

MESSAGES TO THE MULTITUDE

BEING

TEN REPRESENTATIVE SERMONS SELECTED AT
MENTONE, AND TWO UNPUBLISHED
ADDRESSES DELIVERED ON
MEMORABLE OCCASIONS

BY

CHARLES HADDON SPURGEON

*“Take my life, and let them be
Filled with messages from Thee ”*

LONDON
SAMPSON LOW, MARSTON & COMPANY
LIMITED
St. Dunstan's House
FETTER LANE, FLEET STREET, E.C.

1892

PUBLISHERS' NOTE.

JUST twelve months ago, Mr. Spurgeon kindly consented to contribute a group of sermons to the present series, but almost immediately afterwards he was seized with critical illness, and it seemed in the early autumn as if he never would be able to carry out his purpose. At the request of the publishers, his brother and colleague, the Rev. J. A. Spurgeon, undertook to make the selection, but towards the end of the year Mr. Spurgeon recovered sufficiently, amid the sunshine of Mentone, to feel a revived interest in the task. He accordingly took the matter once more into his own hands, and in December last selected the majority of these sermons as typical of his pulpit teaching during the entire period of his ministry at the Metropolitan Tabernacle. He showed keen interest in the preparation of the volume for the press, and was busily engaged in the revision of the printed slips, when the sudden return of his illness in an aggravated form compelled him to lay down finally his busy pen. In a letter to the publishers, dated January 12, 1892, he said, "Call the volume 'Messages to the Multitude,'" and he added, "I will write three or four pages of preface." That letter was hardly despatched, when his illness assumed an alarming character, and it is needless to add that the words of greeting which the great preacher had intended to address through these pages to his absent friends remain unwritten. The two concluding addresses were both delivered on special occasions, and neither of them have hitherto been published; they were selected from Mr. Spurgeon's papers preserved in the library at Westwood. The publishers desire to thank the Rev. J. A. Spurgeon for writing a preface to the book, and they are not less indebted to the Rev. J. W. Harrald—Mr. Spurgeon's private secretary and companion at Mentone—for the painstaking and loving care with which he has seen the volume through the press.

PREFACE.

THIS volume has passed—as to the chief part of it—under the author's own revision. He took much interest in it during the closing weeks of his life, and it is amongst the last of his literary productions. Other hands have put some final touches, but it may be accepted as substantially his own, alike as to authorship and as to the choice of the sermons to represent him amongst the preachers of his age. It is a sad task to compose an introduction to a book which the departed one should himself have penned, but perhaps a brother can fitly say what must have been under those circumstances left unsaid.

The preacher will ever be remembered as the teacher of the people. One who spoke forcefully the thoughts of the great heart of Christendom on the eternal verities of the gospel. As unchangeable in his system of theology as the shape of a circle, and as fixed in principles as the multiplication table; and for the same reasons, that he was resting on fundamental truths which have no variation. Some have deemed this a weakness, and called it a limited range of thought; but in this holy trafficking of truth we are glad he has not had divers weights and measures in his bag. The standard has ever been the shekel of the sanctuary, and therefore fixedly the same. Through the nearly forty years represented in this selection from his ministerial preaching, there are no old terms applied with new and contradictory meaning. The progress—and such there is—has always been in and not out of the truth as it is in Jesus, and this ever along the lines of thought sanctified by the experience and witness of the Church's leaders ever since apostolic times.

With this unity of creed, the reader will discover a deepening and mellowing of thought and utterance, such as might well be expected from the ripening powers of a great worker and a greater sufferer. The style of the speaker has been advisedly modified in the preparation for the press, to meet the eye rather than the ear of the student of truth. It were a great advantage for some public speakers to be compelled to peruse their own productions after delivery. Here the preacher was continually re-perusing his own treatises with the desire to produce the same impression under altered circumstances. This has affected them somewhat as orations, and has occasionally reduced an oratorical effect, and tamed down the thrilling utterance to a calmer mood more suited to the quiet thought of the closet. But what has been lost to emotion has been richly repaid in unction and spiritual power. This fact must, therefore, be remembered in any comparison with other public speakers of his age. With an unaltered theme, the great preacher has found ample scope for the display of his undoubted talents, both of mind and utterance.

The style of the author is as clear as the day, because illumed all through with accurate acquaintance with his subject and his own views upon it. In his

depths there is no darkness, and in his heights he has not entered the clouds, and yet in both height and depth of thought he has few equals. The range of illustration, metaphor, and information exhibited in the sermons, of which these are a small specimen, is immense; and every art, trade, science, and realm has been laid under tribute to enrich the discourses and enforce the truths. This is the result of no mere accidental possession of natural powers. On the contrary, the accurate scholar of tenacious memory and facile mind has studied carefully, noted down copiously, and by persistent efforts has given the perfected product of much conscientious toil for the benefit of those listening to him. In the earlier years of his preaching, the preparation extended even to the wording of the sermon in almost its entirety, gradually lessening in detail as years ripened the speaker's pulpit powers, but always including a careful and written division of matter, with due arrangement of illustration, argument, and appeal. The freshness of the sermons has thus been maintained by dint of hard work, which is perhaps the main characteristic of what is called genius in every department of human life.

But two other reasons are manifestly to be noted. The preacher was a great Bible student, and honoured his text by expounding it, illustrating it, enforcing it in perfect loyalty to the mind of the Spirit as therein revealed. This textual style ensured a fresh sermon with each portion of the sacred record taken from time to time for review and exposition. But last of all, and chief of all other reasons of his perennial variety—he was a live man, full of the Holy Ghost and power, and spake as the Spirit gave him utterance. On that he relied, and to it he never failed to give all the praise. The same influence which of old gave the revelation of the truth to the first utterers of it, was with him to aid in the exposition of the themes thus first of all penned by an inspiration Divine. The Spirit of all truth was in him, and under a power distinctly given from above he brought forth these many manner of fruits in due season, and thus these leaves in ceaseless verdure have been for the healing of the nations. In this no claim is made beyond that which all truly God-sent and God-helped men will share, but on this we lay the greatest stress of all, as we indicate the reasons for a power which has made this preacher's sermons, both as spoken and perused, a spiritual phenomenon of the age.

May the same Almighty Lord, whom His now departed servant sought to honour, enforce the publication of these truths in their present form as richly as when they were first proclaimed, and make this new issue of them one more memento of the preacher's faithfulness, and of the Master's power to solace, sanctify, and save !

JAMES A. SPURGEON.

METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE,
NEWINGTON BUTTS, S.E.,
April 4, 1892.

FAITH: WHAT IS IT? HOW CAN IT BE OBTAINED?

Preached at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, July 17, 1881.

“By grace are ye saved through faith.”—EPH. ii. 8.

I MEAN to dwell mainly upon that expression, “through faith.” I call attention, however, first of all, to the fountainhead of our salvation, which is the grace of God. “By grace are ye saved.” Because God is gracious, therefore sinful men are forgiven, converted, purified, and saved. It is not because of anything in them, or that ever can be in them, that they are saved: but because of the boundless love, goodness, pity, compassion, mercy, and grace of God. Tarry a moment, then, at the well-head. Behold the pure river of water of life as it proceeds out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. What an abyss is the grace of God! Who can fathom it? Like all the rest of the divine attributes, it is infinite. God is full of love, for “God is love.” God is full of goodness, and the very name “God” is but short for “good.” Unbounded goodness and love enter into the very essence of the Godhead. It is because “His mercy endureth for ever,” that men are not destroyed; because “His compassions fail not,” that sinners are brought to Himself, and forgiven. Right well remember this, or else you may fall into error by fixing your minds so much upon the faith which is the channel of salvation as to forget the grace, which is the fountain and source even of faith itself. Faith is the work of God’s grace in us. No man can say that Jesus is the Christ but by the Holy Ghost. “No man cometh unto Me,” saith Christ, “except the Father which hath sent Me draw him.” So that faith, which is coming to Christ, is the result of divine drawing. Grace is the first and last moving cause of salvation; and faith, important as it is, is only an essential part of the machinery which grace employs. We are saved “through faith,” but it is “by grace.” Sound forth those words as with the archangel’s trumpet: “By grace are ye saved.”

Faith occupies the position of a channel or conduit-pipe. Grace is the fountain and the stream; faith is the aqueduct along which the flood of mercy flows down to refresh the thirsty sons of men. It is a great pity when the aqueduct is broken. It is a sad sight to see, around Rome, the many noble aqueducts which no longer convey water into the city, because the arches are broken, and the marvellous structures are in ruins. The aqueduct must be kept entire to convey the current; and, even so, faith must be true and sound, leading right up to God, and coming right down to ourselves, that it may become a serviceable channel of mercy to our souls. Still, I again remind you that faith is only the channel or aqueduct, and not the fountain-head; and we must not look so much to it as to exalt it above the divine source of all blessing which lies in the grace of God. Never make a Christ out of your faith, nor

think of it as if it were the independent source of your salvation. Our life is found in “looking unto Jesus,” not in looking to our own faith. By faith, all things become possible to us; yet the power is not in the faith, but in the God upon whom faith relies. Grace is the locomotive, and faith is the link by which the carriage of the soul is attached to the great motive power. The righteousness of faith is not the moral excellence of faith, but the righteousness of Jesus Christ which faith grasps and appropriates. The peace within the soul is not derived from the contemplation of our own faith; but it comes to us from Him who is our peace, the hem of whose garment faith touches, and virtue comes out of Him into the soul.

However, it is a very important thing that we look well to faith as the channel of grace, and therefore at this time we will consider, as God, the Holy Ghost, shall enable us, First, Faith, *what is it?* Next, Faith, *why is it selected as the channel of blessing?* Then, Faith, *how can it be obtained and increased?*

I. FAITH, WHAT IS IT?? What is this faith concerning which it is said, “By grace are ye saved *through faith*”? There are many descriptions of faith; but almost all the definitions I have met with have made me understand it less than I did before I saw them. The negro preacher said, when he read the chapter from the pulpit, that he would proceed to *confound* it; and it is very likely that he did do so, though he meant to expound it. So, brethren, we may explain faith till nobody understands it. I hope I shall not be guilty of that fault. Faith is the simplest of all mental acts; and perhaps, because of its simplicity, it is the more difficult to explain.

What is faith? *It is made up of three things—knowledge, belief and trust.*

Knowledge comes first in order. Some Romanist divines hold that a man can believe what he does not know. Perhaps a Romanist can; but I cannot. “How shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard?” I want to be informed of a fact before I can possibly believe it. I believe this, I believe that; but I cannot say that I believe a great many things of which I have never heard. “Faith cometh by hearing:” we must first hear, in order that we may know what is to be believed. “They that know Thy name will put their trust in Thee.” A measure of knowledge is essential to faith; hence the importance of getting knowledge. “Incline your ear, and come unto Me; hear, and your soul shall live,”—such was the word of the ancient prophet, and it is the word of the gospel still. Search the Scriptures, and learn what the Holy Spirit teacheth concerning Christ and His salvation. Seek to know “that God is, and that He is the Rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.” May He give you “the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord”! Know the gospel: know what the good news is, how it talks of free forgiveness and of change of heart, of adoption into the family of God, and of countless other blessings. Know

God, know His gospel, and know especially Jesus Christ the Son of God, the Saviour of men, united to us by His human nature, and united to God, seeing He is divine, and thus able to act as Mediator between God and man, able to lay His hand upon both, and to be the connecting link between the sinner and the Judge of all the earth. Endeavour to know more and more of Christ. After Paul had been converted more than twenty years, he told the Philippians that he desired to know Christ; and depend upon it, the more we know of Jesus, the more we shall wish to know of Him, that so our faith in Him may increase. Endeavour especially to know the doctrine of the sacrifice of Christ, for that is the centre of the target at which faith aims; that is the point upon which saving faith mainly fixes itself, that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them," Know that He was made a curse for us, as it is written, "Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." Drink deep into the doctrine of the substitutionary work of Christ, for therein lies the sweetest possible comfort to the guilty sons of men, since the Lord "made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." Faith, then, begins with knowledge; hence the value of being taught in divine truth; for to know Christ is life eternal.

Then the mind goes on to *believe* that these things are true. The soul believes that God is, and that He hears the cries of sincere hearts; that the gospel is from God; that justification by faith is the grand truth that God hath revealed in these last days by His Spirit more clearly than before. Then the heart believes that Jesus is verily and in truth our God and Saviour, the Redeemer of men, the Prophet, Priest, and King unto His people. Dear hearers, I pray that you may at once come to this. Get firmly to believe that "the blood of Jesus Christ, God's dear Son, cleanseth us from all sin;" that His sacrifice is complete and fully accepted by God on man's behalf, so that he that believeth on Jesus is not condemned.

So far you have made a considerable advance towards faith; but one more ingredient is absolutely necessary to complete saving faith, and that ingredient is *trust*. Commit yourself to the merciful God; rest your hope on the gracious gospel; trust your soul on the dying and living Saviour; wash away your sins in the atoning blood; accept His perfect righteousness, and all is well. Trust is the life-blood of faith; there is no saving faith without it. The Puritans were accustomed to explain trust by the word "recumbency." You know what it means. You see me leaning upon this rail, leaning with all my weight upon it; even thus lean upon Christ. It would be a better illustration still if I were to stretch myself at full length, and rest my whole person upon a rock, lying flat upon it. Fall flat upon Christ. Cast yourself upon Him, rest in Him, commit yourself to Him. That done, you have exercised saving faith.

Faith is not a blind thing; for faith begins with knowledge. It is not a speculative thing; for faith believes facts of which it is sure. It is not an unpractical, dreamy thing; for faith trusts, and stakes its destiny upon the truth of revelation. Faith *ventures* its all upon the truth of God; it is not a pleasant word to use, but the poet employed it, and it suggests my meaning—

“Venture on Him, venture wholly;
Let no other trust intrude.”

That is one way of describing what faith is: I wonder whether I have “confounded” it already.

Let me try again. *Faith is believing that Christ is what He is said to be, that He will do what He has promised to do, and expecting this of Him.* The Scriptures speak of Jesus Christ as being God, God in human flesh; as being perfect in His character; as being made a sin-offering on our behalf; as bearing sin in His own body on the tree. The Scriptures speak of Him as having finished transgression, made an end of sin, and brought in everlasting righteousness. The Scriptures further tell us that He “rose again,” that He “ever liveth to make intercession for us,” that He has gone up into the glory, and has taken possession of heaven on the behalf of His people, and that He will shortly come again “to judge the world in righteousness, and His people with equity.” We are most firmly to believe that it is even so; for this is the testimony of God the Father when He said, “This is My beloved Son: hear ye Him.” This also is testified by God the Holy Spirit; for the Spirit has borne witness to Christ, both by the Word and by divers miracles, and by His working in the hearts of men. We are to believe this testimony to be true.

Faith also believes that Christ will do what He has promised; that if He has promised to cast out none that come to Him, it is certain that He will not cast us out if we come to Him. Faith believes that if Jesus said, “The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life,” it must be true; and if we get this living water from Christ, it will abide in us, and will well up within us in streams of holy life. Whatever Christ has promised to do He will do, and we must believe this so as to look for pardon, justification, preservation, and eternal glory from His hands, according as He has promised.

Then comes the next necessary step. Jesus is what He is said to be, Jesus will do what He says He will do; therefore we must each one *trust Him*, saying, “He will be to me what He says He is, and He will do to me what He has promised to do; I leave myself in the hands of Him who is appointed to save, that He may save me. I rest upon His promise that He will do even as He has said.” This is a saving faith, and he that hath it hath everlasting life. Whatever

his dangers and difficulties, whatever his darkness and depression, whatever his infirmities and sins, he that believeth thus on Christ Jesus is not condemned, and shall never come into condemnation. May that explanation be of some service! I trust it may be used by the Spirit of God.

But now I thought, as it was a very hot and heavy morning, that I had better give you a number of illustrations, lest anybody should be inclined to go to sleep. The illustrations will be such as have been commonly used; but perhaps I may be able to add one or two of my own.

Faith exists in various degrees, according to the amount of knowledge, or other varying circumstances. Sometimes faith is little more than a simple *clinging in Christ*: a sense of dependence, and a willingness so to depend. When you are at the seaside, as we might all of us wish to be just now, you will see the limpet sticking to the rock. You walk with a soft tread up to the rock with your walking-stick, and strike the limpet with a rapid blow, and off he comes. Try the next limpet in that way. You have given him warning; he heard the blow with which you struck his neighbour, and he clings with all his might. You will never get him off; not you! Strike, and strike again, but you may as soon break the rock. Our little friend, the limpet, does not know much; but he clings. He cannot tell us concerning the geological formation of the rock; but he clings to it. He has found something to cling to, that is his little bit of knowledge, and he uses it by clinging to the utmost of his capacity. It is the limpet's life to cling. Thousands of God's people have no more faith than this; they know enough to cling to Jesus with all their heart and soul; and this suffices to save them. Jesus Christ is to them a Saviour strong and mighty, and like a rock immovable and immutable; they cleave to Him for dear life, and this clinging saves them.

God gives to His people the propensity to cling. Look at the sweet pea which grows in your garden. Perhaps it has fallen down upon the gravel walk. Lift it up against a shrub or trelliswork, or put a stick near it, and it catches hold directly, because there are little hooks ready prepared with which it grasps anything which comes in its way: it was meant to grow upwards, and so it is provided with tendrils. Every child of God has his tendrils about him—thoughts and desires and hopes with which he hooks on to Christ and the promise. Though this is a very simple sort of faith, it is a very complete and effectual form of it; and, in fact, it is the heart of all faith, and that to which we are often driven when we are in deep trouble, or when our mind is somewhat be muddled by our being sickly or depressed in spirit. We can cling when we can do nothing else, and that is the very soul of faith. O poor heart, if thou dost not yet know as much about the gospel as we could wish thee to know, cling to what thou dost know! If as yet thou art only like a lamb that

wades a little into the river of life, and not like leviathan who stirs the mighty deep to the bottom, yet drink; for it is drinking, and not diving, that will save thee. Cling, then! Cling to Jesus; for that is faith.

Another form of faith is this, in which a man depends upon another from a knowledge of his superiority, and therefore *follows his lead*. I do not think the limpet knows much about the rock, but in this next phase of faith there is more knowledge. A blind man trusts himself with his guide because he knows that his friend can see; and trusting, he walks where his guide conducts him. If the poor man was born blind, he does not know what sight is; but he knows that there is such a thing as sight, and that it is possessed by his friend, and therefore he freely puts his hand into the hand of the seeing one, and follows his leadership. This is as good an image of faith as well can be: we know that Jesus has about Him merit and power and blessing which we do not possess, and therefore we gladly trust ourselves to Him, and He never betrays our confidence.

Every boy that goes to school has to exert faith while *learning of a master*. He teaches him geography, and instructs him as to continents and oceans, countries, cities, and empires. The boy does not himself know that these things are true, except that he believes in his teacher, and in the books put into his hands. That is what you will have to do with Christ if you are to be saved—you must just know because He tells you, and believe because He assures you it is even so; and you must trust yourself with Him because He promises you salvation. Almost all that you and I know has come to us by faith. A scientific discovery has been made, and we are sure of it. On what ground do we believe it? On the authority of certain well-known men of learning, whose repute is established. We have never made or seen their experiments, but we believe their witness. Just so you are to do with regard to Christ: because He teaches you certain truths, you are to be His disciple, and believe His words, and trust yourself with Him. He is infinitely superior to you, and presents Himself to your confidence as your Master and Lord. If you will receive Him and His words, you shall be saved.

Another and a higher form of faith is that *faith which grows out of love*. Why does a boy trust his father? You and I may know more about his father than he does, and we do not rely upon him quite so implicitly; but the reason why the child trusts his father is because he loves him. Blessed and happy are they who have a sweet faith in Jesus, intertwined with deep affection for Him. They are charmed with His character, and delighted with His mission, they are carried away by the loving-kindness that He has manifested, and now they cannot help trusting Him because they so much admire, revere, and love Him. It is hard to make you doubt a person whom you love. If you are at last driven to it, then comes the awful passion of jealousy, which is strong

as death, and cruel as the grave; but till such a crushing of the heart shall come, love is all trustfulness and confidence.

The way of loving trust in the Saviour may thus be illustrated. A lady is the wife of the most eminent physician of the day. She is seized with a dangerous illness, and is smitten down by its power; yet she is wonderfully calm and quiet, for her husband has made this disease his special study, and has healed thousands similarly afflicted. She is not in the least troubled, for she feels perfectly safe in the hands of one so dear to her, in whom skill and love are blended in their highest forms. Her faith is reasonable and natural, her husband from every point of view deserves it of her. This is the kind of faith which the happiest of believers exercise towards Christ. There is no physician like Him, none can save as He can; we love Him, and He loves us, and therefore we put ourselves into His hands, accept whatever He prescribes, and do whatever He bids. We feel that nothing can be wrongly ordered while He is the Director of our affairs, for He loves us too well to let us perish, or suffer a single needless pang.

Faith also *realizes the presence of the living God and Saviour*, and thus it breeds in the soul a beautiful calm and quiet like that which was seen in a little child in the time of tempest. Her mother was alarmed, but the sweet girl was pleased; she clapped her hands with delight. Standing at the window when the flashes came most vividly, she cried in childish accents, "Look, mamma! How beautiful! How beautiful!" Her mother said, "My dear, come away, the lightning is terrible;" but she begged to be allowed to look out and see the lovely light which God was making all over the sky, for she was sure God would not do His little child any harm. "But hearken to the terrible thunder," said her mother. "Did you not say, mamma, that God was speaking in the thunder?" "Yes," said her trembling parent. "Oh," said the darling, "how nice it is to hear Him! He talks very loud, but I think it is because He wants the deaf people to hear Him. Is it not so, mamma?" Thus she went talking on; as merry as a bird was she, for God was real to her, and she trusted Him. To her the lightning was God's beautiful light, and the thunder was God's wonderful voice, and she was happy. I dare say her mother knew a good deal about the laws of nature and the energy of electricity; but little was the comfort which her knowledge brought her. The child's knowledge was less showy, but it was far more certain and precious. We are so conceited nowadays that we are too proud to be comforted by self-evident truth, and prefer to make ourselves wretched with questionable theories. Hood sang a deep spiritual truth when he merrily said—

"I remember, I remember,
The fir trees dark and high;

I used to think their slender tops
Were close against the sky.
It was a childish ignorance,
But now 'tis little joy
To know I'm farther off from heav'n
Than when I was a boy."

For my own part, I would rather be a child again than grow perversely wise. Faith is to be a child towards Christ, believing in Him as a real and present Person, at this very moment near us, and ready to bless us. This may seem to be a childish fancy; but it is such childishness as we must all come to if we would be happy in the Lord. "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." Faith takes Christ at His word, as a child believes his father, and trusts him in all simplicity with past, present, and future. God give us such faith!

A firm form of faith arises out of assured knowledge. This comes of growth in grace, and is the faith which believes Christ because it knows Him, and trusts Him because it has proved Him to be infallibly faithful. This faith asks not for signs and tokens, but bravely believes. Look at the faith of the master-mariner—I have often wondered at it. He looses his cable, and steams away from the shore. For days, weeks, or even months he never sees sail or shore, yet on he goes day and night without fear, till one morning he finds himself just opposite to the desired haven towards which he has been steering. How has he found his way over the trackless deep? He has trusted in his compass, his nautical almanack, his glass, and the heavenly bodies; and, obeying their guidance, without sighting shore, he has steered so accurately that he has not to change a point to get into port. It is a wonderful thing, that sailing without sight. Spiritually, it is a blessed thing to leave the shores of sight, and say, "Good-bye to inward feelings, cheering providences, signs, tokens, and so forth: I believe in God, and I steer for heaven straight away." "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed:" to them shall be ministered an abundant entrance into heaven at the last, and a safe voyage on the way.

This is the faith which makes it easy *to commit our soul and all its eternal interests into the Saviour's keeping.* One man goes to the bank, and puts his money into it with unthinking confidence; but another has looked into the bank's accounts, and has been behind the scenes, and made sure of its having a large reserve of well-invested capital; he puts in his money with the utmost assurance. He knows and is established in his faith, and so he cheerfully commits his all to the bank. Even so, we who know Christ are glad to place our whole being in His hands, knowing that He is able to keep us even unto the

end.

God give us more and more of an assured confidence in Jesus, until it comes to be an unwavering faith, so that we never doubt, but unquestioningly believe! Look at the ploughman; he labours with his plough in the wintry months, when there is not a bough on the tree, nor a bird that sings to cheer him, and after he has ploughed, he takes the precious corn from the granary, of which perhaps he hath little enough, and he buries it in the furrows, assured that it will come up again. Because he has seen a harvest fifty times already, he looks for another, and in faith he scatters the precious grain. To all appearance, the most absurd thing that ever was done by mortal man is to throw away good corn, burying it in the ground. If you had never seen or heard of its results, it would seem the way of waste, and not the work of husbandry; yet the farmer has no doubt, he longs to be allowed to cast away his seed. In faith he even covets fair weather that he may bury his corn; and if you tell him that he is doing an absurd thing, he smiles at your ignorance, and tells you that thus harvests come. This is a fair picture of the faith which grows of experience; it helps us to act in a manner contrary to appearances; it leads us to commit our all to the keeping of Christ, burying our hopes and our very lives with Him in joyful confidence that, if we be dead with Him, we shall also live with Him. Jesus Christ, who rose from the dead, will raise us up, through His death, unto newness of life, and give us a harvest of joy and peace.

Give up everything into the hand of Christ, and you shall have it back with an abundant increase. May we get strong faith, so that, as we have no doubt of the rising and setting of the sun, we may never doubt the Saviour's working for us in every hour of need! We have already trusted in our Lord and have never been confounded, therefore let us go on to rely upon Him more and more implicitly; for never shall our faith in Him surpass the bounds of His deservings. Have faith in God, and then hear Jesus say, "Ye believe in God, believe also in Me."

II. Thus far have I done my best to explain what faith is; we shall now enquire, WHY IS FAITH SELECTED AS THE CHANNEL OF SALVATION? "By grace are ye saved *through faith*." It becomes us to be modest in answering such a question, for God's ways are not always to be understood; but, as far as we can tell, faith has been selected as the channel of grace because *there is a natural adaptation in faith to be used as the receiver*. Suppose that I am about to give a poor man an alms: I put it into his hand—why? Well, it would hardly be fitting to put it into his ear, or to lay it upon his foot; the hand seems made on purpose to receive. So faith in the mental frame is created on purpose to be a receiver; it is the hand of the man, and there is a fitness in be-

stowing grace by its means. Do let me put this very plainly. Faith which receives Christ is as simple an act as when your child receives an apple from you, because you hold it out, and promise to give him the apple if he comes for it. The belief and the receiving relate only to an apple; but they make up precisely the same act as the faith which deals with eternal salvation; and what the child's hand is to the apple, that your faith is to the perfect salvation of Christ. The child's hand does not make the apple, nor alter the apple, it only takes it; and faith is chosen by God to be the receiver of salvation, because it does not pretend to make salvation, nor to help in it, but it receives it.

Faith, again, is doubtless selected because *it gives all the glory to God*. It is of faith that it might be by grace, and it is of grace that there may be no boasting; for God cannot endure pride. Paul saith, "Not of works, lest any man should boast." The hand which receives charity does not say, "I am to be thanked for accepting the gift;" that would be absurd. When the hand conveys bread to the mouth, it does not say to the body, "Thank me, for I feed you." It is a very simple thing that the hand does, though a very necessary thing; but it never arrogates glory to itself for what it does. So God has selected faith to receive the unspeakable gift of His grace, because it cannot take to itself any credit, but must adore the gracious God who is the Giver of all good.

Next, God selects faith as the channel of salvation because *it is a sure method, linking man with God*. When man confides in God, there is a point of union between them, and that union guarantees blessing. Faith saves us because it makes us cling to God, and so brings us into connection with Him. Years ago, above certain great falls, a boat was upset, and two men were being carried down the current, when persons on the shore managed to float a rope out to them, which rope was seized by them both. One of them held fast to it, and was safely drawn to the bank; but the other, seeing a great log come floating by, unwisely let go the rope, and clung to the log, for it was the bigger thing of the two, and apparently better to cling to. Alas! the log, with the man on it, went right over the vast abyss, because there was no union between the log and the shore. The size of the log was no benefit to him who grasped it; it needed a connection with the shore to produce safety. So, when a man trusts to his works, or to sacraments, or to anything of that sort, he will not be saved, because there is no junction between him and Christ; but faith, though it may seem to be like a slender cord, is in the hand of the great God on the shore side; infinite power pulls in the connecting line, and thus draws the man from destruction. Oh, the blessedness of faith, because it unites us to God!

Faith is chosen, again, because *it touches the springs of action*. I wonder

whether I shall be wrong if I say that we never do anything except through faith of some sort. If I walk across this platform, it is because I believe my legs will carry me. A man eats because he believes in the necessity of food. Columbus discovered America because he believed that there was another continent beyond the ocean: many another grand deed has also been born of faith, for faith works wonders. Commoner things are done on the same principle; faith in its natural form is an all-prevailing force. God gives salvation to our faith, because He has thus touched the secret spring of all our emotions and actions. He has, so to speak, taken possession of the battery, and now He can send the sacred current to every part of our nature. When we believe in Christ, and the heart has come into the possession of God, then are we saved from sin, and are moved towards repentance, holiness, zeal, prayer, consecration, and every other gracious thing.

Faith, again, *has the power of working by love*; it touches the secret spring of the affections, and draws the heart towards God. Faith is an act of the understanding; but it also proceeds from the heart. "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness;" and hence God gives salvation to faith because it resides next door to the affections, and is near akin to love; and love, you know, is that which purifies the soul. Love to God is obedience, love to God is holiness: to love God and to love man is to be conformed to the image of Christ, and this is salvation.

Moreover, *faith creates peace and joy*; he that hath it rests, and is tranquil, glad, and joyous; and this is a preparation for heaven. God gives all the heavenly gifts to faith, because faith worketh in us the very life and spirit which are to be eternally manifested in the upper and better world. I have hastened over these points that I might not weary you on a day when, however willing the spirit may be, the flesh is weak. May the Holy Spirit bless what has been spoken!

III. We close with the third point: HOW CAN WE OBTAIN AND INCREASE FAITH? A very earnest question this to many. We hear them say that they wish to believe, but cannot. A great deal of nonsense is talked upon this subject. Let us be practical in our dealing with it, and not raise absurd questions as an excuse for continuing in unbelief. Instead of asking, "What am I to do in order to believe?" let us believe at once, and have done with trifling. The shortest way to understand faith is to believe at once what we know to be true. If the Holy Spirit has made you honest and candid, you will believe as soon as the truth is set before you. You are bidden to trust in Jesus; and as you know that He is perfectly reliable, your wisdom is to trust him immediately. Anyhow, the gospel command is clear: "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

But still, *if you have a difficulty, take it before God in prayer*. Tell the

great Father exactly what it is that puzzles you, and beg Him by His Holy Spirit to solve the question. If I cannot believe a statement in a book, I am glad to enquire of the author what he meant, and if he is a true man, his explanation will satisfy me: much more will the divine explanation satisfy the heart of the true seeker. The Lord is willing to make Himself known; go to Him, and see if it be not so.

Furthermore, if faith seems difficult, it is possible that God the Holy Spirit will enable you to believe if you *hear very frequently and earnestly that which you are commanded to believe*. We believe many things because we have heard them so often. Do you not find it so in common life, that if you hear a thing fifty times a day, at last you come to believe it? Some men have come to believe that which is false by this process: I should not wonder but what God often blesses this method in working faith concerning that which is true, for it is written, "Faith cometh by hearing." If I earnestly and attentively hear the gospel, it may be that, one of these days, I shall find myself believing that which I hear, through the blessed operation of the Spirit upon my mind.

If that, however, should seem poor advice, I would add, next, *consider the testimony of others*. The Samaritans believed because of what the woman told them concerning Jesus. Many of our beliefs arise out of the testimony of others. I believe that there is such a country as Japan. I never saw it, and yet I believe that there is such a place because others have been there. I believe I shall die. I have never died, but a great many have done so whom I once knew, and I have a conviction that I shall die also. The testimony of many convinces me of this fact. Listen, then, to those who tell you how they were saved, how they were pardoned, how they have been changed in character: if you will but listen, you will find that somebody just like yourself has been saved. If you have been a thief, you will find that a thief rejoiced to wash away his sin in the fountain of Christ's blood. You that have been unchaste in life, will find that others who have fallen that way have been cleansed and changed. If you are in despair, you have only to get among God's people, and enquire a little, and some who have been equally in despair with yourself will tell you how He saved them. As you listen to one after another of those who have tried the Word of God, and proved it, the Divine Spirit will lead you to believe. Have you not heard of the African, who was told by the missionary that water sometimes became so hard that a man could walk on it? He declared that he believed a great many things the missionary had told him; but he never would believe that. When he visited England, it came to pass that, one frosty day, he saw the river frozen; but he would not venture on it. He knew that it was a river, and he was certain that he would be drowned if he ventured upon it. He could not be induced to walk on the ice

till his friend went upon it; then he was persuaded, and trusted himself where others had ventured. So, mayhap, while you see others believe, and notice their joy and peace, you will yourself be gently led to trust Christ. It is one of God's ways of helping us to faith, through His good Spirit.

A better plan still is this,—*note the authority upon which you are commanded to believe*, and this will greatly help you. The authority is not mine, or you might well reject it. It is not even the pope's, or you might even reject that. But you are commanded to believe upon the authority of God Himself. *He* bids you believe in Jesus Christ, and you must not refuse to obey your Maker. The foreman of certain works in the north had often heard the gospel, but he was troubled with the fear that he might not come to Christ. His good master one day sent a card round to the works—"Come to my house immediately after work." The foreman appeared at his master's door, and the master came out, and said somewhat roughly, "What do you want, John, troubling me at this time? Work is done, what right have you here?" "Sir," said he, "I had a card from you saying that I was to come after work." "Do you mean to say that, merely because you had a card from me, you are to come up to my house, and call me out after business hours?" "Well, sir," replied the foreman, "I do not understand you; but it seems to me that, as you sent for me, I had a right to come." "Come in, John," said his master; "I have another message that I want to read to you," and he sat down, and read these words, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "Do you think, after such a message from Jesus, that you can be wrong in going to Him?" The poor man saw it all at once, and believed, because he saw that he had good warrant and authority for believing. So have you, poor soul; you have good authority for coming to Christ, for the Lord Himself bids you trust Him.

If that does not settle you, *think over what it is that you have to believe*,—that the Lord Jesus Christ suffered in the room and place and stead of men, and is able to save all who trust Him. Why, this is the most blessed fact that ever men were told to believe: the most suitable, the most comforting, the most divine truth that ever was set before men! I advise you to think much upon it, and search out the grace and love which it contains. Study the writings of the four Evangelists, study Paul's Epistles, and then see if the message is not such a credible one that you are forced to believe it.

If that is not enough, then *think upon the person of Jesus Christ*; think of who He is, and what He did, and where He is now, and what He is now; think often and deeply about the Son of God, and the Holy Spirit will create faith in your soul. When He, even such a One as He, bids you trust Him, surely then your heart will be persuaded; for how can you doubt *Him*?

If none of these things avail, then there is something wrong about you

altogether, and my last word is, *submit yourself to God!* May the Spirit of God take away your enmity, and make you yield! You are a rebel, a proud rebel, and that is why you do not believe your God. Give up your rebellion; throw down your weapons; yield at discretion; surrender to your King. I believe that never did a soul throw up its hands in self-despair, and cry, “Lord, I yield,” but what faith became easy to it before long. It is because you still have a quarrel with God, and intend to have your own will and your own way, that therefore you cannot believe. “How can ye believe,” said Christ, “which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?” Proud self creates unbelief. Submit, O man! Yield to your God, and then shall you sweetly believe in your Saviour. God bless you, for Christ’s sake, and by His Holy Spirit bring you at this very moment to believe in the Lord Jesus! Amen.