



Helps to Holiness

Chapter 14 – FAITH: THE GRACE AND THE GIFT

"Be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises" (Heb. vi. 12).

"Without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him" (Heb. xi. 6).

"Ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry" (Heb. x. 36, 37).

There is an important difference between the grace of faith and the gift of faith, and I fear that a failure to note this difference and to act accordingly has led many people into darkness, and possibly some have even been led to cast away all faith and to plunge into the black night of skepticism.

The grace of faith is that which is given to every man to work with, and by which he can come to God.

The gift of faith is that which is bestowed upon us by the Holy Ghost, at the point where we have made free use of the grace of faith.

The man who is exercising the grace of faith, says: "I believe God will bless me," and he seeks God with his whole heart. He prays secretly and publicly. He searches the Bible to know God's will. He talks with Christians about the ways of God's dealings with the soul. He takes up every cross, and at last, when he has reached the limits of the grace of faith, God suddenly, by some word of Scripture, some testimony, some inward reasoning, bestows upon him the gift of faith, by which he is enabled to grasp the blessings he has been seeking, and then he no longer says: "I believe God will bless me," but he joyfully exclaims: "I believe God does bless me!" Then the



Holy Spirit witnesses that it is done, and he shouts for joy and declares: "I know God blesses me!" and then he would not thank an angel to tell him that it is done, for he knows it is done, and neither men nor devils can rob him of his assurance. Indeed, what I have here called the gift of faith might be called, and probably is by some, the assurance of faith. However, it is not the name but the fact that is important.

Now the danger lies in claiming the gift of faith before having fully exercised the grace of faith. For instance, a man is seeking the blessing of a clean heart. He says: "I believe there is such a blessing, and I believe God will give it to me." Now, believing this, he should at once seek it from God, and if he perseveres in seeking, he will surely find. But if some one comes up and gets him to claim it before he has by the grace of faith fought his way through the doubts and difficulties he has to meet, and before God has bestowed upon him the gift of faith, he will probably drift along for a few days or weeks and then fall back, and probably come to the conclusion that there is no such blessing as a clean heart. He should be warned, instructed, exhorted and encouraged to seek till he gets the assurance.

Or suppose he is sick, and he says: "There are some people who have been sick, and God has healed them, and I believe He will heal me." Having this faith, he should seek this healing from God. But if someone persuades him to claim healing before he has, by the grace of faith, worked his way through the difficulties that oppose him, and before God has bestowed upon him the gift of faith by which he receives the healing, he will probably crawl out of bed for a short time, find out he is not healed, get discouraged and, maybe, call God a liar, or possibly declare that there is no God, and cast away all confidence for ever.

Or, again, suppose he is an officer or a minister and his heart is set on seeing souls saved, and he reasons with himself that it is God's will to save souls. Then he declares: "I am going to believe for twenty souls tonight"; but night comes, and twenty souls are not saved. Then he wonders what was the matter, the devil tempts him, and he gets into doubt and, probably, is at last landed into skepticism.



What was the trouble? Why, he said he was going to believe before he had earnestly and intelligently wrestled and pleaded with God in prayer, and listened for God's voice till God wrought in him the assurance that twenty souls should be saved. "God is ... a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him."

"But," says someone, "should we not urge seekers to believe that God does the work"?

Yes, if you are certain that they have sought Him with all their hearts. If you feel sure they have exercised the grace of faith fully and yielded all, then urge them tenderly and earnestly to trust Jesus; but if you are not sure of this, beware of urging them to claim a blessing God has not given them. Only the Holy Ghost knows when a man is ready to receive the gift of God, and He will notify that man when he is to be blessed. So, beware not to attempt to do the work of the Holy Ghost yourself. If you help seekers too much, they may die on your hands. But if you walk closely with God in a spirit of humility and prayer, He will reveal to you the right word to say that will help them through.

Again, let no one suppose that the grace of faith will necessarily have to be exercised a long time before God gives the assurance. You may get the blessing almost at once, if you urge your claim with a perfect heart, fervently, without any doubt, and without any impatience toward God. But, as the prophet says, "Though it (the vision) tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry" (Hab. ii. 3). "Yet a little while, and He will come; He will not tarry." If the blessing should tarry, do not think because it is delayed that, therefore, it is denied; but, like the Syro-phenician woman (Mark vii. 26) who came to Jesus, press your claim in all meekness and lowliness of heart, with undaunted faith. He will in love soon say to you: "O man, O woman, great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt."