

A MAN'S FAITH

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I. HOW TO OBTAIN FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST

WHAT most men want is knowledge, but I am speaking of faith, though, if I am not mistaken, there is little outside the science of numbers that is not really faith. We eat, sleep, work, and do everything by faith. The clearest idea I have of it I get from the letter to the Hebrews. It is something which makes a man give "substance to things hoped for." It is the kind of trust that makes one put his bottom dollar into a scheme. It is not mere intellectual assent. It is that particular motive power which makes a man give himself and everything he has to follow Jesus.

The first thought that rises to one's mind is that this is palpably a silly thing to do, that it is an act of superstition or credulity to act so unreservedly on an hypothesis. This keeps many men from taking the step. Yet the world is run by faith in premises, and success is won in every branch in proportion as men act, and act most promptly on their faith. This hindrance to faith, therefore, is a false one. I believe, with Paul, that ours is a perfectly reasonable faith. In things material, in things intellectual, in things spiritual, faith is the

power every time that buoys men up, and makes them float on the top in life's ocean. That is why young men are the successful heads of so many of the largest business concerns in the world. They will venture more on faith than the old fellows, who either "think they know," or "want to know more before," and by that time the chance has gone by.

WHAT SCIENTISTS AND STATESMEN RELY ON

Through faith men of science became Newtons, Faradays, Darwins, Fultons, Marconis. Men like these have faith in theories and confirm them by achievement and experiment. According to Paul, that is how Abraham and men like him did many things worth doing. Certainly Washington and Lincoln, Gordon and Livingston, Luther and Garibaldi, and such men of action, were primarily men of faith. Above all else Jesus himself is the supreme example of a man of faith. Even on his cross he was confident, when, as far as any one human could see, his faith in his success was absolutely unjustifiable. In every-day social life the same thing is true. The really loved in social life are those who have faith in others, and that even against odds. If the love of others and not their sham praise is the goal of social life, then faith again is the factor in its achievement.

Again, that which really succeeds cannot be altogether foolish. That which makes men do things is not to be sneered away because we do not altogether apprehend it. So in other departments of life, we can't deny what we don't understand, even if we want to. I have been

reading of the treatment of the adult criminals in Cleveland, and of the Juvenile Court of Denver. The idea of effecting the reform of the worst criminals and outcasts by removing all restraint from them and putting faith in them looked dangerously like credulity. But as a remedial element in punishment, which is the real object of all punishment, faith has proved itself far and away the most practical factor.

ITS TRANSFORMING TOUCH

These illustrations could be carried further. But I will satisfy myself by saying that simple faith in Christ as the Son of God seems to me to have been the father of action, and that in the right direction always. Its results have been obscured by the dilution of the simplicity of it. But the experience of the passing years clinches in my mind ever more firmly the conviction that nothing succeeds in transforming the individual like it. Nothing is so practical and potent a power as this faith for making bad men into good ones, and good men into more useful ones. "The life which I live," Paul said, "I live by faith in the Son of God," and I consider Paul lived a more useful life than any man of his time in inducing righteousness, joy, and peace into a moribund world, a triumphant life, a life I could consider a success, a life I should be only too glad to look back on or to take a record of with me wherever I go.

I do not forget, however, that not all men gauge success in the same way. Though if they stopped and thought more I believe they would

be much more unanimous on that point, and that then dollars would not loom quite so large. Therefore I consider my faith a practical thing, not a foolish one.

Nay, more, I own to considering it a desirable thing, and I presume I must thereby be content to write myself down a prejudiced witness henceforth. Yet I do not consider this a stultifying statement. I want to believe in Jesus Christ because I want to attain the ends I know such a faith insures. I consider faith, as Peter did, "a precious thing." I believe it can make me master of myself and of the world, as John did. I do not expect it to be based on the wisdom of to-day altogether. I believe with Paul that it is well based, "not on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God," which I see it exemplify. Where would it have been if based on the wisdom of Paul's day? As he most wisely said, "Our knowledge is incomplete." "It will be cast aside."

BOOKS YIELD TO LIFE

Books of miracles resulting from faith, even the New Testament itself, must, with the lapse of time lose ability to convince men of the value of that faith to-day amongst them, if they are unaccompanied by any evidence of its power to reproduce them. The preachers may spend ages proving the authenticity of the Gospels, but if I never saw and never heard of any manifestation of the power of faith in Jesus Christ, it would not make me believe. The preachers may prove faith in Christ made Simons into Peters, Sauls into Pauls, and Stephens into