

# Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

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STRONG FAITH.

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## A Sermon

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

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“But was strong in faith, giving glory to God.”—Romans iv. 20.

ABRAHAM is the father of the faithful. When children have a noble father it is a good thing for them to be fully conversant with his character; and therefore we shall do well to consider the life of the great patriarch, especially marking that grand excellence which makes him the father of believers, namely, his faith. Nor should we fail to observe *the strength* of his faith, for in him it reached a very high degree: he was not only a believer, but he was an unstaggering believer. He did not only trust God, but he trusted God most firmly, in the teeth of all contradiction, not so much as considering the difficulties, but believing in God without questioning. Oftentimes I have exhorted unbelievers to faith, but now my word is directed to those who have faith already, bidding them manifest more faith. Where there is the root of faith we plead for the growth of faith; where there is life our desire is that it may be found more abundantly. If you have not believed at all, then the gospel cries to you, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved;” but if you have believed, its voice is, “Grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” We cannot talk to unbelievers upon the subject of strong faith, because they have none to begin with; if they had even the weakest faith, it would save them, and become the germ of the highest assurance, but without a beginning how can they be exhorted to increase? There must first of all be the seed of faith in the heart, and then it will be wise to water it, but to water barren ground is lost labour. Have you given glory to God by believing in the Lord Jesus? Then may you glorify him more by a stronger confidence, but not till then. Those who have faith in God are constantly to be exhorted to grow in all graces, and especially in the most important and fundamental grace of faith. They are permitted to pray, “Lord, increase our faith,” with the assurance that “he giveth more grace.” My present address will have strong faith for its subject, let those who have believed strive after it.

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Is it needful for me to remind you that as faith at first is the work of the Holy Spirit, so must any real growth in it be of divine operation? Any addition to faith which could come to you by or from the flesh, if such a thing were supposable, would be an adulteration of faith, and not an increase of it; for evermore that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and only that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Even if an increase of faith could come to us by the will of man, and not by divine working, it would not be worth the having, for it would be a counterfeit. Only the sap of the trunk can make the branch grow: he who gave thee faith at the first must give thee more faith if thou art to become strong in it. Yet there is the parallel truth never to be forgotten, that while faith is the gift of God it is also our own act. The Holy Spirit works faith in us, but we ourselves personally believe; the Holy Ghost does not believe for us—what has he to believe? It would be altogether absurd to conceive of the Holy Ghost as believing or repenting! Nor if such a thing were possible could it be of any benefit to us, for the faith which saves the soul must be personal and cannot be performed by proxy. Faith is both God's gift and man's act. The Lord is the author of our faith, but we ourselves believe. In the same manner, though the strengthening of our faith will come through the Spirit of God, yet must it be our own act and deed: we must ourselves believe more firmly, and our own heart must be exercised to attain to the highest privilege. As unbelief is a sin for which the unbeliever must be held responsible, even so is the feebleness of faith a fault for which we are blameworthy. We are in duty bound to believe in God without wavering, and if we neglect the matter we shall be held guilty concerning it. It is our duty to believe, and to believe in the highest degree; and though some professors can never see the consistency of the two statements that faith is the gift of God and yet the duty of man, we are sure that the one is as true as the other; and so while I shall earnestly refer you to the Spirit of God for strength in order to obtain more faith, yet I shall not apologise for unbelief, or treat strong faith as a work of supererogation, for which God has no claim upon us. I most earnestly declare the responsibility of each believer, and claim from him, as the righteous due of a faithful God, that he do henceforth believe in him more fully than he hath heretofore done. May the remarks I shall offer be used by the Holy Ghost to the increase and establishment of your confidence in God.

I. Our first point is this: **STRONG FAITH, WHEREVER IS EXISTS, IS SUPPORTED BY ABUNDANT REASONS.** It is never chargeable with being unreasonable fanaticism or blind credence: it is a sound, prudent, justifiable thing.

For, first, *all the reasons which justify our believing in God at all justify our believing in him most firmly and continually.* You do not need that I dwell upon this, because it is self-evident: it can never be right to believe unless the statements are true, and if true they deserve undivided faith. If you have trusted your soul with your Redeemer because of the efficacy of his atoning blood, that argument pleads with you to trust him yet more steadfastly and confidently. If anything be strong enough for you to trust your eternal destiny to it, your trust ought not to be tinctured with suspicion, or soured with mistrust; it ought to be unalloyed as pure gold, and immovable as a granite rock. Either no

confidence or great confidence can be logically defended, but a divided heart cannot be justified by reason. Dear brother, little faith will save thee if it be true faith, but there are many reasons why thou shouldst seek an increase of it, and among the rest this forcible one,—thy conscience cannot justify the weakness of thy faith, nor answer the question, “Wherefore dost thou doubt?” If thou believest at all, why dost thou doubt at all? If God be worthy of trust, he is worthy of abundant trust; if it be well to lean on him at all it must be well to lean hard. Is the Lord faithful? then do not both trust and mistrust, believe and disbelieve. Is the promise sure? then do not believe it a little and doubt it a little. Elias spake concerning Jehovah and Baal, “If Jehovah be God serve him, and if Baal be God serve him”; so also would I demand in this matter: if the gospel be a lie, deny it, but if it be a truth, believe it. Be no longer content to mingle unbelief with faith, as if this were the utmost credence that God’s children could give to their own Father. It is time that this mental twilight came to an end, and that the day was known to be day, and the night to be night. Hesitating and questioning, hoping and fearing, make but a lame walk for a Christian pilgrim, and are unreasonable and indefensible. As the legs of the lame are not equal, so such a state of mind has not the balance which a wise man should seek after. If thou goest up to the ancles in the river of faith, go further, even up to the loins, or to full swimming depth, for, if it be right to enter into faith’s stream at all, every possible argument proves that the deeper you go the better.

*Reasons for strong faith may be found in abundance in the character of God.* He is not like ourselves, for in him is no mixture of truth and falsehood, wisdom and folly, power and weakness. Our reliance upon man must be cautiously given and measured out with great prudence, for man is only man; but “the Lord is not a man that he should lie, nor the son of man that he should repent.” His character absolutely demands implicit faith, insomuch that, while meditating upon this subject, I felt ashamed of myself that I should need to pray for faith in God. It is a clear evidence of our dire depravity that we should need to be helped to believe in one who cannot lie. It seems inevitable that a creature should trust its Creator, and especially such a Creator; and it would be inevitable if that creature were not exceeding depraved. For a child to trust its father is natural, so natural that no one counts it a virtue. How marvellous is our moral perversity that we should be so far gone out of our right condition of heart that we have to argue ourselves into believing our God, and even then succeed not till the Holy Spirit gives us faith. It ought to be a very hard thing for a Christian to doubt his heavenly Father; in fact, it ought to be impossible, seeing that the divine character is incapable of falsehood. Beloved, should we not have strong faith who believe in a God whose very essence is pure truth? Where deception is inconceivable doubt should be impossible. Thou believest that never shadow of untruth ever stained the character of thy God, why then dost thou not render to him strong faith? Thou believest also that God is infinitely wise, and therefore he has never spoken rashly nor promised what it might be wiser to withhold. The promise was not delivered in haste, or so unguardedly that it might be necessary to retract it; and therefore no alteration can be supposed. The covenant of promise stands secure

even as to its jots and tittles. If it had been foolish it might pass away, but since it is ordered by eternal wisdom it will outlast the everlasting hills. Come, then, beloved, should not the utmost confidence be rendered to him whose every word is steeped in infallibility? Shouldst thou not believe with all thy heart and soul and strength in him whose truth stands fast like the great mountains?

Moreover, O man of God, thou believest in One who is omnipotent, and therefore thy believing should be strong. Thou knowest how to answer that question, "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" for thou believest that with God all things are possible. If it be so, then his true word spoken in wisdom can readily enough be carried out: he has but to will it, and it is done. God's word is fact: for him to purpose is to perform: can there then arise any condition or circumstance which he cannot meet? Wherefore these doubts? In the presence of an Almighty Promiser unbelief is as ridiculous as it is sinful. "The strength of Israel will not lie," neither may we treat him with mistrust.

Thou knowest also that thy God is immutable. All things else change, but thy God knoweth no shadow of a turning; he is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." Is he the same? He doth not take back the word that goeth out of his mouth, nor reverse his divine decree; why then question and suspect him? Better far to believe immutably in an immutable God. Canst thou not rest in him who saith "I am Jehovah; I change not"?

Thou believest also that he is the God of love, full of goodness, mercy, and lovingkindness. What a wanton insult it is to mistrust one who cannot be unkind, whose very nature it is to bless his creatures, and whose innermost soul is set upon loving and blessing his own elect. Hast thou confided in him? then doth he not assure thee that he has graven thy name upon the palms of his hands, that he has loved thee with an everlasting love, and therefore with lovingkindness he has drawn thee. Wilt thou fly in the face of changeless love, and coldly question it? Can it be possible to trust it too confidently? Surely all these things, and much more, in the glorious character of the ever-beloved God, demand of us the strongest imaginable faith.

Then, again, when I turn mine eyes from pure deity to him who is bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh, *even our Lord Jesus Christ*, in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, it appears incongruous that the blessed Son of God should be received with meagre confidence. God dwelt among men in human flesh, you know it to be true that so it was: Jesus, the Son of God, abode upon the earth throughout a lowly life amidst poverty and shame, and, (wonder of wonders), at last he poured out his heart's blood for our redemption; and can we entertain a doubt of his ability to save? Do we see those blood drops from his hand and heart, sealing the everlasting covenant, and can we doubt? Abraham had strong confidence when he saw the smoking furnace and the burning lamp passing between the pieces of the slain victims, and what ought our confidence to be when we behold the Lord Jesus Christ himself ratifying the eternal covenant by his own death? Surely if the patriarch could find rest in the sight of the type only, we ought to rest without thought of fear. When faith beholds the divine antitype, no thought of disquietude should ever arise again. My soul,

what more dost thou want? Is there not here more than enough of solemn pledge and surety? Are not founts of assurance opened in the bleeding Saviour which are deeper than all fear and higher than all hope? That wondrous sacrifice is as high above thy thoughts at their best as the heavens are above the earth, and wilt thou return doubts and fears as a fit recompense for such a divine confirmation of eternal love? O Lord, help thy servants to be strong in faith!

One other reason is perhaps of less weight than those which have gone before, but I cannot withhold it. It is this: we ought to give to God strong faith, because *there is no evidence to the contrary*, nor any supposable evidence which could justify mistrust. All adown the ages those who have trusted in him have never been confounded. Our fathers trusted in him, and he helped them to suffer and to bear, to attempt and to accomplish, to live and to die. We read just now, in the eleventh of the Hebrews, the record of what the Lord wrought in those who believed in him. Now, on the other side, *per contra*, there standeth nothing. Has one child of God come forward wringing his hands and saying, "God hath not fulfilled his word, and his promises are false"? We have stood, many of us, at the bedside of dying saints, and the truth generally comes out there, yet there is not one among us, most familiar with such scenes, who ever heard a solitary believer declare that it is a mistake to confide in the blood of Jesus, or an error to rest in the faithfulness of God. Somewhere or other this thing would have come out: if it had been so: if the Lord had been false to one of his people we should have had sure record of it, and I think we might have trusted the devil and his myrmidons, who delight in infidelity, to have circulated such a report, pretty largely, all over the world, if they had known one such an instance; but they have not one to report. "He forsaketh not his saints."

Furthermore, I will appeal to your own experience,—have you experienced anything which casts suspicion upon the character of God? Has the Lord been a wilderness unto you? When you have trusted him has he failed you? Will you put your finger upon a promise which he has broken? Search the book through and through, and find if you can one single word of his against which you must write "false." Oh, no; the promise tarries sometimes, but it never lies. There is a waiting time for the testing of your faith, but in the end it will be seen that he has withheld no good thing from them that walk uprightly, and you will have to say at last, like hoary headed Joshua, "There failed not ought of any good thing which the Lord had spoken unto the house of Israel; all came to pass." Brethren, ought we to doubt our God when we have no cause to show for it? Is there any apology for little faith since we cannot remember any instances of prayers unheard, deliverances denied, or mercies refused? We have nothing of the kind to quote, and therefore when we doubt the Lord we are guilty of wanton distrust,—may the Lord forgive us and deliver us from it.

So much upon that first point, the strongest faith is supported by abundant reasons.

II. And now, secondly, according to the text, STRONG FAITH PRODUCES THE MOST DESIRABLE RESULTS. We have not time to go into many of these, but we will dwell upon one, the one mentioned in the text, "Strong in faith, *giving glory to God.*" Why, this is what we live

for—to glorify God. Every man who is truly a child of God feels that he has no object which at all approaches to this in importance; his chief end is “to glorify God and enjoy him for ever.” Well, then, since strong faith answers to that end we ought earnestly to desire it; but how does it appear?

Well, strong faith glorifies God because *it treats him like God*. Unbelief is practical atheism; because, denying the truthfulness of God, it takes away what is a part of the essential character of God, and so far mars his very existence. I would not say a word to grieve those who have but little faith, for the least faith is saving and is most precious; but still faith wherein it is weak does not treat God like God, it bounds and limits the Holy One of Israel! It believes him up to such a point, or under such and such circumstances, and this is not to act towards him as omnipresent and omnipotent. Strong faith treats God according to his infinite character: it does not suspect him, because it knows him to be the God of truth; it does not doubt the possibility of his accomplishing his promise, because it knows him to be God all-sufficient; it does not question his faithfulness, because it knows him to be absolutely immutable. Alas, we often deal with God as if he were like ourselves, or like our fellow-men. We are fickle, and we suppose that he is so; our fellow-men promise and fail us, and we act as if our God were like to the son of man, who is but a worm. O beloved, it robs God of glory when we act towards him otherwise than as he is, but it glorifies him when we gain a scriptural conception of what he is, and act towards him under that aspect, and what is that but to trust him without staggering? To me, when I look at it calmly, the strongest faith does not appear to be a wonder, it is only what the Lord has a right to receive. Considering the folly and depravity of man, faith is a marvellous production of grace; yet looked at from the Godward side of it, the strongest possible faith in God is only what God may justly claim. Say you not so, O believers? Does not your Lord deserve to be trusted at all times?

Further, strong faith brings glory to God, because *it treats him as a Father*, and acts towards him in the childlike spirit. It is very beautiful to see the confidence which our children repose in us. Why even when the man is utterly unworthy of respect you will see the little child still believing in his father. And as for those who are favoured with parents who are wise and gracious, there is, there should always be, an implicit reliance upon father's judgment. I have known boys quote their father with as implicit a reliance as Christians quote Scripture, or as confidently as a Catholic quotes a bull of the Pope. Indeed, what is a father after all but the papa, the pope, of his child to a very great degree; and though that confidence may be mistaken, yet it is natural to the child to feel it, and it is a sad pity that it should too often be rudely repressed by the father's folly. Now, every child of God ought to have unlimited confidence in God. Is he not my Father? Can my Father do an unkind thing to me? Can my Father be untrue? Can my heavenly Father be false or changeable? Impossible! The child of God does not boast of his faith, for it is only a simple childlike trust, yet it glorifieth God more than all the efforts of proud reason, for it calleth him by the name which he loves,

and it putteth him into the place which he delights in, namely, that of Father to his own chosen.

Again, strong faith honours God because *it strengthens all the other graces, and these all bring glory to God.* Without the graces of the Spirit in him a man cannot glorify God. That therefore which will produce in our character all those various lights which are the reflections of the divine excellence as it shone in the Lord Jesus, is the chief means of our glorifying God, and is therefore to be prized. Faith is the root of whatsoever things are lovely and pure and of good repute, and in proportion as it is strong all these precious things flourish, therefore it greatly tends to magnify the Lord.

Strong faith peculiarly glorifies God because *it gives a striking testimony to the world.* I do not think the world notices much the common faith of ordinary Christians; the faith which relies upon God ordinarily in good times the outside world does not think much of; but even carnal minds are compelled to view with astonishment the faith which glories in God when all temporal things are swept away. The faith which can practise eminent self-denial, or which can achieve, through the power of God, enterprises which appear foolhardy to mere reason, that is the faith which attracts the eyes of men; they see your strong faith, and they glorify your Father which is in heaven. I pray God that we may always have such a faith that it may be worth while for men to study it. I have known some faith which would have required a man to put a microscope to his eye to be able to perceive it at all, and when we have declared that little faith saves the soul, the worldling has replied, "Well, it is a very small concern, at any rate." Brethren, ask that your faith may grow; let it embrace God heartily, let it rest in him without a fear, and even the ungodly will be obliged to confess that this is the finger of God.

Strong faith glorifies God again because *it enables him to work great works in us and through us.* As our Saviour could not do many mighty works in a certain place because of their unbelief, so is God hampered with regard to some of us, because we have such little confidence in him. He has given to some men all the abilities necessary for the conversion of many souls, all the knowledge, all the utterance and a large part of the zeal; but they do not believe in him, and therefore they are not established. Some men's words actually create distrust in the minds of others, for they themselves are so diffident in spirit that they rather baulk the children of God in their progress than help them to advance in the divine life. Search, O my brethren and sisters, whether it be not so. He who has little faith will be made useful according to the littleness of his faith, but, if he had more, the Master might use him more. If we trusted more, our life would be holier, happier, serener, more close with God, and more useful; and why should we not? Give me a reason why we should not. Oh, Spirit of the living God, why should we not? Help thou us now to be strong in faith, giving glory to God!

III. Now I advance to a third observation, which I trust may give some comfort to those who are little in Israel. **STRONG FAITH WHICH GIVES GLORY TO GOD MAY BE EXERCISED BY PERSONS WHO ARE OTHERWISE EXCEEDINGLY WEAK.** What a joy this is to you who are sufferers in body. You do not often creep out of your bed which is now growing so hard through your having laid upon it these months.

It is quite a holiday to you to be found in the house of God now and then. Well, dear brother, dear sister, you cannot do apostolic work and range a continent, fervently blazing out the truth, but you can have strong faith in God: you may exhibit a placid patience, a sweet resignation, a sacred hopefulness as to the future, a divine disdain as to the fear of death; and if these abound in you the circle of friends who know you and tenderly watch you are receiving from your example the utmost benefit, and perhaps, though you may not be able to enter into active service, you may be tutoring others by the strength of your faith, and they will accomplish great things as the result of your example. At any rate, the weakness of your body need not prevent your exercising the strong faith which glorifies God.

So, too, dear friends, you may have but few talents, you may be conscious that you have no brilliancy of intellect, that you are not persons of remarkable parts or attainments, and yet you may glorify God by strong faith. You need not be a genius in order to give glory to God, for the strength of your faith will do it. Many a man who is of slender intellect glorifies God far more than your great thinker, because the great thinker is too often filled with a high conceit of his own thoughts, and will not follow God's word, whereas the poor unintellectual believer rises superior to him by taking the intellect of God to be his guiding star. You can glorify God, dear brethren, by holding firmly to the truth of which you understand so little, but which you love so heartily. Though you do not know the whole of its meaning you are in much the same condition as your more advanced brethren, for who knows the whole meaning of God's mind? What you do know you are resolved to hold with iron grip, and by so doing you greatly honour your Lord.

Some saints are conscious of weakness of every sort, but they must not, therefore, think that they cannot honour God by strong faith, for Abraham, of whom the text is spoken, was a special instance of this. He was so old that his body was now dead, and yet he believed that he would be the progenitor of the chosen seed. He knew that death was written upon him as to all that matter, and yet he was quite certain that God who had promised would certainly perform. Do you feel this morning almost dead spiritually? Dear lover of Jesus, have you wandered from him, so that your consciousness of life in him is dimmed and you hardly know whether you are in him or not, for you are so lethargic, your soul cleaveth to the dust? Now is the time to trust him: when sin abounds, when fears are thickest, when temptations are most furious, when want comes upon thee like an armed man, now is the time to trust in God. Summer weather faith is poor stuff, but a faith which burns on through the long, dark, dreary winter, a faith which is not damped by the rain nor buried by the snow-storm,—this is faith indeed, and glorifieth God. The depth of your weakness is just the height of your possibilities of honouring the Lord. If you are nothing, so much the more room for God to be everything; if you are unworthy, the more room for confidence in the righteousness of Christ; and if you are dead, you are the better able to prove the truth of your Lord's words concerning the believer, "though he were dead, yet shall he live." God grant us grace that whatever our circumstances or conditions, we may have the same conquering faith towards God.

IV. Now, fourthly, THIS STRONG FAITH VARIES AS TO ITS MANNER OF WORKING, very much according to the person and his circumstances. There is one thing that strong faith does not do which some think it would be sure to do—it never blusters, and it never talks big and boasts of what it will accomplish. “Though all men should forsake thee, yet will not I,” is not the language of strong faith, that is the prattle of Master Peter with his pride uppermost. Some men are in their own opinion in such a fine condition that they could push the whole world before them, and drag the church after them: I do not know what they could not do. Yes, but there is a great deal of difference between confidence in yourself and confidence in God. I have noticed that the faith which goes forth against the world with the dauntless courage of a lion is the very faith which lies down like a lamb at Jesus’ feet. The next thing to “I can do all things” is “Without Christ I can do nothing.” Consciousness of personal weakness attends a brave reliance upon God, and shows itself in modesty and quietude of manner. Barking dogs do not often bite, and those men who promise much very seldom perform. Strong faith has a quiet tongue, and does the daring deed without preliminary boasting. It does not advertise its coming victories, but falls upon the Midianites at dead of night, and with its lamps and pitchers puts them to the rout. Point me to one boastful word that ever fell from Abraham. All the Scriptural heroes of faith were doers, and not blusterers. David said little to his envious brothers, but he brought home the giant’s bleeding head, and bade its dumb mouth tell of what he had done.

*Faith exercises itself as in the case of Abraham, by believing God’s word.* God had said many things to Abraham, and Abraham believed them all. That is a rare thing nowadays. The school of modern thought, which considers itself to be the most infallible thing now extant, always cuts and shapes divinity according to its own views of what it ought to be; in fact, it has a God of its own, cut out of the brown paper of its philosophies—a God of soft effeminacy, who is no more like the Jehovah of Abraham than the Venus of Paphos. These men believe, not what the Bible says, but what they imagine it ought to say. Their doctrinal views are like the camel which was evolved by a German philosopher out of his own consciousness: he had never seen one, but he produced it according to his own notion of what it ought to be, and he was very strong against humps; he would never believe that a real camel had a hump, because his consciousness did not suggest such a thing. Much of intellectual religion nowadays is just that: we have certain gentry about who evolve a gospel out of their own brain, and of course they utterly despise the gospel which actually exists because it is not like their model. We are asked to bow down and worship the calf which comes out of their furnace, but that we shall not do while our faith is strong. We believe God’s every word as far as we know it. If I know a doctrine to be in God’s word, it is infallible to me. If I have ever in thought gone beyond that which is revealed, I do heartily repent of such presumption; brethren, say you not so? If I see in God’s Book two truths which I cannot square with one another, I believe them both. There is a middle term somewhere, though I know not where to find it; and for the present I

believe without that explanatory truth. There are the two things, God has said them, and they must be true, and it is mine to believe them. Let God be true and every man a liar. This is where strong faith is wanted in these days ; we need a settled creed, and a clear, comprehensive view of revealed truth, even if we should in consequence be called old-fashioned or imbecile. We need to be more old-fashioned than ever. I am a Radical in many things, but in the doctrines of the gospel I would have you to be Conservative to the backbone, not for an hour yielding any point of truth to the most brilliant thinker that the world can produce. Thinkers are not appointed to tinker up a gospel for us ; thank God, we have a perfect gospel already. Their shifting gospel changes about every ten years, and comes out spick and span as a new theology, but we have grasped the old infallible truth, and we mean to hang to it for dear life, being strong in faith, giving glory to God.

But Abraham's was not alone receptive faith : his was a faith which *obeyed the precept*. The test of his obedience was the strange command to take his only son and offer him up for a sacrifice, but he went to do it, and in God's account he did do it, for he had the will to do it at God's bidding. You and I must be willing to do what God tells us, as God tells us, when God tells us, because God tells us, but only strong faith will be equal to such complete obedience.

Then Abraham's faith awakened in him *great expectations*. He was looking for an heir, an heir from whom should spring a seed as the stars of heaven for multitude ; he expected that quite as confidently as you and I expect to-morrow. We shall be full of expectation if we have strong faith : looking for blessings, expecting prayers to be answered, and promises to be fulfilled. We shall not cry "How wonderful !" every time a prayer is answered, but we shall reckon it a matter of necessity that God should stand to every word that cometh out of his mouth. May the Lord give you such strong faith as this, and may it work in this fashion.

But time chides me, as it did the apostle when he entered upon this subject. You may well pardon me if I am prolix, for even so was he, until he said, "Time would fail us to speak of Gideon and Jephtha," and so on.

V. Our last point is, FAITH IS ESPECIALLY TO BE EXPECTED IN CERTAIN QUARTERS. Here I wish to speak very pointedly and personally to all my brethren and sisters in Christ.

Dear friends, there ought to be strong faith *in us who know God*. "They that know thy name will put their trust in thee, for thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee" ; and if he does not forsake the seekers, much less will he forsake those who have found him and trusted in him. Brethren, there are some men you can trust till you know them, but if it be true that when you do know them you can no longer trust them, it proves that they have a bad character. Now, you who know the Lord ought never to throw your God under such a suspicion. If you know him, trust him. I know you will.

We expect strong faith next from those *who have had a long experience of him*. We can almost forgive you young people who have just started in the Christian life if you are vexed with doubts and fears, though truly God does not deserve them even of you ; but when your sires begin to

doubt, what shall we say of them? What, have you known him fifty years and cannot you trust him yet? What, my dear brother, has the Lord kept you till you are seventy! How long do you expect to live? To eighty? Well, he has been good to you for seven tens, cannot you trust him for the last ten? What, tested him over and over again, and never found a flaw in his fidelity—been in deep waters and kept from sinking, and yet are you mistrustful? What are those things upon your feet? Shoes of iron and brass. He said they should be. Are you afraid that after all you will be footsore and shoeless? He promised, “as thy days so shall thy strength be.” How has it been? Why, you say, “It has been so up to this moment;” then why not to the end? Speak well of the bridge which has carried you over so many times. As I have already said, you cannot put your finger upon a single instance in which the good Lord has deceived you, and if you never doubt your Lord till you have reason for it you will never doubt him at all. Come, come, let those of us who have been twenty-five years in the ways of God put aside our childish doubts. Yet I warrant you this is easier said than done; and, though we talk thus, and we know it is true and right, alas, our nature goeth readily astray into a wicked and provoking distrust of God.

Further, dear friends, those ought to trust him *who have lived in fellowship with him*. If you have been on the top of Tabor; if you have known the kisses of his mouth and tasted of his love, which is better than wine; if you have been emparadised in his arms, in the full assurance of faith and the enjoyment of perfect love; why should you come down from the mountain and distrust him? God forbid that we should do this. May the recollection of the hill Mizar and the Hermonites come freshly over our minds this morning, and may we rest in our God.

Those *who are getting near to heaven* ought not to distrust him. I see upon some of you the marks of the coming end. The snow flakes of many winters lie on your brows, nay, the wind has blown even those away from some of you and left the summit bare. You will soon behold your Lord, your eyes will soon see the King in his beauty in the land that is very far off. Do not let it be among the last memories of earth that you doubted your Beloved. Oh, you who have known him from your youth, and have proved his faithfulness till you have come to palsied age, do not now begin to suspect your gracious God. You do not doubt the partner of your bosom, who has shared your sorrows for half a century and has been the comfort of your life,—you do well to trust in her, for it is said of such, “The heart of her husband doth safely trust her”; but surely she is not to be relied upon so implicitly as your God! Oh, dear aged brother, permit one who is but a little child compared with you to entreat you. Console and cheer the younger people by the exhibition of confidence and serenity wrought in you by strong faith.

Lastly, *we who are teachers of others* ought to have strong faith in God. I think we may at times profitably mention our own doubts and fears for the encouragement of those who are terribly downcast, but it ought always to be done with very great prudence and much regret. I recollect once speaking of my own tremblings, when preaching, and a venerable brother said to me afterwards, “I do not think, dear pastor,

that you were right in speaking of your own transgressions so freely. You encouraged the people certainly by what you said about yourself, but I hardly think they ought to be encouraged. Now, suppose you were to go into the pulpit and say 'there are some of you who are thieves; it is very wrong of you, but still do not despair, for I thieve a little myself.' Why, you know," he said, "you would not be doing good, but harm; and yet thieving is not more truly a sin than doubting God, in fact there is the utmost sin in unbelief." I replied to my good brother that he was right, and I thanked him for the correction. Whenever, dear hearers, you catch any of us who are teachers doubting and fearing, do not pity us, but scold us. We have no right to be in Doubting Castle. Pray do not visit us there. Follow us as far as we follow Christ, but if we get into the horrible Slough of Despond, come and pull us out by the hair of our heads if necessary, but do not fall into it yourselves. Never say, "My beloved pastor went there, and therefore I may go there." No, but say, "Even our minister fell into that error, and therefore I will keep as far from it as ever I can, for if the teacher slips the disciple may easily do so, and therefore I must very carefully watch against unbelief."

Brethren, we shall never succeed in winning sinners to faith if we preach what we do not intensely believe. I do verily believe that the sinner is lost, and that unless grace saves him, he is lost for ever. I believe that eternal punishment will fall upon him unless he repents and believes in Jesus Christ. I do believe that Jesus shed his precious blood, and that whosoever believeth in him is saved beyond all fear of destruction, saved by the blood of the Lamb. We must preach in a believing manner, knowing our message to be true, or else men will die in unbelief. And, what is more, I do not think we shall have many conversions unless we expect God to bless the word, and feel certain that he will do so. We must not wonder and be astonished if we hear of a dozen or two conversions, but let the astonishment be that thousands are not converted when they hear such divine truth, and when we ask the Holy Spirit to attend it with divine energy. God will bless us in proportion to our faith. It is the rule of his kingdom.—"According to your faith so be it unto you." O God, give thy ministers more faith! Let us believe thee firmly! Oh, that we could believe thee up to the fullest possible measure of faith, and never doubt thee again. If the enemy number thousands, give us the faith of Samson to throw ourselves upon them, and in the name of God to smite them, and though we ourselves as to all power to convert others are as dead men, and though the sinner be dead, yet help us to believe that souls can be begotten again by the preaching of the gospel, and let us preach with confidence in the divine power. O Lord, grant this to us, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Hebrews xi.

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HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—125 (Song II.), 229, 230.