

Growth in Faith

(No. 3384)

A SERMON PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 11, 1913.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON THURSDAY EVENING, DECEMBER 12, 1867.

"The Apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith." [Luke 17:5](#).

THE Apostles said this. I have sometimes thought that Paul's speech at Lystra, when he forbade the multitude to worship him and told the people that he was a man of like passions with themselves, has need to be repeated in the ears of many modern Christians, for there is a tendency in the Christian Church to set up the Apostles and other eminent saints upon a platform high above the level of ordinary humanity! I do not say to worship them, but rather to hold them in extraordinary esteem than to regard them as models for imitation. Brothers and Sisters, our Lord Jesus Christ would have us to know that we have not a High Priest who cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities. He would have us be certain that He, Himself, was tempted in all points like as we are. With equal certainty would He have us to know that the chosen twelve, the leaders of His host, who went forth from Him, were men of like passions with ourselves. We are not to look upon them as though they were unapproachable heroes, a sort of Divine character, or as though they were free from our infirmities and our troubles. They were as we are—and if they excelled us it was by Divine strength, alone, by strength which we also may receive—by Grace which is as free to us as it was to them. If they were here, they would still have to struggle with unbelief and, conscious of their unbelief, would say again, "Lord, increase our faith."

The Apostles said it and the Apostles said it to Jesus. They went to the Strong for strength! It is idle to go elsewhere. In vain would they have said it to one another. In vain would they have searched the whole world to find some eminent saint to whom to address the petition! They would have been like those foolish virgins who said to the wise, "Give us of your oil," and they would have had the same answer, "Not so, lest there be not enough for you and for us." The virgins went to those that sold and bought for themselves. The Apostles went to Christ, the Lawgiver, the Author and Finisher of their faith and, lifting up their hearts to Him in the prayer, "Lord, increase our faith," they, before long, gained a comfortable answer and became strong in faith, giving glory to God!

Now, I shall need your attention at this time to five or six observations about faith as a growing thing. The first observation is this—

I. THE TEXT THROWS A LITTLE LIGHT UPON WHAT FAITH IS.

This is not altogether a dark subject, but still it is one upon which there has been a great deal of controversy. You are aware, perhaps, that in the first flush of the Reformation it was

asserted by most Divines that saving faith was full assurance, or, at the least, that full assurance of salvation and of a personal interest in Christ entered into the essence of saving faith—and this has been maintained by a very large number of Divines and is still maintained by many Christians that to personally believe that Christ died for me is saving faith.

Now, we believe this to be an error. We prize full assurance beyond all price. We count it to be a gem beyond all earthly values, but we think it is a distressing Doctrine to some of the weak ones of the flock to say that full assurance is necessary to salvation! We believe it to be necessary to deep joy, necessary to edification, necessary to usefulness—but necessary to salvation we do not believe it to be! We believe there are thousands on the Rock of Ages who sometimes fear they are not there—and tens of thousands who will enter Heaven whose faith never reached beyond the simple reliance upon Christ—which we hold to be the essence of saving faith.

The persuasion that Christ died for me comes after the exercise of faith and is an outgrowth of that faith. It is faith in full bloom, but it is not necessarily the essence of faith in Christ. Some of those who teach that to believe that Christ died

for me is faith, teach at the same time that Christ died for everyone! Now, it will strike your mind at once that this kind of faith which they teach is nothing but the belief of a very simple truism, for if He died for everyone, then He must have died for me—and my believing that he died for me may, as far as I can see, be a simple intellectual operation—having nothing to do with the heart—and certainly not requiring the assistance of the Holy Spirit, for anyone can believe that since as long as Christ died for everyone, he died for me! Faith of that sort is a very simple thing and although every Christian is also to perceive that Christ died for him, finally, yet if you begin with that, you begin at the wrong end and you may be guilty of presumption instead of exercising the faith of God's elect!

What, then, is the essence of saving faith? It is this—trust in Christ—dependence, reliance upon Him. It is a belief that Jesus Christ is the appointed Savior of the world. That He is also the Atonement for sin. But it is more than that—it is a trusting in the work of Christ to save you. As to whether Christ has died for you in particular or not, that you shall find out, by-and-by, but faith is coming empty-handed and accepting Christ's fullness. To come naked and take His righteousness to be your glorious dress. To go, vile, to the Fountain which He has filled with blood, to be washed therein—in fact, to have done with all self-confidence and to put your whole reliance in the Lord Jesus Christ. Whoever has this is saved—whatever else he has not, he is saved! And neither death nor Hell shall ever destroy a man who in simple, honest confidence depends on what Christ has done for the salvation of sinners. If you lay hold upon Christ to be All in All to you and if you say, "Nothing but Jesus do I know—what He has done is all my rest and all my rejoicing," then you have God's promise for it, "He that believes on Him has everlasting life." And you have it and you, therefore, shall never perish!

This, then, is saving faith, and this is the very soul, and essence, and substance of it! It is not, in itself, full assurance, but full assurance grows out of it. In the Helvetic Confession, faith is said to be "a most firm confidence in Christ"—another little mistake! A most firm confidence in Christ is faith and is strong faith—but there may be faith where there is no "most firm confidence," though this may be a very valuable evidence. Faith, however, may sometimes be mixed with unbelief. But where any amount of reliance upon the Lord Jesus Christ exists, there is the evidence of true faith, although that reliance may not amount to a happy, comfortable, delightful persuasion of one's own personal salvation. Yet it is faith, saving faith, and will save the soul of him who has it! Let that stand as the first observation.

II. Secondly, FAITH, WHEREVER IT IS, IS CAPABLE OF GROWTH.

The Apostles said, "Lord, increase our faith." Faith is the gift of God and it is given us by degrees. Faith is not always the same in degree, even at the time of the new birth. All children are not alike strong when they are born into the world. All faith is not alike strong at first. Sometimes those who are first at the beginning, get last afterwards—and sometimes those who are last at the beginning, outstrip the others! God does not give us all the same endowment of faith when we commence. Some of us are very tender, much troubled and find it very difficult to lay hold even upon the least of God's promises. But the faith is all of the same nature—though it is not all of the same quantity and degree—it is all the same quality. A diamond is a diamond, though it is no bigger than a pea or the point of a pin—it is precisely of the same character as the Koh-I-Noor, though it is not so large. So with faith. Faith as little as a grain of mustard seed is just as much the faith of God's elect as if it were as large as a mountain! It is still living faith. It is the same, though smaller in amount. It is not always the same in quantity when we receive it, but after we have received it, it grows.

This is proved by the later lives of the Apostles themselves. Take Simon Peter as an instance. At one time poor Simon, indeed—how he was to be pitied! He sat down to warm his hands at a fire in the High Priest's palace and, as he was sitting there, a pert servant girl said to him, "You, also, were with Him." And so weak was Peter's faith that he actually denied his Master! But not many weeks after that, the Holy Spirit descended on Simon Peter and now the same man who blushed with fear before the flippant maid is standing up before thousands in the streets of Jerusalem and delivering himself with the greatest bravery on behalf of the Gospel of the Crucified Christ! There is now no fear, or trembling, or unbelief in Simon Peter, for Pentecost has come and he is made strong and bold by the Holy Spirit! How wonderfully has he changed! You might almost have thought that there were two Simon Peters, rather than one, so marvelously has he grown in faith and courage!

Further, that faith grows is very clear from the fact that there have been and are thousands of other persons who have evidently had more faith than you or I ever had, and yet who have found that their faith was not always strong. Look at the martyrs—how they went to their deaths singing hymns on the road. How many of them triumphed in the

amphitheater when wild beasts tore them to pieces! How they were thrown into damp, reeking dungeons, where they laid until the mildew grew upon them and there they were left to starve—and yet how there they died with joy in their hearts and songs on their lips! Those were men and women of faith whose shoelaces you and I are not worthy to unloose—they were far, far greater than we! And yet if you had spoken to any of them, they would have said that they were no better than we are when they began, but that God had, by His Grace, nurtured and tended their faith until it had become what it was. Do you know what this growth in faith is? We never become nursing fathers and mothers to any of our Brothers and Sisters or our hearers until we have this growth in faith. I bless God that I have seen many of you grow in faith—and my earnest prayer is that everyone of you may grow to the full assurance of hope unto the end, so that I may have to say of you all, "Your faith grows exceedingly, and your love unto all the saints." Yes, Brothers and Sisters, we do see faith grow in others quite as plainly as we have ever seen the shrubs and the plants growing in the field!

Moreover, I think you and I are conscious that our own faith has grown. I know mine has. I know it is weaker, sometimes, for we may grow backwards. Yet I am conscious, taking the run of the years, that my faith is stronger than it was.

I will tell you how faith grows. Sometimes it grows in intensity. You believe the same things, but you believe them more firmly. A child has a pearl in its hand. Yes, but now the child has grown up into a man and he has the same pearl, but how differently he holds it! When, as a little child, he held the pearl, then you might, perhaps, have taken it away from him. But now that he is a man, see how he doubles his fists and grasps the treasure! So it is with the man who grows in faith. He gets such a grip upon eternal Truths of God that you cannot take them from him! He has learned to stand firmly. He is not carried about by every wind of doctrine. He keeps the helm of his soul fixed right to the port where he is bound—let the wind blow and the storm howl and moan as it may!

Faith also grows not only in intensity but in extent, so that you believe more than you once did. At first we believe a few great Truths and then knowledge comes to our assistance and instead of only three or four great majestic Truths of God, we learn ten—and as we advance further we learn a hundred! Sometimes, however, we grieve to confess that as our faith grows in extent, it diminishes in intensity, which is a very poor gain. But if we believe more and believe all with the same intensity as we did at first, then is our faith growing, indeed, and we are advancing after a most healthy and happy fashion!

Faith does grow—we know it does—in these two respects, for we have, some of us, been conscious of the growth in ourselves. Beloved, it would be a very strange thing if faith did not grow. It was a great miracle when Joshua made the sun stand still because that day the sun was the only thing in all the world that did stand still! Everything else was moving. It is part of God's law that every star shall revolve—that there shall be nothing inert. Even the

great sun, itself, rolls round and is constantly going on its mighty way. The sun was the only thing that day that stood still and, therefore, it was, indeed, a miracle! Now, if faith did not grow, it would be the only thing in the Christian that stood still and did not grow—for everything else in the whole man certainly grows.

Does not Christ teach us this, again, by His talking of, first, the blade, then the ear and then the full corn in the ear? At another time we are told that we are children and that we think as children, and speak as children—but that when we shall become men, we shall put away childish things. In other places something is said about little children, then about children, and then about young men and then about the fathers. I will not quote all the instances—they are too numerous—in which both by metaphor and by plain speech, we are taught in God's Word that the whole Christian grows and, therefore his faith, which is as his right arm, must surely grow, too!

Faith, then, is a matter of growth. And now thirdly—

III. GROWTH OF FAITH IS VERY DESIRABLE. I said at the first that the very least faith is saving, but then it is

not desirable that we should only have the very least faith. It is exceedingly desirable that we should get the greatest possible faith!

Growth in faith is desirable and it is so, first of all, because unbelief is a very great sin and where there is little faith there is evidently lurking unbelief and, consequently, sin—and no true Christian would like to be easy while he is daily committing sin. It is not possible for us to be weak in faith without transgressing. Weak faith may bring us a blessing, but weakness in faith is an evil—and to indulge weakness in faith and not to struggle out of it would only be a willful increase of guilt!

Brothers and Sisters, I do not think that we ever estimate aright what a bitter and an evil thing our unbelief is. It is a question, really, whether there is any other sin which makes so direct a stab at the Truth of God as this does! It is a question whether there is any sin more defiling to us, or more dishonoring to God. Brothers and Sisters, we ought to daily aspire to the highest faith in order that we may expel unbelief—and so be delivered from constant sin!

Growth in faith also is necessary for our sanctification. It is by faith that sin is kept down and that all our Divine Graces grow. Unless faith is vigorous, we cannot expect to be making progress towards perfection. Sanctification is a daily and unceasing thing. It is carried on in our thoughts and hearts by the Holy Spirit, but faith in the precious blood is the great means He uses for that sanctifying.

We overcome sin through the blood of the Lamb applied to us day by day by the hyssop of faith. Brothers and Sisters, if you neglect your faith, you will soon find that, struggle as you will, to advance in other Graces, your struggles will be all in vain. Faith, faith, faith—this is the reservoir and if this is not well filled, the pipes will soon run dry!

Again, growth in faith is necessary to our comfort. Little-Faith goes to Heaven, but his feet are sore on the road. He gets into the Kingdom, but it is like a leaky vessel that has cast its precious cargo overboard and only just manages to get into port—it almost founders at the harbor's mouth. Little-Faith stumbles at a straw, but Great-Faith is very full of comfort. His mind is stored with grateful recollections of past mercies and his eyes beam with the fond anticipations of mercies yet to come—and so Great-Faith makes a Heaven for itself here below—and goes towards the songs of Glory rehearsing some of them on the road! Give me strong faith in God and I need ask for nothing else, for strong faith will turn poverty into wealth, weakness into strength, deep sorrows into lasting joys and monster difficulties into marvelous triumphs! More faith and you shall have plenteous comfort. It is always feast days and feast nights—it is a merry Christmas all the year round to a soul that has an unstaggering faith in the promises of the blessed God!

Strong faith is also very necessary to our usefulness. If we go to our work timidly, scarcely knowing our own interest in Christ, we may have a blessing, but it is not likely to be a great one. But when we know whom we have believed and have tasted and handled that the good Word of God is assuredly ours, then what we speak will come with Grace and power—and under the varying unction of the Holy Spirit there are more probabilities of our success when we work with faith than when we work with doubting! Indeed, it is to faith that the blessing comes! I question whether our preaching in unbelief is of much service, but if we preach believing that souls will be saved, then they will be saved! If we preach relying on God's promise that His Word shall not return unto Him void, it will not return void, but there shall be fruit for the sower according to the assurance of our faithful God!

Brothers and Sisters, I cannot now speak to you at length upon a topic so important, but I leave it with you, being assured that you cannot think too much of it. To have your faith growing exceedingly is desirable above all things. Seek for it, I pray you, and may the Lord grant it to you according to His fullness of mercy. But now let us ponder the joyous truth, that—

IV. GROWTH IN FAITH IS OBTAINABLE.

The Apostles would not have asked for it, would not have been allowed to ask for it, if it had not been possible to receive it! They did ask for it, they did receive it and, therefore, you and I may ask for it and receive it. They exhort us to obtain it—at least they practically do so by their example—therefore we may obtain it. It is always a sad thing and greatly depressing to Christian growth when you picture in your mind's eye great and eminent saints as being far above anything that you can ever be. Brothers and Sisters, let me beseech you, when you read the life of such a man as Dr. Payson, do not say, "He is such a spiritually-minded man! I shall never be like he!" You shall be like he by God's Grace! When you turn to the life of Whitfield, young man who is about to enter the Christian ministry, let not the Evil Spirit say, "You cannot be so devoted and so seraphic in earnestness as he was." Why

not? Where Whitfield fell short of being perfect, you fall short with him and you will be short, indeed—but why not be as he? The same Master who made him has also put you upon the wheel. The same Spirit who kept him fervent and faithful has promised to dwell in you! Why should not the same results be produced? I know that you sometimes look up to those who are more advanced in the Divine Life than you are. You who have lately been united to the Christian Church envy them—you do not think that you can ever reach their standard. Ah, Beloved, be it your prayer to reach the best in the Church, that if it is the Lord's will, you may feel yourselves to be less than they are and yet to be in reality far fuller of God's Grace and love, and every good thing than any of them! Aspire, my Brothers and Sisters—do not despair, but aspire for God's Glory, to prove to this

wicked world that Christianity has not lost its vigor—that it is still possible for us to be as simple-minded and as heroic as the Apostles were. Aspire to what they obtained! Ask for an increase of faith, as they asked for it—and when you have it, be not content even with that, nor think that you cannot by any possibility be as full of faith as they were!

I know that the enemy will tell you that you are placed in a position where you cannot possibly be so full of Divine Grace. Tell the enemy that he is a liar from the beginning! You may be in a position where you cannot be extensively useful. You may be where you are neither called upon nor expected to do many of the works which others perform. But circles are admired and praised not because of their largeness, but their roundness! So you will have honor from God, not according to the size of your sphere, but according to the completeness with which you fill it, doing as unto the Lord who requires of you according to His will and through His Grace. A nursery maid having the care of two or three children, teaching them the sweet story of the love of Christ and seeking to bring their hearts to Jesus may be more faithful than I am with a large congregation continually listening to me. She may do all her work—it will be hard for me to do all mine. You with a little shop and much labor to make both ends meet—and with a large family to bring up in the fear of God—may have more honor from the Master, at last, than many a man whose name is blazoned before the world!

It is not where you are, but what you are. And it is not how you are seen, but how you live in the sight of God. That is the thing that matters! Ah, dear Friends, it is possible that in the sphere where you are, to excel as much in faith as Paul did when preaching at Athens! Or Peter, standing in the midst of Jerusalem before the Parthians, Medes and Elamites! Let nothing deter you. Believe that you would not be taught to pray, "Lord, increase our faith," if God would not answer the prayer—and that He will answer it and give you the highest faith that ever man had—even you, so that on the sickbed, or in the midst of poverty you may be as illustrious an example of faith as the best known Believer who has ever adorned the annals of the Church. But to proceed—as this growth in faith is obtainable, so, in the next place—

V. THERE IS A PROPER MEANS FOR OBTAINING IT.

If I might advise you, the first means I would lay down for making faith grow would be that which the Apostles adopted, namely, prayer. They said, "Lord, increase our faith." Pray much that your faith may grow. Oh, I am afraid in this naughty age in which we are so busy with a thousand cares, that we are only too deficient at the Mercy Seat and this accounts for the fact that there is so much superficial religion among us. If you would learn to believe God's promises, go with the promises to God and see them in the light of His Countenance! Plead them with solemn earnestness, not wavering before the Mercy Seat till you have a comfortable assurance that God will be to you what He has said. Let us have more prayer and there will be more faith!

Next to that, search the Word more. The more we are familiar with God's Inspired Book, the more likely shall we be to believe it. If I want to believe a story which is current, I shall best strengthen my credence of its truthfulness by hearing it constantly repeated. When I begin to examine a Doctrine and I see that the Doctrine is clear, then I cannot help believing it. Now come to the Word of God, pure and unadulterated, and, as you read it, it will be its own witness. The glory which "gilds each sacred page, majestic like the sun," will flash before your eyes and you will then marvel that you ever could have doubted it. And let me tell you—many a promise which you have passed over before, or thought it to be scarcely worth attention, will shine out in splendor and delight your eyes and enrapture your spirit! Oh, how dead is the Word of God at one time, to what it is at another! You shall read it in the dark without the help of the Holy Spirit and it shall be to you like Christ in the eyes of the unregenerate world—"without form and comeliness." But at another time, when God shines upon it, you shall find it to be marrow and fatness to your soul and you will wonder that you have ever risen from perusing it, so delightful shall it be to your soul!

Search the Word much! Seek to enquire into the facts and Doctrines of the Gospel. There are very few theological treatises issued now-a-days. You do not read theology. You do not care about it! I know what you read—three-volume novels and especially religious tales in magazines! I wish that we were rid of these religious tales. I like irreligious tales much better, for when they are downright irreligious, people will not read the trash—but when these tales are flavored with a little of the spice of godliness, they go down with them and their heads get stuffed up with the silly nonsense they read! And instead of being the better by what they read, they are rather the worse. I wish you would sit down and study some of the good old stuff which your grandmothers used to read. Some of those old men and women used to sit down and when they had put on their spectacles, would read through some treatise on the Doctrines of the Gospel. Those were the grand old women who, when the minister was unsound, soon let him know that they would hear no such old wives' fables, but would only have good Gospel Truth! And their husbands were of the same sort—they read and searched for themselves. Now-a-days I believe that if a man has only a glib tongue,

he may preach very much what he likes. There are hundreds of our hearers who today would go after a Calvinist or even a hyper-Calvinist and tomorrow would go and hear an Arminian—and it would all be good because of the garnishing and because of the little sprigs and flowers all over the dish! God deliver us from such religion as this and give us to know the Truth of God by searching it out! Do, dear Friends, search out the Truth in God's Word. Seek to get a firm grip and deep knowledge of it. It were well for half the Christians in England if they would learn the Assembly's Catechism. They would get a world of knowledge even by that compendium, but getting the Truth by the Word is an even more profitable means of increasing our faith!

Let me say again that faith is very frequently helped to grow by communion with the saints. Those of you who are younger will often be helped by talking with the more mature and advanced in the Christian life. Yes, the sickbeds of those who are tried and afflicted are often a school in which young disciples may learn lessons in faith! Here you may be enriched with pearls and gems which can be bought in no other market. And suffering saints—men and women who have been in the furnace and have the smell of the fire upon them, who have become like silver purified seven times, who can bear their witness to help given in days of poverty and of deep sustaining Grace in seasons of sore bodily and mental anguish—these can greatly enrich and, through what they shall give, your faith shall grow!

And your faith will also grow, no doubt, when God treats you as He has treated them, for, after all, other people's experience is not of half the value to us as is our own. It is when we feel ourselves in the pinch, when we begin to pass through the fire that we fly to the Eternal God and rejoice that "underneath are the everlasting arms." Ask for the sanctified use of affliction! Pray for the sanctified use of prosperity, too, and so by all Providential means your faith will grow.

Remember, however, that the only real mode of growth in faith is by the power of the Holy Spirit. As I said at the commencement of this discourse, Peter's growth in faith came upon him at Pentecost. And it was the same with the others of the twelve—they became new men because the Spirit's power rested upon them. Beloved, if we have more of the power of the Spirit of God, more exercise of His power within us, our faith will increase!

Faith, then, is a growing thing. We ought to desire to have it grow. It can grow and I have told you some of the means by which it may grow. And now two or three minutes upon—

VI. THE WAYS IN WHICH YOU CAN HINDER ITS GROWTH.

I say only two or three minutes, though it is a very large subject. You can very easily hinder your growth in faith. You can do it by neglecting faith, by letting your Bible grow dusty, by leaving a ministry which is edifying, by despising the Holy Spirit. You can do it by not exercising what you already have. You cannot lose your faith if it is true faith, but you can lose much of its comparative power by worldly-mindedness, by giving yourselves

up to covetousness, by forsaking the assembling of yourselves together, as is the manner of some—by falling into sin, by tampering with the flesh, by indulging in vanity—by anything which will grieve the Holy Spirit! You may also weaken your faith by dwelling far from the sun. Dwellers in lands of snow and ice soon grow cold, and so may it be with us by living far from God and the Sun of Righteousness. As by refraining from meat a man may soon grow weak, so by abstaining from spiritual food and soul nourishing, our faith will soon decay. As a long drought quickly makes the flowers of the garden to droop their heads, so if there is a drought of Divine influence upon you, very soon your faith will begin to wither. By living, however, close to God and simply looking up to Him for everything, your faith may continue to grow until it gets to be the full assurance of faith and, like Abraham, you are "strong in faith, giving glory to God." And here I shall close by saying, let it be one of the resolute pursuits of our life, that being saved we may—

VII. SEEK AFTER THE HIGHEST DEGREE OF GRACE THAT IS OBTAINABLE.

I have heard of a good woman—a widow—who was once in great trouble when visited by her pastor, but on a second visit she was found to be very happy. "What has happened?" enquired her pastor. "What has made you so cheerful?" She said, "I have been reading that precious word, 'Your Maker is your Husband.'" "How has that comforted you?" he said. "Why," she answered, "when my husband was alive, I always lived up to his income. But now that my Maker is my Husband, I will try to live up to His income and oh, what a task I have got before me if I am to live up to the income of God that has no bounds and no limits and knows of no such thing as exhaustion! If I may draw upon Him to the utmost extent of His income, how richly I may live!"

Well, now, let us adopt the good woman's policy and try to live according to the income of our blessed Husband, the Lord Jesus Christ! Then shall our faith grow exceedingly and our love and all our Divine Graces!

Now I am afraid there are some here who have no faith, who have never trusted Christ. Then, dear Friends, it is our solemn duty to remind you, before we sit down, that without faith it is impossible to please God. You have come here, tonight, and I am glad you have—and some of you come often—and I am rejoiced. You are honest, sober, moral, amiable. This is all well, but you would like to please God, would you not? Well, but without faith it is impossible for you to please Him! You may do what you may, but without faith it is impossible to please God! God will never accept anything from any of us unless He sees the blood of His Son with it. If you do not go to Christ, it is no use going to the Father, for "no man comes to the Father," says Christ, "but by Me."

What? You have forgotten to trust in Jesus? You have thought that something else would do? You have been trying your fancied good works, your prayers, your feelings? Now, dear Friends, remember what the Apostle Paul did. He went round about for many years to establish his own righteousness, but as soon as he trusted in Christ, he said, "Those things

which were gain to me, I counted loss for Christ: yes, doubtless, and I count all things loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord." Now, I will tell you. You may, perhaps, be a churchman and you feel very pleased to think that you have been so regular in your life. Or you may be a Dissenter and feel proud to think you are such a consistent Nonconformist. Now, if ever you are converted, these things which are gain to you now, you will count to be less than nothing! You, too, will count them to be loss as compared with Christ. Yes, and your prayers, your repentance, what you have given to charity and what you have done—this, and that, and the other—you will look upon them all as being less than nothing and take Christ to be everything to you! "What are you doing, now?" said a good old Divine to a Brother who was dying. He said, "I am doing, now, what I have done many times before in health—I am taking all my good works and all my bad works—indeed, they are so much alike that I can scarcely tell which is which—and I am tying them all in one bundle and throwing them overboard as fast as I can! And I am just clinging to Christ with all my heart and all my soul." This is the only way of safety. None but Jesus! Nothing of yours—not one brass farthing—but Christ, Christ, Christ—Christ at the top and the bottom, at the beginning and the end, first, last and throughout!

You must have nothing but the Lord Jesus Christ! And if you do this night depend upon Him, why, my dear Friend, your sins are all forgiven! Just what Christ said to the poor grateful leper, I say to you in Christ's name—if you really do depend upon Him—"Your faith has saved you. Go in peace!" Though your past life may have been ever so vile and you have come in here without God and without hope, yet if you now believe in Jesus Christ and rely alone upon Him, none of your sins shall be mentioned against you any more forever. "I have blotted out your sins like a cloud and, like a thick cloud, your transgressions."

May you have faith given you tonight and then another day, after you have faith, may you pray, "Lord, increase my faith." That is not your prayer tonight—be thankful if you have any faith at all! But you who have faith tonight, pray tonight, and pray always, "Lord increase our faith."