THE SEARCH FOR FAITH

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A SERMON
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BY C. H. SPURGEON
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"Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?"
Luke 18:8

IT is absolutely certain that God will hear the prayers of His people. From beneath the altar, souls cry unto Him day and night to vindicate the cause of Christ, the cause of truth and righteousness—and to cast down His adversary—these shall be answered speedily. Here on earth, scant though the supplication may be, yet there is a remnant according to the election of grace, who cease not to importune the Almighty God to make bare His arm, and display the majesty of His Word.

Though for wise and gracious purposes the answer to those prayers may be delayed, yet it is absolutely certain. Shall not God avenge His own elect, which cry day and night unto Him, though He keeps their case long in hand? Assuredly He will, for those prayers are inspired by the Spirit, who knows the mind of God. They are for the glory of God and of His Christ, and they are presented by our great High Priest.

Long-suffering keeps back the advent and the judgment for a while, for the Lord is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But He will not forever delay the long-expected end. The Lord Jesus Himself gives us this personal assurance, "I tell you that he will avenge them speedily."

No doubt remains when Jesus says, "I tell you." The Lord will come, and according to His own reckoning, He will come *quickly*. His reckoning is according to the chronology of heaven, and this the heirs of heaven ought gladly to accept—it is meet that we keep celestial time even now.

Brethren, let not your hearts fail you as to the ultimate issue of the present conflict. "The Lord shall reign for ever and ever. Hallelujah." The idols He shall utterly abolish. Antichrist shall be overthrown—like a millstone cast into the sea, it shall fall and be no more. The heathen shall be our Lord's inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth shall be His possession.

He must reign until all enemies shall be put under His feet. If the present contest should be continued century after century, be not weary. It is only long to your impatience. It is a short work to God. So grand a volume of the book as this, which contains the history of redemption, may well require a long time for its unrolling—and to such poor readers as we are the spelling of it out word by word may seem an endless task. But we shall yet come to its close, and then we shall find that, like the Book of Psalms, it ends in hallelujahs.

The matter to be questioned is not what God will do, but what men will do. Faithfulness is established in the very heavens—but what of faithfulness upon the earth? The part that God allots to us is that we believe His Word, for so shall we be established. It is the child's part to trust his father—it is the disciple's part to accept the teaching of his Master.

Alas! how little there is of it at this moment! Knowing the feebleness of the faith of those around Him, and foreseeing that future generations would partake of the same folly, the Savior gave utterance to this memorable question, "When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" God is faithful, but are men faithful? God is true, but do we believe Him? This is the point, and it is upon this that I shall speak this morning as the Holy Ghost shall help me.

I. I notice with regard to our text, first, that IT IS REMARKABLE IF WE CONSIDER THE PERSON MENTIONED AS SEARCHING FOR FAITH—"When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?"

When Jesus comes, He will look for precious faith. He has more regard for faith than for all else that earth can yield Him. Our returning Lord will care nothing for the treasures of the rich or the honors of the great. He will not look for the abilities we have manifested, nor the influence we have acquired—but He will look for our faith.

It is His glory that He is "believed on in the world," and to that He will have respect. This is the jewel for which He is searching. This heavenly merchantman counts faith to be the pearl of great price—faith is precious to Jesus as well as to us.

The last day will be occupied with a great scrutiny, and that scrutiny will be made upon the essential point—where is there faith, and where is there no faith? He that believes is saved. He that believes not is condemned. A search warrant will be issued for our houses and our hearts, and the inquiry will be—Where is your faith? Did you honor Christ by trusting His Word and His blood, or did you not? Did you glorify God by believing His revelation, and depending upon His promise, or did you not?

The fact that our Lord, at His coming, will seek for faith should cause us to think very highly of faith. It is no mere act of the intellect—it is a grace of the Holy Spirit which brings glory to God, and produces obedience in the heart.

Jesus looks for it because He is the proper object of it, and it is by means of it that His great end in His first advent is carried out. Dear hearers, conceive for a minute that our Savior is searching for faith right now. "His eyes behold, his eyelids try, the children of men." This is the gold He seeks after amid the quartz of our humanity. This is the object of His royal quest—"Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ?"

When our Lord comes and looks for faith, *He will do so in His most sympathetic character*. Our text says not, "When the Son of *God* cometh," but "When the *Son of man* cometh, will he find faith on the earth?" It is peculiarly as the Son of man that Jesus will sit as a refiner, to discover whether we have true faith or not.

He also as the Son of man displayed faith in God. In the epistle to the Hebrews, it is mentioned as one of the points in which He is made like unto His brethren, that He said, "I will put my trust in him." The life of Jesus was a life of faith—faith which cried, "My God, my God," even when He was forsaken.

His was, on a grander scale than ours, the battle of faith in the great Father, waged against all the rebellions influences which were in array against Him. He knows what fierce temptations men experience, for He has felt the same. He knows how want tries the faithful, and what faith is needed to be able to say, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God shall man live."

He knows how elevation tests the soul, for He once stood on the pinnacle of the temple, and heard the infernal whisper, "Cast thyself down: for he shall give his angels charge over thee." He knows what faith means in contradistinction to a false confidence which misreads the promise, and forgets the precept altogether.

He will not err in judgment, and accept brass for gold. He knows what it is to be tempted with the proffer of honor and gain—"All these things will I give thee," said the fiend, "if thou wilt fall down and worship me." He knows how faith puts all the glory of the world away with its one brave and prompt utterance, "Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve."

Beloved, when Jesus comes as the Son of man, He will recognize our weaknesses, He will remember our trials. He will know the struggle of our hearts, and the sorrow which an honest faith has cost us. He is best qualified to put the true price upon tried faith, self-denying faith, long-enduring faith. He will

discern between the men who presume and the men who believe—the men who dote upon vain delusions, and those who follow the plain path of God's own Word.

Further, I would have you note well that *the Son of man is the most likely person to discover faith if it is to be found*. Not a grain of faith exists in all the world except that which He has Himself created. If you have faith, my brother, the Lord has dealt with you—this is the mark of His hand upon you. By faith He has brought you out of your death in sin, and the natural darkness of your mind. "Thy faith hath saved thee," for it is the candlestick which holds the candle by which the chamber of your heart is enlightened.

Your God and Savior has put this faith in you. Now, if faith in every instance is our Lord's gift, He knows to whom He has given it. If it is the work of God, He knows where He has produced it, for He never forsakes the work of His own hands. If that faith be only as a grain of mustard seed, and if it be hidden away in the obscurest corner of the earth, yet the loving Jesus spies it out, for He has an intimate concern in it, since He is its Author and Finisher.

Our Lord is also the sustainer of faith, for faith is never independent of Him upon whom it relies. The greatest believer would not believe for another moment unless grace were constantly given him to keep the flame of faith burning.

Beloved friend, if you have had any experience of the inner life at all, you know that He that first made you live, must keep you alive, or else you will go back to your natural death. Since faith from day to day feeds at the table of Jesus, then *He* knows where it is. It is well for us that we have one looking for faith who, on account of His having created and sustained it, will be at no loss to discern it.

Besides, *faith always looks to Christ*. There is no faith in the world worth having, but what looks to Him, and through Him to God, for everything. On the other hand, Christ always looks to faith—there was never yet an eye of faith but what it met the eye of Christ. He delights in faith. It is His joy to be trusted. It is a great part of the reward of His death that the sons of men should come and shelter in Him. If faith looks to Christ and Christ looks to faith, He is sure to find it out when He comes—and that makes the text so very striking—"When the Son of man cometh, shall *he* find faith on the earth?"

The Son of man will give a wise and generous judgment in the matter. Some brethren judge so harshly that they would tread out the sparks of faith, but it is never so with our gracious Lord. He does not quench the smoking flax, nor despise the most trembling faith. The question becomes most emphatic when it is put thus—the tender and gentle Savior, who never judges too severely, when He comes, shall even He find faith on the earth?

What a sad and humbling question it is! He who is no morose critic but a kind interpreter of character, He who makes great allowances for feebleness, He that carries the lambs of faith in His bosom, and gently leads the weak ones—when even He shall come to make a kindly search, will He be able to find faith on the earth? Unbelief is rampant indeed, when He who is omniscient can scarcely find a grain of faith amid the mass of doubt and denial! Ah me! that ever I should have to explain the question, "When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?"

Once more—I want to put this question into a striking light by dwelling on *the time of the scrutiny*. "When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" Look you, brethren, the ages are accumulating proofs of the truth of Christianity—and the search takes place when this process has reached its climax.

Whatever may be said about the present torrent of doubt, which no doubt is exceedingly strong, yet the reason for doubt grows weaker and weaker every year. Every mound of earth in the East contributes a fresh testimony to the accuracy of the Word of God. Stones are crying out against the incredulity of skeptics.

Moreover, all the experiences of all the saints, year after year, are swelling the stream of testimony to the faithfulness of God. You that are growing grey in His service know how every year confirms your confidence in the eternal verities of your God and Savior. I know not how long this dispensation of long-suffering will last, but certainly the longer it continues, the more wantonly wicked does unbelief

become. The more God reveals Himself to man in ways of providence, the more base is it on man's part to belie His solemn witness.

But yet, my brethren, at the winding up of all things, when revelation shall have received its utmost confirmation, even then faith will be such a rarity on the earth that it is a question if the Lord Himself will find it.

You have, perhaps, a notion that faith will go on increasing in the world—that the church will grow purer and brighter—and that there will be a wonderful degree of faith among men in the day of our Lord's appearing. Our Savior does not tell us so—but He puts the question of our text about it. Even concerning the dawn of the golden age He asks, "When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?"

I want you to notice the breadth of *the region of search*. He does not say shall He find faith among philosophers. When had they any? He does not confine His scrutiny to an ordained ministry or a visible church—but He takes a wider sweep—"Shall He find faith *on the earth*?"

As if He would search from throne to cottage, among the learned and among the ignorant, among public men and obscure individuals, and after all, it would be a question whether among them all—from the pole to the equator and again, from the equator to the other pole—He would find faith at all. Alas, poor earth, to be so void of faith! Is there none in her vast continents, or on the lone islets of the sea? May it not be found in some of the countless ships upon the deep? What! Not upon the earth? Not with Jesus Himself to look for it?

I have tried to set forth the question as distinctly as I can, that it may have due effect upon your minds. It sounds through the chambers of my soul like the knell of many a grand hope and pleasant imagination. Lord, what is man, that centuries of mercy can scarcely produce a single fruit of faith among a whole world of the sons of Adam? When thousands of summers and autumns have come and gone, shall there be no harvest of faith upon the earth, except for a few ears of corn, thin and withered by the east wind?

II. Let us somewhat change the run of our thoughts. Having introduced the question as a remarkable one, we will next notice that IT IS EXCEEDINGLY INSTRUCTIVE IN CONNECTION WITH THE PARABLE OF WHICH IT IS PART.

It is wrong to use the Bible as if it were a box full of separate links, and not a chain of connected truth. Some pick sentences out of it as a crow picks worms out of a ploughed field. If you tear words from their connection, they may not express the mind of the Spirit at all. No book, whether written by God or man, will bear to be torn limb from limb without being horribly mutilated.

Public speakers know the unfairness of this to themselves, and Holy Scripture suffers even more. The connection settles the drift and directs us to the true meaning—a meaning which may be very different from that which it seems to bear when rent from its surroundings. Let us carefully note that this passage occurs in connection with the parable of the importunate widow pleading with the unjust judge, and therefore it is to be interpreted in connection with it.

Hence, it means, first of all—When the Son of man comes, shall He find upon the earth *the faith which prays importunately*, as this widow did? Now the meaning is dawning upon us. We have many upon the earth who pray, but where are those whose continual coming is sure to prevail? I thank God that the prayer meetings of this church are well-sustained by praying men and women, but where are the Jacob-like wrestlers?

I am afraid it cannot even be said of many churches that their prayer meetings are at all what they should be, for among many the gathering for prayer is despised, and men say, "It is only a prayer meeting!" As if that were not the very crown and queen of all the assemblies of the church, with the sole exception of that for the breaking of bread.

Brethren, I will not judge with severity, but where are those who offer effectual, fervent, much-prevailing prayer? I know that there are many here who do not neglect private and family devotion, and who pray constantly for the prosperity of the church of Jesus Christ, and for the salvation of souls. But

even to you I put the question—If the Son of man were now to come, how many would He find among us that pray with a distinct, vehement, irresistible importunity of faith?

In the olden days, there was a John Knox whose prayers were more terrible to the adversary than whole armies, because he pleaded in faith—but where shall we find a Knox at this hour? Every age of revival has had its men mighty in prayer—where are ours? Where is the Elias on the top of Carmel who will bring down the rain upon these parched fields? Where is the church that will pray down a Pentecost?

I will not decry my brethren in the ministry, nor speak little of deacons and elders, and other distinguished servants of my Lord—but still, my brothers and sisters, taking us all round, how few of us know what it is to pray the heaven-overcoming prayer which is needful for this crisis!

How few of us go again, and again, and again to God, with tears, and cries, and heart-break—pleading as for our own lives for the increase of Zion, and the saving of the ungodly! If the Son of man comes, will He find much of such praying faith among our own churches? Ah me! that I should have to ask such a question—but I do ask it—hanging my head for shame.

The importunate widow waited with strong resolve, and never ceased through sullen doubt. If the judge had not yet heard her, she was sure he must hear her, for she had made up her mind that she would plead until he did.

A waiting faith is rare. Men can believe for a time, but to hold out through the long darkness is another matter. Some soldiers are good at a rush, but they cannot form a square, and stand fast hour after hour. When the Son of man comes, shall he find many who can believe in a delaying God, and plead a long-dated promise—waiting, but never wearying?

When we have a revival, and everybody is crying, "Hosanna!" certain eager folk are sure to be in the front. But when the popular voice growls out its, "Crucify him!" where are they? Where are even Peter, and John, and the rest of the disciples? Go, learn to plead on when no answer comes, and to press on when repulsed—this is the test of faith.

It is so easy to be a believer when everybody believes. But to be a believer when nobody believes, and to be none the less a firm believer because nobody believes with you—this is the mark of the man valiant for truth, and loyal to Jesus.

Brethren, is it, after all, a matter of counting heads? Can you not dare to be in the right with two or three? Can you not be like rocks which defy the raging waves? Can you not let the billows of popular misbelief wash over you, and break and crash—and break and crash in vain? If these things move you, where is your faith? When the Son of man comes, how many shall He find on the earth whose faith stands not in men, but in the witness of God?

The widow staked her all upon the result of her pleading with the judge. She had not two strings to her bow—she had but one resort in her trouble—the judge must hear her. She would lose her little property, and her children would die of starvation, if he did not hear her. He must hear her. About that she had no two opinions.

What we want at the present moment is the man that believes God, and believes the Gospel, and believes Christ, and does not care two pins about anything else. We need those who will stake reputation, hope, and life itself upon the veracity of God, and the certainty of the everlasting Gospel. To such, the revelation of God is not one among many truths—it is the one and only saving truth.

Alas! we have nowadays to deal with foxes with holes to run to in case they are too closely hunted. Oh, to have done with all glory but glorying in the cross! For my part, I am content to be a fool if the old Gospel be folly. What is more, I am content to be lost if faith in the atoning sacrifice will not bring salvation. I am so sure about the whole matter, that if I were left alone in the world as the last believer in the doctrines of grace, I would not think of abandoning them, nor even toning them down to win a convert. My all is staked on the veracity of God. "Let God be true, but every man a liar."

"When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth," such as He deserves at our hands? Do we believe in Jesus practically, in matter-of-fact style? Is our faith fact, and not fiction? If we have

the truth of faith, have we the degree of faith which we might have? Just think of this—"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."

What does this mean? Brethren, are we not off the rails? Do we even know what faith means? I begin sometimes to question whether we believe at all. What signs follow our believing? When we think what wonders faith could have done. When we consider what marvels our Lord might have wrought among us if it had not been for our unbelief—are we not humiliated?

Have we ever cut ourselves clear of the hamper of self-trustfulness? Have we ever launched out into the deep in clear reliance upon the eternal God? Have we ever quitted the visible for the invisible? Have we clung to the naked promise of God, and rested upon the bare arm of omnipotence, which in and of itself is more than sufficient for the fulfillment of every promise?

O Lord, where are we? Where shall we find an oasis of faith amid this wilderness of doubt? Where shall we find an Abraham? Is not the question an instructive one when set in connection with the parable which teaches us the power of importunate prayer?

III. In the next place, our text seems to me to be SUGGESTIVE IN VIEW OF ITS VERY FORM.

It is put as a question—"When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" I think it warns us *not to dogmatize about what the latter days will be*. Jesus puts it as a question. Shall He find faith on the earth? If you say, "No," my dear friend, I shall be very much inclined to take the other side, and warmly plead the affirmative.

I remember how Elias said that he only was left, and yet the Lord had reserved unto Himself seven thousand men that had not bowed the knee to Baal. Nations that know not Christ shall run to Him, and the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts. I venture to hope that when the Son of man comes He will find faith on the earth—but if you vehemently assert that it will be so, I shall be driven to advance the negative side with much apprehension that it may prove true.

When our Lord was here before, He found little enough of faith. And He has distinctly told us that when He shall come the second time, men will be as they were in the days of Noah—"They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark." I am inclined to take neither side. Let it remain a question, as our Lord has put it.

This question leads us to much holy fear as to the matter of faith. If our gracious Lord raises the question, the question ought to be raised. They say that some of us are old fogies, because we are jealous for the Lord of Hosts. They say that we are nervous and fidgety, and that our fears are the result of advancing age.

Yes, at fifty-three I am supposed to be semi-imbecile with years. If I were of their way of thinking, I do not suppose that this would occur to them. We fall into a pessimism—I think that is the word they use—I do not know much about such terms.

Surely the Savior was not nervous. None will dare to accuse Him of foolish anxiety. But yet He puts it, "When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" As far as my observation goes, it is a question which might suggest itself to the most hopeful persons at this time, for *many processes are in vigorous action with tend to destroy faith*. The Scriptures are being criticized with a familiarity which shocks all reverence, and their very foundation is being assailed by persons who call themselves Christians. A chilling criticism has taken the place of a warm, childlike, loving confidence.

As one has truly said, "We have now a temple without a sanctuary." Mystery is discarded that reason may reign. Men have eaten of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil till they think themselves gods. Revealed truth is not now a doctrine to be believed, but a proposition to be discussed.

The loving woman at Jesus' feet is cast out to make room for the traitor kissing Christ's cheek. Like Belshazzar, our men of modern thought are drinking out of the vessels of JEHOVAH's sanctuary in honor of their own deities. The idea of child-like faith is scouted, and he is regarded as the most honest man that can doubt the most, and pour most contempt upon the authority of the divine Word.

If this continues, we may well ask, "When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" In some places the greatest fountain of infidelity is the Christian pulpit. If this is the case—and I am sure it is so—what must become of the churches, and what must come to the outlying world? Will Jesus find faith in the earth when He comes?

In addition to many processes which are in action to exterminate faith, *are there not influences which dwarf and stunt it?* Where do you find great faith? Where is the preaching or the teaching that is done in full faith in what is preached and taught? It is no use flogging other people—let us come home to ourselves.

My brothers and sisters, where is our own faith? It seemed almost a novelty in the church when it was stated long ago that Mr. George Mueller walked by faith in regard to temporal things. To feed children by faith in God was looked upon as a pious freak. We have come to a pretty pass, have we not, when God is not to be trusted about common things?

Abraham walked with God about daily life, but nowadays if you meet with a man who walks with God as to his business, trusts God as to every item and detail of his domestic affairs, persons look at him with a degree of suspicious wonder. They think he has grace in his heart, but they also suspect that he has a bee in his bonnet, or he would not act in that sort of way. Oh yes, we have a fancied faith—but when it comes to the stern realities of life—where is our faith?

My brethren, why are you so full of worldly care? Why are you so anxious, if you have faith in God? Why do you display in worldly things almost as much distrust as worldly men? Whence this fear? This murmuring? This worry? O my Savior, if You were to come, we could not defend ourselves for our wretched mistrust, our foolish apprehension, our want of loving reliance upon You.

We do not trust You as You ought to be trusted. And if this be the case among those who are such great debtors to Your loving faithfulness, where will You find faith on earth? Where is that unstaggering faith which betakes itself to prevailing prayer, and so rises above the petty miseries of the hour, and the fears of a threatening future?

Do you not think that this, put in a question as it is, *invites us to intense watchfulness over ourselves*? Do you not think it should set us scrutinizing ourselves as our Lord will scrutinize us when He comes? You have been looking for a great many things in yourself, my brother—let me entreat you to look to your faith.

What if love grow cold! I am sorry for it, but after all, the frost must have begun in your faith. You are not so active as you used to be. That is to be greatly regretted, but the streams run low because the well-head is not as full as it was wont to be—your faith is failing. Oh that your soul were fed upon divine realities! Oh that you had a vivid consciousness of the certainty of God's presence and power!

When faith is strong, all the other graces are vigorous. The branches flourish when the root sucks up abundant nutriment—and when faith is in a healthy state, all the rest of the spiritual man will be vigorous also. Brethren, guard well your faith.

My fear is that when Christ comes, if He delays much longer, He will find many of us faint because of our long waiting, and because of the disappointments which arise out of the slow spread of the Gospel. The nations continue in unbelief. O Lord, how long! Because we have not accomplished all that we hoped to have done, we are apt to grow weary.

Or perhaps when He comes, He will find us sleeping for sorrow, like the disciples in the garden when He came to them thrice, and found them very heavy. We may get to feel so sad that the Gospel does not conquer all mankind, that we may fall into a swoon of sadness, a torpor of despair, and so be asleep when the Bridegroom comes.

I fear, most of all, that when Jesus comes, He may find that the love of many has waxed cold because iniquity abounds. Warm-hearted saints keep each other warm, but cold is also contagious. When sin abounds, saints may be able to stand against it, and yet it has a sad tendency to chill their faith. If the Master comes and finds us lukewarm, it will be a calamity indeed. The question stirs a bitter anguish in my soul. I trust it moves you also.

It is a question. I cannot answer it, but I open wide the doors of my heart to let it enter and try me. It acts like a fan in the Lord's hand to purge the floor. It sweeps away my self-confidence, and leads me to watch and pray, that I enter not into the temptation of giving up my faith. I pray that we may stand fast when others slide, so that when the Lord comes, we may be found accepted of Him.

IV. I will close with this remark—my text is very IMPRESSIVE IN RESPECT TO PERSONAL DUTY.

"When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" Let faith have a home in *our* hearts, even if it is denied a lodging everywhere else. If *we* do not trust our Lord, and trust Him much more than we have ever done, we shall deserve His gravest displeasure. It will be a superfluity of naughtiness for us to doubt, for to some of us conversion was a clear, sharp, and distinct fact.

The change made in our characters was so manifest that the devil himself could not make us doubt it. We know that the misery we suffered under a sense of sin was no fiction, and that the peace we received through faith in Jesus was no dream. Wherefore do we doubt?

Since conversion, some of us have been led in a strange way, and every step of it has shown us that the Lord is good and true, and ought to be trusted without stint. We have been sorely sick, and full of pain, and anguish, and depression of spirit, and yet we have been upheld, and sustained, and brought through.

In great labors we have been strengthened. In great undertakings we have been supported. Some of you have been very poor, or your business has been declining, and emergencies have been frequent—and yet all these have proved the truth of God. Do not these things make it the more incumbent upon you to trust Him?

Others of you have suffered sad bereavements. You have lost, one after another, the props of your comfort. But when you have gone to God, He has heard your prayers, and been better to you than father, husband, or friend. It is down in your diary in black and white that His mercy endures forever, and you have said to yourself many times, "I shall never doubt again after this."

Brethren, it ought to be impossible for us to mistrust, and natural to confide. And yet I fear it is not so. If after all this watering, we grow so little faith, we may not wonder that our Lord said, "When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?"

Some of us have been so familiar with dying beds—we have seen so many pass away in holy calm, and even with transporting triumph—that for us to doubt is disrespect to the memories of the saints. For us to doubt would be treachery to the Lord who has favored ourselves also with visits of His love. We may doubt the dearest ones we have, and that would be cruel—but we had better do that than cast any suspicion upon Him who has manifested Himself to us as He does not to the world.

I speak not to you all, but I speak to those whom the Lord has specially favored, to whom He has revealed His secrets, and made known His covenant. For these to question His faithfulness is wickedness. What shall I say of His own elect, if they do not believe Him? If it were possible for you to quit your faith, you would crucify your Lord afresh. He must not be thus wounded in the house of His friends. No, go where you will, O unbelief, you shall not find willing lodgment in my heart. From my spirit you shall be banished as a detested traitor, for my Beloved is true, and I will lean upon Him.

I think I hear you say, "We are resolved upon it. We are called to have faith in our Lord, even if none else believe Him." Then look to it that you do not fail in these evil times. If you would keep your faith, settle it in your minds that the Holy Scriptures are inspired of the Holy Ghost, and so are our infallible rule of faith.

If you give up that foundation, you cannot exhibit faith worthy of the name. It is as clear as the sun in the heavens that a childlike faith in God as He is revealed is not possible to the man who doubts the revelation. You must accept the revelation as infallible, or you cannot unquestioningly believe in the God therein revealed.

If you once give up inspiration, the foundations are removed, and all building is laborious trifling. How are the promises the support of faith if they are themselves questionable? God can only be known by His own light, and if we cannot trust the light, where are we?

Next, settle it in your soul as to the Holy Spirit's dealings with yourself. He has renewed you in the spirit of your mind. At least, I ask the question—Has He or has He not? You were converted by a divine agency from your lost estate of sin, and brought by the same divine agency into newness of life—were you or were you not? Unless you are quite certain about this, it is not possible for you to rise to any height of faith. You must know that God has come into contact with your soul, or else what have you to believe?

Next to that belief, you must know your full pardon and sure justification through the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ your Lord. Believe in the precious blood. Whatever else you doubt, believe in the merit of the great sacrifice of Calvary. Rejoice in your own acceptance through the sacrifice, seeing your whole faith rests therein.

O brothers, our eternal hopes cannot be built on speculation—we need revelation. We cannot fight the battles of life with probabilities—we need certainties for such a conflict. If God has not revealed fixed truth, you may go and think and dream—but if He has given us a clear revelation, let us believe it and cease to imagine and invent.

O Sirs, if you must speculate, risk your silver and your gold, but I beseech you to lay aside all idea of speculating in reference to your souls. I need absolute certainties and unquestionable verities to bear me up when death's cold flood is rising up to my loins. Divine truths, as they are written in the Book, and brought home to the heart by the Holy Ghost, are sure standing ground for that faith which Jesus looks for. He looks for it in vain when men no longer accept His work as undoubted fact.

Again, if you would have strong faith, never relax your confidence in the efficacy of prayer. This is essential to my text, for the widow used no other weapon than prayer in her importunity with the judge. She would not have persevered as she did in her pleadings if she had not felt morally certain that in the long run she would prevail.

Brethren, believe that God hears your prayers, and that He will answer them. As for me, I do not need any argument to prove the influence of prayer with God. I have tried it, and do try it, till it is no longer an experiment. The man that habitually eats bread knows that he is nourished by it—the man that habitually lives by prayer to God knows that God hears him. It would be absurd to offer him evidence for or against the statement. If a person were to argue with me that there was no sun in the heavens, I am afraid I should laugh outright.

If anyone said that he did not believe me to be alive, I do not know in what way I could prove it to him. Would it be lawful to kick him, by way of argument? When a man says, "I do not believe in prayer," I answer, "What if you do not? You are the only loser." That God answers prayer is a living certainty to me, and I can say no more and no less.

If you do not believe in prayer, assuredly the Lord will not find in you the faith of which our text speaks. If you regard it as a pious exercise which refreshes the devout, but has no power whatever with God—well then, if all are of your mind, the Son of man will find no faith on the earth. Do not talk about believing—you know nothing of the matter.

If you do believe, believe up to the hilt. Plunge into this sea of holy confidence in God, and you shall find waters to swim in. He that believes what he believes shall see what he shall see. No man yet was ever yet found guilty of believing in God too much. Among the high intelligences of heaven, no creature was ever censured for being too credulous when dealing with the Word of the Most High.

Let us believe implicitly and explicitly. Let us believe without measure and without reserve. Let us hang our all upon the truth of God. Let us also aspire to walk with God in the heavenlies, and become the King's Remembrancers. Let us seek grace to become importunate pleaders of a sort that cannot be denied, since their faith overcomes heaven by prayer.

Oh, that I might have in my church many a prevailing Israel! Some here know what it is to be up early in the morning to besiege the throne of grace with all the power of believing prayer. How much I owe to these dear ones, eternity alone will declare. Oh, that we had many more intercessors who would bear sinners on their hearts day and night, before the Lord, and like their Savior, would never rest till the Lord built up His church!

Alas, for the rarity of such conquering faith! I question whether there are not Christian people here who have never heard a certain text which I am about to quote—and I am sure there are others who will shudder when they hear it—"Thus saith the LORD, concerning the work of my hands command ye me."

"Surely that cannot be Scripture!" cries one. But it is so. Turn to Isaiah 45:11, and read it both in the Authorized and the Revised Versions. Can a man command the Lord? Yes, to believing men He puts Himself at their call. He bids them command His help, and use it as they will.

Oh that we could rise to this! Is there such faith among us? If there is not, may our Lord Jesus, by His Spirit, work it in us for His own glory! Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
LUKE 17:20-37 AND 18:1-8

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—149, 12, 691

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.