

ADVENT FAITH AND ITS COMPANIONS Romans 10:17; 12:3

Charles Carrin, a Reformed theologian and personal friend, a man submitted to the Holy Spirit, has taught me a lot concerning "the faith." I have relearned some things from him I always knew and picked up some nuances I had not noticed before. Faith is not native to our planet but is projected into our cosmos from the Great-Other-Realm. Therefore, the faith at work in you and me is not at an attitude or mental effort on our part. Nor is it merely your religious concept or ideology. Faith is a trans-earthly power. As gravity, centrifugal force, thermodynamics, etc., are powers native to our cosmos, so faith is native to the other realm and is only a visitor in our's. Faith came to you because of your "hearing the word of God" , Romans 10:17, and God then having dealt to you "a measure of faith," Romans 12:3. Faith is a gift to us.

The Dictionary definition of faith is vastly insufficient. It identifies faith solely as religious persuasion, moral conviction, conscientious sentiment, etc., but offers no comment about faith being a spiritual force. Wherever this concept has been accepted it has stripped Christianity of its inherent power. For that reason, much of what we call "faith" is nothing more than religious presumption and a poor imitation of the genuine. It is a deceptive counterfeit, rising from man's soul--not his spirit--and remains powerless because it has no vital connection with the upper-domain of the Kingdom of God.

Nowhere is the distinction between religion and true spirituality more graphically displayed than in the difference between true faith and its artificial counterpart. Unfortunately, it is possible for believers to be seduced by a subtle imitation of faith. Instead of hearing "what the Spirit is saying," Revelation 3:13, people are directed by the deceptive appearance of circumstances. Churches are tragically caught in its trap.

Because of this, I join with Charles Carrin and will "coin" a Greek word, peiro, into an English application and join it with the word "faith". Peiro means "to pierce through" and originates from the word peran meaning "other side", "beyond," "farther," "over," "across." In Greek, the word for faith is pistis. The combination of the two words allows us to visualize faith's purpose in penetrating our physical realm. This penetration is absolutely necessary if there is to be miraculous healing, spiritual gifting, deliverance, out-of-body transports experiences and yes they do happen especially when people are declared dead and are resuscitated. This penetrating kind of faith is absolutely necessary if we are going to experience the Advent holy days the way God intended. "Peiros-Faith" is a force that comes to our dimension from the other realm, passes through cooperative believers here, then, like an X-ray, penetrates and effects change in the circumstance it touches. Admittedly, the subject is beyond my explanation-but it is not beyond our exploration. I simply want to explore "faith" in its potential to interact both with our physical dimension of time and space while it maintains a complete, uninterrupted union with the Eternal Dimension where it originates. In other words, faith is a symphonizing of these separate dimensions. It is a force. A power. Listen to this true story.

It is told about a Masai elder in the book, CHRISTIANITY REDISCOVERED, in which the Roman Catholic missionary, Vincent Donovan, shares his discoveries as he worked among Masai people in Tanzania, just south of Kenya. Donovan had been working among the various communities of the Masai for many months. It was difficult work, and at times, his faith faltered. At one point, Donovan spoke with a Masai elder about the agony of belief and unbelief. In their conversation, the Masai elder pointed out that the word Donovan had been using in Swahili to convey the word "faith" was not a very good word in their language. The word they were using for "faith" meant literally, "to agree to." Donovan acknowledged that he knew the word was not a good one to translate the word "faith." The Masai elder said that to believe like that was similar to a white hunter shooting an animal from a great distance. Only his eyes and his finger got into it. The Masai elder then said that for one to really believe is more like a lion going after its prey. The lion's nose and ears sense the prey. He sniffs the air and locates it. Then he crouches, and slithers along the ground virtually invisible. We have never seen lions do this, but we have seen our cats. Same lineage, apparently. A cat thinks it becomes invisible as it stalks the prey. The lion gets into position, and when everything is optimum, the lion pounces. All the power of his body is involved and as the animal goes down, the lion envelopes it in his arms, pulls it to himself, and makes it a part of himself. This, said the elder, is the way one believes, making faith a part of oneself! Donovan nodded in complete agreement, almost overcome with the elder's wisdom. But the elder was not done yet. The old Masai became thoughtful. Then he said to Donovan: "We did not search you out, Padri. We did not even want you to come to us. You searched us out. You told us of the High God. You told us we must search for the High God. But we have not done this. Instead, the High God has searched us out and found us! All the time we think we are the lion. In the end, the lion is God!" (Fits with the Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe.)

The companion to faith is love. Faith can persuade in the hands of those who are vibrant and alive. Love, like gravity, is the force which grasps, bonds, holds to itself. Faith, working through love, penetrates, illuminates, radiates. Like sunlight restoring life to a plant kept too long in the dark, faith has the radiating power to change the spiritual environment around it and bring life. Have you ever seen faith transform a person's life so they are so different you know it is something they could never do themselves?

You received faith when you were born again. You must release it through love. In twelve of the eighteen detailed instances of healing by Jesus, He pointed to the person's faith as being a factor. Faith in them met with love in Him. We frequently read that He was "moved with compassion".

By its very nature, therefore, faith cannot merely lie on the surface of its intended target but must pierce the subject needing change. Both a sending and receiving are involved. In every instance of faith's having impact and success, change results from the arrival of the Kingdom of God's power. Without penetration of the intended subject there can be no change.

As I understand it, this interaction of "peiros" faith-that is "faith" from the "other side-the beyond-the farther-the over-the across" is a coming-together with the material substance

of our dimension. This is miraculous and has a parallel to the day of the Resurrection when Jesus' physical body passed through the physical wall of the room without having physical effect upon either. Such a feat is not possible in our dimension of length, breadth, depth; it is only possible if there is a "piercing through" this dimension with peiros-power that by-passes and supersedes the limitations of our material realm.

(Paul, the greatest faith-writer of the New Testament reveals his dependence on the "peiros" aspect of penetrating-faith in preaching when he said, "Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and also took Titus with me. And I went up by revelation, and communicated to them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles ..." Galatians 2:1-2. What does he mean by the expression "I went up by revelation"? Paul's trip to Jerusalem was a physical one; his trip into "revelation" was not. While preaching he experienced an out-of-body passage into the other dimension. II Corinthians 12:2-5. Paul simply meant that he exited the physical realm and entered the non-physical. He had a "peiros" transport to the "other side"-of the beyond-the farther-the over-the across" dimension. Preaching from such a position brought phenomenal penetration of faith-power both to Paul and his hearers. This level of consciousness has no parallel in the natural.)

True faith, borne of love and compassion, manifests itself as a "Divine Expectation." "Faith works by love." Love is the identifying distinctive of Kingdom power. Where the empowering and motivation is loveless, it is not faith, it is not Kingdom, it is not God. Hope and faith are not the same. Both are to be cherished and loved but only faith expects. When hope begins to expect it ceases to be hope and becomes faith.

Why is faith essential in salvation and how does it work? "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast ..." Ephesians 2:8-10. In salvation, grace and faith are inseparable spiritual-companions, both come to us from the "peros" realm; neither are native to our cosmos and because they do not share our inferior nature nor are able to perform, perfect, and impose, their own "peros" nature into our's. Grace makes it possible for us to receive faith; similarly, faith makes it possible for us to step into saving grace. In salvation, peros-faith must first penetrate us then continue its journey out of us--"believing in the heart" followed by "confessing with the mouth". There must be both the "sound" received (into the heart) and the "echo" returned (out of the mouth). Romans 10:10.

Grace--as the companion to faith--follows that "echo", the Holy Spirit transferring His regenerating-power into us while transforming our nature from sin and uncleanness to the imputed righteousness of Christ. In all this eternal activity of faith, grace, regeneration, the Holy Spirit remains the active Agent. Faith and grace cannot operate alone, each is dependent on the other, both dependent on the Holy Spirit. We might liken the transition to the sunrise; first, the faint glow of dawn, then the sun on the horizon, continuing to the brightness of high noon.

Faith is both a fruit of the Spirit and a gift of the Spirit. Of all the fruits and gifts, it alone has that honored distinction of belonging to both expressions of the Holy Spirit in the

believer. Galatians 5: 22,23, I Corinthians 12:8-10. What we are being told in these Scriptures is that faithfulness in a person's character as a "fruit of the Spirit" must be present if faith as a "gift of the Spirit" is to work. That forever settles the issue: An unfaithful person can never become a person of faith. Let me repeat that: An unfaithful person can never become a person of faith. Can we prove that? Yes. "Faith works by love". If love, as the primary fruit of the Spirit is absent there is nothing to motivate or release the power of true faith.

Attempts to operate faith artificially (without love) are like trying to start a car with the wrong key. It simply will not work. We can shout, praise, sing, clap our hands, get excited, and throw all kinds of religious confetti into the air, but when the noise has ceased and the confetti fallen, faith will still be unmoved. It will wait on love. Christmas is our gift of love.

HOW DOES ONE EXPERIENCE "PEIROS-FAITH" DURING THE COMING HOLY DAYS?

The Father's "agape" love must be projected into you from the "other dimension" and becomes the controlling companion of your faith. Faith will work automatically once true love has been released in you. Without it, you remain as a religious "sounding brass and tinkling cymbal". But Scripture makes it very clear that frequently there can be a distinct, identifiable moment in which the "door of faith" is opened to you.

We read of events on the day of the Resurrection: Luke 24:31,32, "Then their eyes were opened and they knew Him; and He vanished from their sight. And they said to one another, 'Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?'" Later, we read, "Then Jesus said to them, 'These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me.' And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures." Luke 24:44,45.

"An old woman living in one of the Ohio towns had broken almost every law of her State, and at last being guilty of murder, was sent to the penitentiary. In the days of children's childhood parents and nurses would frighten the children with the story of this old woman's misdeeds. She had broken every law of institution, and they had exhausted every form of punishment upon her. One day there went up from the town an old Quaker lady, who asked permission to see her suffering sister. She was brought in, the perfect picture of despair, with chains upon hands and feet. The old Quaker walked towards her and called her my sister, but she said with an oath, "I am not your sister." She said, "I love you," and the response with a greater oath, "No one loves me." Then the old saint bent over and kissed her, and she said, "God loves you." Instantly the downcast eyes were raised, tears rolled down the cheeks of the woman, who was a sinner. She rose to her feet, and vowed that if God loved her she would serve him, and they took off her chains, never

to put them on again, and until the day of her death she went up and down the corridors of the prison, herself an angel of mercy." That is penetrating Faith with Love plus grace.

Present yourself to Holy-Spirit filled believers to lay-hands and pray for you. Receive. Or, you may choose to present yourself privately to the Lord in complete submission and ask Him to "open your door of faith". Jesus said, "Everyone who asks receives." It is God's will that you experience faith with love and that you understand both its' wonderful origin and its destination this season of holy days called Advent