

These two states of feeling constitute true faith—to believe the testimony of the Gospel with regard to invisible things, and to confide in God's power and faithfulness to verify the promise of the Gospel. This is saving faith. There is a sort of empty conviction of the truth of the Gospel in our country, not accompanied by any confidence in the Divine character. Although the promise of the Gospel contains all the means of life—not life as long as that of Methuselah, but eternal life; yet they have not the confidence in God which leads them to expect it, that causes them to pray for it, or to walk along the road that leads thither.

There are very remarkable examples of faith in the eleventh chapter of the Hebrews, and they strikingly illustrate the confidence in God that enters into the essence of true faith, and gives Him glory. "Abraham, what will become of the promise if thou offerest up Isaac?" "My mind is easy; I am full of confidence. God is able to raise up Isaac from the ashes of the altar of Moriah." This confidence in God is strong. When there is no specific promise given for the purpose it will yet cleave to the Lord, on the ground of what He is accustomed to do.

The faith of Moses' parents—it constructs "an ark of bulrushes, and daubs it with slime and with pitch;" and places the infant, in all its helplessness, "in the flags by the river's brink." "Parents, shall Moses die?" "We cannot save him, but we have now given him out of our hands to the care of God." They confided in the Highest that He would bring about deliverance, though there was no positive promise; and this caused Miriam to look and wait for redemption; and she was not disappointed.

Through faith Moses passed the Red Sea as by dry land, and he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood. He had confidence in the Divine goodness and power that the blood would save the houses of the Israelites, and that the crystalline walls of the Red Sea would not fall in and overwhelm him and the people.

"J h, the Lord seems bent on thy extermination." "Yes: but blessed be the name of the Lord, if He slay me, I will trust in Him." How entire was the confidence of the centurion in Christ! "Speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed. Thy word created all things, and sustains all things. It has power enough to heal my servant."

The faith of the Gospel brings the invisible God, and eternity, with all its joys and horrors, into the heart; and thus the believer lives before God, and in the presence of eternal realities. "We walk by faith, and not by sight." A man, by sowing his seed, is supported by his reason and experience. He shall have a harvest crop; he has often witnessed such a result; but faith sows in a soil that is invisible—casting its bread-seed on the face of the waters, seeing not where it falls. The natural eye sees the seed fall into the earth: but prayers, preaching, and religious efforts are like the sowing of seed into the Nile; while faith says, "It shall not be lost. We shall see it after many days, and shall return loaded with full sheaves."

Faith brings invisible things so near the spirit of man as to influence it mightily, as the sun influences the earth, and the wind the sea. "By grace ye are saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." Many have precious pearls brought from great distances, but faith is a gift from a farther country—from the secret places of eternity, beyond the seas and mountains of time. It is the fruit of eternal love, the atonement of the cross, the intercession in heaven, the manifestation of the Gospel upon earth, and the powerful working of the Holy Ghost.

Mention is made of a weak and a strong faith. Abraham was strong in faith; the disciples at one time had a weak faith. A conviction of invisible things, and a confidence in God's testimony, will thus be found alternating in vigour and weakness, in different persons, and even in the same person. And this does not prove that all faith is not the same in nature, object, and effects. In all it is of God; in all it is holy; in all it refers to Christ, and embraces Him as the Saviour, the second Adam, the Head of the covenant, the chief of the new world; and in all it worketh by love, conquereth the world, and purifieth the heart in all obedience, blessing, and praise.

Faith, whether it be weak or strong, is precious to all its possessors, and does not, in either case, prove to the disadvantage or injury of any man. Even a weak faith unites with the Almighty Redeemer. As a less valuable gold ring will unite in marriage as well as the most costly, even so will the weakest faith, which is scarcely vigorous enough to be perceptible, connect with Christ, so closely that the mind becomes one spirit with Him.

All true faith gives "the like" right to the same inexhaustible riches—"be it unto thee according to thy faith"—and secures the same victory which Christ obtained over hell, the world, and the grave—translating all its possessors from the kingdom of Satan to that of Jesus, leading them all to the same rock of defence, giving them all an entrance, in the name of the same Lord, to the heavenly sanctuary, with full permission to ask, and seek, and receive; and investing them all with the same security here and hereafter.

The promise that, "whosoever believeth in Him should not perish," is on board the same ship with the believer; and Christ lives in the promise and in him. There is more than "the fortune of Caesar" to keep from sinking the ship that carries the Christian across the ocean of time. Be not afraid; faith will land him safe and sound on the shore of the eternal inheritance—"receiving the end of your faith—the salvation of your souls."

Oh, that every sermon may prove an occasion for the exercise of this great grace, that many may come into the enjoyment of the like precious faith; and enjoy evermore the honour and privilege of being the sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty.

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