

## **THROUGH NIGHT TO MORNING**

by

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### **SERMON FOUR -**

#### **GOOD CHEER FOR LITTLE FAITH**

**"Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief"** (Mark 9:24).

THOSE of you who have seen the "Transfiguration" of Raphael, were doubtless struck with what seemed to be a mistake on the part of the artist. CHRIST, with the Apostles, is on the mount, and at the same time a group of bewildered disciples, with the distressed father and the maniac son, are at the foot of the mountain. The two scenes were about twenty-four hours apart, and the distance was too great to see from one to the other; and yet Raphael has expressed his thought.

He wished to place in contrast the glory of the Transfiguration and that scene of suffering, bewilderment and unbelief. Our Mounts of Transfiguration are close to our Gethsemanes. Often the time of victory is near the time of defeat; victory to-day, defeat to-morrow.

Weak faith struggling out into victory is the thought of the text and context, and it is my purpose to speak, first, on the Test of Faith, and, secondly, on the Power of Little Faith.

It is a comfort to know what little faith has done, and that other people famed for usefulness sometimes have little faith. It comforts us to find weak faith in others who have been blessed. We see ourselves reflected in them; if they came out all right, doubtless, we shall too.

#### **THE TESTING OF LITTLE FAITH**

This father's weak faith was tested, first of all, by the scepticism of open opponents. The scribes were asking the disciples hard questions. Every question was a dagger.

They had failed to cast out the devil; and whenever a Christian fails to do something he ought to do, depend upon it, the world will ply him with questions. The disciples were put to shame by the scribes in the presence of the multitude.

Little faith was tested, again, by the weakness of the disciples. Theirs was weakness where there ought to have been strength. The father had brought his maniac boy believing that the disciples could cast out the devil. They had tried and failed. And when a man finds weakness in a Church where he expects strength, he is apt to turn away in disgust. The Church cannot afford to be weak; it cannot afford not to cast out devils. A weak Church is a standing argument against Christianity. When souls are not converted, and Christians are not built up, when the powers of evil are not made to tremble and crumble, it is a standing argument against the Gospel.

His weak faith was also tested by the conditions JESUS imposed. He was conscious that he had not much faith, and now JESUS said, "**All things are possible to him that believeth.**" His little faith said, Lord, "**if Thou canst.**" But JESUS replied, "**If thou canst!**" "The condition is not upon Me, but upon you. I have the power to do it; what you need is to fulfil the condition; and, unless you have faith, it cannot be done."

The weakness of the disciples was caused by their lack of faith. The great principle that JESUS drew from their failure we ought never to forget: "**This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer.**" Their failure was in their lack of faith, and now JESUS imposes on this man the condition of implicit trust: "**All things are possible to him that believeth.**"

Little faith is just strong enough to pray, "**Help Thou mine unbelief.**" Thank GOD when you have faith enough to pray for faith. It is not of the heroic kind; it is not the kind that attracts the attention of angels and causes men to wonder, as CHRIST wondered at the faith of the centurion; but if you have faith enough to pray for faith, it is encouraging.

But faith was further tested by the obstacles increasing. Doubtless it was a good day with his boy yesterday. "To-day our boy feels better, and I will take him to the CHRIST," the father said to his wife that morning. In the excitement of the occasion the attack of epilepsy comes on, the boy falls and wallows, foaming at the mouth. The father stands there in despair, while the child gets worse instead of better. The presence of these unbelieving disciples just seems to stir the demon within him; and when he comes into the presence of JESUS and JESUS speaks the word, it does not cure him, but strikes him down as dead. Often that is the case.

The obstacles grow greater and greater. Nevertheless, the father prays, Lord, "**have compassion on us, and help us.**" He had enough faith to say "**Lord.**" When little faith can crown JESUS CHRIST as Lord, it is mighty.

Put yourself under the mastery of CHRIST and little faith will do more than great instrumentalities.

### **THE POWER OF LITTLE FAITH**

Little faith had power to come to JESUS, power to turn from sources of failure to a higher source of strength, power to give up the help that the disciples might bring, and go where help is certain. I know a few people whose faith has been wrecked because they would not turn from some Christians in whom they had lost confidence. They could not turn from them to JESUS.

My dear friend, if the Church is not what you think it ought to be, come directly to CHRIST. If Christians do not live as you think they ought to live, turn from them to JESUS. If you have been trying to get CHRIST to save your boy, or your friend, and seeking through the Church that help which never comes, do not let your faith be wrecked; turn from human sources unto JESUS CHRIST who can help you. This father turned to CHRIST with his boy, - and JESUS said, "**Bring him unto Me.**" I can see the father going for the son, taking him by the hand, and leading him to JESUS. The next step you need to take is to bring your loved one to JESUS. Bring the burden of your soul to Him and say, "Lord, I don't know how to pray; I don't

understand much about theology, and the Bible is a mysterious Book to me, but I have a broken heart. I just throw myself at Thy feet; Lord, MASTER, give me the desire of my soul."

The father stood by and quietly listened to the voice of CHRIST. CHRIST said to the demon, **"Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him."** And then it tore him. The time of liberty may be just after the time of greatest thralldom. The darkest hour may be just before day, and even when our friends are getting worse, it may indicate that GOD has some great blessing in store for them. The devil is doing what he can to tear them; he knows the time of deliverance is near. If the father could have looked a little ahead, and anticipated what JESUS was going to do, the very suffering of his boy might have made him joyful, because it would have indicated that the power which made him suffer was going to be overcome, and JESUS CHRIST would be Conqueror.

The word of CHRIST has a potency that the devil cannot overcome, and little faith believing the word of CHRIST has great power.

An earnest city missionary in New York was passing through the tram-cars going down to Fulton Ferry, distributing a little card:

"When tempted, when in despair, when sick, when dying, look to JESUS."

One of these cards fell into the hands of a passenger on the car, who read it. As the man who gave it to him started out of the car, the passenger followed and said, "Friend, let me speak a word to you. I have just buried my wife and two children, and I have been unfortunate in business. Life is a blank to me; it is as dark as midnight. I was on my way to Fulton Ferry, thinking I would end it all down there in the river; but that little card you put on my lap has given me hope."

Little faith, just born, had gained the victory through CHRIST.

One of the leading anarchists in Paris took sick and went to the McCall dispensary for medicine. The physicians in charge learned who he was. One day the physician said to a friend, "We are doing that fellow's body some good. Cannot GOD save him?" Then two or three Christian men and women came together for prayer and asked the Lord to help them say a word that would save that anarchist.

He was a man who had been banished from Paris; and coming back under police surveillance, was allowed to live there on condition that he would show himself in a certain place once every twenty-four hours. The police kept a watch upon him constantly. The next day, in giving the medicine, one of the physicians spoke to him about CHRIST the Saviour, and was surprised to see his hardened face grow serious. The anarchist made no reply, but was invited to return. When it was found that he was approachable, the physician made an appointment and had quite a long conversation with him, in which he urged upon him JESUS CHRIST as the sinner's friend.

That man became a missionary in the city of Paris. He sometimes stands before his former friends and preaches to them JESUS, while they curse and laugh and shake their fists in his face; but humbly and patiently he works on. Through the physicians of the dispensary the ban of the

police was removed and he was given liberty. Ah, friend, GOD can do it. JESUS CHRIST through His word and even little faith can accomplish wonders, and if little faith can do so much, what can great faith do? Trust in CHRIST without a tremor; believe in His power and love without an interrogation point.

This brings me to say, finally, that the result of little faith, exercised and followed, is often very great joy. There was not much joy, I think, to those disciples. They came and said, "**Why could not we cast him out?**" "**This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer,**" replied JESUS. "You disciples were feeling rather strong in yourselves, you did not keep your eye upon me; you got out of contact with the source of power; you failed to trust GOD and ask Him to help you; My Name had become a sort of magic word to you, and you thought that just the pronouncing of that Name would cast out the devil; you lost hold upon Omnipotence. You were weak because you were too strong. You were helpless because you failed to realize your helplessness."

The curtain drops. Between the lines GOD sometimes writes as large as in the letter. Can you picture the scene as that father goes home with his once lunatic boy, now cured? The boy afflicted from childhood, falling into the fire and into the water, the care of the mother and all the family at home, now walking by his father's side in perfect health.

He says, "Father, I feel so different, I have no symptoms of disease. My nerves are all restored. I am a new man. JESUS CHRIST did it. Oh, what a Saviour! What a GOD He is!" And that night around the family altar how the voice trembled in prayer and praise. A happy home. Discord there before, now music; bitterness there once, now sweetness; a sort of pandemonium once, now a little vestibule of Heaven. That is what JESUS loved to do. He can turn a hell into Heaven. He can take a heart as black as ink and make it whiter than snow. Ask Him to do it for your friends. Little faith shall conquer. Let little faith pray for itself - let little faith accept CHRIST as Lord; let little faith persist, and the blessing will certainly come.

~ end of chapter 4 ~

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