hearts, and fill them with love for the blessed Savior, and cause you to seek an interest in his atoning blood? Nothing! I realize it in my inmost heart. My arm is too short and feeble to reach you, and deliver you from the bondage of sin and death. All the powers of men or angels cannot save you. None but Jesus can save you, for there is salvation in none other. O, may the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead enter your hearts, that they may be melted down in love, and drawn to Christ, for there is salvation in none other for lost, helpless sinners.

Dear brethren and sisters, you are nearing the perfect shore. The stormy sea is almost past; the sorrows and troubles of time are almost over; your warfare will soon end; the time is near at hand when you shall, in triumph, enter the bright and sunny shore where faith will be lost in sight, and hope, in the possession of all you now hope for. But love, that eternal principle which unites you to God and his dear children, will never end or die. And as we journey to that happy state, through great tribulation, we can sing:

**Haste thee on from grace to glory,
Armed by faith and winged by prayer;
Heav'n's eternal days before thee,
God's own hand shall guide thee there.
Soon shall close thy earthly mission,
Soon shall pass thy pilgrim days;
Hope shall change to glad fruition,
Faith to sight, and prayer to praise.**

Glory be to God, the author and finisher of "*faith which worketh by love.*"