

August 2016

Dear Brethren:

We offer another warm greeting from Minnesota, the land of 10,000 lakes. We trust all continues well with you despite the many things we do not fully understand in this life. "For now we see through a glass, darkly," with incomplete understanding (1 Corinthians 13:12). That is why we live by faith. But it is through those things we do not fully understand that God can teach us one of the fundamental lessons of our Christian walk.

Say you were lying in a bed, so weak you were unable to move, your body riddled with cancer, restricting your ability to talk and even to breathe, wracked with pain day and night, week on end—what would be going through your mind? At the same time you realized that not only was God allowing you to go through this, but that very likely He was going to let you die from it. How hard do you think it would be for you to totally trust God's judgment and to remain in total agreement with the way God was handling your situation? Very few of us have to endure a trial that severe. But trials and difficulties are common to us all. Are there situations in your life that you do not fully understand? Trials you wish would end?

Are you in total agreement with every decision made by God's ministers? Do you understand every point of doctrine in the faith once delivered? Do you understand every statement made in the church literature? Are you in total agreement with the way God answers your prayers and blesses and directs your life? If you were God, would you conduct the conversion process the same way—not changing a thing? How do we handle those areas where we are not totally satisfied—where we just do not understand why God is doing it that way?

Many apostate groups out there have a good solution: Just follow the concepts of your own mind. Pick through all the scriptures and just hold fast to that which makes sense to you. However, in God's true Church, we are to "all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions [no dissensions or schisms] among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind [of Christ—not scholars] and in the same judgment [of what is right and wrong]" (1 Corinthians 1:10) [*New King James Version*].

How is that possible? Obviously, it has to do with God's top-down government—God working through the one man He is using, and everyone submitting to that doctrine he is teaching. But what about what goes on in our individual minds? How do we deal with questions like: Why would Jon Brisby (for example) make that decision? Why would he

teach that as the faith once delivered? Why is God putting me through this severe trial? You are not alone. The Bible records a number of examples of godly men and women who struggled with certain directives of God.

Moses followed God's command to go to Pharaoh and demand the release of the Israelites. When Pharaoh told Moses no, and then proceeded to double their workload by not giving them straw to make bricks, Moses naturally became frustrated, discontented and discouraged. "Why is it You have sent me? For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in Your name, he has done evil to this people; neither have You delivered Your people at all" (Exodus 5:22–23) [NKJV]. Moses became depressed, discouraged and demoralized because God had only allowed things to get worse.

When the prophet Elijah fled from Jezebel (the wicked wife of King Ahab) who was chasing him down to kill him, he became very depressed and so discouraged that he just wanted to die. He said to God: "I have been very zealous for the [Eternal] God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword. I alone am left; and they seek to take my life" (1 Kings 19:10) [NKJV]. Elijah was asking God, why are you letting this happen?

These men were doing what God asked, and matters only got worse. Other biblical examples show people being mocked, imprisoned, stoned, sawn asunder, slain with the sword, being destitute, afflicted, tormented—for doing the right thing! Have some of these things ever happened to you? Sometimes doing the right thing can get us into trouble with those in Satan's world who are our neighbor enemies.

Job was a righteous man, the greatest of all the kings of the East, and even when his entire family was killed and all his entire wealth was stripped from him, he still did not curse God. But then, when a major health trial was added on top of all that, the questions started to flow.

Wherefore then hast thou [Oh Eternal] brought me forth out of the womb? Oh that I had given up [my life as a breathing creature], and no eye had seen me! I should have been as though I had not been; I should have been carried from the womb to the grave (Job 10:18–19).

Notice the first four verses of Habakkuk. Habakkuk the prophet is asking God why He permits injustice:

The burden [the weighty message that God did lay on the mind of His seer] which Habakkuk the prophet did see [without a full understanding]. O [Eternal], how long shall I cry [of injustice], and thou wilt not hear! even cry

out unto thee of violence, and thou wilt not save [those in harm's way]! Why dost thou shew me iniquity [injustices of lawbreakers], and cause me to behold grievance [the fruits of sin]? for spoiling [plundering] and violence are before me: and there are that raise up strife and contention. Therefore the law is slacked [compromised and powerless], and judgment [justice] doth never go forth: for the wicked doth compass [surround] about the righteous; therefore wrong judgment [perverted justice] proceedeth (Habakkuk 1:1–4).

This prophet of God saw violence and injustice all around him, and he could not understand why God was allowing it to go on!

Do we ever talk to God in this way? Perhaps something God is allowing us to go through just does not seem right. Perhaps a sore trial we are going through, or seeing someone else go through, seems unjust. It is a question that has been asked repeatedly among many of God's people: Why? There is a right way and a wrong way to ask that question. You can ask it as a skeptic—one inclined to doubt the truth or soundness of God's judgment and justice. "Why is God allowing this to take place in my life? God is not fair. It does not make sense to me. Why me? I do not see why I should have to suffer in this way."

The other way to ask those questions is not as a skeptic, but as the called of God—within a conversion process—in a spirit of humility and wonder: "Why is God dealing with me in this way? What makes this way the best for me? What is God trying to tell me? I want to understand." There is a major difference between these two approaches, because one stems from disagreement in the way God is treating me, and the other stems from faith in knowing that God knows best how to convert my carnal nature and how and when to heal me.

As I was growing up from a child, my favorite question to ask when I did not understand something was, "WHY?" I was not skeptical of what the answer might be because I was sure there must be a good reason, and I wanted to know what it was. I realized I was ignorant in this regard and went to a knowledgeable source for the answer. That is the way we need to approach God. Why did you do it that way and allow this to happen? I know there is a good reason—I want to understand this according to your thinking because your thoughts are more righteous than my thoughts.

Think about this: When we meditate upon our future as part of Christ's wife and helpmate, we often focus on being kings and priests, teachers and leaders. But realize, no matter how exalted our positions, how great our honor, we will always be children of our Father (and the wife of the Son). If we develop a childlike trust in our Father, how will that affect our actions? In this letter we will see how the childlike quality of faith is directly related to the childlike habit of obedience.

Mr. Armstrong often said the two conditions for healing were FAITH and OBEDIENCE. The truth is that these two qualities are inseparably linked. Consider this profound statement from *The Plain Truth about Healing*, 1979, (pp. 66–67): "But the very PURPOSE of human life (God reproducing Himself) is this holy and righteous character development. AND IT IS ACQUIRED, DEVELOPED AND INCREASED primarily through OBEDIENCE AND FAITH." Those two qualities are how we develop God's character! God is trying to build our FAITH and our habit of OBEDIENCE.

There are two scriptures that give good basic definitions of what faith is. One of them is in Romans, chapter 4, which discusses the example of faithful Abraham:

And being not weak in faith, he [Abraham] considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb: He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; And being fully persuaded [fully convinced] that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform (Romans 4:19–21).

God had promised to give Abraham a son, and to bless him with multitudes of descendants through that son. And Abraham, like a child, simply believed God would follow through. That is faith with a childlike quality. Abraham waited for years and built tremendous faith and patience in the process.

Read Genesis 22:1–18 and you can see the message contained in Abraham's story. This historic record shows how closely related are FAITH and OBEDIENCE. Abraham believed—had faith—and obeyed. Abraham's faith was manifested, demonstrated and expressed in obedience. And his faith and obedience was rewarded with blessings. What does God have to say about faith that is not manifested, demonstrated and expressed in obedience? "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?" (James 2:14). Absolutely not! That is because it is a professing, dead, faith reflected in no action.

God says, by Christ's stripes are you healed (Isaiah 53:5; 1 Peter 2:24), if we are not continually breaking the law and reaping the penalty of infirmity. God only forgives sins of which we repent. We must stop practicing the sin that stems from a professing, dead, faith.

Even so faith, if it hath not works [of obedience to God's law], is dead, being alone [isolated]. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works [in actions of obedience to God's Word to back it up]. Thou believest that there is one God [having all authority]; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and

tremble [but they are not saved]. But wilt thou know [will you ever learn], O vain [foolish] man, that faith without works [of obedience to God's Word] is dead [ineffective and worthless]? (James 2:17–20)

It is not enough merely to believe in God's promises and that He exists. We must also believe, trust and DO what He says. Suppose a wife tells her husband that she loves him very much and trusts in what he tells her to do. But when he tells her to do a certain thing and she refuses to do it, she has proven by her works her lack of trust in what he told her to do. She did not hear because she already had her mind made up.

Was not Abraham our father justified by works [of obedience], when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought [produced] with his works, and by [his] works [of obedience to God—inspired through faith] was [his] faith made perfect? And the scripture [Genesis 15:6] was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed [accounted] unto him for righteousness [conformity to God's will in thought and action]: and he was called the Friend [beloved] of God (James 2:21–23).

Notice the relationship between true faith and righteous works—they are inseparable. While true faith produces righteous works, righteous works evidence true faith. The only way you can show someone the reality of your faith is by your righteous works. In other words, righteous works is a measuring device of your faith. Perhaps it is hard to pinpoint how much faith you have. But how obedient are you in obeying God's Law? How is your progress in living by every word of God? That is much easier to see! What are your works? Do your works reflect childlike faith in your Heavenly Father? Are you really demonstrating your trust in God by responding positively to His work in your life?

Question: Was Abraham foolish to obey God's command to offer up his son as a burnt offering without some form of an explanation? Was he a victim of some form of brainwashing? Abraham did not understand, yet he had the faith to obey God.

Meditate on this truism: Disobedience really demonstrates a lack of faith. It communicates to your Creator that you do not trust that God can deliver you from every sore trial and temptation. You do not trust that the conversion process, God's way, is necessary. You do not believe that sin is that offensive to God. You are going to trust yourself in the concepts of your own thoughts. Obedience, on the other hand, demonstrates a childlike trust in God—that He knows best, and that all things will turn out better if you will just simply do as He asks. We really CAN measure our faith by our obedience, which will also bring understanding. What do you do when you do not understand some decision, when you are not satisfied by an answer you receive from God in His Word, or from the ministry? Our natural carnal minds will rebel against it. When we lack faith, we will be lacking in

obedience. God wants us to obey Him in faith without understanding because it is through obedience that understanding will come.

Let us examine more closely the intimate relationship between faith and obedience. First, we need faith in order to obey, which comes about by hearing the doctrine once delivered through the foolishness of preaching. As Mr. Armstrong wrote in *The Plain Truth about Healing*, page 41:

. . . With men it is impossible—utterly impossible to really KEEP His commandments. But—here's the blessed truth—WITH GOD it is possible even to keep His commandments. Do you begin to see? It TAKES FAITH—faith in the power of God! And, just as your own diligent effort coupled with faith makes faith perfect, so faith coupled with your effort makes PERFECT OBEDIENCE! The two go hand in hand. And you cannot have the one without the other.

A LIVING FAITH, the only kind that will SAVE, is an *active* faith—one that trusts God to make it possible to OBEY Him, to live the true Christian life, to KEEP His blessed Commandments!

Think! Could a just God command men to do what is IMPOSSIBLE to do? . . . And so it *is* possible through FAITH and the GIFT of God's Holy Spirit for man to keep His commandments! And whoever claims differently God calls a plain LIAR (I John 2:4). . . .

The true commandment-keeper is forced to trust God to make obedience possible. And thus faith does not void, but *establishes*, the law! And to keep the law requires FAITH!

Ye see then how that by works [in obedience to God's Law] a man is justified [rendered right in God's sight], and not by faith only (James 2:24).

Meditate on this statement made by Mr. Armstrong in this same booklet (p. 38): "Then are we saved by works *instead* of faith? No, NEVER! We are saved by FAITH! But faith functions *with our works* and BY WORKS our FAITH is MADE PERFECT! That is LIVING FAITH!" God's Law is intended to protect us from suffering. Whatever we sow we shall reap. It is not God who punishes us when we do wrong, it is merely our own acts rebounding like a boomerang.

When we live by every word of God—making it active and operative in our lives, the way it was originally revealed to us—only then is our faith made perfect. God's Law is perfect. It makes our faith perfect. It is only a terror to the lawbreaker because lawbreaking makes his faith ineffective and worthless. Let us remember, faith is the gift of God.

For by grace [unmerited pardon] are ye [being] saved through faith [in the doctrine]; and that [faith of Christ—Galatians 2:16] not of yourselves: it [the faith of Christ] is the gift of God (Ephesians 2:8).

Here is what Mr. Armstrong said in reference to this scripture—same booklet (pp. 36–37): "In Revelation 14:12 . . . the *true* Church of THIS DAY . . . have the FAITH OF JESUS. Notice, the FAITH OF JESUS! It is not just *our* faith in HIM, but *His* faith—the very faith with which He performed His miracles—placed *in us* and *acting* in us." It is a fruit of God's Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22).

Mr. Armstrong taught that Jesus Christ had a full measure of God's Holy Spirit because God was His Father and He was the Word made flesh. The more of God's words we make active and operative in our lives, the more of God's Holy Spirit we will have and the greater will be our faith. And Acts 5:32 tells us that God gives His Holy Spirit only to those who obey Him. We must first start out with our own will power to obey God—against all odds of success. When God first sees our effort, only then will He come to our aid as we draw ourselves close to Him, matching effort for effort.

So note these critical truths: Obedience is itself an act of faith. If you step out in faith with the will to obey God, He will give you His Holy Spirit to increase the faith of Christ needed to obey Him. God will reward and bless you for your obedience. Your act of faith will inspire more faith. If you draw close to God, there will be a virtuous cycle at work in your life. You need faith to obey. The more you obey, the more your faith will increase, the more of God's Holy Spirit you will receive, and the easier it will become to obey God. And at the end of it all, you are a more faithful, obedient child of God.

Now let us look at the Bible's other definition of faith: "Now faith is the substance [the assurance, the confirmation, the title-deed] of things [we] hoped for, the evidence [the conviction] of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1). Hope is the end product of faith which you do not see. Faith is a trust and confidence in the invisible God to perform what He has not yet done, and which mortal flesh cannot do. Faith is the assurance that God's Word is true as it was originally revealed to us, and that His promises are sure. This assurance, this reliance on God's Word—this confidence in the revealed Truth once delivered—is FAITH. By its nature, it refers to our belief or confidence in something that we do not have yet. The called must live by faith (Hebrews 10:38). The called must walk by faith, not by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7). Both of these verses are telling us that we must OBEY through faith.

When God commands something, we are to do it, whether or not we understand why. We must not allow our minds to think, "I'll do this after I understand it." Oftentimes, God will reveal His reasons only AFTER we show ourselves to be faithful, obedient children! God's Word commanded Herbert and Loma Armstrong to keep the Holy Days. They did that

by themselves for seven years with no understanding. Then they continued another seven years within the church with no understanding. They had kept the Holy Days for fourteen years before God revealed their meaning to them. They walked by faith. They obeyed in faith. They were faithful, obedient children of God, howbeit lacking understanding.

This is one of the fundamental principles of the whole Bible. First you exhibit the faith, second you obey, and then you receive the understanding. Obedience is required before God reveals understanding. God's desire is to build our faith and our habit of obedience. What is the BEST way for God to do that? As hard as this may be for us to accept, it is NOT by giving us full understanding and giving us everything we ask for. Actually, sometimes the best way for God to help us is to withhold the understanding—withhold the blessings—until we have the opportunity to build the faith and our habit of obedience.

My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations [various sore trials]; Knowing this, that the trying [proving] of your faith worketh [produces] patience. But let patience have her perfect work [building our faith and our habit of obedience], that ye may be [become] perfect [in godliness] and entire [complete], wanting [lacking] nothing (James 1:2–4).

One day we will have all the answers to why God allows some to die prematurely; why God allows some to be wracked with pain day and night, week on end. Mr. Armstrong taught that God will permit sore trials, tests, severe problems of all kinds, even health problems, to come upon us. He will permit circumstances to drive us to Him for help and deliverance! If we learn the lesson of FAITH, if we have PATIENCE, and if we obey and trust God, He has promised to deliver us out of every trial or problem that comes up. One thing is for sure, we will reap what we sow. If we sow the fruits of failure, and God does not intervene to deliver us, we will also reap the fruits of failure.

Mr. Armstrong said there were only three possible reasons why healing is hindered: 1) God heals in His own time. Neither you nor I can dictate to God HOW or WHEN. 2) We have not repented. We have not stopped practicing physical sin which has to do with improper diet, rest, exercise and control of stress. 3) We lack the faith of Jesus Christ within us. God raised up Mr. Armstrong to reveal to us the definition of physical sin. He also taught us the principles of healthful living that were intended to protect us from sickness and suffering. When we transgress God's physical law operating within the human body, we will reap whatever we sow. It is not God punishing us *specially* when we do wrong. It is merely our own wrong acts returning to us to give us a boomerang reward.

God's natural physical law operating within the human body is only a terror to those who are continually transgressing it. If you are breaking the laws of healthful living

habitually, your faith to be healed will be DEAD and ineffective. God wants us to glorify Him in our bodies by practicing preventative maintenance against all behavioral driven diseases.

And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought [worked] righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight [became powerful in battle], turned to flight the armies of the aliens [put foreign armies to flight]. Women received their dead raised to life again [in a physical resurrection] (Hebrews 11:32–35).

But notice now, there is a second group spoken of here. Paul is now talking about martyrs and those persecuted. The first group, having won divine approval by means of their faith, was delivered out of harm's way. The second group, which had also won divine approval by means of their faith, was NOT delivered out of harm's way.

. . . and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection [born of the Spirit into immortality]: And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover [even] of bonds [chains] and imprisonment: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted [meaning they were tried and tested to prove steadfastness of faith without a show of God's power to deliver them], were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; . . . they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise [the reward] (Hebrews 11:32–39).

I want you to notice a contrast here. One group escaped the edge of the sword and the other group was slain by the sword. God delivers one group out of harm's way, but the other group He allows to be persecuted and suffer martyrdom. What were they thinking when God was allowing them to go through such intense suffering? Did they understand WHY? They knew God's promises were sure. "The righteous cry, and the [Eternal] heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles. . . . Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the [Eternal] delivereth him out of them all (Psalm 34:17, 19)." That is wonderfully inspiring, and God does that for many, but not all. What about the "others"—the others who were not taken out of harm's way? Their suffering was intense. Did they understand why? Surely they would have liked an explanation. What were they thinking, knowing that God was allowing this to happen? Whatever they thought, what is amazing is that they remained faithful. They were in a war of faith versus doubt. Yet, they obtained a good report through faith!

The Apostle Peter wrote, "Beloved [of God], think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed [at His return], ye may be glad also [collectively] with exceeding joy" (1 Peter 4:12–13). Suffering is a normal Christian experience. "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Timothy 3:12). That is the price we pay for being called. Jesus said, "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile [reprimand, criticize abusively] you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward [your degree of office or position in God's Kingdom] in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you" (Matthew 5:11–12). God wants us to be faithful, obedient children to the faith (the doctrine) once delivered. "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God [the God Family], and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together" (Romans 8:17).

God has invited us to the table of His salvation process, but it is not going to be a picnic. God wants to build within us the childlike attitude of faith through the childlike habit of obedience. Once we obey and search for answers in the right spirit—not as skeptics, but as disciples of Jesus Christ—God will begin to bless us with understanding. As we collectively learn to trust our Father and walk by the faith once delivered, we will mature spiritually to become part of the wife God is preparing for His Son. Then, glorified together, we will convert the world during the coming Millennium. May God bless you in your endeavor to be faithful, obedient children *in the faith*.

Your servant in the faith,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robert J. Litz". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Robert J. Litz