

WHY DO YOU NOT BELIEVE?

By: Andrew Murray

31 MESSAGES ON
FAITH

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ANDREW MURRAY

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NOT FOR RESALE!!

INTRODUCTION

Beloved friends, who are seeking the Lord, but have not yet found Him, it is for you that this little book has been written. When I recently spoke with you, in the course of my pastoral visitation, my soul was filled with deep sorrow over your condition. I still met with many who with manifest earnestness and spiritual desire were seeking salvation, some indeed for many years past, and who, notwithstanding, had not yet arrived at faith.

This ought not to remain so. It tends to the dishonour of our Lord. True religion is thereby brought into contempt, for the world is then right in concluding: the service of Jesus gives neither joy nor salvation. On young converts your influence is by no means helpful, for your example gives them absolutely no encouragement. In this way also, the congregation suffers loss, for instead of helping as joyfully active members to build it up, you are on the contrary serving to divide its energies, and you hinder its spiritual prosperity. To your minister you are often the cause of care and anxiety; you make him dispirited with the thought that the Word of God has so little influence with you. You spend your life in sorrow and gloom, and you place your souls in peril for eternity.

Beloved, your condition goes to my heart, and many a time I ask myself, What is really the cause of this unbelief? I know that there are some who cannot believe, because their heart is not right before God. The man who loves the world, and does not, with confession of his guilt, betake himself to Jesus with the prayer that he may be delivered from the love of the world, cannot, may not, believe. The man who still cleaves to this and that bosom sin, and, for instance, will not have done with deception, love of strife, pride, avarice, and such like iniquities, ought not to be surprised that he cannot believe. Jesus would ask him, "How can ye believe?" (John 5:44). It is an impossibility. But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you. I write to you as those of whom I hope that it is in truth their earnest desire to find the Saviour, and of whom I really trust that they have truly declared before the Lord: Lord, Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that I love Thee. And with my eye fixed on your condition, I ask myself, What can be the cause of it, and is there no means of delivering you out of it? "Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there?"

The cause cannot be that God has closed His dealings with you, and that it is no longer possible for you to believe. He desires this, and His Word has laid down before your faith promises for it to take up. And yet I fear that there are some among you who imagine that there is an appointment of God, against which you can do nothing, until God makes some alteration. With all earnestness, I entreat you to put these thoughts far from you. It is your own guilt that you do not believe, and indeed a heavy guilt, which you ought to confess with humility, and of which you should be ashamed. If you do not fully acknowledge this, I see no remedy for bringing you to faith, for this secret thought will make all your endeavors of no avail.

The cause of this unbelief of yours can just as little be that God has not given you power for faith. I know that this misunderstanding is prevailing with some of you. Because there are some Christians that have been brought to faith very suddenly and effectually, it is imagined that such a mode of conversion, if not the only one, is certainly at least the best. Secretly, therefore, some are waiting for a powerful impulse whereby they shall be as if driven to faith and brought to it at once. This thought also is a very dangerous hindrance in the way of faith. There are always two ways, along

which one can attain to the enjoyment of abundance. To make the first plain by an example: one may become rich at once by an inheritance that one receives, or by this or that successful undertaking; but one can also attain to wealth by the more gradual and quiet method of faithful industry and economy, or by making a wise use of every opportunity of increasing ones resources. So, to use another illustration, one can have a large space filled with water by a plentiful shower of rain as well as by a watercourse from a clear fountain; by which latter method the thing is done more slowly. The first is the easier way, but it is also that which stands exposed to the most dangers; the second is the longer and more troublesome way, but in some respects also the safer. The souls that find the heavenly treasure of the assurance of faith at once are to be accounted happy that the way for them has been so short; if others have to tread a more difficult path, they can nevertheless at least reach the goal. If they only move along the pathway of means with real desire, and with the positive conviction that they also can believe, they shall be brought to this point.

In connection with the two erroneous ideas just mentioned, stands what I have also just referred to, namely, the means of healing for your complaint, and therefore on this point, too, I shall say a few words.

You must acknowledge that it is the will of God that you should believe. "If I say the truth, why do you not believe me?" (John 8:46). This question of the Lord Jesus to the Jews, which He also puts to us, shows that unbelief must have a cause apart from Him. He spoke the truth with the aim and desire of awakening faith. You must further take into consideration that there is nothing for which you have to wait, before you begin to believe. You have to set yourselves forthwith in the way of the means, and with them you must be diligent; when you may hope for the blessing of the Spirit. On the Spirit you have not to wait, as if He had still first to come and were to make you by one token or another know that He was now ready, and that you could thus believe. No; He is promised to you. He has already often desired to work in your souls; and instead of your having to wait for Him, before you begin to believe, you have just to make haste to believe, for the Spirit waits for you. You have already kept Him waiting too long. Begin, therefore, immediately without further delay. And if, trusting in the promises of God, that the Spirit is given to those who ask for Him, you are diligent in learning to believe, you may also certainly expect that He, the Spirit of grace, will make you capable of faith. Wait not then, and delay not under the impression that all is not yet ready, or that it is not yet your duty actually to believe. In this sense there is nothing for which you have still to wait. No: ask for the Spirit, expect His influence, be diligent, and, although you do not then as yet actually observe His workings, you may, nevertheless, reckon upon it that, even while you may suppose yourselves to have been passed by, the Spirit is already co-operating with your first feeble endeavors.

You must pay special attention to what the means for coming to faith is, and to what way it has to be used. The means is the Word: but the main stress falls on the manner in which the Word is employed. When one searches it merely in a general way, and reads it to get knowledge and religious instruction, it operates so strongly in the line of reflection and repentance that the anxious soul is often embarrassed by the influx of thought, and thus fails to attain his object in reading. It is my counsel, therefore, that you should read the Bible with a definite aim, namely, to find out what promises there are that you have to believe. It is my counsel that you should seek and come to know what promises there are that are available for you, in order that you may be occupied with them, and so take advantage of every expedient for receiving them in faith. Meditate upon them, learn them by heart, remain continuously absorbed with

them, bow your knees before the Lord, and say to Him that you are resolved to believe them. Grudge not the time that this exercise costs you. Do not fancy that this business can be finished in ten minutes or so. The vast eternity is surely worth the striving of some hours. Take time thus to search the Word with set purpose, with that one definite aim of arriving at faith. Ponder the Word and pray for enlightening influences from above: such earnestness cannot remain unblest.

There is still another remark to be made respecting the manner in which this means is to be used, namely, that the duty is to be done with faithfulness and perseverance. We all know how great the power of habit is. By continuous and intentional repetition a thing that was at the outset strange and opposed to our taste, becomes a second nature and thereby easy and acceptable. In religion the laws of human nature are not set aside; the Spirit is indeed above them, but He still makes use of them. So is it also with faith. The heart that is habituated to distrust and doubt does not arrive at the new, holy habit of faith without the continual, often-repeated exercise of the act of faith. The promise that found a slight entrance today loses its influence in turn tomorrow, just because the soul does not persevere and has taken no pains to keep and confirm the blessing received. Thus I have often observed that, after a sermon or a conversation, a soul had a little light but speedily again lost it. And why? Because he did not recognize the importance and the necessity of his still keeping the promises anew before him, to the end that the old habit of unbelief might not again obtain the upper hand. Therefore, beloved, be faithful, continue from day to day, yes, as much as you can, occupied with the promises of God. The question must be continually repeated, "What does God require me to believe?" and in like manner, in the face of whatever weakness, must the answer be expressed at His feet: "Lord, I believe; I will believe."

To hold out a helpful hand to this perseverance, I have written for you this little book. It is offered to you with this urgent entreaty that for a month, day by day, you specially concentrate your attention on that faith to which God calls you. It was in the midst of prayer that these words were addressed to you: do you read them also with a praying heart? May it please the Lord to deliver you soon from the chains with which you to this day are still fettered. God grant it. Amen.

CHAPTER I

THE ABSOLUTE NECESSITY OF FAITH

"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned (condemned)." Mark 16:16.

Hear this Word of the Lord, all ye who have decided to seek your salvation.

He that believeth shall be saved; simple faith is enough: more God does not require. With less, however, He will not be content. Faith is the only way: there is no other way that leads to salvation. He that believeth not shall be condemned. Thus, alike on the right and the left hands, on the one side by the attractions and charms of His grace, on the other by the menace of His wrath, does God seek to impel us to faith in Christ as the one indispensable condition of salvation.

However much man may be opposed to this method of God, the time comes when the lost in hell no less than the saved in heaven shall justify God in this ordination of His. The whole universe shall acknowledge the equity of this sentence: he that believeth not shall be condemned. The gracious Lord had always met the sinner with the wonderful offer of having remitted all the offenses he had committed, or what the law had still to demand--of having bestowed on him all that was necessary for an everlasting salvation. He required no worthiness or merit, but simply this, that man should accept what was offered to him, and believe what was said to him. And, in order to remove every impediment to faith out of the way, and win the heart, God ordained to be sent the glad tidings of salvation through His own Jesus Christ, who manifested Himself in the most loving and attractive form, and sealed His love with His own precious blood. He, then, that still does not believe--the whole creation must approve of the sentence--he shall be condemned. He has anew set the seal upon all his former sins, for he will not suffer himself to be redeemed from them. To his former sins, he has yet added this, the greatest of all, that he has affronted the authority of God, despised the love of God, lightly esteemed the Son of God, defied God's vengeance, and thrust away from him God's salvation. By unbelief he has shown his enmity against God and his rejection of God; it cannot, it may not, be otherwise: he that believeth not shall be condemned.

Not less is the absolute necessity of faith confirmed by the contemplation of the other side: he that believeth shall be saved. Man has nothing, absolutely nothing, whereby on his part he can be in a position to contribute something to the attainment of salvation. And yet the Lord will do nothing but reign over a willing people. Man is no stone; on his own side, he must play his own part. It is faith that solves the difficult enigma (a perplexing statement) that man who can do nothing would yet do something: faith which is manifested in the acknowledgment of poverty and misery, in the confession of inability and helplessness, in consent, submission, and surrender to that grace of God which is to be everything in us. More God could not require; less He may not require, for He will not inflict wrong on His own honour and the freedom of man. He requires faith: faith alone. What grace it is that thus bends to our weakness: he that believeth shall be saved.

Reader, behold then, these two ways: make your choice. Pray, reason not any longer, nor ask the question if there be no other way; but, come, submit yourself to God and to the Word of His grace: he that believeth shall be saved. No longer yield to the secret thought, that something else may after all still be necessary. I am well aware that everlasting salvation appears to you to be too great a blessing over against this meager and paltry faith. It appears to you too hazardous for your sinfulness to venture so far merely upon faith; yet, see, it is God that has spoken: only by faith. He that possesses this faith, has all; for by it he has Christ. He that does not possess faith has nothing, although he should possess all besides. Faith is indispensable.

Anxious ones, hear it yet once again: "he that believeth shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be condemned."

CHAPTER II

THE OBJECT OF FAITH

"For she said, If I may but touch His garment, I shall be whole." Mat. 9:21.

What a glorious representation of the Lord Jesus does this woman in her simplicity give to us. She regarded Him as so filled with the divine power of life, as He in truth is, that it flowed out on every one that only touched Him in faith, and streamed over him. She felt assured that even the slightest fellowship with Him would be blessed, and that she would experience the healing power of the life that was in Him. Not for a moment did she have any doubt of His power and still less of His willingness. Had he not come for the sick? Why should she still ask, as if she had no claim? No: she knew the one truth just as certainly as she knew the other--that in Him there was healing. This healing is also for her. She should doubt her right to make use of the light of the sun, sooner than her right to Jesus. She should fear whether it were indeed open to her to take a draught of water from a rushing river sooner than cherish the thought that there was no health for her to be found with Jesus.

O that thou, doubting soul, wouldst think of the Lord Jesus just as this woman thought of Him. It is always the good pleasure of the Father that in Him all fullness should dwell. All the fullness of His love and His life has the Father of set purpose made to dwell in Jesus, the Son of Man, in order that it may be truly visible and accessible to us. In Him dwells the power of a new and holy life from the dead, which he obtained by making atonement for our sins. This life is mighty to impart health to souls sick unto death, and this is for us sinful, dead, condemned sinners. Pray, do understand what the woman calls out to you; the blessing and the approval of Jesus are always the seal of the truth of her words. In Jesus is life, life even for the most wretched.

What a glorious representation is there here also of true faith, as the means of our participating in the fullness of Jesus. The woman knows that she has no work to do; that she has no great motion of strength to put forth; that she has not to consider, as is the case in dealing with other professors of the healing art, whether she is really in a position to pay the fees that will be demanded. No: she has merely to touch Him, that is, she has merely to appropriate what is prepared for her; the healing is there as soon as she stretches out her hand to receive it. Anxious soul, who hast already been so long seeking to prepare and make yourself fit for the great work of believing, let this poor woman cure you of your error. In Jesus everything is ready; you have merely to stretch out your hand. O, do understand it. Here He stands ready for your deliverance; He is also given to you by the Father; only touch Him with the firm conviction of the faith: Jesus is for me; with the simple thought, I have a right to Him; in Him there is deliverance for me also. Touch Him, and, as truly as His name is Jesus, you shall be delivered. This may not be immediately felt by you; in that case just wait,

hold on, say from day to day: "If I touch Him, I shall be made whole." The healing will be consciously yours.

And what a glorious representation is there besides of the blessing which Jesus will give to faith. That the woman was healed was much to begin with; but it speaks of yet richer blessing that Jesus observed her, the poor trembling believer who would fain have hid herself for shame, even whilst others were seeking her in the crowd. He gives her the assurance of His good pleasure and His favour; He constrains her to confess Him openly. He praises her faith, and thus makes her an example and a blessing for thousands. O, all ye who are looking out and yearning for the salvation of the soul, pray learn to understand what is awaiting you with Jesus, what you may hope for from Him. It is not only forgiveness of sins and rescue from destruction that He will make you partakers of: the friendship and love of the Saviour shall also be your portion, and by these He will make you become a blessing to others.

Beloved, what more have you need of to make you say humbly and with faltering lips, after this woman, "If I but touch His garments, I shall be made whole."!

CHAPTER III

THE SEED OF FAITH

"The seed is the word of God." Luke 8:11.

Very simply as well as strikingly is the Word of God set forth to us in this parable. There lies the cold, dead earth, which of itself brings forth either nothing, or thorns and thistles. It has not the power to give man nutritive corn. When the husbandman, however, desires to have that corn, he takes good seed and commits it to the ground that had hitherto brought forth nothing but weeds. The soil receives it, and keeps it in the silent and dark secrecy of its bosom. Encouraged by the sunshine and moistened by the dew of heaven, it shoots there and grows up; and the cold dead earth by and by becomes the mother of a beautiful crop. The life was not in the earth, but in the seed; and yet the earth was just as indispensable as the living seed, before that these fair fruits could be reaped. Although the seed did not receive life from the earth, yet without the earth's having it share in the work the seed could not yield its fruit. It must offer the seed the soil in which the root can shoot; in its bosom must the seed still be kept until it be ready to make an appearance above ground.

A glorious and instructive picture is this of the new life of grace. Like the earth, the heart is in itself lifeless, unfruitful of itself in what is good. Like the seed in the earth, the Word is strewn in the heart and committed to it, simply to be received and kept there. The living power that God has lodged in the seed is the security that the ground, although in

and of itself wholly incapable of bringing forth anything but weeds, will be changed into a fruitful field. Thus, however helpless you may feel yourselves to be, shall the living seed of God's Word send forth its roots in your heart, and sprouting upwards bring forth fruit. Sinner, yearning for salvation, you have only to acknowledge that a living power is presented to you in every Word of God. With that confidence must you keep it in you heart, and the certainty of fruit depends not on any ability of yours, but on the faithfulness of God. Only endeavour by prayerful consideration and faithful keeping of God's Word, to prepare a place for it in your heart.

Mourn no longer, then, that your heart is so hard and so full of weeds, but rather understand what you see every day, that by the keeping of the seed the dead earth is transformed into a fruitful field. Faith is not a thing that is present in you before you receive the Word, or with which you must meet the Word. No! there is life in the Word, and it is by the Word that faith is first awakened.

Meanwhile, forget not that there are many kinds of seed, and that every kind bears fruit according to its nature. A child of God, for example, longs for comfort in adversity; he chooses one of the promises of God to His people, sows it in his heart, and keeps it; the desired fruit is the comfort of God. As those who are troubled about your sins, you have need of the promises of God's grace in relation to the ungodly. Seek for seed according to your need. "The Lord is gracious and full of compassion"; "He will abundantly pardon"; "Him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out"; Christ died for the ungodly." That is the kind of seed you must use. Every one of these words is a heavenly grain of seed containing power for eternal life. One of them is sufficient to bring forth, when it shoots up, the fruits of faith and peace and life. Let one of them be faithfully kept in the heart, and it cannot but be that faith shall be born of it. In the seed is life: the seed of God's Word has a divine power of life. O, take, then the heavenly seed, lay it up in your heart, and keep it there. Although you do not actually feel that you believe, resolve at least to hold fast by the thought: "It is the living Word of God. God will give the increase in His own time." The seed needs time for development. It must be kept a long time quietly beneath the ground: one day it certainly comes up. Day by day continue absorbed in heart with the Word of promise and of grace. The true God and His living Word are the guarantees that your experience also shall be: "Faith cometh by the Word of God."

CHAPTER IV

THE LANGUAGE OF FAITH

"There is forgiveness with Thee." Psalm 130:4.

Here is one of those heavenly grains of seed that have only to be received and kept in the heart to become living, and to bring forth faith, peace, and blessing. Let me have the privilege of commending it to you this morning, anxious soul.

It is such a simple word: every one can understand it. Every one knows what is meant when an earthly father forgives his child. He answers him that he will no longer remember his sins, will not impute the evil experienced, and will not punish him. He will deal with the child as if he had done no harm. In like manner the guilty and consciously-condemned soul looks to God on high, and says: "Lord, with Thee there is forgiveness. My guilt is heavy, I have deserved Thy severest punishment; but with Thee is forgiveness. Of free grace Thou hast promised to acquit the guilty of everything, and not to impute his sins to him." This is the simple, and at the same time the only way along which one exposed to the curse, who can do or bring nothing, can be saved. Altogether freely and for nothing, without the least worthiness or merit upon his part, he receives the divine acquittal from all his guilt.

Is it not also a glorious word? Should not every one desire this blessing? For a soul that, with David in this psalm, has to cry "out of the depths": "If Thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?" it is glorious to be able to look up to God with the assurance: All these sins will God blot out and bring to nought. Yes: very blessed it is to be able to look up to God out of the distress and anxiety with which the soul has felt its heavy guilt and deep misery, and to say: "With Thee is forgiveness; the Lord looks upon me in grace, His anger is turned away from me, and He comforts me." What a blessed peace, what a heavenly joy then falls on the heart. O, it is glorious, in the face of all conviction of sin and experience of misery, in the face of every thought of death and judgment, to be able to say: "With Thee is forgiveness." Who would not desire it?

It is also such a sure word. Every one may believe it. The whole Bible announces it. Jesus came from heaven to obtain and to seal it for us. His blood is the pledge of it. Thousands of the greatest sinners can support the truth of the cry: "With God there is forgiveness." All heaven confirms it. Eternity shall re-echo: "With God is forgiveness." It is sure. The certitude of it depends not on your faith. Whether you believe it or not, whether you despise it or not, "With God is forgiveness." As truly as He is God, is He a God of forgiveness, a God who abundantly pardons. As certain as you are that He is God, may you be certain that there is forgiveness with Him. Before you believe it, it is truth, and you may rest your soul and safely commit yourself to God upon it. You shall experience it: with God is sure forgiveness.

Further, it is such a powerful word. Every one can receive blessing from it. Although you have as yet no faith, take this Word as a living seed into your heart, and it will awaken faith. Although you dare not as yet call God your Father, lay up this Word in your heart, give it a place there, think over it, and say in spoken words before your God: "Lord, with Thee there is forgiveness." This Word is living and powerful; it will cause hope to rise in your soul. It will inspire you with new thoughts about God, it will instill into you confidence and boldness before Him. Insensibly you will get up to saying: "With Thee there is forgiveness also for me." It will thus awaken the fear and love of God in your soul. It will bind you to Jesus, it will impel you to dedicate yourself wholly to Him. O soul, mourn no longer over your weakness. Receive this Word; it is "living and powerful." Go with it trustfully to your knees, and, although it should be the thousandth time, use it as the language of your heart to God: "Lord, with Thee there is forgiveness." This Word will work mightily, and faith and peace and love shall be its fruits.

Beloved, I offer to you this Word of God. God gives you freedom to use this Word with Him; God commands you to

think thus of Him. True, your heart says, "I do not know whether there is forgiveness with God"; but come, let these perverse thoughts of yours go and give room for God's thoughts in your soul. Let it stand fast with you: "With God is forgiveness," and you shall speedily be able to add: also for me. And so you shall soon learn to sing: "Bless the Lord, O my soul, who forgiveth all thine iniquities."

CHAPTER V

THE BEGINNING OF FAITH

"Yea, Lord: I have believed that Thou art the Christ, the Son of God." John 11:27.

The Lord had said to Martha: "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth on Me, though he die, yet shall he live"; and after that He had put to her the question, "Believest thou this?" What answer was she to give? The thought that her brother was to be raised again was still too high and wonderful for her. And yet she was conscious that she believed in Jesus, and did not doubt Him or His Word. What reply was she to make? With childlike simplicity and sincerity she says: "I have believed that Thou art the Christ: I do not indeed know aright what I believe concerning the resurrection of my brother. It is to me, as if I cannot understand, cannot conceive it; but this I know, I have believed and still believe in Thee, as the Son of the living God. Thee, Thy birth, Thy power, Thy love, I doubt not."

How instructive is this picture of Martha's faith. How frequently it happens that when the Word of the Lord comes to a soul with the promise of forgiveness and reception into sonship with God, and the question is put, "Believest thou this?" that the discouraged soul falls a-sighing and answers, "Ah! no: this I cannot yet believe"; and thereafter he proceeds to condemn himself--a thing that profits nothing, instead of acting as Martha did. She did not yet believe everything, but what she believed that she spoke out before the Lord. She believed in Him as the Son of the living God: this was the principal thing, and would prove the source of greater faith. In connection with what she did believe, she was diligent in prayer; by this means her faith would be strengthened and become capable of receiving yet more and more.

Follow that example, O thou of little faith. When you are asked: Do you believe that your sins are forgiven, that you are a child of God, that everlasting salvation is yours? you are perhaps afraid to answer, "yes." You see others who can say so. You read in God's Word that the Lord will give His grace, that you may be enabled to say so. But you cannot say so, and you do not know how you shall ever come to the point of daring to say so. Soul, learn the way from Martha. Do not continue sitting down there, mourning over your unbelief, but go to Jesus with that which you know that you do believe. This at least you know that, although you cannot yet say, He is my Saviour, your whole soul believes that He

was sent by God to be a Saviour, and that He has proved Himself to be a Saviour for others. Well, then, go with this confession to Jesus, utter it before Him in prayer, look to Him and adore Him as the Saviour of the world. Speak out what you do believe, and by this means will faith in your heart be confirmed and increased. Say: "Lord Jesus, how unbelieving I am; this, however, I do believe that Thou art the Saviour, full of love and grace, and mighty to redeem." Forget yourselves and worship Jesus. although you dare not as yet say, that He is yours. In the midst of those exercises your faith will increase, and by and by you will insensibly come to the confidence that He is also yours. Only persevere: so long as you cannot yet say, "He is mine and I am His," let your soul be found, this and every day, in the ceaseless adoring confession: "Yea, Lord: this I believe, that Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." He will speedily confirm to you that Word of truth: "Thou has been faithful over a few things, I will set thee ruler, over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord" (Mat. 25:21). You will speedily learn to believe, and then, like Martha, you shall also see the glory of God.

CHAPTER VI

THE SPIRIT OF FAITH

"We having the same Spirit of faith...we also believe." II Cor. 4:13.

For the hundred times that in the Word of God we are exhorted to faith, or that faith is spoken of as an act of man, it is but in some few instances that it is expressly said that faith is the work of the Spirit. And thus, when we insist on faith as a work in which man must be active and in which he must trustfully and perseveringly use means, it may sometimes appear as if we forget who the Author of faith is. This, however, is by no means the case. We believe that those who feel most deeply the truth about the complete dependence of man on the Spirit, as the Spirit of faith, will also be the most eager to fall in with the exhortation addressed to man. He who knows that there is a Spirit to actuate to faith knows also that man may, with spirit and hope, strive to exercise faith.

The right understanding of this truth is, for anxious souls, of great importance. They must especially know that when they wait for the influence of the Spirit to carry them on to faith, they must not expect that this influence shall be unveiled to them in a conscious and sensible manner. The beginnings of life are hid in darkness: the first workings of the Spirit are not known or observed. The soul must work on, although it be not conscious that the Spirit is in it: it must as readily in the dark as in the day, and that too in its own strength, obey and strive to believe; it must hold fast the Word in confidence that the Spirit will, through the Word, work in it, expecting that sooner or later the Spirit will be recognized as the power that has put in a position to believe. That faith will then be to it the first sure token that it has the Spirit. He is always the Spirit of faith. Faith is his internal manifestation, the form in which He reveals Himself, and by which He

becomes known. It cannot be, "If I once have the Spirit then I believe," but, "when I believe, then I know that the Spirit has wrought this result in me."

In this way the right desire of the soul to know that it has the Spirit of faith may be fully gratified. It will learn that there is something more in it than its mere faith, that faith is not its own work: it will learn that the divine Creator of the New life is in it. According as the trustful soul is in itself unreservedly surrendered to live through faith, shall the Spirit witness with its spirit which was active in faith, according to the Word of God, that after we believe we are sealed with the Spirit: "Ye know Him: for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." (John 14:17). By His divine, indwelling power, He always stirs up the soul more and more to faith, carrying it into all the riches of the promises of God, and giving it confidence to appropriate every blessing to itself. And thus the one influence always operates upon the other; the more fully the soul believes, the more clear becomes the revelation of the Spirit; the more fully the Spirit works in it, the more does the soul grow in the life of faith and confidence. And thus at length, but not by the way which most of us had pictured for ourselves, we come to the experience of the blessedness of which we are speaking, namely, of having the Spirit of faith.

Seeker of salvation, why do you not believe? The Spirit of God is a Spirit of faith. It is the Spirit of God that has broken your slumber and made you anxious to believe. It is the Spirit who will help you in the conflict for faith, in which you think that you are abandoned by Him. He is given in answer to prayer. Let the thought encourage you, that where there is a soul desirous of salvation the Spirit will certainly work faith in it. At the outset you are not yet in a position to recognize His working. You are not yet accustomed to His ways; His tokens are still unknown to you. Hidden, but really existing, He is at hand to help you, if you but pray for Him and do your work, relying upon His operation. In this exercise and conflict of prayer, and in the desire to believe, it is He that all unconsciously draws on and strengthens the soul. Believe, for the Spirit will give faith within you. Work, "for it is God that worketh in you."

And, when you have believed and have become known to Him as the Spirit of faith--O, be thou only faithful to Him. Yield yourself wholly to Him; set your heart entirely open for Him; through Him, let there be a progress "from faith to faith," until, with full certitude, you are able to witness: "We have the same Spirit of faith, therefore we also believe."

CHAPTER VII

THE REPENTANCE OF FAITH

"Repent ye, and believe in the gospel." Mark 1:15.

This beginning of the preaching of the Lord Jesus contains the summary of the will of God for our salvation. Repent ye and believe. What God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. Without repentance no real faith, without faith no true repentance.

Without repentance no real faith. The entire design of God in the mission of Christ, the great aim for which the salvation of faith has been given to us, is to win the heart back from sin, and to make it free from sin. A real desire for this salvation can thus never arise in the heart that is not also prepared to be loosed from sin, and to abandon it. Faith is a surrender of the soul to God: this is an impossibility where it still continues to give itself to sin. Faith is an appropriation and a reception into the heart of the grace of God: it is an absurdity to suppose that this should take place without a contemporaneous repentance, and abandonment and casting out of sin.

Without faith also no true repentance. Repentance is not only a turning away from sin, which of itself would tend to self-righteousness, but a turning back to God, and this can take place only through faith. Repentance is not a work of one's own power, but a consenting, a co-operation with God's plan, in God's strength, a trustful surrender to the redeeming grace of God. And this can be done only through faith. Repentance is not an actual victory over sin, but the soul has to bring every sin to the feet of the Lord Jesus, the great victor over sin, that He may take it away; and this cannot find place, except by the faith which has acknowledged that He is faithful to forgive sin, and to cleanse from all unrighteousness.

Thus the power of repentance is faith: for the more we trust that Jesus makes us free from sin, the stronger are we to turn away from it. And the power of faith, on the other hand, is also repentance: for the more eager to become freed from sin it causes

us to be, the more are we shut up to faith. "Repent ye and believe": he that observes and holds fast both shall be saved.

Nor is it only at the beginning of the way, but on to the very end that these two must accompany one another. No sooner is faith cultivated in a one-sided fashion, without a growing conscientiousness in the casting off of little sins, and the sanctification of the whole heart and walk, than it becomes a work merely of the understanding or the feeling. And as soon as continued repentance occupies itself with the furtherance of sanctification, without daily holding fast and increasing a living faith by the promise of God's grace, such a repentance will also lose its worth.

"Repent ye and believe." See here what Jesus calls us to. Every wish and endeavour after repentance, every remembrance of the sin which is in you, and of which you would be free, must be a summons to faith in that Jesus who is exalted to bestow repentance. Combat every sin, and make renunciation of it at His feet with faith fixed on Him. And let every thought of faith on the other hand be an encouragement to fight more bravely against sin, until at length your whole soul shall be filled with the faith of which it is written: "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even your faith." So shall repentance and faith in due time become entirely one, and the outgoing of the soul to Jesus shall be a departure from sin: the enjoyment by faith of the light of His love, shall of itself drive away the darkness. Then shall believing and working no longer be considered as antagonistic, but the soul shall know that a continually renewed faith is the fruit of sanctification, for it carries it on in the strength of Jesus, and continued repentance then gives to faith courage to persevere, experience which it can plead, and the certitude of a full assurance.

Soul, why do you not believe? O, pray let it not be because you will not repent. It should not be that you are not

willing to make a renunciation of sin. And let it not be that you would first repent and then later on believe. No: let both go together from this moment onwards: "Repent ye and believe."

CHAPTER VIII

THE HUMILITY OF FAITH

"Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldest come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed." Mat. 8:8.

The faith of which these words are the utterance was so great that the Lord wondered at it, and exclaimed: "I have not found so great faith, no not in Israel." It may be of service to those who desire to come to faith, or who long for a stronger faith than they have hitherto had, to examine carefully the faith of the centurion, and to observe the soil in which that great faith struck its roots. The soil is--deep humility. This man who, although he belonged to the Gentiles, was praised by the Jewish elders as worthy of the Lord's favour, and whose faith surpassed all that the Lord had found in Israel,--this eminent man is the only one of whom we read, during Jesus' sojourn on earth, that he did not consider himself worthy that Jesus should enter his house. Wonderful humility in such a hero of faith. We learn from this the most momentous lesson--that deep humility and strong faith are knit to one another by the closest bonds.

Out of humility springs faith. Then first, when the soul fully acknowledges that it has nothing, and is also content to receive favour as one that possesses nothing, does it cast itself on the free grace of God, and receive it as one that believeth. In the acknowledgment of its nothingness, it does not dare to contradict God with its thoughts of unworthiness, with its desire still further to bring this or that to perfection. It feels that, since it has pleased such a great God to say that He is prepared to show compassion to the poorest and most wretched, then nothing becomes it better than to be silent and suffer Him to manifest His love. It knows, moreover, that it is so deeply corrupt that it can never of itself become better, and on this account its faith is just the best proof of its humility: it is from the recognition of its utter helplessness, from its knowledge of the fact that it can never become better, that it casts itself on the will of God. This is an entirely different state of mind from that of all such as imagine that humility comes out in not believing; as if there could be humility in waiting till something has been found in us that could make us more acceptable to the Lord than we really are: as if there could be humility in giving no obedience to the command of God actually to believe. Nay, verily. And just as perverse is the idea that faith will at any later period lead to pride. No: faith, as it springs from humility, will in turn only increase humility. It was because the centurion by faith recognized Jesus as wielding over nature a power which could not by any circumstance be prevented from healing the

sick by His mere Word, that he felt himself to be unworthy of having him in his house. And thus will it always be. The more glorious the revelation and experience of the Lord's greatness and goodness which faith enjoys, the more deeply does it sink in self-abasement and in lowly acknowledgment of the condescension by which such a God unveils Himself to such a sinner. And thus it always continues to be: the deeper humility the more faith, and again, the stronger faith the deeper humility. May the Lord teach us these truths--that there is no stronger proof of humility, and also no better means of increasing it, than just faith; and that, whether we feel ourselves deeply humbled or still desire to come to a deeper humility, the one as well as the other should only shut us up to faith.

And now, soul, why do you not believe? Are you still too unworthy? You dare not say so. The deeper your humility, the stronger your reason and right for believing. Are you still too proud? Ah, let it not be longer so. Only bring yourself to the acknowledgment of your entire weakness, and confess that you are wholly lost: in the depths of your wretchedness, and you will see that there is no other remedy than to let the Lord help you, and to commit yourself trustfully to the Word of His grace.

CHAPTER IX

THE FINDING OF FAITH

"Seek, and ye shall find." Luke 11:9.

This Word is a promise of Jesus, and on this account sure and certain. His truth and faithfulness are like His love to sinners, the pledge that every one who truly seeks shall certainly find. And yet there are so many that apparently seek sincerely and earnestly, and yet complain that they do not find. Whence arises this failure? Amongst other reasons, a principal one is that they do not know what finding is. They have a wrong idea of this finding; so that they have probably found, and yet continue seeking. And this arises chiefly from the fact of their not understanding that not only seeking and praying, but also finding must take place by faith.

To use an illustration: I have a heavy debt, and must go to prison, because I cannot pay it. I seek for a surety, but can nowhere find one. Then I receive a letter from a friend who has heard of my misfortune, telling me that he will become my surety: he will come at the first opportunity to release me. Shall I then not say that I have found a surety? And that not otherwise than by faith. I have not yet spoken to the man, I have not yet received the money, and yet out of trust in his letter, and because I place reliance on His Word, I still say: I have found a surety. It might possibly happen that experience here would be in conflict with faith. Perchance I might be taken to prison on account of my debt,

and my actual experience at that time, when I looked round on the gloomy abode, might possibly say, "I have no surety"; but faith would still say, "I have found a surety: I know my friend will certainly come. I have only to wait a little, when he will appear for my release." The real experience then comes later--after the finding.

Not otherwise is it with the finding of the Lord Jesus. The awakened sinner seeks all round for a surety to meet his debt, to deliver his soul, but nowhere finds one. Then comes to him the Word of God, with the message: "Christ is a propitiation for the sin of the whole world." The soul has only to receive that Word, and then by faith it has found a Redeemer. And according as it occupies itself with that Word, so as to be persuaded that the message is also for it, the more does it become strengthened in the conviction: "The Redeemer is also for me--God has said it"; until at last it learns to say with gladness: "I have found the Saviour." Mark it well, all this takes place simply and only by faith in the Word. It may be that the soul's experience is still in conflict with this confession. It often feels itself very sinful, corrupt, perverted from God, as if it were in a gloomy dungeon, and it asks: "If it be true that I have found the Saviour, why is it thus with me?" But it remembers that the finding of the Redeemer precedes the real experience of redemption. It comforts itself with the thought that the Lord is honoured by the faith which holds fast His Word as truth, and that it is by trial that faith becomes prepared alike to contemplate and to enjoy. First finding, receiving in faith; then later, actual experience.

Seeking soul, Jesus is to be found. He is not far from you, so that you must still for a long time seek Him, but very near. For He seeks you. Only believe this, hem yourself round with this: "Jesus seeks me, and is bent on having me." Let the Word of God's grace fill your heart, and out of the Word you will speedily say in faith: "I have found Him whom my soul desireth, Jesus, the Saviour of sinners."

CHAPTER X

THE SIMPLICITY OF FAITH

"The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart." Rom. 10:8.

The righteousness which is of faith saith thus: "Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down:) or, Who shall descend into the abyss? (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead.) But what saith it? The Word is nigh thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the Word of faith, which we preach." Thus does Paul describe the simplicity of faith and of the salvation which is obtained by it. Not in the height above, not in the depth below, not far off and to be sought for with great trouble: for the Word is nigh thee, in thy mouth and in thy heart. That is to say,

if you simply confess with the mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in your heart, you shall be saved.

O that souls would give heed to such words of God, and understand that it is the truth, what God says: "Hearken unto me, ye stouthearted, that are far from righteousness: I bring near my righteousness; it shall not be far off" (Isa. 46: 12-13). We are far from God, and yet we have no long road to traverse in seeking God. For such a task we are too weak and too blind. In sheer compassion He brings his salvation right up to us, yea, very nigh. Not in the height and not in the depth, but in our own inmost spirit He manifests His salvation. In our mouth and in our heart does He give it, for in the preaching of the Word of faith Christ abides and He comes to us. And yet so many will always go about seeking it, as if it were afar off. How is it that they sigh over the thought of the majesty and the holiness of God and the impossibility of climbing up to Him to bring thence a Saviour for themselves? Or how is it that they speak of the Lord Christ, as if He were still dead (although He did indeed die for our sins), and did not now live to save them? Ah, no: that was the righteousness, which was of the law, and which prescribed that man must do something before he can live. But the message of the Gospel is: "Receive with meekness the engrafted Word, which is able to save your souls." (James 1: 21) Helpless and wretched, man has only to be silent and to receive: God brings the blessing nigh.

The Word is nigh thee, in thy mouth and in thy heart. You mourn that it is still not in your heart. You are afraid to take it simply in your mouth; but, soul, observe how gracious God is. He will make the confession of the mouth for you the way and the means to the faith of the heart. How often in the things of this world do we teach our little children to utter words which they do not yet fully understand, in the sure confidence that the thoughts and feelings expressed in them will be gradually imprinted on their hearts. How constantly do we see that idle and sinful words, which at the outset are uttered carelessly, become forthwith rooted in the heart of the speaker, and bear their own fruits. And what do we not observe in prayer? That the soul which is ever and anon uttering, for example, the words, "Thy will be done," although the heart does not as yet fully assent to them, shall at last, by means of the very use of the expression, submit to the casting out of the unwilling and antagonistic disposition. Would that we dealt not otherwise with the salvation which is by faith. Take the Word in your mouth, humbly and earnestly. Say the words of grace after the Lord God, as if you heard Him addressing them to you. Yield not to the unbelief of the heart: combat and overcome it by attaching yourself to the Lord with the mouth: the consent of the heart will surely be won. Yea, do this now, by continually thinking over and speaking what the Lord God has said to you: "The Word is nigh." Confess with the mouth, with longing and with prayer, in order that it may at length come to the faith of the heart, that Jesus is your choice and your Lord: the Spirit of God will work with the Word, and you shall be able to believe with your heart. The Word is nigh thee, in thy mouth and then also in your heart.

CHAPTER XI

THE SINCERITY OF FAITH

"I believe; help Thou mine unbelief." Mark 9:24.

The Word of God attaches great value to sincerity. It is on this account that the desire of many to be sincere in their faith is justifiable. And for the fear and disquietude which arise from this desire they have also well-founded reasons, in the consistent testimony of the Word of God as well as in experience. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" (Jer. 17:9).

Frequently, however, there are great mistakes made, alike with respect to what true sincerity is and the means by which it is obtained and increased. As to the first of these points--what true sincerity is--many think that sincerity consists in a distinct feeling that they have surrendered themselves to the Lord with a strong faith and fervent love. This is by no means what the Word of God intends by sincerity. Sincerity is that attitude of the soul, in virtue of which we present ourselves to the Lord just as we are, neither better or worse. A man is insincere who makes himself out to be other than he really is or feels. It is on this account that the words of the father of the possessed child, quoted above, are such a glorious example of sincerity. He wished to believe, but felt unbelief still too strong within him. What, then, shall be done? He presents himself to the Lord just as he is. He knows that his desire is to trust in Jesus; but he does not know whether there be more unbelief than faith in his heart. What shall he do? Shall he mourn over the unbelief that is still in him? Or shall he just wait on till he feels that he has believed well and fully? No: not one of these things; for they will afford him no help. Just as he is, he goes to Jesus, and with childlike sincerity and simplicity he pours out his heart before Him: "Lord, I believe: but, alas, there is still too much unbelief--come to the help of my distrustfulness."

And this teaches us further what is the only means of being delivered from insincerity. The father felt that there was still in him an element that was waiting to believe, but he goes with it to Jesus. He makes it known to Him in the expectation that, in spite of his distrust, He will have mercy upon him and rescue him from it. How utterly different is this conduct from that of so many seeking souls. How often they continue year after year mourning over insincerity, longing for sincerity, and yet they make no progress. Ask them if it be not true that they make no advance but rather go on in their misery. And they know not, and they hearken not, when it is said to them that this is genuine sincerity--to present ourselves just as we are, with all our unbelief. They ought to know that this is the only way to healing; to give ourselves to the Saviour, with the little beginnings of good,--although they are but a desire to believe,--and that, too, in spite of a great preponderance of double-heartedness and worldly-mindedness and unbelief. Yes: to mourn our unbelief, in dealing actually with Jesus--that is true sincerity.

Poor soul, who hast so long remained apart from the Lord from dread of being insincere, and hast thereby grieved both the Lord and thyself, even although thou shouldest feel that of the hundred elements in you there are ninety and nine of unbelief, and only one of feeble desire to believe, go with it to Jesus: that is sincerity. Continue every day also to pour out your heart before the Lord: fight the good fight against remaining insincerity and distrust at Jesus' feet. That is the only place where you can overcome. "Lord, I believe; I will believe as well as I can; I do so. I believe at last, that

Thou art Jesus, the Helper of the wretched; come to the help of my distrustfulness." As you thus pray and strive every day, you will soon obtain the victory and the blessing. As for him who does not thus pray, he may be sure at least of this, that, so long as he remains apart from Jesus, no more sincerity shall come. No: sincerity is the outpouring of the heart before the Lord, and is nowhere obtained but in intercourse with Him and through His friendly grace.

CHAPTER XII

THE PENITENCE OF FAITH

"Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord." Luke 5:8.

The Saviour had unveiled His glory to Peter. He had wonderfully blessed His work of faith, "At thy Word I will let down the net," and at the same time made Himself known as the mighty Ruler over nature, the beneficent Friend of His disciples. Of all this grace, the fruit and the result was that Peter cast Himself before the Lord with the prayer: "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man." The glory of the Lord appeared to him so clearly in that light of faith, and his own sinfulness became to him so manifest, that out of dread and self abasement he uttered this cry: a clear proof that true faith has as its fruit a deeper humiliation for sin and knowledge of it, sincere and inward penitence.

And this lesson is of great importance for many who are in the way of faith. They think that they cannot be believing, because they are not yet deeply enough convinced of sin. And they do not observe that this Word has not yet defined how deeply one must feel sin before one may come to Jesus: it has fixed no measure. The first sense of need must bring us to Him. They do not understand that this remaining apart from Jesus is just the way to make their sense of sin less, and, what is especially of importance, that, on the other hand, an incipient (just beginning to exist) faith may become the means of increasing this sense of sin. Always the closer to the light, the more visible the impurity; the nearer to the Holy One, the stronger the sense of unworthiness; the more blessed with grace, the deeper the conviction of sin.

As with Peter, so with all believers. The hour of the revelation of Jesus' grace and love are the times of the deepest abasement. And these times are for the most part not at the beginning, but in the later progress of the life of faith. Consider the case of Peter: he has to attain his true knowledge of sin at his denial of the Lord, well-nigh three years after he had already said: "We have believed and known that Thou art the Christ." Think also of Jacob: how the Lord made with him at Bethel the covenant of His grace, and yet first brought him to the recognition of his sinfulness twenty years later, in the crisis of the wrestling by night, in which the Lord came to meet him as an antagonist, to break down the old nature and the power of the flesh. Think also of David and the glorious experiences of God's help and

friendship which he as a youth tasted when he was a shepherd and fought against Goliath: it was much later in life that he had to enter into the path of suffering, ere he could see sin unveiled. And so there are still ever so many, in whose case it is manifest that the Lord first leads their souls to faith, and then later on, through faith, to the full knowledge of sin, to genuine penitence.

Accordingly, let the soul who desires to become more humble and to turn back to God as one that is guilty understand that doubt and unbelief will not help him in this but rather hinder him; but that on the contrary faith can bring on the way to obtain all this fruit. Let the soul who doubts if he indeed has faith, and may have it, consider that, while his feeling of unworthiness and guilt causes so much darkness and anxiety in the depths of his spirit, it is only in this poverty of the soul that faith can flourish, and that it is by this means that he will be driven to his Lord. And let the soul who believes never forget that this must be one of the indispensable fruits and proofs of the sincerity of this faith, namely, a constantly growing self-abhorrence and a becoming less in his own eyes, according to the Word of the Lord to His people: "I will establish my covenant with you, that ye; may be ashamed, when I shall make atonement for you, for all that thou has done, saith the Lord." (Ezk. 16: 61-63, Dutch version).

Reader, why do you not believe? Surely it is not that you will still wait for more penitence and contrition of heart. Ah, no: this last grace, too, is always a fruit of faith. Believe today in the grace of Him who comes to you. All that is lacking in you must stir you up to this. With Him you receive everything that you are going to seek elsewhere in vain.

CHAPTER XIII

THE FEAR OF FAITH

"By faith Noah, moved with fear, prepared an ark." Heb. 11: 7.

There are many who suppose that, when the Word of God says, "Blessed is the man that feareth always," it is commending a disposition that is at variance with the rest and assurance that are given by faith. And they thus regard this unbelief as a sort of virtue: they fear this great and holy God, and they fear their own weakness and unfaithfulness, and they dare not believe. This view is altogether out of harmony with the Word of God; for the Word teaches us that fear and confidence must go hand in hand with each other. "Many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord" (Psa. 40: 3), "Ye that fear the Lord, trust in the Lord" (Psa. 115: 11), "Behold, the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear Him, upon them that hope in His mercy." (Psa. 33: 18) Fear and confidence go in union: the one increases the other.

Very clearly is this truth set before us in the history of Noah. "By faith Noah, being warned of God concerning things

not seen as yet, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark." The fear was partly the fruit of his faith, and partly a motive to make his faith active in the building of the ark. He believed the announcement of the avenging flood, and feared; feared in view of the destruction that was to overtake his fellow-men and in view of the holy God from whom the judgment was to proceed. He feared, and therefore he cleaved in strong faith to the promise of the ark, and worked at it as the only means of preservation. Fear and trust were with him inseparable, the one indispensable to the other.

Anxious soul, you fear the Lord, you fear His holiness and His judgments, and you say that it is out of veneration for Him that you do not dare to believe. You say that you are too unworthy in the presence of such a holy and dreadful God to appropriate the right of being called His child, and of speaking to Him with confidence. O that you knew how grievously you are mistaken. There is nothing that so much tends to arouse in the Lord the sense of dishonour and anger as unbelief--not believing His Word, that He has compassion on all the unworthy. There is nothing on which God so much sets His honor as His free grace and His pity for the ungodly. You wound Him in the most tender point when you doubt if His grace is indeed for you, and so drag its greatness and trustworthiness into doubt. O souls, when you fear the Lord, pray, fear to dishonour Him by unbelief.

But, no: you say that it is not the Lord, but yourselves that you doubt. You fear on account of your unfaithfulness, your insincerity. And do you not then understand that it is just this fear of yourselves that is the strongest argument for your casting yourselves upon the Lord and entrusting yourselves to Him. O soul, pray, seek no longer something in yourselves; for, if you wait until you no longer fear for yourselves, you will never come to Christ at all. God never asks you for an engagement to be faithful on which He can rely. No: He gives you a promise of faithfulness on which you can rely. And just because you fear your own unfaithfulness, you must place your confidence on God's faithfulness. Herein just lies the glory of free grace, that the sinner, who cannot trust himself, who feels that in everything--in faith, in humility, in earnestness, in sincerity--he comes far short, may yet surrender himself to the Lord as one who is utterly wretched, with confidence in the Word that He certainly receives, and will keep such an one. Yea: it is he who fears on his own account that must trust in the Lord. This is the only remedy. He has nothing on which he can hope but the promise of God's compassion. Every thought of fear must be a new motive to confidence. So shall he learn to fear no more, according to the Word of the psalmist: "Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord: his heart is established, he shall not be afraid." (Psa. 112: 1, 8). He shall also learn to experience that the fear of the Lord then becomes through confidence the source, not of anxiety but of peace and growing power, according to that other Word: "The churches, walking in the fear of the Lord and the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied." (Acts 9: 31).

CHAPTER XIV

THE CERTAINTY OF FAITH

"He staggered (wavered) not at the promise of God through unbelief, . . . and being fully assured that what He had promised He was able also to perform." Rom. 4:20-21.

Abraham did not doubt. Glorious testimony to provoke us to jealousy, and thus to the imitation of his example. Therefore the Word also gives us to know what the power was in virtue of which he obtained faith and brought all doubt to silence. The secret lay simply in the conviction: What God has promised, He is able also to perform. On this account he was assured, and whenever reflections and doubtings would arise, he always held before his eyes the incontrovertible (undeniable) argument: That which has been promised, God is able to perform. Hence it is that there stands written: "And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, . . . before Him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth the things which be not as though they were." (Rom. 4:19,17) To every question, "How can these things be?" there was his simple answer: "What God has promised He is able also to perform. For the Lord there is nothing too wonderful. It is not my business to be anxious, and to say how God's Word can be fulfilled. The Lord will see to it."

My reader, you mourn over the power of your doubts, and say that you cannot overcome them: come, learn of Abraham how you can do this. The first thing that is necessary is that you understand and reflect what promise the Lord has given you. If the Lord has given no promises for you, then it cannot be your duty to believe. But, as surely as the Word says "Believe," is there also a promise which you must believe. To take only one out of the thousands which are in the Scriptures, "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." God give you the gracious promise, and commands you to believe it with all your heart. It is His will that you should receive it as the truth that His son has come for all that are lost, hence also for you. He desires that you should believe that His Son seeks you and longs for you, and that His Son will save you.

God wills that you should ponder this thought and cherish it in your heart, until your whole soul takes its stand on this truth: Jesus seeks me, lost as I am; there is grace for me. As soon as you believe that, the Saviour begins to come in to you.

If now you have reached this first point, if you know that there is a promise also for you, then the second duty is not to look into yourselves to know if there is hope that what you expect will take place. As Abraham did not regard his own body, which was already dead, so must you not regard your own dead soul. Although you feel yourself to be dead, powerless, insincere, very sinful, although you are lacking in penitence, earnestness, and in all else that you know you ought to have, still act like Abraham: believe on God, who maketh the dead alive, and calleth the things that are not as though they were. Act like Abraham, and cast down every doubt with the thought: "What God has promised He is able also to perform." Keep your mind occupied with this certain truth: He is come to save that which was lost, and there is no lost one so far lost that Jesus cannot find him and cannot save him.

Once again, it comes simply to these two points: know if there is a promise for you, lost sinner; if so, then cleave

simply to this fact: What has been promised He is able also to perform. "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief. I will no longer dishonour Thee by doubtings: Thy power, Thy love, Thy faithfulness, I will adore and trust. I will venture to surrender my soul to Thee. Although I feel it not, I will believe it. Thou seekest and savest that which is lost. Lord, help: I do believe."

CHAPTER XV

THE GLORIFYING OF GOD BY FAITH

"He staggered (wavered) not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God. Therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness." Rom. 4:20,22.

The question is frequently asked by those who have not yet come to faith, and who on this account do not yet fully understand it, What, pray, may be the reason why faith is so highly esteemed by the Lord and is capable of such great things? The answer is simple: It gives glory to God. It humbles the sinner in the dust as one who deserves nothing and is capable of nothing, and must on this account present himself to God as dependent on the promises of a free compassion. It glorifies God in the acknowledgment of His power and love which will bestow redemption; of His Word and faithfulness also, since these are held to be so strong and glorious that the sinner, although he has nothing else, can commit himself to them. Faith sets God and man in the right relation to one another--God on the throne of His sovereign grace, from whom all must and shall come; man in his misery and nothingness, as one who has nothing in himself but guilt and its curse.

In the other virtues of the Christian life, such as humility and love, there is always something that is wrought in man, that he can feel, and of which he might be able to boast. True faith on the other hand is the confession of utter poverty and helplessness. It says: "I have nothing left, I can also do nothing. I must now simply remain silent to hear what God speaks, to see what He will do, to receive what He will give." It is truly the attitude of a beggar, by which man is laid in the dust. And yet no angel in heaven can give God so much honour as faith, when out of the surrounding darkness and sin and poverty it still relies on God and expects from Him the certain fulfillment of that which He has promised.

Alas! how great is the foolishness of the heart of man. How many are there still, who really imagine that they give glory to God by their unbelief. They fancy that, when they mourn heavily over themselves and their misery, telling how unworthy they are to appropriate such grace because they have so deep a sense of the greatness and holiness of God,

this is to the honour of God. On the contrary, it is really to His dishonour: as if He were not sufficiently gracious towards the unworthy, not sufficiently powerful to rescue the utterly wretched, not faithful to perform His Word. No: faith alone gives glory to God, for it sets no limits to the Holy One of Israel. It has but one Question, What has God said? When it has once known this, then it asks nothing further about possibility or truth or anything else. The Word of God is enough for the soul. Like Abraham, it gives glory to God by being strong in faith.

Beloved reader, it is a terrible sin to rob God of His honour. By being unbelieving you make yourself guilty of this offense. As God has revealed Himself in the gospel more gloriously than in the law, so is the sin of unbelief in relation to the promises much more dreadful than that of disobedience to the commandments. For this reason, I entreat you, believe what God says. Ask not what you are or what you have, but if there is anything with respect to which God will have it that you shall now believe, or if there is any promise with which He comes to meet the ungodly. Here is one: "Christ died for the ungodly." Receive that Word, keep it in your heart, ponder and believe it, and rest not until it abides as essential truth with you, even as it is with God: "Christ is for the ungodly." Yes: this very day, O souls, give glory to the Lord, by going to Him as the gracious, almighty, and faithful Redeemer; commit yourselves to His Word, be strong in faith and there by give glory to God, as you go to Him.

Anxious ones, in God's name, why do you not believe? This is the only thing that you are to do, the only thing that God will have--only believe.

CHAPTER XVI

THE POWER OF FAITH

"Through faith also Sarah herself received strength . . . because she judged Him faithful who had promised." Heb. 11:11.

See here again one of the examples, so simple and intelligible of what faith is: "She counted Him faithful who had promised." There was a time when Sarah doubted, for she looked to nature, and it said to her that she should no longer bear. Through the repeated promises of the Lord she was nevertheless led to look to Him who had given the promises, and keeping in mind His divine faithfulness she found there was no alternative for her but to believe; and the only account which she could give of the supernatural expectation of faith was this: "He is faithful that promised." (Heb. 10:23).

The same way must still be followed by those Christians who desire to be liberated from their doubts and to reach the blessed experiences of the life of faith. We must learn to have done with the reasonings of the understanding; with the questions which nature would have first answered, such as, "How can these things be?", "Whereby shall I know it?", with calculations as to whether our own wisdom and power are perchance sufficient to bring us where we must know; and we

must hold ourselves content with the view expressed in this sentence: "He is faithful that promised." The only thing which one has to ask is this, "Is there a promise also for me?" If the Word of God gives us the answer: "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners of whom I am chief," then that is sufficient to bring us down before the Lord and to make us expect that He will perform the promise to us: "He is faithful that promised."

O, if souls would only keep themselves occupied with the consideration of God's faithfulness, how would unbelief be ashamed. Whenever anxious feelings multiply in you, and you fear for yourself and your work, go, O soul, bow down in silent meditation and adoration before your God as the faithful One, until your whole spirit becomes filled with the thoughts and the peace that spring from this attribute. Go over all the assurances in the Scriptures, so glorious and clear, that the unchangeable One Himself shall fulfil His counsel, and that He simply desires of souls the stillness which observes and expects the performance. Take counsel with the believers of the old and new covenants, reflect on their ways and their leadings, and they will tell you with one accord that their strength and their peace have been--the faithfulness of God. O, pray, accustom yourself, every day, with every promise of God that you read, with every prayer that you make for the attainment of what God has spoken to you of, with every fear that arises in you as to whether you shall be indeed partaker of the offered salvation,--pray, accustom yourself to fasten your eye undividedly on that Word, to let your whole heart be filled with it: "He is faithful that promised." And, above all, even when you are not yet able to appropriate everything to yourselves, forget not to praise and to thank God for His faithfulness; praise and adore Him as the Faithful One: adoration will confirm you in faith in Him. Nor must you set your hope on the divine faithfulness only when you are taking the first steps on the way of conversion, seeking for forgiveness and acceptance, but, especially in the midst of the struggle, to be confirmed unto the end and to be unreprouable in the day of our Lord Jesus. It is with his eye fixed on this hope that Paul says, "God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord." (I Cor. 1:9); just as in that glorious work about sanctification that finds so little belief, "The God of peace sanctify you wholly," he also immediately adds: "Faithful is He that calleth you, who will also do it." (I Thess. 5:23-24).

It was by this faith, this loyal esteem of the faithfulness of her God and reliance upon it, that Sarah received power to bear. So far is this faith also from leading to sluggishness and indifference that it will increase activity. It teaches the soul to wait upon God spiritually and earnestly, that He may point out to it what it must do, and that it may learn by experience to understand the deep significance of that Word: "Work, for God worketh in you." Believing in His faithfulness also to work in it, it has courage to work after Him. "By faith she received power, since she counted Him faithful who had promised."

CHAPTER XVII

THE CHILDSHIP OF FAITH

"As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name." John 1:12.

The receiving of the Lord Jesus is here said to be the same as believing on His name. One receives Him as soon as one believes, yea through believing on His name. His name is always Jesus, Lord and Saviour. As soon as the soul believes this, and on this account looks on Him as the man who certainly saves the sinner, it not merely thinks: "He can do this, yet I know not if it will take place with me," but it regards Him as Lord and Saviour given by God also for himself, and thus believes on His name that it essentially expresses what Jesus is,--as soon as, I say, the sinner does this, he receives Him. He acknowledges Him in His grace as Jesus, appropriates Him in the faith which says, "He is also for me"; he receives Him as a gift bestowed by God, set before Him to be appropriated, receives Him as that which His name signifies--Lord and Saviour, the only and perfect Lord and Saviour. He acknowledges that in himself there is nothing good nor ever shall be; he foresees manifold unfaithfulness and backsliding; he feels himself to be wholly powerless: but he receives Jesus as Lord and Saviour, as one who undertakes the whole work, who from day to day will continue that work and accomplish it in the leading, the keeping, and the sanctification of the soul. And according as he believes further in that name, in the absolute truth, the far-reaching signification, the inexhaustible power of that name, in this same measure does he receive Jesus more perfectly in the riches of His manifold blessings, and experience how true it is: Jesus saves. He gives power to men to become the children of God, enables them also to say, through the Spirit, "Abba, Father," and with all the dispositions of children--confidence, fear, love, obedience--to rejoice in God's fatherly love.

Reader, are you seeking salvation? O, then, receive Jesus. He is offered to you by God as Lord and Saviour. Receive Him as a gift of the Divine love; acknowledge Him as really also for you; believe that, with His name, it is the full truth that the work of saving a sinner may well be entrusted to Him; receive Him in that faith, coupled with the simple surrender of yourselves, dead and wretched as you are, into His hands, and be assured that you shall not come out deceived. Away with all doubtings. In the name of God I ask you, as upright dealing is for you indispensable to being saved: Do you believe in the name of Jesus, or do you not believe in it? Do you believe in the name JESUS, given by the true God to His Son, in order that you may build your hope upon it? O sinner, pray, believe that the name, Jesus, is divine truth. Come, say today, "Yes: He is the Lord and Saviour of that which was lost"; no longer shut Him out, but receive Him in the heart, with simple faith in His Word, I am Jesus. Begin with this, continue with this, go forward with this, believe evermore in the name JESUS; receive Him with this, and He shall give you power to become a child of God. Hear once more what God says to you today, "As many as received Him"--thousands on earth and in heaven can corroborate the statement that it is really so--"to them gave He the right to become children of God, even to them that believe on His name."

CHAPTER XVIII

THE SURRENDER OF FAITH

"They first gave their own selves to the Lord." II Cor. 8:5.

In the Word of His promise, through the gracious working of His Spirit, the Lord gives Himself to us; through faith we receive Him, and we know that He is ours. This faith, as the outgoing of the soul to Jesus to meet Him, is at the same time a surrender to Him. We can never receive the Lord as Saviour and His grace without at the same time surrendering ourselves to Him, to be sealed and filled with salvation. And as faith knows that the Lord is ours, because His Word tells us that He gives Himself to us, so it also knows that He receives us as His own, because His Word assures us of that.

Faith has thus two sides: the believing reception of the Lord Jesus and all that He gives, and the believing surrender of the soul with all that it has to the Lord. The one cannot be without the other. I take Jesus as my King to rule over me, as a Saviour to free me from sin; He cannot perform His work in me, if I do not surrender myself to Him. Confidence in Jesus is thus at the same time a committal of one's self to Him.

Anxious soul, see here again the simplicity of faith. If you wish to know what you have to do, the answer is, Give yourself to the Lord Jesus.

Give yourself to the Lord Jesus, just as you are. You have to give yourself to Him, not as an offering that is worthy of Him, as one who is already His friend and on whom He can look down with complacency. No: you have to surrender yourself to Him as one that is dead, whom He has to make alive, as an enemy whom He must reconcile and forgive, as a sinner whom He must save. The multitude of your sins, the corruption which you feel struggling within you, the very insincerity of your coming to Him, are thus no reason why you should not venture to give yourself to Him. No: just the reverse: these are the proofs that you stand in need of a Saviour; they are at the same time the tokens given by the Word of God of those in whose behalf Jesus came. O sinner, just as you are, surrender yourself to Jesus.

Surrender yourself also to Him wholly and undividedly. Keep nothing back of what is yours. Think not that He is to do one part of the work and you the rest. No: submit entirely to His estimate of you. Although you do not yet feel the power to make a separation from all sins, although you still feel that the heart is attached to one thing and another, and will cleave to them, make confession of all this before Him; for it is also through the confession of sins that we surrender ourselves to Him. Understand that the more you surrender yourself entirely to Him, the more completely is He able to accomplish His work for you. Think of His complete surrender for you and to you; think of the claim of His love upon you and the complete salvation with which He will fill you, and let your surrender to Him be complete and undivided.

And, above all, surrender yourself to Him in faith. You have perchance given yourself to Him ere this, but it brought you no peace, for you did not know if the surrender was accepted by Him. You would have a token from heaven, a divine

inspiration in your heart to tell you that He had accepted you. And this was wrong. He has said: "Him that cometh unto Me, I will in no wise cast out." God has said: "Return ye, and I will receive you." When you surrender yourself to Jesus, you must believe that; in that Word you must have sufficient. You are to take your stand upon it, because God speaks the truth. However wretched you are, however imperfect your surrender is, it must be a surrender of faith, of faith that He receives you, because He has said it. Although you find it difficult to believe that so firmly, although it seems to you very hazardous for so great a sinner, it is, nevertheless, your duty to believe that, when you surrender yourself to the Lord, He receives you. Do not set yourself above God. Do not say, I have done my part but I know not if God will do His. No: think of the Word; say to the Lord that it is on His promise that you surrender yourself; day after day be occupied with the faithfulness of God's promise and you shall gradually come to the blessed certainty: He receives me. Yes: you shall even be able to say, He has received me.

CHAPTER XIX

THE SCHOOL OF FAITH

"O woman, great is thy faith: be it done unto thee even as thou wilt." Mat. 15:28.

A great faith: all should know that there is nothing on earth so desirable. Many may wish to have it and pray for it, and yet there are but few that come to it. And why? A principal reason is this: they will not walk in the way that leads to it; they are afraid of the school where that faith is taught. Or, they have very wrong ideas concerning the way to attain that great faith, as if, for instance, it were a gift which is bestowed at once. So perverse are their thoughts, that when the Lord is going to hear their prayers and is to lead them in another way than they had expected, they suppose that He is no longer caring for them. Come, all ye that long for more faith, learn from the Canaanite woman, how the Lord will bring you to it.

First of all, He will try you. The Canaanite woman had a daughter possessed by a devil, and what a trial was not that to her? And so the Lord still sends His children trials of very different kinds. With one, it is trial in the physical life; with another, trial in the family; with another again it is inward vexation of soul; with still more it is hidden conflict with sin. But trial there must be; for so long as the flesh has everything agreeable and according to its inclination, the soul will never wholly and with power cleave to the Lord. It is by necessity that it is driven out to seek all its salvation in the Lord and to commit itself to Him. Blessed trial, the message of God to teach more faith, how many regard thee as the messenger of His wrath and aversion, instead of humbly suffering themselves to be led by thy hand to the Lord.

Further: when the Lord is to lead a soul to great faith, He leaves its prayers unheard. So it was with the Canaanite

woman. He answered her not one word, and when He did at length reply to her, the answer was still more unfavourable than His silence. This is always the way. If the answer came immediately, how would the soul get acquainted with the Lord Himself. His gifts would occupy its attention so much that it would overlook the Lord Himself. It must first be put to the proof, whether it can take its stand upon its Lord and what He has provided, without any answer; whether He and His Word are to suffice for it; yea, whether it will, even when His Word appears to be opposed to it, still not doubt His love, but rather commit itself to it. A faith so great that it still cleaves to the Lord in spite of apparent rejection: this precious lesson, which is above all else acceptable to the Lord, is learned and practiced only in the conflict of unheard but persevering prayer.

Once more: the soul that is to come to great faith must be humbled. What a hard word for the poor heathen woman: "It is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs." But she suffers it to be well-pleasing to her, and uses it as her strongest argument. She overcomes the Lord with His own weapons and turns His rejection into her plea: "Even the dogs eat of the crumbs that fall under their master's table." Do you also likewise: whenever, in following the Lord, your sins are laid bare to you, and your unworthiness held up before you, and the Word makes you feel that you are an ungodly and accursed sinner, always answer with the woman, "Yea, Lord, I am very wretched; all that my heart testifies of sin is true: 'yet, yet even the dogs eat'; and with such a Lord as Thou art, there is overflowing grace even for the most wretched." The deeper the root, the stronger the tree; the deeper the descent of humility, the stronger the faith; for then it leans, not half on itself, but wholly on the Lord.

See here, thou, my soul, Jesus' school for faith. Let it not grieve you, if the lessons are sometimes heavy; He has told you of this beforehand. But hold fast this conviction: when my soul is brought into trial, when my sin and unworthiness become more distinct, and press me the deeper down, I shall look upon all this as the way along which the all-loving Jesus is to lead me to that life of faith, in which He takes such delight; and when I am dispirited, I shall read again the story of the Canaanite, and I shall be strengthened by the glorious victory and reward of her conflict of faith. The more difficult the school, the more glorious the prize; "Be it done unto thee, even as thou wilt."

CHAPTER XX

THE WORD OF FAITH

"So faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Rom. 10:17.

Here is the simple answer to the question, How does faith arise in the soul? The Spirit, the author of faith, uses for

this purpose a means, and that means is the Word. It cannot be otherwise. The Spirit does not work apart from the faculties of man, but by means of them. His supernatural power makes use of the natural gifts which remain to man after his sin, renews and sanctifies them. By awakening desire, He bends the will; by presenting the loveliness of Jesus, He works upon the affections; and thus also, when He works faith, He does so by presenting the truth, in order thereby to awaken confidence.

I take it for granted that my reader is one who has been awakened; who, desiring to be saved, is looking out for rescue; who longs to be freed from his sin, and asks, How, pray, do I come to faith in Jesus? The answer is, By the Word. But what am I to do with the Word? Do with it what you should do with any ordinary message which you cannot at once believe. Suppose that tidings is brought to you of a great inheritance which comes to you. You had not been expecting it, and cannot believe that so great happiness and wealth have fallen to your lot. What are you to do? You will inquire if the messenger is trustworthy. If you are sure of this point, in order to obtain all certainty, you will ask him once and again and again to say that you are the person intended; or if he has brought a letter of conveyance or a will, you will read it repeatedly. And thus, by explanation and confirmation of his message, you will become convinced and will believe. This is just: faith is by the Word.

Not otherwise is it in divine things.

When the message comes to you, Jesus is a Saviour for sinners, also for you, do you ask if you are to believe Him who speaks? The answer is, Yes: for He is the true God. Do you ask if there is no misunderstanding, or if you are really the person intended? Yes: for the message is to every sinner. Then does it become your duty to listen earnestly to the message; to ask repeatedly, yea unceasingly--for the matter is of moment--Shall I or shall I not believe? And the more you simply take the Word, read and read again the message of God, contemplate one after another the promises with which God has made it sure that the Saviour is for every sinner, the sooner shall you feel constrained to say, It is true; God says it; I must believe it.

O, poor sinner, pray cease to ask what your own heart feels, as one who would be saved. Cease to seek the ground of faith in yourselves. Attend now to the Word: Jesus is the Saviour of sinners. Listen to it again and yet again. Let your soul become occupied the whole day with the thought: God says it; it must be. And continue with this, the more wretched and dark the condition of your heart may be. Ask simply from day to day, What says the Word? Take and carry that Word in your heart, and you shall speedily experience that "faith is by the Word." And so far from making you think that faith is thus a work of your own power will such activity be, that you shall acknowledge that it is by the Word the Spirit works. Your use of the Word gives you reason, gives you right, to hope for His help. You shall experience how little faith is merely a reasoning of the intellect, but at the same time how faithful God is to bestow His grace on the use of means, and to crown with His blessing the soul that honours His Word.

CHAPTER XXI

THE THANKSGIVING OF FAITH

"So walk ye in Him, stablished in your faith, . . . abounding therein with thanksgiving." Col. 2:6-7.

The idea which is here expressed by the apostle is, that where faith is active and growing it will always go coupled with thanksgiving; as it stands written: "Then believed they His words; they sang His praise." As faith stirs up to thanksgiving, so it exercises a reactive influence; it in turn strengthens faith. Faith and thanksgiving belong to one another and keep one another. The more I believe, the more I shall thank; the more I thank, the more I shall believe. The lack of faith is the reason that men give thanks so little; the neglect of thanksgiving hinders and weakens faith. This is a fault to which too little attention has been paid and from which many a one suffers great loss. Let us consider it for a moment.

The reason why thanksgiving has the effect of increasing faith is manifest. Faith has its greatest power in the fact that in believing the soul wholly forgets itself, and with undivided energy looks to God and hears Him--goes out wholly to Him. This is in like manner precisely the nature of thanksgiving, that in it the soul must be entirely occupied with God, with the contemplation of His goodness, the adoration of His Godhead, the consideration of His ways, the expression of His wonders. Accordingly, the more the mind is exercised in this work, and is taken up with the thought of all this, the more shall there be fixed and rooted in it the conviction that the Lord is truly a God on whom it is its duty to rely. If thanksgiving, the express mention of His omnipotence, His love, His faithfulness, His perfection shall fill the soul, the result cannot but be that the soul shall suffer it to be concentrated on God. He that has but a single word of such a God to build upon has enough. In such thanksgiving the soul will have its desires roused, its courage strengthened, its inward devotion to Him deepened. The shamefulness of its unbelief will be very manifest as an offense against such a God. The remembrance of unbelief, of my unworthiness, my lack of love, my insincerity, my weakness and my uncertainty as to whether I shall remain faithful,--all this shall be utterly blotted out by what the thankful soul has expressed, namely, that God in His compassionate and omnipotent love is greater than all the force of sin and Satan. It cannot be otherwise, if thanksgiving increases faith. Hence that Word: "Abounding in faith with thanksgiving."

And now I wish to ask you who here say that you are seeking the increase of faith this question, Are you really doing this by thanking God? If you are still unconverted, go and thank Him that you are still not in hell. O, what a wonder it is that in His longsuffering He has still borne with you and spared you. Thank Him for this. Thank Him that He gave His Son Jesus for sinners. Yes: although you are not yet able to say that His is yours, fall upon your knees and thank God for His unspeakable gift to this sinful world and also to you. Thank Him for His gracious promise which has also come to you. O sinner, though you have as yet received little or nothing for yourself, pray be not silent, but adore and speak of His wonderful compassion. Let this be a daily work with you. Keep yourself intensely occupied with it: let your soul abide in contemplating what God is, what He has done, what He has promised He will do; how gracious, how faithful He

is and how mighty to deliver and endeavour, however imperfectly, to express this on your knees before Him. In every acknowledgment of your bitter misery, thank Him that He is God; confess before Him that He is great and good. This thanksgiving will teach your soul that you may calmly confide in God. And, throughout the whole conflict of faith, you will often have to say that, when everything looked utterly dark and your wretchedness was very deep, if you but rendered thanks for what God was, hope then once more revived in your soul. Whatever else fails you, this always remains--a God of praise. Never was your case so wretched, that you had nothing more left to be thankful for. Only put this remedy to the proof: in the midst of all that is dark, grievous, and incomprehensible for the soul, only begin to praise, and your praising shall speedily merge in believing. Praising and believing are one.

CHAPTER XXII

THE OFFENSE OF FAITH

"And Elisha sent a messenger unto him, saying, Go and wash in Jordan seven times." II Kings 5:10.

The story of Naaman's healing has at all times served as a striking illustration of the way of faith, with all the humbling, yea offensive, features that it has for the natural heart, of which Naaman himself is to us so clear an example.

The answer of Naaman when he received the message of the prophet--how entirely is it in accordance with the expectation of nature, which is so fain to see something, so fain to receive something in the shape of external ceremonies: "Behold, I thought, He will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the Lord his God, and wave his hand over the place, and recover the leper." How completely emerges here the inclination of the seeker for healing, who would have a sensible, visible, impressive revelation of the Lord's power; and who, when a servant is sent with the simple message of faith, turns away disappointed, as if this were no answer to his prayer.

And then the contents of the message--to wash in Jordan. If water could do it, were not the rivers of Damascus larger than the Jordan, were not their waters better than all the waters of Israel? He did not know that it was not the water, but the power of God through His Word with the water. And in like manner the seeker for salvation cannot understand that it must just be faith by which he is to be cleansed. Are there not the waters of a deep and inward penitence, the streams of sincere humility, the loyalty of an inner love? Why is it, pray, that faith is to be named above these? How many there are that go and set their disposition before and above mere simple faith; as if God called not that which is weak and despised, and indeed nothing; as if He had not chosen faith as the way in which man, as capable of no achievement, was to receive everything out of free compassion.

But, more than all else, the washing seven times was sure to prove a stumbling-block, unless he had previously been taught to submit to the obedience of faith. If the waters were good, why was not one washing sufficient? If the healing

did not take place at the fifth or sixth time, why should it occur just at the seventh time? Reason was thoroughly entitled to inquire in this fashion. But faith cannot insist on an answer to these questions, and at the same time obeys "according to the word of the man of God." This submission should become to us a very significant instance of the longsuffering of faith. It should remind us how faith is to hold out, although it sees not the least token of alteration or healing. It should teach us the lesson which is learned with so much difficulty that there must be a continual repetition of the act of faith, cleaving fast to the Word of God, until He bestows the blessing.

O soul, seeking for salvation, learn here your way. It is with submission to that which does not appear to you the best means, which seems to you too small and trifling for such a great result, it is by the continuous repetition of what at the outset seems fruitless, that you are called on to persevere in faith. Pray, understand it, faith is God's way. It was He that devised it, and not man. On this account it is a stumbling block to every Naaman, until he learns, as one that is helpless, to bow beneath the Word of God. Submit yourself to God and receive what He says, that "he that believeth shall be saved." Go every day to the Word and its streams of living water. Although it seems to you somewhat trifling to wash there, to plunge and bathe in it, to receive from it this or that promise, and to do the very same thing every day anew, without experiencing any healing, yet hold on. Persevere, and the blessed result shall be like that of Naaman. "His flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child," he was as one born a second time, "and he was clean." You also shall be born again by the living Word, and be cleansed from your sin. It does not lie in you, nor even in the Word regarded in itself, but in the faithfulness of God, who has said: "He that believeth shall not be ashamed."

CHAPTER XXIII

THE STABILITY OF FAITH

"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for." Heb. 11:1.

Many people think that faith is something which at its best is but very uncertain: not so certain, for example, as sight or hearing. They appear to think that faith is a sort of imagination by which we must take pains to be assured in our own hearts that we shall be saved. The result of this erroneous conception is that they often attempt to exercise it, but find no rest in it, or perhaps even come to regard all assurance of faith as conjecture, self-deception, or presumption. They do not understand what faith is.

The Epistle to the Hebrews might have taught them. There faith is represented as the highest certainty, as a sure foundation on which one can build and safely trust oneself. In faith there is nothing that moves or can be moved: faith is a strong basis, and that indeed for the simple reason that faith depends upon what stands more firmly than rocks of

mountains, namely, the Word of God. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but the Word of God endures to eternity. And on this account it is that to come to rest, peace, and stability, the soul has simply to ask, "What has God said? " Is there anything that God has commanded me to believe? Has He spoken anything that is directed to every sinner, and that every sinner is bound to believe? If so, then it is my duty to search out this and to receive it as being the Word of the true God, and therefore sure and certain.

And what is it, then, that every sinner is to believe? Simply this--that Christ has been given by God also to him as a Saviour. "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ is come into the world to save sinners:" all sinners without distinction, even the chief. Let the sinner that longs to be saved only hold fast that truth, and be occupied with it. Let him go out of himself, so as to be hemmed in with this thought, until his heart be filled with it: Jesus is come to save sinners, even me; Jesus is given by God also to save me: Christ is certainly for me. Not because I have believed all this or have been converted; no, but because I am an ungodly one. And, whether I believe it or not, it remains truth that Christ is offered by God also to me. Before I believe it, it is the truth: the truth of it thus does not depend on anything in me that is yet to take place. The truth of it is grounded on the fact that God has said it. I have, therefore, nothing to do but to hear according to the Word of God, and to receive it in my soul, until it becomes with me a settled conviction: it must be true, Christ is a Saviour also for me, for God has said it. Every questioning in the form of, Are you already converted? or, Are you worthy of it? or, Are you indeed sincere? I bring to silence with the simple answer: Whoever or whatever I may be, Christ is for the sinner, is also for me. And according as I day by day accustom myself simply to ask, "Am I sure that God has said it? Shall I experience that faith is a firm foundation?" Standing on this basis, I cannot waver, but I come to an ever clearer insight into the truth that faith is nothing but a receiving and committing of oneself to the Word of the true God. Hence it cannot be otherwise than that "faith is a firm foundation."

And now, anxious one, why do you not believe? O, faith is no imagination that you too are a chosen one, but a laying of yourself down on the immovable rock of the Word of the Lord. "God loved the world," "Christ died for the ungodly"; and now He comes to ask you--see to it, I entreat you, that you give Him an answer: "If I speak the truth to you, why do you not believe?"

CHAPTER XXIV

THE JUSTIFICATION OF FAITH

"Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." Rom. 3:28.

The Lord has revealed to us two ways, which should be able to lead us to Him and salvation. Along the one the law

leads us, along the other grace. Both ways are good and come from God: yet there is after all only one of the two for us to use, by reason of our weakness. The law is good for those who have the power to obey and to follow it. Grace is the way for those who are powerless and can accomplish nothing. The law demands and must be fulfilled: grace gives and needs simply to be received. The law says, "Do this and thou shalt live"; grace says, "Believe and thou shalt be saved." The law demands works, yet gives no strength to produce them: grace asks for faith, which it also of its own power awakens by its promises--faith, which is nothing but the acknowledgment of weakness and a consent to be willing to receive everything for nothing. The law directs me to the height, to a mountain too steep to climb: grace to the valley, where I have only to sink down to be preserved.

Of the utmost importance is it that I should know well the distinction betwixt these two ways, choose the right one, and walk in it. For in our present sinful condition there is only one of these ways that is still really of service to us, although man on the contrary would just very fain walk in the other. Well is it for us that God has left us in no doubt as to which one is wished for and approved of by Him.

It was especially the Apostle Paul whom God chose to point out to us clearly the way of salvation--as he has done most fully in his Epistle to the Romans. The conclusion of his argumentation we have in the text quoted at the head of this chapter. He had shown how all mankind, Jews as well as heathen, had missed the glory of God. They could not fulfil, they did not wish to fulfil, the law of God. The law must be perfectly obeyed, otherwise it works only wrath. The law knows nothing of grace, only of right. God has searched the world, and there was none righteous, not even one. By the law every mouth was stopped, and the whole world made guilty before God. It was a declaration of the law itself, "By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight." (Rom. 3:20). "But the righteous shall live by faith." That the Lord Jesus had proclaimed. By His death God had reconciled the world. He had allowed the punishment and the demands of the law to be fulfilled. He has permitted an everlasting and infinite righteousness to be brought in. For nothing had God suffered it to be offered: without price and without money is this righteousness ours, through the free gift of God. In the case of the corrupt, curse-deserving, and powerless sinner, there can be no talk of service or works: only of faith, "Submission to the righteousness of God." Where that faith in Jesus and the Word of His grace is found, there is the sinner made partaker of the righteousness of God, faith being simply the eye to see it as it was offered, the hand to receive it, and the activity for appropriating it for himself. He that believeth is justified.

What folly, then, is it still to look to one's own works or merit. Sinner, are you resolved to work? Then must you keep the whole law, and that perfectly; and thus you shall certainly be condemned. Do you desire to be justified? Only believe in Christ and His righteousness, in God and the promises of His grace, as intended also for you. By that faith man is justified without the works of the law.

CHAPTER XXV

THE WORKS OF FAITH

"Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only." James 2:24.

It has often been supposed that there was opposition betwixt this utterance of James and the doctrine of Paul. It is to be nevertheless acknowledged at once that this is not the case, when one reflects that the works of which Paul speaks are entirely different from those which James intends. Paul always speaks of the works of the law: James has his eye upon the works of faith. The works of the law are those which are done out of the personal power of man, in the direction of fulfilling the law of God in order to merit the favour of God and make himself worthy of it. Of these the Word of God says, that man is justified without the works of the law. He can do nothing that is good or meritorious: all that comes from him is impure and deserving of wrath. On the contrary, the works of faith of which James speaks are those which must be done for the confirmation and the perfecting of faith, and thus out of the power which God gives and not to merit anything. They serve to manifest that which faith has received from free grace. They follow upon conversion, which the works of the law can only precede this change. The works of the law will be able to glorify man: the works of faith give God all the honour; for they are done in the acknowledgment of personal unworthiness. Works and faith go together, as being both fruits of grace and tokens of the renewing of the mind; faith as the root of the works, the works as the perfecting of faith.

In this way it can now be clearly understood what the Word of God means, when in one passage it says: "To him that worketh not but believeth, his faith is reckoned for righteousness," and then again insists on works. The works which are done apart from faith, as an endeavour to make ourselves worthy of God's favour and thus keep us back from faith, the reception of God's free grace, are not to be done: they are abominable in the eyes of God: "He that worketh not is justified." The works which are done with and in faith, while the soul in the sense of its unworthiness commits itself to the gracious promises of God, just because it hopes or knows that the Lord receives it apart from its merits, and seeks to praise Him for them, are acceptable to God, and must be done, the more the better. And it is of these that it is said that "man is justified by works": they are the manifestation of faith and actual fruit-bearing, and not merely of a faith that continues inactive, and is thus dead.

Let the soul which seeks to come to Jesus in faith thus understand what it is to think of works. As soon as it begins to look upon its works as the ground of merit, as soon as it begins to say in fear, "My works are too small, too trifling, too sinful for me to be received," it must at once remember that "man is justified without works." No sin or ungodliness of which you have been guilty ought to keep you back from the hope of grace. Yet, on the other side, in order that the soul may not perhaps sit down in idle inactivity, in order that it may not go on in sin while it relies upon grace, let it be remembered that as soon as the first beginnings of the desire for grace awake within us--this, if it is sincere, will necessarily show itself active in the doing of God's will. We shall be able to pray with confidence and in truth, "forgive us our debts," only when at the same time we just as heartily endeavour to say, "as we forgive our debtors"; just as John writes, "Let us not love in word, neither with the tongue; but in deed and truth. And hereby we know that we are of the

truth, and shall assure our heart before Him;" and, "If our heart condemn us not, we have boldness toward God." (I John 3:18-19, 21) Thus we learn to understand rightly the Word, "work for God worketh in you," that is, by faith; and our works become the lovely evidences of His heavenly grace, the foretokens of His everlasting favour.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE OBEDIENCE OF FAITH

"By faith Abraham, when he was called, . . . obeyed; and he went out." Heb. 11:8.

Beloved soul, you still say that you would fain believe, that it is your earnest and sincere desire to belong to the people of the Lord. You are nevertheless kept back, for what reason you yourself do not really know. Perhaps it is because it is not yet quite clear to you what you have to do when you believe. You do not yet understand the simplicity of faith, nor see that it is something which you can and must do without any even the least delay. Let us try to understand this by the example of the father of the faithful.

The Lord had said to Abraham: "Go thou out of thine own land to the country which I shall show thee." In this calling of Abraham, we find a divine command and a divine promise. The command is, "Go thou out of thine land": the promise, "to a country which I shall show thee." By faith, says Paul to the Hebrews, he obeyed. Had he not believed the promises, had he not believed that the Lord would certainly bring him to that unknown land, he would surely never have gone out. His faith in the promise was his power for obedience to the command. He did not first go out of his land to become a believer thereby; for had he not first believed that he should find that foreign country he would never have had the courage to leave his fatherland. He first believed, and afterwards he went out.

God calls you also, my reader, to go out of the life of sin and to leave the world behind; but it is as if the call did not succeed with you. You are afraid that you shall never reach heaven. It is as if you had not the courage and the strength to tread that way. It is indeed no wonder. Abraham too would never have had the courage to abandon everything, and to undertake that long journey, had he not held fast to the Word of God: "The country which I shall show thee." Every consideration of the sacrifice, the folly, the dangers of going to an unknown land is overcome by the thought: "I go to a country which God will show me." Faith was his strength. Faith must also be your strength. Like Abraham, you too must learn to cleave to the Word: "The Lord will bring you thither."

"But I have not received the promises", you cry. My reply is, You have indeed received the promises. God is not unrighteous as to say to anyone that he must go to heaven without the promise that He will bring him thither. He has given you Jesus to show you the country, and to lead you on the way thither. He does not say, "Repent ye," without

pointing to Jesus whom He ordained to give repentance. He does not say, "Abandon sin, and be saved," without at the same time saying, "Jesus frees and saves from sin." And it is only in the strength of this faith that you shall enter heaven. Therefore, soul, observe the calling of God: pray, understand that Jesus will do all for you: receive Him this day as the guide on the way given by God. However wretched you are, just simply believe that it is truth that God has given His Son Jesus also to you to save you. Be willing and acknowledge Him as your Saviour. Rejoice in the thought: God has given Him to the sinner and thus also to me. And although you still feel nothing in yourself, grasp firmly this thought the whole day: carry it round with you in the midst of all your work and over it: it is certainly true, God has given Jesus also to me, to save me. This simple thought is faith. Hold fast by it, thank God for it: it will speedily send forth roots in you, and you shall rejoice in the assurance: Jesus is leading me to heaven. By this faith, you also having been called, shall be obedient.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE NUTRIMENT OF FAITH

"I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate (day's portion) every day, that I may prove them whether they will walk in my law or no." Exo. 16:4.

In these words we have announced to us what the rule is for the maintenance of the spiritual life, the law for the growth and increase of the life of faith. This law is in no respect different from that which we observe in the natural life every day. Every man knows how the little child is fed so as to grow up a strong man, how the strong man is supplied with nourishment so as to maintain his strength. The daily regular use of a little food gives man strength of body. Thus also it is with everything in nature: the little tree becomes large, the poor man becomes rich, the grandest building rises from its foundation, the longest journey can be performed, not with great and violent strides, but by the silent, persevering faithfulness, which does not despise the little, invisible progress of every day, but uses it to reach the appointed goal.

"A day's portion every day," the general rule of the natural life prevails also in the spiritual; and yet there are so many Christians who, by not acknowledging this, suffer dreadful loss. They imagine that great exertion of strength at particular times, that fervent prayers when we feel ourselves stirred up, are the means of securing the increase and the flourishing of the soul's life. But the golden rule, "a day's portion every day," the day by day, regular continuance in the use of food, whereby the soul obtains its growth, they do not understand. They have not yet apprehended the lesson that faith and the life of faith must have nourishment, daily bread; and that with the promise, "I will rain bread from

heaven", there stands the command: "The people shall gather a day's portion every day that I may" (this clause is added just for this very end) "prove them whether they will walk in my law or no."

Beloved reader, have you not often mourned over the unstable and changeable character of your spiritual life: have you not often wondered how it comes about that your days of hope are so shortlived, and asked on all sides what you had first to do that it might be otherwise with you, that your faith might abide and increase? Would it surprise you that you should be weak, if your body remained without food for a couple of days, and that every time afresh? And is it then to surprise you that your faith should not be living, firm, and strong, if you do not faithfully partake of the Word of God? That is the nutriment of faith: from it and from it alone does faith draw its strength. "Man shall live by every word that cometh from the mouth of God." Confess that you too often yield to this and that worldly circumstance, to idleness and apathy, and neglect the hidden use of God's Word, or use it so hastily and superficially that your soul is not nourished. No wonder that you have to mourn over a leanness in your soul. Begin today and henceforth let no day pass by without eating of the heavenly manna, the Word of God and the living Christ in the Word. Receive the Word in faith. God gave manna every day in the waste wilderness up till the homecoming in Canaan: if we go out and gather, there will be in the Word, for every new day, instruction, strengthening, purification and salvation. And he who with faithful perseverance continues day by day in the use of the Word, even when he does not at once observe the blessing that flows from it, shall experience that the increase of faith, although it be unobserved and slow, is yet certain and sure.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE TENDERNESS OF FAITH

"And they gathered it every morning, every man according to his eating: and when the sun waxed us hot, it melted." Exo. 16:21.

In the silence and coolness and secrecy of the night God gave the manna: in the freshness and quickening of the morning hour the people had to go out to gather it. It was thus the first work of every day to receive bread from God's hand; for, when the sun waxed hot, it melted, and was no longer to be found. Not in the glow of the midday sun, nor in the press and bustle of the day, did they receive this hidden manna, but in the charming coolness of the morning, ere the mind was ensnared by the seductions of the world.

Lovely and instructive image of the way in which God still ministers to faith its nutriment. And I remain convinced that there are many that seem to be sincerely longing for confirmation of faith, while they have not become partakers of it, because they do not go in search of it betimes. How many are there, pray, by whom the reading of the Bible is

continued only in the evening? After the freshness of the morning hour and the strength of the day have been devoted to the world, they come in the evening, in weariness of mind and body, to serve the Lord with the remnant of their energies. No wonder that there is no blessing enjoyed: the heart is weary, the tenderness of the spirit and its receptiveness for the Word is dulled. On the other hand, are there not many who are often content in the morning with the general reading of the Word in the household, apart from private searching of the Scriptures, or reflection or meditation with prayer? This still yields little blessing. The reading of a chapter once a day is, as a rule, not sufficient. No: let all that truly desire to increase in faith, see to it that they endeavour in the morning hour to gather for the day manna on which they can ruminate throughout its course. He that goes out in the morning without partaking of a portion of this nutriment comes home weary in the evening, with but little desire to eat. And he who does not in the morning first lay up the Word in his heart is not to be surprised if the world assumes the first and chief place in his heart, for he has neglected the only means of being in advance of the world. No: as the Lord gives us the night in order to throw off again the weariness of the day, and in the morning hour to make a new beginning with fresh spirit and energy, so must the believer take and devote to the Lord his first fresh and undiminished forces, and gather his manna while the blessing of the night's rest is upon him, and before the corruption of the world has again banished its lovely dew; for when the sun waxes hot, it melts. When the heat of the day has come, and temptation has first passed over the soul, all the gladness and trustfulness of the morning hour have also passed away. The life of grace will not endure the heat of the sun unless it be first strengthened by food.

"Cause me to hear thy lovingkindness in the morning." (Psa. 143:8). "My voice shalt Thou hear in the morning, O Lord; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto Thee, and will look up." (Psa. 5:3). Such words point out to us what will be the attitude of the soul in him who is in earnest first and chiefly and with the whole heart to serve the Lord. With every morning hour he will taste the delightful experience of the Word: "His going forth is prepared as the morning." (Hosea 6:3).

Reader, why do you not believe? Pray be faithful towards yourself and towards God. There is no piety in mourning over unbelief, unless you also lay aside everything that stands in the way of faith. If the irregular, superficial use of the Word, if the giving of the first, the fresh, the best hours of the day and energies of the soul to the world and its service is the cause, then come make a change in these points: morning by morning go and seek your God: He will not keep Himself hidden from you.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE HAND OF FAITH

"Jesus said to the man that had his hand withered . . . Stretch forth thy hand. And he did so: and his hand was restored." Luke 6:10.

One of the most common mistakes by which souls are kept back from faith is that they do not feel the strength for faith. They desire first to feel faith living in themselves, and then they would believe. But that the command to believe should come to them while they do not yet feel themselves prepared for it or in a position to believe--this they do not comprehend. They do not understand, because they have not observed, what we experience or may see every day, that readiness and ability for any work is not given before the work but only through the work, and thus after we begin to work. The child that learns to run begins before he can really do it, and learns in the midst of the effort. The man that wishes to learn swimming goes into the water while he cannot yet swim, because he knows that, when he begins, he will in time learn to do it. And this law of nature has a still more glorious application in grace. God gives us commands for which we have previously no power, and yet requires obedience to them with full right; because He has said to us that when we submit, and set ourselves towards obedience, strength will be given along with this incipient activity. And this is the spirit in which we are to believe. Under the conviction of its unbelief, the soul must set itself to believe. In the assurance that power will be bestowed, it is yet to make a beginning: "Lord, I believe." In this action it is also to persevere and go forward.

Very strikingly are both aspects of this truth pictured to us in the case of the man with the withered hand. He feels his hand powerless, and yet Jesus says to him: "Stretch forth thy hand." He sees in the Saviour enough to convince him that He will not mock him, that He who gives this command will certainly never issue it without, at the same time, giving power to carry it out. He obeys and his hand is healed. O soul, the Lord Jesus who calls to you, "Believe in Me, as your Saviour," knows your helplessness. But it is just on this account that He speaks to you to rescue you from it. With a voice of power He commands you, "Believe in Me, that I am given by God to be your Saviour: stretch out your hand to lay hold of Me and to appropriate Me for yourself." Listen to Him, be willing to obey Him; remember that with the command He also gives the strength; begin, although you do not yet feel the power, and, although you can still do nothing, say, like Martha; "I believe that Thou art the Christ, the Son of God." Show that it is your desire to believe, and that you are in dead earnest about it; set your soul to attend to the fact that He really speaks to you, and to hear how charmingly attractive and kindly encouraging His voice is: "O thou unbelieving one, believe in Me." As the man with the withered hand obtained power to stretch it out at the command of Jesus, so shall it be with you. The command, "Believe," will no longer oppress you with the thought, "I cannot do it," but encourage you to entertain the confidence: "Jesus commands it, thus it is to be, thus it may be." And if, with every inclination again to be discouraged, you look to Jesus and hear how cheerfully He calls to you, "You may, you must, you can believe in Me," your soul will be strengthened with an ever-growing steadfastness to entrust yourself to Him. In the endeavour to believe, strength for it is given and exercised: the hand of faith will soon be entirely healed.

Soul, Jesus asks you, "If I speak the truth to you, why do you not believe?" He tells you the divine truth that He has come for you. He tells you the truth that your faith may be awakened thereby. I beseech you, understand this. See Him who here speaks: it is Jesus, the faithful and almighty Lover: hear His voice and be no longer unbelieving.

CHAPTER XXX

THE HINDERING OF FAITH

"Then cometh the devil and taketh away the word from their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved." Luke 8:12.

By this Word the Lord teaches us that whenever the devil is bent on keeping back anyone from salvation, he has merely to see to it that he keeps him back also from faith: he cannot then be prepared for salvation. And, on the other hand, in order to keep anyone back from faith, he has simply to take away the Word from the heart: he does not then believe. And how dreadful is the thought that there are so many who, although they say that they desire to believe, yet work into the hand of the devil, so far as the Word is concerned. To the devil it is a matter of small interest in what particular way this takes place, so long as he can take away the Word out of the heart. In how many ways is this done.

In one case, by all manner of sin and unrighteousness. The love of sin cannot dwell together with the Word. The heart cannot at the same time move towards God and away from God, cannot equally desire the Word and sin. One or other of these must be cast out. Alas! how many thousand times does a sinner who said that he was seeking Jesus, and was desirous of believing, let slip the Word which he has laid up in his heart in the morning, because he was not willing to say farewell to his sin, his anger, or lying, or deception, or envy, or impurity.

In another, the Word is stifled by worldly cares and inclinations. It may be either the heavy sorrow and disquietude of one who has a difficult lot in the world, or it may be the temptation and preoccupation with the world that often springs from prosperity. How constantly it happens that the Word is stifled, and thus taken away by love to the world.

Again, there are others from whom the devil takes away the Word, through the soul's being occupied with itself and its sins. Instead of the heart being kept bent on the Word of promise, the eye is fixed on its own inmost parts: the soul is so much taken up with its own feeling, its own wretchedness and weakness, with the effort to be converted in its own strength, that the Word is loosely held, and so easily carried away.

And when one remembers how superficially the Word is read, what little pains is taken to understand the Word, to take into the heart and keep there every day that which should be fitted to strengthen faith, one feels how lightly and easily the Word is taken away: it costs the devil little trouble.

Reader, if you are seeking Jesus, if you would come to faith, be admonished by this earnest Word: "The devil comes and takes away the Word, that they may not believe." Whatever temptation there may be, either from the world without or in your own heart, take heed that you always keep and hold fast the Word. Let not the devil take it away from

you. Let the precepts and promises of the Word be your meditation day and night. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly." (Col. 3:16). "Thy word have I hid in mine heart... It is my meditation all the day." (Psa. 119:11,97). This language of David must be yours; then, when you have found life, you will later on be able also to say with him: "This I had, because I kept Thy precepts." (Psa. 119:56). O soul, even the devil knows this: where the Word dwells in the heart, there faith comes. Do you also learn this, and be assured that the humble, silent holding fast the living Word of God will certainly be blessed to awaken faith in you also. God Himself has said that is the Word, "which is able to save your souls." (James 1:21); and as the Word is received and kept in this hope, He is faithful to bestow by the Spirit the blessing of the Word.

Before that Word, the evil one retreats, as before the "It is written" out of Jesus' mouth: with and by that Word, the Lord God and His Spirit came to soul.

CHAPTER XXXI

THE GIFT OF FAITH

"Unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ,...to believe on Him." Phil. 1:29.

Faith a gift of God: this truth has been to many a one the cause of fear and dread. And yet this ought not to be. It rather yields reasons for gladness and hope. It is always an entirely perverse amplification of this statement to say: "It is a gift, and thus I do not know whether I shall ever receive it; if it were to be found by personal effort, and if I had to call it into existence by my own power, I should then indeed take heed that I did not remain without faith." Thus many a one reasons. No: the reverse is the truth. If you could believe of yourselves, by personal effort and work, you would never do it, you should certainly be lost. But since faith is given to us, since there is a Lord in heaven who will implant and cherish and care for that faith in us, then there is hope that we may obtain and preserve that faith. It is a word of joyful hope.

And what makes the encouragement of this Word still greater--this faith is given by grace. There is no question of worthiness or merit, of wisdom or piety, of strength or dignity; but it is given to the unworthy and the ungodly. To those that do not seek Him, the sovereign God comes with His drawing grace; through the Spirit He works the conviction of sin and of the need of His love; by His Word He sets Jesus before the soul as His gift to the sinner, desirable and suitable, freely offered and acceptable, until the soul, under the hidden and indeed effectual working of the Spirit, takes confidence to appropriate the Saviour entirely to itself. Yea, from beginning to end, along the whole way, in the midst of continual sinfulness and unfaithfulness on your part, it is of grace given to you to believe in Him.

And that faith comes under the use of means does not make it any the less a gift. Of well-nigh every gift of God one can be partaker only by work. We get bread in the sweat of our brow, and yet we pray: "Give us this day our daily bread." We enjoy health through the use of food and other means, and yet we always thank the Lord for preserving us from sickness and death. No: the appointment of means only shows us how loving the gift is, how the Lord will move and open the spirit of man by its own activity to appropriate entirely for himself what his God will bestow upon him. This thought of our text does not deter from means, but gives the right desire and the right spirit to use them. The soul learns to understand that the Lord who gives it the Word will also give the faith to receive it; that He who has given the promise will also bestow the fulfillment, although you feel that you cannot do it. Set yourself to believe, in the joyful confidence: it is given.

Reader, it is given by grace to believe in Jesus. Ask this grace humbly from the Lord, wait for it at His hands in a childlike spirit. Let every experience of failure, of unbelieving, of insensibility convince you, how unfortunate it would be if you had to believe of yourself, and how blessed it is that you may look to God for it. Keep yourself occupied with the Word of promise, look to Jesus as appointed for you by God, in order that you may believe in Him; and in every endeavour to appropriate Him, and the promises of grace, work in silent gladness, inspired by the Word: "It is granted unto you to believe in Jesus." The God who has had Jesus offered to me, who has awakened in me the first desire for Him, will also give grace to believe. In that blessed confidence I shall go forward, until secretly and gradually faith become living and visible. Yes, thank God, "it is granted to believe in Him."