

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

LITTLE FAITH AND GREAT FAITH.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, NOVEMBER 16TH, 1890,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Lord's-day Morning, November 2nd, 1890.

"O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?"—Matthew xiv. 31.

"O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt."—Matthew xv. 28.

BETWEEN the very lowest degree of faith and a state of unbelief there is a great gulf. An abyss immeasurable yawns between the man who has even the smallest faith in Christ and the man who has none. One is a living man, though feeble, the other is "dead in trespasses and sins"; the one is a justified man, the other is "condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." The weakest believer is on the road to heaven; the other, having no faith, is going the downward road, and he will find his portion at last among the unbelievers—a terrible portion indeed.

Although we thus speak of believers as all of one company, yet there is a great distance between weak faith and strong faith. Thank God, it is a distance upon the one safe road—the King's highway. No gulf divides little faith from great faith; on the contrary, little faith has only to travel along the royal road, and he shall overtake his stronger brother, and himself become "strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." I want to quicken some of the more tardy travellers along the sacred way. I would have doubts slain and faith revived. I want Mr. Feeble-Mind, and Mistress Much-Afraid, and Miss Despondency, and the whole tribe of the little ones, to take heart of hope this morning, and observe that they have not yet enjoyed all that the Lord has prepared for them. Although a little faith saves, there is more faith to be had: faith which strengthens, gladdens, honours, and makes useful, is a most desirable grace. It is written, "He giveth more grace," and therefore God has more in readiness for us. Little faith may increase exceedingly until it ripens into full assurance with all its mellowness and sweetness.

There are three things I am going to attend to. The first is *little faith gently censured*: "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" In the second place, *little faith tenderly commended*; for it is no small

No. 2,173.

boon to have any faith at all, even though it has to be called little. Thirdly, I shall conclude by speaking of *great faith as much more to be commended*. In this last matter I shall dwell upon our Master's gracious words: "O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt."

I have read in your hearing two stories in the fourteenth and fifteenth chapters of this Gospel according to Matthew. It is memorable that the incidents, illustrating little and great faith, come so closely together. I shall take it for granted that you have the stories of Peter and the Canaanitish woman clearly before your minds. Keep your Bibles open while I preach; and may the Spirit of God open your hearts to understand them!

I. First, we have LITTLE FAITH GENTLY CENSURED.

What shall I say about it, to begin with, but this?—that *it is frequently found where we expected greater things*. This man who is chided for little faith is Peter. Peter, to whom the Lord had communicated a very clear knowledge of himself; Peter, the foreman of the twelve; Peter, in after-days the great preacher of Pentecost; Peter, who has been exalted by some into the primate or pope of the apostolic church, though he claimed no such position; this is Peter, who was a true piece of stone from the foundation rock, Peter, to whom the Master gave the keys, and to whom he delivered the commission, "Feed my sheep," and "Feed my lambs." It is Peter, to whom Jesus says, "O thou of little faith." And, my dear brother or sister, may it not be true that you have obtained great mercy, enjoyed high privileges, received gracious protection, and been eminently favoured with fellowship with Christ, most near and dear? By this time you ought to be strong in faith. But yet you are not so. You will soon be home; your grey hairs are silvered with the light of Immanuel's land; you can almost hear the singing of the saints across the narrow stream. At your time of life, so long taught of God, so deeply experienced in the things of Christ, you ought to be fathers in faith, whereas you are still children; you ought to be mothers in Israel, and yet you are mere babes. Is it not so? Why is this sad fact so undeniable? Solomon spake of the cedar in Lebanon, and of the hyssop on the wall: but I have too often seen a hyssop on Lebanon, and I have sometimes seen a cedar upon a wall: I mean, that I have seen great grace where there seemed to be nothing to assist it, and I have seen little grace where everything was advantageous to its growth. These things ought not so to be. You and I, who are no children now; you and I, who are no longer coasters, but have launched out into the deep, and have had experience in many a storm; you and I, who are no strangers to our Lord now, for the King hath often brought us into his banqueting-house, and his banner over us has been love; we ought to be ashamed if we are still lamenting our little faith. It is an infirmity in which we cannot glory, for unbelief is exceeding sinful. Well might the Master lift his finger to some who are sitting in these pews this morning, and say to us one by one, "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?"

Continuing our very gentle censure, we note that *little faith is far too eager for signs*. I do not think that Peter's faith became suddenly

little: it was always little, and the sight of the boisterous wind made its littleness apparent. When he said, "Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water," his faith was weak. Why did he want to walk on the water? Why did he seek such a wonder? It was because his faith was little. Strong faith is content without signs, without tokens, without marvels. It believes God's bare word, and asks for no confirming miracle; its trust in Christ is such that it asks for no sign in the heavens above, or in the seas beneath. Little faith, with her "If it be thou," must have signs and wonders, or she yields to doubt. Joyful meditations, remarkable dreams, singular providences, choice answers to prayer, special fellowships—little faith must be having something out of the common, or she collapses. The perpetual cry of little faith is, "Show me a token for good." Little faith is not satisfied with the bow which God doth set in the cloud, but she would have the whole heavens painted with celestial colours. It is not satisfied with the usual portion of the saints, but must have more, do more, and feel more than the rest of the disciples. Why could not Peter have kept in the ship like the rest of his brethren? But, no: because his faith was weak he must quit the deck for the deep; he cannot think that it really is his Master walking on the sea unless he walks with him. How dare he ask to do what his divine Lord was doing? Let him be content to share his Lord's humiliation: he ventures far when he asks to partake in a miracle of Omnipotence. Am I to doubt unless I can do miracles like those of my Lord? But this is one of the failings of weak faith: it is not content to drink of his cup and be baptized with his baptism; it would share his power, and partake in his throne.

Weak faith is apt to have too high an opinion of its own power. "Oh," says one, "Surely you are wrong. Is it not the error of weak faith to have too low an opinion of its own ability?" Brethren, no man can have too low an opinion of his own power; because he has no power whatever. The Lord Jesus Christ said, "Without me ye can do nothing"; and his witness is true. If we have strong faith we shall glory in our powerlessness, because the power of Christ doth rest upon us. If we have weak faith, we shall diminish our trust in Jesus and put into our hearts instead of it so many measures of confidence in self. Just in proportion as faith in our Lord is weakened, our idea of ourselves will be strengthened. "But I thought," says one, "that a man who had strong self-reliance was a man of great faith." He is the man who has no faith at all; for self-reliance and Christ-reliance will not abide in the same heart. Peter has an idea that he can go upon the water to his Master: he is not so sure of the others, but he is clear about himself. James, and John, and Andrew, and the rest of them, are in the ship: it does not occur to Peter that any one of these can tread the waves; but he cries, "Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water." Self-consciousness is no attribute of faith; but it is a nest for doubt. Had he known himself, he might have said, "Lord, bid John come to thee on the water; I am unworthy of so high a dignity." But, no: being weak in faith, he was strong in his own opinion of himself, and he hurried to the front, as usual; hastened into a pathway that was quite unfit for his trembling feet to

tread, and before long found out his error. It is weak faith that allows of high ideas of self. Great faith hides self under its mighty wings.

Note another point about weak faith: *it is too much affected by its surroundings.* Peter went on pretty well till he noticed that the wind tossed the waves about tremendously, and then he was afraid. Are not many Christians too apt to live by what they feel and see? Do we not often hear a young beginner say, "I know that I am converted, for I feel so happy"? Well, but a new frock will make many a girl happy, or a few shillings in the pocket will make a youth rejoice. Is this the best evidence that you can bring? Why, if you are very troubled, it may be a better sign of conversion than feeling happy. It is well to mourn over sin, and struggle against it, and try to overcome it: this is a sure mark of grace; a far surer one than overflowing joy. Ah, believer! you will be happy in the highest and best sense if you trust in Jesus; but you will soon lose your happiness if your happiness becomes the ground of your confidence. Happiness is a thing that depends upon how things happen. It is too often hap-ness, and nothing more. It is too much a hap-hazard thing. But faith rests in Christ whatever hap may happen; and so it is happy in the happening of sorrow and grief, because it relies wholly upon God. Faith rests upon the Lord's faithful word and promise, come what may. "Ah!" says another, "I feel very low and dull. I am heavy even when I try to pray; I cannot pray as I would like." And so you doubt your salvation because of that, do you? Does your salvation depend upon the liveliness of your prayers? It is the mark of weak faith, that it is all up, and then all down. If we live by feelings, brethren, we shall live a very wretched life; we shall not dwell in the Father's house, but we shall be a kind of gipsies, whose tents are too frail to shut out the weather. God save us from being like the barometer, which at one time is "set fair"; but "set fair" with the barometer does not last long, it is back again to "rain," and it drops down to "much rain," before we know where we are. Strong faith knows where its true standing is, and, perceiving this to be unchanging, it concludes that its foundation is as good one day as another day; for its standing is in Christ. As the promise upon which strong faith leans is not a variable quantity, but is always the same, so its rest is the same. Our faithful God will save all those who put their trust in him; and there is the top and the bottom of it: we need not go any further. But poor weak faith is always looking out to see whether the wind is in the east; and if it be so, down she goes. Is the wind quiet? Peter walks on the wave. Does the wind howl? Peter begins to sink. This is weak faith all over. It pins us down to its environment. God help us to rise out of it!

Weak faith, in the next place, *is forgetful of its constant danger,* and has not learned to believe in the teeth of it. When Peter was walking on the waves, he was in as much danger as when he began to sink. Practically, he never was in any danger at all; for Jesus, who enabled him to tread the sea, was equally near all the way. When he was standing, he could not have walked another step if the Master had not upheld him; and when he began to sink, his Master was still able to prevent his drowning. Would his Master withdraw the divine strength,

and suffer his poor servant to perish? Peter's strength is gone; but will his Master take away the divine strength, and leave him to perish? Weak faith frequently makes this mistake; she does not know that she is at all times in extreme danger, wherever she may be, when she looks to herself; and that she is never in any danger, wherever she may be, if she looks to her Lord. If you get a cloudy view of your confidence, and begin to trust, not in Christ pure and simple, but in Christ Jesus as you enjoy him, in Christ as you are like him, or in Christ and yourself as taught by him: if you allow any amalgamations in your trust, they will turn out to be adulterations; and when a sense of danger falls upon your mind, you will not know where to turn for the re-establishment of your confidence. Strong faith takes Jesus only as her basis; but feeble faith tries to add thereto. Beloved, weak faith tries to make up for want of confidence in the Lord Jesus Christ with an indistinct confidence in herself, or her works, or prayers, or something else. If Peter had been trusting wholly in Jesus, whether he walked on the billows, or sank in the waves, he had done what his Master told him to do, and the reason of his safety was not in the least affected by the wind. If his reliance be on Jesus only, the ground of his confidence is never questionable. I pray that we may climb above that weak faith which rises and falls with the passing incidents of this life's story.

Weak faith, when conscious of her danger, swings as a pendulum to the opposite extreme, and *in an instant exaggerates her peril*. One moment Peter walks upon the sea; the next moment he is going to be drowned. It is a curious thing that he never thought of swimming. When the soul trusts Christ it is spoiled for reliance upon self. When once a man has found out the way to walk upon the top of the water, he forgets his skill in swimming in it. Self-confidence goes when confidence in Christ comes in. It was the Lord's will that Peter should know his weakness, and should most clearly see that his standing depended upon his faith, and that faith found all its strength in the Lord Jesus. Down goes Peter; and now it is, "Lord, save me." He is at his wits' end. Peter is going to be drowned—drowned with the Master standing by! He will die while Jesus lives. Will he? He will perish when he is doing what Jesus bade him do! Do you think he will? It is evident he has that fear upon him. I have been foolish enough to feel that I should sink under trouble and need. It is folly. Having mixed up our confidence in brighter days, when dark days come, a large part of our confidence is gone, and we fear that we shall perish. Have not some of you that believed in the doctrine of the final perseverance of the saints, yet said, "I shall one day fall by the hand of the enemy"? You know that Christ has promised to keep you; and yet, because you are not quite keeping yourself as you ought to do, you dream that *he* will not keep you. You know that he will never give you up, and yet you are almost ready to give it all up yourself, and say, "I shall prove an apostate after all." In this way little faith forgets her Lord. She is too bold one day, and too timid another, and all because she mixes up her confidences.

Little faith speaks unreasonably. Notice how our Lord puts it: "O

thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" Faith is spiritual common sense; unbelief is unreasonable. For look; if Christ was worth trusting at all, and Peter had proved that he thought he was, by throwing himself into the sea, to come to him; then, if he was worth trusting at all, he was worthy to be trusted to the full. You cannot say of a man, "He is a faithful man, for you may at times rely upon his word." That qualifying word, "at times," is fatal to his character. Unless he is always to be relied upon, he is not an honest, truth-speaking man. And if you say of God's promises, "I can believe some of them, and therefore I expect him to help me under certain difficulties," you are accusing the Lord of unfaithfulness. O sir, you are cutting away the foundation of what little faith you have. Your Lord might ask you, "Why do you believe as much as you do believe? Having gone so far, why do you not go on to the end? The reason which makes you believe as much as you do believe, should make you believe to a still greater degree. O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt? If thou hast any faith, why dost thou doubt? If any doubt, why any faith?" The two things are inconsistent with each other. You are not occupying a logical position in being a weak believer in a strong Christ. Why wavering faith in an unwavering promise? Why feeble faith in a mighty Saviour? Let your faith take its colour from him on whom it rests, and from the Word which you believe, and then you will be standing upon good, solid, reasonable ground, which can be justified to conscience and understanding.

One word more about our trembling apprehensions. *Weak faith often gets a wetting.* Although Peter was not drowned, yet you may be sure he was soaked to the skin with the water. If you have strong faith you will often escape a sea of troubles, which weak faith will be immersed in. Weak faith is a great fabricator of terrors. I know friends who have a trouble-factory in their back-garden, where they are always making rods for their own backs. They disbelieve God about this and about that, and hence they are always fretting and worrying, and getting wet through with trouble. I have heard say that home-made clothes very seldom fit; and, certainly, home-made troubles are very hard to bear. I have also heard that a home-made suit will last longer than other garments, and I believe that home-made troubles stick to us far longer than those which God appoints for us. Shut up that fear-factory, and make songs instead! If God send thee a trouble, it comes not amiss to thee. But who wetted Peter through and through, and soaked him in the deep? Who but Peter himself? Peter, afflicted Peter! If he had possessed strong faith, he might have had a dry coat. His Master prevented the waters destroying him; but he suffered them to make him very uncomfortable. If thou hast weak faith, thou wilt have broken joys and many discomfords.

Thus have I very gently censured weak faith. I did not mean to hurt a hair of its head. It is a blessed thing, this little faith—not its littleness, but its faith. If I could kill the weakness, and quicken the faith; if the littleness could be removed, and the faith could be increased, how glad should I be!

II. Now, LITTLE FAITH SHALL BE TENDERLY COMMENDED. I shall praise it, not because it is little, but because it is faith. Little faith requires to be tenderly handled, and then it will be seen to be a precious thing.

First of all, *it is true faith*. Faith which begins and ends with Jesus is true faith. The least faith in Jesus is the gift of God; and it is "like precious faith," though it is not like strong faith. If thou hast faith as a grain of mustard seed, thou canst do wonders. Though thy faith be so little that thou hast to look for it with all thine eyes, yet if it be there, it is of the same nature as the strongest faith. A three-penny piece is silver, as surely as the crown piece, and it bears the mint-mark quite as certainly. A drop of water is of the same nature as the sea; a spark is fire as assuredly as the flames of Vesuvius. Nobody knows what may come of a spark of faith: behold, it sets a thousand souls on fire! Little faith is true faith, for did not our Lord say to this Peter: "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven"? Peter had true faith; and yet it was little faith. O my hearer, "If thou believest that Jesus is the Christ, thou art born of God." If thou dost feebly cast thyself on Christ's finished work, thy weakness in the act of reliance does not alter the fact that thou hast fallen into strong hands, which will surely save thee. Jesus saith, "Look unto me, and be ye saved"; and though thy look be a very unsteady one, and though tears of sorrow dim thine eyes so that thou canst not see him as he is, yet thy looking to him hath saved thee. Little faith is born from above, and belongs to the family of the saved. The weakest faith is real faith.

Next, notice that *little faith obeys the precept, and will not go a step without it*. Little faith cries, "If it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water. And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water to go to Jesus." If Jesus saith, "Come," little faith answers, "Behold, I come!" Though her gait be staggering, and her knees be feeble, yet she will go where Jesus calls her, whether it be through flood or flame. I know some of the Lord's children who very seldom have much enjoyment; and yet I almost envy them for their tenderness of conscience. Their shrinking from the least contact with sin, their carefulness to keep the way of the Lord's commandments, are admirable traits in their character. Gracious walking is, after all, more precious than comfortable feeling. How can I blame thee, poor little faith, when I see thee afraid to put one foot before the other for fear thou shouldest step aside? I had rather see thee in all thy timidity thus carefully obedient than hear thee talking loudly about thy great faith, and then see thee tampering with sin and folly, and feeling as if when thou hast greatly erred it is a matter of no great consequence. When tenderness of conscience flourishes side by side with little faith, they are as two lilies for delicate beauty.

Peter's little faith did not try to walk upon water until Jesus gave the word of permission. Peter asked, "Bid me come." Oftentimes have I noticed men and women much despondent, greatly fearful, and yet they would not do anything for the life of them, until they heard

the voice behind them saying, "This is the way, walk ye in it." They hesitate till they have consulted the map of the Word; they dare not go at a venture, but they kneel and cry for guidance, for they are afraid of taking even a single step apart from their Master's will. They have a holy dread of running without warrant from the Lord. Little faith, if this be thy mind and temper, we commend thee much!

And, next, *little faith struggles to come to Jesus*. Peter did not leave the ship for the mere sake of walking the waters; but he ventured on the wave that he might come to Jesus. He sought not a promenade upon the waves, but the presence and company of his Lord. "When Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water to go to Jesus." That was the one point he aimed at—to get to Jesus. Some of you, I know, have but little faith; but you long to get nearer to Jesus. Your daily panting is, "Lord, reveal thyself to me, reveal thyself in me, and make me more like to thee." He who seeks Jesus has his face turned in the right direction. Though your knees knock together, and your hands hang down, yet what little headway you do make is towards Jesus: you strive to serve him, and to honour him; is it not so? Though the winds be contrary, you still pull for the shore. Well, though thou be little in faith, yet am I glad thou art struggling, despite thy feebleness, to reach thy Lord. Struggle on, for Jesus comes to meet thee; and when thou dost begin to sink, through mistrust, he will catch thee up and set thee on thy feet again. Wherefore, be of good cheer!

Little faith deserves commendation again, in that *it does behave grandly for a time*. Though Peter had little faith, yet he walked from one billow to another, in rare style. I think I see him after he had leapt out of the ship, astonished to find himself standing upon the waters, which lay beneath him like solid glass. Then he takes one step, like a child that begins to walk; and, with growing confidence, he takes another. Though the waves roll under his feet, yet he stands firmly upon them, for a time. Little faith can play the man for a while. When Jael took the nail and slew Sisera, the timorous woman became a warrior, as she slew the enemy of Israel. Many a time the lame and the feeble, who could not usually lift a hand in the holy war, have felt stimulated, and have developed heroism for the time being. Little faith, like David's sling, has slain the giant; like Ehud's left-handed dagger, little faith has wrought deliverance. So I commend thee, little faith; for thou hast thy high days and holidays, and thou too canst count thy victories, wrought in the name of Jesus. If it were always with thee as it is at times, thou wouldest be glorious indeed! Even now thou canst move mountains, and pluck up trees by the roots.

Little faith I must commend yet further; because *when it finds itself in trouble it betakes itself to prayer*. Peter begins to sink. What does Peter do? Peter prays: "Lord, save me." Little faith knows where her strength lies. When she is in trouble, she does not then turn her face to human confidences, or natural forces; but she turns immediately to prayer. Little faith pours out her heart before the Lord. I love to see a man, in the hour of his distress, begin to pray at once, as naturally as frightened birds take to their wings. Some of you run to your neighbours, or hold a council with your own wits: but the

profit of this course has never made you rich. Let us try a surer method. Instead of stopping to turn over all the old stock we have, let us go at once to Jesus for new help. Alas! we do not go to Jesus until we have knocked at every other door; and then the mercy is that he does not turn us away from his gate. Peter did not try the natural resort of swimming; he took to praying, "Lord, save me." O little faith, thou art great at pleading in prayer. Perhaps thy very weakness drives thee oftener to thy knees. Thou art not so prevalent in prayer as strong faith; but thou art quite as abundant in it. I see thee trembling and faint; then dost thou cry unto the Lord for strength, and he helps thee. This cry of thine proves thee to be of the spiritual stock; even as it was with one of old, of whom it was said, "Behold, he prayeth."

Weak faith has this commendation again, that *it is always safe, because Jesus is near*. Peter was safe on the water, because Christ was on the water. Though his faith was weak, he was not saved by the strength of his faith; he was saved by the strength of that gracious hand which was stretched out to catch him when he was sinking in the flood. If thou believest in Christ with all thy heart, if he is the first and last of thy confidence, then, though thou be full of trembling and alarm, Jesus will never let thee perish. If thou art depending upon him, and upon him alone, it is not possible that he should slight thy faith, and let thee die. God forbid we should so insult our Lord as to suppose he would let a believer drown, however weak his faith! Since Christ lives, how can we die? Since Christ standeth on the waters, how can we sink beneath them? Are we not one with him?

One thing I may say in commendation of weak faith, and that is, that *Jesus himself acknowledges that it is faith*. He said to Peter, "O thou of little faith." He rebuked him because it was little, but he smiled on him because it was faith. I love to feel that the Holy Ghost is the Creator, not of the littleness of our faith, but of our faith, be it ever so little. Our Lord acknowledges that to be faith which we suspect to be little better than unbelief. "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief," is an admirable prayer for many of us. Christ forgives the unbelief, but he very graciously accepts the faith, despite its weakness. He can spy out faith when, like a lone spark, it is all but smothered under a heap of rubbish.

Once more, I commend little faith because, though it may sometimes sink, *it recovers itself, and does its old wonders over again*. Peter is ready to sink; but when his Master has caught him, what do you see? There is not one person now walking on the water; there are two. Christ is there, and Peter too. Peter, my man, you walk on the sea as one to the manner born! Oh, yes; his little faith has learned, by a touch from the Lord, to do what it did at first: he walked the waves at first, and now he does it again. See! he comes up with his Lord into the ship. You that used to have good times, and at this hour look back upon them with deep regret, may have the like again. You that have grown despondent and sad, be of good courage; you shall have your festival days back again, and much brighter than they. "Oh, but I have wasted so much time," says one, "through this feeble faith of mine." Well, it is a great pity; but there is a promise which I

commend to your faith: "I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten." The locust has eaten up our harvests—this locust of weakness has devoured our pleasant fruits; yet our Lord Jesus Christ can restore to us those wasted years; he can pack ten years of usefulness into one; he can put seven days of joy into one day, and so make up to us the lost past. Our Lord can make you to forget the shame of your youth, and not to remember the reproach of your widowhood any more. Be of good courage, little faith! Thou comest of a good family, though thou be but a babe as yet. Be of good courage, little faith! Thou mayest be sick on board the vessel; but the vessel in which thou hast embarked is safe for all that, and thou wilt get to shore as surely as strong faith will do. Put thy trust in the Lord, and quietly wait for him, so shall thy morning surely come in due time. Thus have I gently censured and kindly commended little faith.

III. But now I want to say a few words to finish with; and this is the motto of them—GREAT FAITH IS MUCH MORE COMMENDED.

It is sometimes found where we least expected it. Our Lord beheld it, not in the manly Peter, but in the tender woman who pleaded for her child. She was a woman; but she had faith which put the men to shame. She was a Canaanitish woman, of a race concerning which it was said, "Cursed be Canaan," and yet she had stronger faith than Israelitish Peter, who had known the Scriptures from his youth up. She was a woman who had great discomfort at home; for the devil was there, tormenting her daughter. It is a dreadful thing to have the devil in your husband, or a devil in your daughter, when you go home; yet many a Christian woman has this to bear. Notwithstanding this grave trial, though there was nothing to comfort her at home, she was a woman of great faith. And why should not we be like her? My brother, although your condition and circumstances are greatly against your growth in grace, yet why should not you grow to manhood in Christ? The Lord Jesus can cause you to do so. Though it seems to you that you must be stunted by the chill blast and the cruel soil which environ you, yet the great husbandman can so foster you that you shall become a plant of renown. God can turn disadvantageous circumstances into means of growth. By the holy chemistry of his grace he can bring good out of evil. I commend great faith with special emphasis when I see it where all its surroundings are hostile to it.

Next, great faith is to be commended because *it perseveres in seeking the Lord.* This woman came to Jesus to have her daughter healed; and at first he answered her never a word. Oh, the misery of silent suspense! Next, he speaks coolly of her to his disciples; but she seeks on. She has come for a boon, and she so believes in the Lord, the Son of David, that she will not take "no" for an answer; she means to be heard, and so she presses her suit with importunity even to the end. Oh for a strong faith, a persevering faith! Brethren, have you got it? You men, are you using it? Here is a woman that had it, and kept it at work till she won her object. May we have it abundantly!

Great faith also *sees light in the thickest darkness.* I do not think Peter was half so tried as the Canaanite was. What was it that

frightened Peter? The wind. What might have frightened her? Why, the harsh words of Jesus himself. Who is afraid of the wind? Who would not be afraid of a rejecting Christ, speaking hard words? "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs." Why, if our Lord had spoken thus to any one of us, we should never have dared to pray again. We should have said, "No, that hard sentence shuts me out altogether." But not so strong faith. "No," says she, "he called me a dog. Dogs have a position in society; little dogs are carried by their little masters indoors at dinner time, that they may get a crust or a crumb; and, Lord, I will be a dog, and get my crumb: it is only a crumb for thee to give it, though it would be everything to me to get it." So she pleads with him as readily as if he had given her a promise instead of a rebuff. Great faith can see the sun at midnight: great faith can reap harvests at mid-winter, and find rivers in high places. Great faith is not dependent upon sunlight: she sees that which is invisible by other light. Great faith rests upon the certainty that such a thing is so because God has said it, and she is satisfied with his bare word. If she neither sees, nor hears, nor feels anything to corroborate the divine testimony, she believes God for his own sake, and all is well with her. O brethren, I hope you will be brought to this condition—that you will believe in God, though your feelings give God's promise the lie, and though your circumstances give it the lie. Though all your friends and companions give the Lord the lie, may you come to this, Let God be true with every man, and every man a liar; but doubt God we dare not, and we will not. His sure promise must stand. Such a faith as this deserves to be commended, and our Lord himself praises it. "O woman, great is thy faith"!

Great faith prays and prevails. How she did prevail! Her daughter was made whole, and she received a broad grant of whatever she willed. "Be it unto thee even as thou wilt." I wish we had this mighty faith in connection with prayer. One man praying with faith will get more from God than ten men, or, for the matter of that, ten thousand men, who are unstable and unbelieving. Believe me, there is a way of praying in which you may have what you will of God. You may go up to your closet, and ask and have; ay, and come out of your solitude saying, "I have it." Even though you have it not as a matter of actual enjoyment, yet your faith has grasped it, realized it, and believed in it, and so has taken immediate possession. Did not Luther often, in his worst times, come down from his chamber crying, "Vici," "I have conquered"? He wrestled with God in prayer, and then he felt that all else that he had to wrestle with was just nothing: if he had overcome heaven by prayer, he could overcome earth, and death, and hell. Strong faith doth all this, and goes on to do more.

She has extraordinary reverence for God; but she has a wonderful familiarity with him. If you were to hear what strong faith has sometimes dared to say to God, you would think it profane; and profane it would be from any lips but hers. But when God indulges her to know the secret of the Lord, which is with them that fear him, and when he says, "Ask what thou wilt, and it shall be done unto thee," she has a blessed liberty with God, which is to be commended, and not

forbidden. If the Son make you free in prayer, you shall be free indeed. Strong faith is ever on the winning side. It wears the keys of heaven at its girdle. The Lord can deny nothing to the pleadings of an unstaggering faith.

I commend strong faith, because *Jesus, our Lord, was delighted with it.* What music there was in his words, "O woman, great is thy faith"! There was no smile on his face when he said to Peter, "O thou of little faith": it grieved him that his follower should have such little faith in him. But now it gladdened him that this poor woman had such splendid faith. He looks at her faith as jewellers do at some famous stone worth more than they can tell. "O woman," said he, "great is thy faith. I am charmed with thy faith. I am amazed at thy faith. I am delighted with thy faith." Well, brethren, you and I long to do something to please our Redeemer. I know we have often cried, "Oh, what shall I do my Saviour to praise?" Believe him then. Believe his promise without doubt. Believe him greatly. Believe him unstaggeringly. Believe him to the full, and go on in faith till there seems to be nothing further to believe. Believe evermore in Christ Jesus.

How enriched that woman became! She had pleased her Lord, and then her Lord pleased her: "Be it unto thee even as thou wilt." She went away the happiest woman under the skies. God had given her her desire, and she was over-glad and ever glad.

What benefits we could confer upon others if we had strong faith! Her daughter was made whole. Mother, if thou hadst more faith, thy child would soon be brought to Jesus. Father, if thou hadst more faith, thy boy would not be such a plague to thee as he now is. Have more faith in thy God; and when thou dost treat thy Father better, thy children shall treat thee better. If thou wilt dishonour thy God by doubting him, do you wonder your children dishonour you by disobeying you? O preacher, if thou hadst more faith, thou wouldest have more converts! Sunday-school teacher, if thou hadst more faith, more children would be brought to the Saviour out of thy class. "Lord, increase our faith"! I hope we are all saying that in our hearts at this moment.

I will conclude by asking: Is there not great reason why our faith in Christ should be strong? Is there not every reason why we should have the strongest faith in him? I told you, the other day, of John Hyatt, when he was dying. Someone said to him: "Mr. Hyatt, can you trust your soul with Christ now?" He said, "I would trust him with ten thousand souls, if I had them." We can go even further than that. If all the sins that men had committed since the world was made, and time began, were laid upon one poor sinner's head, that sinner would be justified in believing that Christ could take that sin away. Whosoever thou art, and whatever thou art, bring your burdens, and lay them at his feet, casting all your care upon him, for he careth for you; and henceforth may he never have to say to you, "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" Oh, may he often exclaim, with joy, of you, "O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt"! May the Holy Spirit bless these simple words of mine to your edification! Amen.