

## 14.

### “FAITH-WORKS”

Salvation is by grace through faith. In these days almost all Christians who have access to a Bible realize this fact. There is nothing which we can do in and of ourselves which will please God or cause Him to save us. It is only by His great mercy and the love which He has for us that He sent His Son to die in our place. No works which we can do will bring us salvation but only our acceptance of the great sacrifice which Jesus made. When we genuinely repent of our sins and believe into Him, then God forgives us. He is satisfied with the perfect offering of His Son and He receives us into the Beloved. This is something which every Christian should understand.

Even though this is so, as we have been learning from the past several chapters, a believer's entrance into the Millennial Kingdom is based upon his works. When we stand before the judgment seat of Christ we must give account of the deeds done in our body, whether they have been good or evil (II Cor 5:10). Jesus says He will give to every man according to his works (Rev 2:23). This presents us with an apparent contradiction. On one hand salvation is the free gift of God through Christ Jesus and on the other, when we appear before Him, He will judge us according to our works. Receiving eternal life is indeed by grace and is not of ourselves. But, our entrance into the Millennial Kingdom is another thing. Our entrance there will be determined by what we have done with what God has given to us. Jesus has supplied us with an indescribable gift and He expects us to do something with that gift while He is away.

Just as Jesus Christ spent His time doing the will of the Father, so we too should bear fruit unto God. When a farmer plants seeds in the ground he does so with the expectation that they will grow up and produce fruit. In the same way God is expecting us to bring forth works which glorify Him. Peter writes that we should be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of Him (II Pet 1:8). God requires that we produce the fruit of good works while we are on this earth (Eph 2:10). Through Jesus He has given us new life and entrusted us with a great commission. His purpose for doing this is that we would use our time here to serve Him, helping Him to accomplish His will.

The Lord Jesus expects us to be doing something while He is away, and it is by these works which we have done that we will be judged when He returns. Probably you all remember the parable found in Matthew 25:15-30 concerning the talents which were given to a certain king's servants. It is clearly stated that this parable is concerning the coming Kingdom. The servants who were faithful were rewarded by being able to "enter into the joy of [their] Lord." But the servant who was given only one talent and did nothing with it was punished by being cast into outer darkness. He was disciplined because he did nothing in his lord's absence. May God have mercy on us that we would be found faithfully doing His will when He comes and so be pleasing in His sight. Paul, the apostle, urged Timothy to labor so that he would be a workman that "does not need to be ashamed" (II Tim 2:15). We too should follow this example so that we would not be ashamed on that Day.

There is an interesting portion of another Kingdom parable found in Matthew chapter 22 which addresses the subject of wedding garments. We read beginning in verse 11: "But when the king came in to see the guests [at the wedding feast], he saw a man there who did not have on a wedding garment. So he said to him, 'Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment?' And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, 'Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

For many are called, but few are chosen" (Mt 22:11-14). This poor man was obviously lacking some requirement for entering into the wedding feast aspect of the Kingdom. What was this requirement? It was to be clothed with the good works of faith. Revelation 19:8 shows us that the wedding garment was in fact good works where we read: "that she [the bride] should array herself in fine linen, bright and pure: for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints" (ASV).

### TRIED BY FIRE

We understand then that good works are necessary and desirable. They are something which every believer must be producing. But it is also clear from the scriptures that not just any kind of effort for the Lord will prove to be acceptable. The works which we do in Jesus' name must be of special kind to qualify for a reward. When the Day of the Lord comes, all the works which we have done will be tried by fire. I Corinthians 3:12-15 reads: "Now if any one builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw; each one's work shall become manifest: for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work of what sort it is. If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss: but he himself will be saved; yet so as through fire." This fire which will test our works, I believe, is nothing other than the presence of the eternal God. "For our God is a consuming fire" (Heb 12:29). The intensity of His presence and the glory of His countenance will quickly reveal the substance of our activities.

The phrase "suffer loss" used here must include the loss of inheriting the Millennial Kingdom since this is one of the rewards which the faithful will receive. Although there are other kinds of rewards mentioned in the Bible such as various kinds of crowns, many of these also can be understood in the context of the Kingdom. Crowns, for example, speak of kingship and ruling, which as we have been seeing will be exactly the role of believers who are judged worthy. Losing our unacceptable works could not be the loss spoken of here since works will not be our reward but

will only entitle us to one. This passage also shows that those whose activities are rejected at the judgment seat of Christ are still eternally saved even though they “suffer loss” (I Cor 3:15).

We find mentioned in the foregoing passage two specific categories of works: wood, hay and stubble – gold, silver and precious stones. The valuable ones endure the test and entitle us to a reward while the combustible items are consumed and expose our disobedience, thus disqualifying us from entering into the Kingdom. Since these deeds which we do are so critical in determining whether or not we will be approved when we stand before the Lord, it is well worth taking some time to discuss at length the substance of them. Every believer should have a good understanding of which activities will please God and which will not. Many Christians being ignorant of God’s criteria could all too easily be wasting their time building something which God does not desire.

Beginning to examine this all-important subject, we will discuss the kind of works which are rejected by God. Later on, we will look into the glorious truths about what it is that pleases Him. Although we must spend a little time here speaking about negative, disagreeable things, it is essential for every follower of Jesus to have a firm grasp on these truths. So please bear with me as we cover this ground together.

## **WOOD, HAY AND STUBBLE**

Certainly we should all know that these works which we are to do while Jesus is away are not works of the law for the scripture says that “by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight” (Rm 3:20). Even though this should be obvious to anyone who opens his or her Bible and meditates on the things of God for themselves, there is a growing movement in these days encouraging believers to return to the law. There is a new wind of doctrine, which in some parts of the world is almost a mania, to revert to Old Testament Judaism. It seems that there are many who have failed to penetrate behind the veil and establish an intimate relationship with God Himself. Or perhaps through the years, their relationship

with Him has become distant, boring or cold. These then are seeking to find a superficial, human way to feel good about themselves and think that they are serving the Lord. Not enjoying the kind of relationship with the Invisible which is justifying them day by day, they seek another avenue to satisfy their conscience and to feel that they are doing the right thing. They are occupying themselves with Old Testament rituals, terminology, festivals and practices, hoping that this will somehow fill the void. However, as we all should know, the law and all the ordinances are weak because they only work through the efforts of the flesh (Rm 8:3). Therefore, they can never produce the kinds of works which will stand the test of that Day.

Further every believer should also be aware that trying to do the right thing according to "New Testament principles" will not be acceptable to Him either. While some have understood that the law cannot produce righteousness, they instead have developed for themselves another kind of "law" composed of New Testament principles. They have researched the gospels and epistles and synthesized from them a kind of a "spiritual" code of ethics and behavior by which they try to guide their lives. They make every effort to follow these principles. They are zealous to do the right thing. But once again, these kind of works can only be done through the efforts of the natural man. Those with a strong will and much determination can perhaps make a good show of following these various principles. However, these efforts make very combustible materials.

Those who are living their lives only by the outward directives found in the scriptures will be among the ones to whom Jesus says, "depart from me, you that work iniquity (lawlessness, rebellion)" (Mt 7:23). Significantly, the number of those in this category will be "many" (Mt 7:22). To set out to accomplish the dictates of the Bible on our own, even "with the help of the Holy Spirit," is really an act of rebellion against God. Some of those who were rejected were individuals who had done impressive things in Jesus' name. They had preached and prophesied. They had cast out demons. They had done many extraordinary works and even miracles. Perhaps they even constructed great cathedrals and had far-reaching ministries. But none

of this was done in true submission to Him. It was just the works of the flesh. All these things can be done by human energy and knowledge acting in independence from Him. We can assume that these same people lived at least outwardly moral lives and perhaps those around them were impressed by their Christianity. But moral living, miracles, beautiful buildings and eloquent messages do not please the Father. Only by submitting completely to Jesus and allowing Him to work through us is the Father satisfied. Jesus' way is one of complete dependence and submission to Himself. His way for us is to simply abide in Him. Any works which we do which are legalistic, self-motivated or merely human accomplishments will be exposed to be only "wood, hay and stubble."

### THE NATURAL MAN

This brings us then to another category of rejected works which are the works of the natural man or the "flesh." When we come to the Lord and begin to know Him in an intimate way, it is normal for us to become excited about working for Him. However, it is here that the natural, human nature can come into play. If we are intelligent, resourceful, energetic with many great plans and ideas, it is all too easy for us to begin to do works for God. Naturally we want to please Him and so we use our own efforts do try to do His work. However, our Lord has some very specific criteria for us in our work. That is that what we do for Him, must first be directed by Him. He must be the one who is initiating the work. Further, what we do cannot be done simply by our own resources and energy, but by a dependence upon His strength and power. Surely, "the flesh profits nothing" (Jn 6:63).

How many of God's children are caught up in fleshy works. They want to please Him, but lack understanding of how to do so. They have mounted ministries, started churches, and initiated programs. They have preached, taught and labored to do what they think the Lord might want them to do. But many of these dear brothers and sisters have encountered frustration and failure in their efforts. Perhaps they have become disillusioned and discouraged, thinking that God has not blessed their work.

However, the root of the problem is not their willingness. It is not that God does not love them and want to use them for His kingdom. The problem is that He must first break them of all their confidence in themselves. All their natural capabilities and energy must be brought to an end. They must learn that "Without Me, you can do nothing" (Jn 15:5).

Whatever we can produce for God by our own energy and effort will be rejected on judgment day. It does not matter if we think our efforts are "biblical." It makes no difference if what we are doing seems right or good. The question is not the appearance of the deeds we do – whether they are popular or successful for example – but the substance of them. Very impressive buildings can be constructed out of wood, but it is an extremely combustible material. Jesus must be the source and the content of all of our work for God. He must be the one who initiates our actions and He must be the one who is flowing through us to accomplish them.

## FAITH

The works which will please God and pass the test of judgment day are works of faith. But what does this mean? What is this true faith which will produce works which glorify and please God? To really grasp this, it may be necessary to disabuse ourselves of some very common misinformation. We must understand very clearly what this faith is not. Faith is not a mental exercise. Real faith is not our mental agreement with biblical facts. True faith is not something which we ourselves can create by constantly reaffirming scriptural truths. Instead, genuine faith is our heart response to God's revelation of Himself. When He reveals Himself, through His speaking in our spirit, in His word or by other means and we believe what He is showing us, this is faith. Unless and until God reveals Himself to us in some way, we cannot possess the kind of faith that pleases Him. Real faith is not something which we can generate ourselves. Instead, it is "a gift of God" (Eph 2:8). When God reveals Himself to us and by His grace we respond by believing, this is true faith.

Let us examine a few examples from the Bible to clarify this point. How did our father Abraham arrive at faith? Did he screw up his thought processes until they almost overheated and finally decided that there must be a God? Did he contemplate the cosmos using all his rational force and finally conclude that there must be a Creator? No, exactly the opposite occurred. First “the God of glory appeared to Abraham” and second, “Abraham believed God” (Gen 15:1,6). The order of these events is very important. Abraham arrived at faith by responding positively to the revelation of God.

How about the early disciples? Did they come to faith by analyzing Jesus’ family tree? Did they research the prophecies and conclude that He was the one who would fulfill them so He must be the Christ? No. In fact, those who knew of His prophesied birthplace were the very ones who did not believe and did not come to worship Him. Although the genealogy of Jesus and His fulfillment of the prophecies came to the disciples’ understanding later, it was not these things which generated their faith. Instead what happened first was: Jesus “manifested His glory,” then “His disciples believed in Him” (Jn 2:11).

When Peter made his famous declaration that Jesus was the Christ, Jesus affirmed that this had not been something of which he had become convinced by human means. It was not “flesh and blood” which had explained it to him, but was the “Father who is in heaven” who had revealed it (Mt 16:17). Peter’s faith was a result of divine revelation. In every case, when the disciples first encountered Jesus, they followed Him because they saw something supernatural in Him. Humanly speaking Jesus was unattractive (Is 53:2), but God opened their eyes to see beyond the outward appearance and into the spiritual realm. Then their hearts responded by believing in Him.

When we become born again, it is because in some way Jesus revealed Himself to us and we responded in faith to this revelation. If you have never had the Son of God revealed to you in any way, then, even if you are assenting to some Bible verses or have been convinced of some scriptural truths, you cannot be a true disciple of Jesus. You have only been convinced but not converted.

## WALKING BY FAITH

Our relationship with Jesus begins with this supernatural revelation. It also continues in the same way. Day by day, Jesus is revealing Himself and His will to us by His Spirit in our spirit. When we are born again, we enter into this spiritual relationship with Him. He is invisible, yet He is constantly showing us His will and His way. As we continue responding in faith to what He is revealing and to the direction in which He is leading, we fulfill His desires. This is what it means to walk by faith. It means that we have an intimate, personal relationship with our invisible Master through our faith.

When we first believe, we receive a living Person inside of us. Since He now lives within us, He is constantly revealing Himself to us in various ways. We know His inner speaking. We sense His sentiments with respect to various situations. We can perceive His compassion, His joy, His peace, His satisfaction or even His anger. We can know His leadership and His desires. All the various components of His personality are being revealed within our spirit. Therefore, we can constantly affirm and believe in what He is revealing of Himself to us. Thus we walk in communion with Him by faith, believing in the invisible revelation of the Son who lives within us. In this way, we can follow Him day by day. In this way, we can express Him, since we are sensing all the aspects of His personality within our spirit. As we discern His feelings, thoughts, decisions and leadership, we can choose to flow along with what is being revealed. If we decide not to affirm what He is showing us in our spirit, we interrupt the flow of life. But when we believe, we express who and what He is to the universe.

Naturally, as a new believer, our faith is small and our ability to sense His presence in its fullness is restricted. Just as a child is very limited in many ways to understand the world around him, so God's children, when they are young, do not have such a clear sense of God's presence. But we are not meant to stay children. Our Father's plan is for us to grow up to maturity. As we grow spiritually, our faith grows and our ability to sense the presence and per-

sonality of our Savior becomes more acute. Consequently, our expression of His ways and His will also become more clear. For example, one sign of spiritual maturity – the fact that we are in constant, intimate communion with Jesus – is that we love one another. Since God is love and loves every one of His children passionately, when we are in a faith relationship with Him, we sense this great love for all other believers. As we affirm this love, we also express it. In this way and many others, the personality of Jesus and the will of God flow through us to be expressed to a perishing world.

The practice of prophecy also helps us understand faith. Romans 12:6 reads, “let us prophecy in proportion to our faith.” Some understand this to mean preaching, while others see a kind of spiritual gift which sees into the past or future. But whatever our understanding, the way prophecy works is the same. While we are walking in an intimate relationship with Jesus, we sometimes sense that there is something He wants to speak through us. By faith we then affirm and believe that it is He who is revealing these words or thoughts. So we speak in faith to others. Also, in the above verse there is an implication that we should not go beyond our faith. We should be careful, when speaking for God, not to let our own desires, thoughts and opinions govern what we say. We should not go beyond the faith that we have and embellish what He is saying with things from ourselves. Conversely, we should not limit our words to only those things which we believe will be agreeable to others.

We walk by faith and not by sight (II Cor 5:7). This is to say that we are not following some visible program, but a living invisible Person. We are not simply following rules and regulations, principles or laws which we learned from the Bible or from some teacher or other, but we are “seeing Him who is invisible” (Heb 11:27) and responding in faith. The natural human being longs for tangible things. He trusts in them because they seem “real” to him. He is accustomed to things that he can see, feel, taste, touch and smell. Therefore, many depend upon legalism, physical sensations, prophecies and leaders for their spiritual guidance. However, this is walking by “sight” and not by the

kind of faith which pleases God. True Christianity is walking by a faith relationship with an invisible King.

## OUR FAITH OVERCOMES THE WORLD

As we walk in this intimate faith communion with Jesus, our lives are changed. Our attitudes and desires become different. We are no longer so influenced by outward and superficial stimuli but by the invisible Person of Jesus. Therefore, our lives become different from the other inhabitants of the world. We begin to love and seek different things. We are overcoming the world. I John 5:4 read: "And this is the victory which overcomes the world, – our faith."

The world around us has many attractions. It offers us many kinds of sensual pleasures, including romance, sex, entertainments, food, sports events, etc. All these things vie for our attention and seek to capture our affections. Of course we all know who is the evil being behind such things. Our natural man, since it too is a product of the physical world, lusts after them. We have a yearning for satisfaction in all of these areas. Yet those who walk by faith are not captured by these attractions. Their lives are somehow separate and different. They are "set apart" from the physical, natural things. Many times the other "worldlings" do not understand. Believers' attitudes seem strange to them. It is like the "children in the marketplace" (the people of the world) who say something like: "Hey, we are having fun but you are not joining in with us" or "We are sad, but you aren't responding to the same things we are" (see Lk 7:32). The children of the Kingdom of God are different. They are separated from the world and it's people.

Our faith causes us to be set apart. It is our connection with the invisible Kingdom of God which governs our lives and makes us unique. Those who walk by faith are not attached to tangible, physical, earthly things. Their lives are not all wrapped up in entertainments and pleasures. Also, they are not mourning over the state of world affairs and spending their valuable time trying to change them. Instead, they are constantly sensing the leadership and character of the invisible God. They are following and

expressing Him. This then causes them to lead a life which is not worldly. They overcome the world by their faith. Their continuous faith relationship with God causes them to have other attractions and values. Their affections are placed on different things. Naturally, all of us must be somewhat involved with the things of this earth, since we need to eat, drink, work and live. But the men and women of faith have a different attitude. Their involvement with the things of this earth has a different quality. They use them because they must, but they do not abuse them (I Cor 7:31). Their heart is not attached to them and they are not pursuing them in search of satisfaction. Being in continuous touch with God through faith, they are satisfied in Him and do not need to seek another source to meet their needs.

### WHAT IS FAITH?

Hebrews 11:1 gives us a definition of faith. We read: "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Let us take the first part of this verse and look at it more closely. Biblical hope is a hope in invisible, spiritual things. The glory of God into which He has called us is something which cannot be explained but only revealed to us through the Spirit. Once we have "seen" with spiritual eyes such glory which has been promised, this becomes within us our unshakable hope. It becomes the "substance" of what we are hoping for.

The second part of this verse speaks of "evidence." The Concordant Literal Translation, renders the word "evidence" in this verse as "conviction." As we have been seeing, when we discern Jesus revealing Himself and we affirm, or agree to this revelation, this is faith. Therefore, we develop a conviction concerning things which are not seen. To the world, what we are pursuing and doing is complete foolishness, because they can in no way understand it. It is invisible to them. However, to us who have penetrated behind the veil and seen into the unseen world of the Kingdom of God, we have a deep abiding conviction concerning the things of the Spirit of God. Perhaps some who have been only mentally convinced concerning Christ might be easily turned away when things become difficult.

But those who have received a real revelation of Jesus have a deep conviction which will see them through hard times.

It should be mentioned here that we are supposed to “walk by faith,” but this is not the same thing as merely agreeing with “the faith.” When people speak of “the faith,” they mean a set of commonly understood truths concerning the Person and work of Jesus Christ. Among such truths would be the fact that He was born of a virgin, lived a sinless life, died for our sins, was resurrected from the dead, ascended into heaven and will come back some day to the earth. All these things are wonderful, true and good. They do have an impact upon our walk with Jesus, since we can know that the Spirit within us will never contradict such truths. However, following the Lord is not the same thing as simply trying to follow a set of doctrines or a creed. Our faith walk is not merely trying to adjust our life to a certain set of truths. It is not just agreeing in our mind to these things. Instead, it is day by day, moment by moment, affirming the living revelation of Jesus Christ within us and allowing this revelation to be the source of our living. When we allow the One who gives us faith to permeate our lives with His, we will consequently be known as followers of “the faith.”

There is a great difference between practicing a religion and following Jesus by faith. Some have taken the various truths and exhortations of the Bible and established for themselves a kind of “Christian” religious system. They have practices, rules, goals, meetings, special clothing, cathedrals and all the trappings which appeal to the senses of the natural man. They believe that they have “faith” because they have given their mental assent to various truths found in the scriptures. Since they continue to “believe” these things, and to obey the ordinances which they are taught, they imagine that they are pleasing God. They are depending upon tangible, mental doctrines, traditions and practices as their means to satisfy God. However, following Jesus is a completely different thing. He is a living Person. When we by faith respond to the revelation of His ever-present Person, then we are fulfilling the desires of the Father.

If our faith is a living faith it will produce works. James in his epistle shows us that our faith, in order to be genuine, must be generating fruit. He explains that if our faith is not producing works today, then it has died and has become a dead faith. And dead faith no longer produces any fruit. Furthermore, it is not justifying, and will not justify before the judgment seat, any Christian. So we see that our faith must always be up-to-date. In other words, we must maintain a living, daily faith relationship with Jesus to be justified by Him. It is not enough just to have believed sometime in the past. It is not sufficient to mentally affirm a set of Bible doctrines. We must be maintaining a living relationship with Jesus by faith every day. Our heart response to God's revelation must continue to be an active thing which is directing our very lives and actions. This then will produce good works which glorify Him. This is a faith which is pleasing to God.

Jesus teaches us that we should abide in Him. This means that we live in continuous intimate communion with Him, constantly affirming what He is revealing of Himself to us by faith. When we do this, then He also abides in us. As we maintain our faith relationship with Him, Jesus leads us in the works which He wishes to do through us. Our faith response to His leadership brings the flow of His life into us and through us. It is His life then which brings forth everlasting fruit. These works are a spontaneous result of our faith. As we remain in intimate communion with God through faith, moment by moment, day by day, He works in us and through us. Jesus taught us that if "you abide in Me and My words abide in you," "you shall bring forth much fruit" and "your fruit should remain" (Jn 15:7,8,16) (In other words it will not be consumed on judgment day). Clearly we cannot bear fruit ourselves (Jn 15:4). It is our continuing faith relationship with Him that causes us to be fruitful. These are the works of gold, silver and precious stones.

## **FAITH AND OBEDIENCE**

In order to maintain an intimate relationship with Jesus through the Spirit, we must be obedient to Him. We must learn to live under His rulership and therefore in His

Kingdom. We must continue submitting ourselves in faith to our invisible King. If we become disobedient, that is we refuse to believe and respond to His inward direction, this disturbs our intimacy with our Savior. When we continue in this defiance and do not yield to His direction, our sense of His presence diminishes more and more. Gradually, we fail to have that vital faith relationship and enjoyable intimacy with Him. Our faith is dying because of our refusal to respond to His leading. Faith and obedience are inseparably linked together. When we resist the Holy Spirit and His authority in our lives, it becomes very difficult for us to remain in the presence of God.

How many believers are today in this condition? They once knew God intimately, but now feel like they are on the outside looking in. Their once sweet communion with Jesus is just a memory. At some point they have refused the heavenly speaking, resisted the leadership of the Spirit and so are now outside of the present Kingdom. Their rebellion against whatever it was that Jesus wanted of them has left them with only a hollow shell of Christianity.

The reasons why this happens are innumerable but it might be good to mention just a few possibilities. Perhaps these individuals were too afraid to follow Jesus into what He was wanting. Maybe they were too busy with their own pursuits such as pastimes or business. Possibly there were other believers or relatives who discouraged them from taking the steps which the Lord was indicating. It could even be that they were just too stubborn and resistant to yield to Him in the areas which He desired to rule. Another possibility is that something happened in their walk with the Lord that left them bitter and disillusioned. But whatever the case, the result is the same. Their living faith is gone and the sense of sweet intimacy with the Lord has receded from their lives. No doubt such people "still believe in Jesus." Probably the biblical facts about His life and ministry are still clear to them. But their faith is old and stale. It is a faith from their past and not of their present experience. It is not a faith which is alive today and providing the underpinning of their communion with God.

Those who find themselves in this condition must repent. It is the only solution. They must cry out to God for the grace to finally hear, believe and obey what He is revealing to them. Their obedience will restore their intimate relationship with Jesus. The necessary obedience might involve apologizing to someone for an unkind word or action. It might mean a career change or a move to another part of the world. Undoubtedly it will mean humbling ourselves and admitting that we have been resistant, stubborn and wrong. The number of ways we can become disobedient is infinite. Only our Lord can reveal to us what it might be that is interrupting our fellowship with Him. But once we are really willing and ready to again hear His voice, we will know what it is that we are to do. This humbling of ourselves and the softening of our heart to receive correction is absolutely essential in the spiritual life. Only in this way will we again be able to walk in faith. Far too many Christians today have tried another alternative. Instead of repenting, they try to justify themselves in their own eyes and the eyes of others by maintaining a superficial, religious appearance. However, just as in the days of His earthly ministry, Jesus is calling upon every one of us to repent for the sake of entering into the Kingdom.

When we stand before God on that Day, we will be judged according to our works. These works will be the result of our faith which has brought us into and maintained an intimacy with God Himself. The works which will be approved will not be works which we have done for Him, but the works which He has done through us as a result of our faith relationship with Him. These are what I would like to call "faith-works." If you are not living in faith today and therefore are not producing fruit for His Kingdom, there is still time to repent. There is still time for you to get your relationship with Jesus right, respond to His leading and live for the King in His Kingdom.

## **ENTERING INTO THE REST**

The book of Hebrews is full of exhortations concerning this very subject. There we learn that it is all too possible for us to harden our heart and not believe in what Jesus is speaking to us today. This then will cost us the Kingdom.

Perhaps it would be of great value to pause a moment and read again chapters 3 and 4 of Hebrews in the context of our subject. Here the author warns us severely, again and again using the example of the children of Israel in the wilderness. He states that they did not enter in to inherit the promise “because of unbelief” (Heb 3:19). He then admonishes us to, “Beware, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God” (Heb 3:11). He exhorts us, “Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest (this is the seventh day Kingdom rest, vs. 4), let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it” (Heb 4:1). Clearly, there is something for us to fear. Definitely there is something very serious for us to keep in mind as we walk with our Lord. Although some have tried to teach that there are no negative consequences for our behavior today, it is beyond dispute that the scriptures teach something very different. If we do not walk in daily faith, if we resist the Holy Spirit, we will not enter into His rest and not inherit the Kingdom which Jesus has promised.

Our goal then is to enter into the rest of God. But what does this mean? How is this possible? It is simply to enter into the Kingdom of God today. It is to stop doing our own works for God, using our Bible knowledge and our understanding of the law or scriptural principles. We must once and for all cease from our own merely “religious” activities. All that we imagine that we could do for Him must be abandoned. Instead, we must cultivate an intimate faith relationship with Jesus. As we rest in Him, having sweet communion with Him in the spirit, He will live in us and work through us to do His will. Just as Jesus was not doing His own works but was allowing the Father to work through Him so too we can be channels, vessels if you will, to convey and express the God of the universe. This is the secret of genuine New Testament Christianity. This is how we can produce works of gold, silver and precious stones.

If after reading this chapter you find that your Christian life has been only legalistic and dead, if your life has only been worldly and therefore unfruitful, or if you have been doing nothing to bring forth fruit unto God, the answer is repentance – repentance for the sake of the Kingdom. God

is calling to us today to repent of everything in which we are involved which is not of His Kingdom. Through our faith, we must overcome all that vain religion, the world and the flesh have to offer. Instead of wood, hay and stubble we can produce gold, silver and precious stones. Jesus Christ is coming again soon to judge the earth in righteousness. "Therefore since we also are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 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 has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." (Heb 12:1,2).