

FAITH

III

Trust in the Guidance and Power of God

We began these meditations with a discussion of faith in its fundamental meaning, as the acceptance of the vicarious atonement wrought by our blessed Savior, when He became the substitute of all mankind in His suffering and by His death on the cross of Calvary. That is justifying or saving faith, when a person confesses, with all his heart: "I, a sinner, saved by grace." That faith is absolutely necessary if one wants to obtain salvation. Our Savior says: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." Mark 16:16. We raise our eyes to Him who died on the cross for the sins and guilt of the whole world, for "whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3:16.

But, as we found in our second meditation, saving faith is inseparably connected with the acceptance of Holy Writ as the inviolable truth given to us by the Lord. One may be ignorant of many portions of the Bible, but no man may reject any part of the Bible, not even one word, and still have faith, for Holy Scripture is the organic foundation of faith. To deny any statement of the Bible is the same as accusing the Lord of giving us falsehoods to believe, and such an insult would cut us off from Him who is the King of Truth who came into the world to bear witness of the truth and who tells us: "If ye continue in My Word, then are ye My disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." John 8:31, 32. Hence we may well sing, with Luther: "The Word they still shall let remain, nor any thanks have for it." The Word must remain inviolate, otherwise even our trust in the redemption wrought by our blessed Savior will not be standing on solid ground.

In the present meditation we shall

take another step in considering the meaning of the word "faith," for the Bible tells us that faith also has the meaning "trust in the power and guidance of God and of our blessed Redeemer."

Just how much Jesus was concerned about such trust in Him and in His care for those who are His own we see, first of all, from the way He dealt with His disciples when they plainly showed that they were lacking in the full trust of their Master. Even in the Sermon on the Mount the Lord chides His listeners: "If God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?" Matt. 6:30. And He used similar expressions during the storm on the sea: "Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?" Matt. 8:26. We might also consult Matt. 14:31; 16:8; Luke 12:28. We find also that "little faith" in the mouth of Jesus was equivalent to unbelief. This sometimes meant an actual lack of faith in any form, as in Matt. 13:58 and Mark 6:6. But in other cases it referred to the weakness of the disciples' trust in their Master and His power, as when He told them that they could not cast the devil out of the boy who was first brought to the disciples and then healed by Jesus and they wanted to know why they had failed: "Because of your unbelief." Matt. 17:20.

The very next words of the Savior show that He was not speaking about their lack of faith in Him as Savior (for they frequently showed that they believed Him to be the promised Messiah), but their weakness in not possessing enough trust in Him whose power to work miracles was almost constantly before their eyes. That this is the meaning appears from the statement which Jesus made in this connection: "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place, and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you." The evangelist Luke relates an incident in which the

apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith." "And the Lord said, If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you." Luke 17:5.6.

The trust to which Jesus referred is commonly known as heroic faith, and it may be well for Christians to follow the suggestion of the Master to cultivate such a trust in the power of God and of Jesus. Without Him we can indeed do nothing, John 15:5, but with Him and through Him we can do work in His kingdom that will surprise even ourselves. Phil. 4:13. The Lord has placed His almighty power at our disposal, and we are so lacking in this form of faith, that is, in trust in His promises and His power that we so frequently fail in our endeavors. We should often call to remembrance the unwavering trust of the three men who were cast into the fiery furnace, Dan. 3:16, 17, of the centurion of Capernaum, Matt. 8:10, and of the Syrophenician woman, Matt. 15:28. Such was also the faith and trust of some of the great men and women of history, as, for example, the martyr Blandina and her many companions in tribulation. Such was also the faith of Martin Luther, as he said, before starting out for Worms and that fateful diet, where he stood before the mightiest rulers of the world: "Though there were as many devils in Worms as tiles on the roofs, yet I should go there."

We need to develop more of this faith in our days, since we are often so fearful and timid. We need such faith in our own individual lives, so that we do not despair when the Lord puts us to a test. We should have the faith of Job, when he said: "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." Job 13:15. And we need heroic faith particularly in the work of the Church, in building the Lord's kingdom here on earth. He has given us the promise: "Behold, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world," Matt. 28:20, and therefore the

Poets Corner



Christmas Devotion, Enjoyment, Blessings

*Christmas! Day of SWEET DEVOTION
Spent beside the manger-bed,
Knowing that the Lord of heaven
There by Mary's love was fed;
On the hay where beasts were nourished
He laid down His kingly head.*

*Christmas! Day of CALM ENJOYMENT,
Of redemption and of peace,
Knowing that His incarnation
Joys insures that never cease,
That from all earth's tribulations
He will bring complete release.*

*Christmas! Day of SACRED BLESSINGS
In our Savior's bounteous grace,
For we see the Father bending
Down to us His loving face,
Knowing that we shall in heaven
Find our glorious resting-place.*

P. E. K.

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gates of hell shall not prevail against us. Our motto must be: Forward with Christ! P.E.K.