

Dear Fellow Redeemed by the blood of God's own Son,

We have been studying the book of Exodus in our LWO meetings. One of the more astounding events in a book that is full of God's miracles, is not a miracle at all! I'm talking about Israel's worship of the golden calf which they had Aaron make for them at the foot of Mt. Sinai. This they did after seeing all the miracles God performed through His servant Moses! How could they worship a man-made image?

Think about what they said to Aaron. They gathered around him and said, "**Come, make us gods that shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.**" (Ex. 32:1)

Moses had repeatedly told the people that it was Jehovah-God who had delivered them from Egypt with a mighty hand; but it was Moses they saw. They wanted something to see once again, so they worshiped the image of the golden calf.

We know how impossible it is for materialistic human beings like us to believe in an invisible God. Good health is something we feel. Good food is something we taste. Gold is something we can see and touch, like the golden calf. But we can't feel, taste, see, or touch the invisible God!

Many years ago, Dale Evans, the wife of the old cowboy star, Roy Rogers, talked about the many times she literally "felt" the presence of God in her life. Many people belong to a church which because of its beauty or size makes them feel that God must be there? Yet many lose the feeling of God's presence and blessing in their lives when their health or wealth are suddenly lost! What is the firm ground of true Christian faith – our senses, feeling, or sight? A thousand times NO!

**THERE IS ONLY ONE FIRM GROUND OF FAITH –  
DO YOU HEAR IT?**

**I.**

Peter, James, and John, saw Christ's glory, but they were

told to hear His Word! Less than a week before our text, Jesus had told His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem to suffer many things, be killed, and be raised again the third day. But these words greatly disappointed Peter and company, They had been expecting a visible and glorious kingdom on earth. They didn't want to believe, they wanted to see! When Peter began to argue with Jesus, the Lord rebuked him: **"Get behind me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, because you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of man."** (16:21-23)

Peter and his fellow disciples needed help for their fragile faith. If they doubted the purpose, work, and glory of Jesus, how could they trust in Him when He was crucified by men? How could Jesus help them? He took Peter, James, and John, up to a high mountain where He was transfigured before them! There they saw the eternal glory of the Son of God shine through His human nature.

Not only this, but the three disciples saw Moses and Elijah talking with Jesus! These two great O.T. prophets represented the Word of the Lord to His people from the time of their rise to their spiritual decline and rebellion. What a spectacular sight – Visible proof that Jesus was the very Son of God, the promised Savior!

But later, Jesus tells His disciples not to tell anyone what they had seen on the mountain until after **"the Son of man is risen from the dead."** What they had seen on the mount was intended only for the strengthening of their own faith at this point. Others would find it difficult to accept until after the Lord's resurrection.

But take a closer look at Peter's immediate response to what He saw. Greatly excited, Peter blurted out: **"Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, let us make here three tents; one for You, one for Elijah, and one for Moses."** What could be better?

These men on the mountain top were feeling wonderfully safe and secure from all the trials and troubles below, because of what they were seeing. But then God suddenly spoke from a bright, blinding cloud: **"This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased. HEAR HIM!"** Even though the disciples saw the glory of Christ, they

are told to HEAR HIM! God's word is the only ground of faith!

## II.

So it must be with us. We are to hear and receive the sure Word of God so that we may truly see and know Him by faith. For **"faith,"** Paul says in Romans 10:17: **"comes by hearing, and what is heard is the Word of God."** We dare not trust our sight, reason, or feelings to know that God loves us and is present with His help at all times.

Some people shout "Hallelujahs," roll and sweat until they speak in gibberish and get "Holy Ghost bumps" all over themselves! They want to "feel" that God is near to them. Some go on and on about the power of a church building or the style of a certain preacher, which makes them feel the presence of God. Some believe they are closer to God because they are rich and prosperous, and still others think they are far from God because they are poor and full of trouble.

But what did you hear the Apostle Peter say earlier in his second letter about the only ground of true faith in God? Peter wrote of how he and the other two men had seen the glory of Christ on the Mt. of Transfiguration. But then he quickly adds: **"We have also a more sure word of prophecy, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place . . . ."**

How did Noah keep on building the Ark month after month, when all his neighbors kept pointing to a cloudless sky and mocked him? Noah had the word of God on which to rest his faith. How did Abraham and Sarah know that they would have a son in their old age? They trusted God's word to them.

When the Prophet Elijah fled from wicked King Ahab and Queen Jezebel into the wilderness, how did God reveal His presence and help? **"A great, strong wind tore into the mountains and broke rocks in pieces, . . .but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire, a still small voice."** (1Kings 19:11-12)

How do you know God is here with us in this particular church this morning? There is no wind, no earthquake, no spectacular fire! And what if this building were even humbler, and the preacher even more of a bumbler? Yet, by the still, small voice of God's Word you should know the presence and help of your God. . . .

**"There is therefore now NO condemnation to those who are in connection with Christ Jesus." (Rom. 8:1) "We have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins." (Col. 1:14) "By grace you are SAVED, through FAITH . . . ." (Eph. 2:8 ff.) "Fear not! For I have REDEEMED you; I have called you by your name; you are Mine." (Is. 43:1 ff.) "All things work together for good for those who love God, who are the called according to His purpose." (Rom. 8:28 ff.) "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the age." (Mt. 28:20)**

Martin Luther wrote: "If you are not ready to believe that the word is worthy of more than all you can see or feel, then reason has blinded faith. . . . I do not feel the resurrection of Christ, but the Word affirms it. I feel sin, but the Word says that sin is forgiven to those who believe. I see that Christians die like other men, but the Word tells me that they shall rise again. So we must not be guided by our own feelings, but BY THE WORD." (Luther's sermon on 1Cor. 15:1 ff., March 31, 1529, as quoted in Quest for Holiness, Koeberle, p. 79)

**God's Word is the only ground of our faith. Hear it! Stand on it, and live forever! Amen.**