

beyond, he exerts his little strength, and receives many a fall at first; still, day after day he perseveres,—his muscles, by the continued exercise, get stronger and stronger,—he becomes more and more expert in rising bar above bar, until at last he clears the top, and, as a reward to his industry and perseverance, he comes into possession of what his heart so earnestly desires. So it is with God's promises in the gospel, and the way He teaches us to exercise our faith, that we may grasp each one of them with this hand of faith, with which He has furnished each true christian, by that mysterious operation of the Holy Spirit, in his heart and soul, called Regeneration, and really and truly call them all our own, that we may feel them all to be our own, and that we can use them all as our own, for our own especial benefit, interest and comfort.

When the professing christian, therefore, ceases in his endeavours, after two or three exercises, and gets disheartened, how much need has that individual to do as the apostles did, (Luke 17:5) and pray, saying, "Lord Jesus, increase my faith." What a noble example of perseverance in prayer, indicating a strong faith, have we in the instance of the Canaanitish woman, recorded at the 22nd and following verses of the 15th chap. of Matthew's Gospel. She had a special deed which she wanted our Saviour to perform—namely, the casting out of a devil which was in her daughter. She knew that Jesus could do this thing, and she had resolved in her mind that she would not part with Him until she should get Him to do it. Our Saviour knew that she was possessed of strong faith in Him, and He wished to put it to the trial, observe, for an example to all christians, in every age of the world, by seeming to give her a flat refusal. At first He would not answer her a word; and when He did speak to her, His words contained no promise, nor even afforded the best hope, that He would do as she requested Him: "It is not meet," said He, "to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs,"—that is, it is not right to extend the blessings and benefits which God has sent Me to confer on the Jews alone as yet, and employ them in behalf of the Gentiles, of whom you are one. This reply, one would think, would have been sufficient to have silenced her, but Jesus knew that it would not, else He would not have said it. He knew well that she would not be shaken off with this seeming rebuff; and, indeed, it made her only the more persistent. "Be this, Lord, as you say," replies she, in effect—"yet account me as a dog, that I may only have the privilege of gathering up the crumbs which fall from the children's table." This was enough for our Saviour—He was most willingly caught in His own argument and mode of expression—and He graciously speaks the word which the woman wished Him to speak, "O woman," says He, "great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt." "And her daughter," it is added on the sacred page, "was made whole from that very hour." Would, then, that all professing christians, in the exercise of their faith by prayer, would take an example by her—and as surely will they get their righteous petitions granted by God, as she got her request so graciously answered. The unwillingness is not in the Lord to grant every good thing which He has promised to His human creatures, but the defect is in ourselves. We either ask for things from Him, the granting of which He foresees would be for our injury, rather than for our benefit, and therefore He wisely keeps them back from us, or we fail in knocking loud enough at the door of grace—so that, for all we do, He will not open it to us, in the particular request we want Him to do so. Yet, what are His own words? Are they not, "Ask and ye shall receive, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened to you?" These twice repeated promises of His are not given to mock us, but to assure us, and the earnest cry of the human heart to Him has never yet been disregarded. Like the case of Peter of old, (Matt. 14:30) God oftentimes permits His people yet to get into troubled waters—to be at the very point of sinking among the billows of trials and misfortunes—but then, when all hope, to human appearance, seems to be cut off, the earnest cry of the