

LUKE 17:5 -- Prayer for Faith – “Increase our faith”

6/11/16 Sat Morn Prayer

Luke 17:3-6 Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. [4] And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day returns to you, saying, 'I repent,' you shall forgive him." [5] **And the apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith."** [6] So the Lord said, "If you have faith as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, 'Be pulled up by the roots and be planted in the sea,' and it would obey you.

Context/Biblical Background – The occasion and reason the apostles said to the Lord “Increase our faith”, has been debated. The immediate context shows that in verses 3 & 4, Jesus is speaking of the importance of forgiveness. However, Jesus had on many occasions had spoken of faith. Up to this point, they must have realized, more and more, **the importance of faith and that more faith is highly desirable**. Notice that **Jesus had already made mention to the apostles of faith twelve times!**

Luk 5:20 When He saw their **faith**, He said to him, "Man, your sins are forgiven you." (4 men brought man)

Luk 7:9 When Jesus heard these things, He marveled at him, and turned around and said to the crowd that followed Him, "I say to you, I have not found such great **faith**, not even in Israel!" (Centurion requesting healing)

Luk 7:50 Then He said to the woman, "Your **faith** has saved you. Go in peace." (sinful woman at Simon's house)

Luk 8:25 But He said to them, "Where is your **faith**?" And they were afraid, and marveled, saying to one another, "Who can this be? For He commands even the winds and water, and they obey Him!"

Luk 8:48 And He said to her, "Daughter, be of good cheer; your **faith** has made you well. Go in peace." (12 yrs.)

Luk 9:41 Then Jesus answered and said, "O **faithless** and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you and bear with you? Bring your son here." (at foot of Mt. of Transfiguration)

Luk 12:28 If then God so clothes the grass, which today is in the field and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will He clothe you, O you of little **faith**? (to disciples – don't worry)

Luk 12:42 And the Lord said, "Who then is that **faithful** and wise steward, whom his master will make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of food in due season? (the faithful and the evil servants)

Luk 16:10 He who is **faithful** in what is least is **faithful** also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much. (parable of the unjust steward)

Luk 16:11 Therefore if you have not been **faithful** in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?

Luk 16:12 And if you have not been **faithful** in what is another man's, who will give you what is your own?

[5] And the apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith."

I. THE OBJECT OF THE APOSTLES' REQUEST. Their "faith."

- We ought to **be extremely careful** of our faith—**both of its rightness and of its strength**, first of all—**when we consider the position which faith occupies in salvation**. Faith is the salvation-grace. We are not saved by love; but **we are saved by grace, and we are saved by faith**. We are not saved by courage, we are not saved by patience; **but we are saved by faith**. That is to say, **God gives His salvation to faith and not to any other virtue**.
- **Be anxious about your faith, for all your graces hang upon it**. Faith is the root-grace: all other virtues and graces spring from it.
- **Take heed of your faith, because Christ thinks much of it**.
- **Take good care of your faith, for remember faith is the only way whereby you can obtain blessings**. It is said of Midas, that he had the power to turn everything into gold by the touch of his hand; and it is true of faith—it can turn everything into gold, but destroy faith, we have lost our all; we are miserably poor because we can hold no fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.
- **Take care of your faith perpetually, because of your enemies**; for if you do not want faith when you are with friends, you will require it when you have to deal with your foes. **Faith has quenched the violence of the flames, shut the mouths of lions, and out of weakness it has made us strong. It has overcome more enemies than the whole host of conquerors**. Tell me not of the victories of Wellington; mention not the battles of Napoleon; tell me of what faith has done! Oh! if we should erect a monument to the honor of faith, what various names should we carve on the mighty pedestal!
- For a sixth reason. **Take care of your faith, because otherwise you cannot well perform your duty**. **Faith is the foot of the soul by which it can march along the road of the commandments**. Love can make the feet move more swiftly, but faith is the foot which carries the soul. Faith is the oil enabling the

wheels of holy devotion and of earnest piety to move well, but without faith the wheels are taken from the chariot, and we drag along heavily. **With faith I can do all things, without faith I shall neither have the inclination nor the power to do anything in the service of God.**

- **Take care of your faith, my friends, for it is very often so weak that it demands all your attention.**

II. THE HEART'S DESIRE OF THE APOSTLES. They did not say, "Lord, keep our faith alive: Lord, sustain it as it is at present," but "Increase our faith," For they knew very well that it is **only by increase that the Christian keeps alive at all.** Napoleon once said, "I must fight battles, and I must win them; conquest has made me what I am, and conquest must maintain me." And it is so with the Christian. **It is not yesterday's battle that will save me to-day; I must be going onwards.**

- "Increase our faith" **in its extent**—the extent of what it will receive. Increase my faith and help me to believe a little more. I believe I have only just begun to learn the A B C of the Scriptures yet, and will constantly cry to the Lord, "Increase my faith," that I may know more and believe more, and understand Thy Word far better. "Increase my faith" in its extent.
- "Increase my faith" **in its intensity.** Faith needs to be increased in its power as well as in its extent. We do not wish to act as some do with a river, when they break the banks, to let it spread over the pasture, and so make it shallower; but we wish, while it increases in surface, that it may increase likewise in its depth.

III. THE PERSON TO WHOM THE APOSTLES ADDRESSED THEIR PRAYER. The Lord. They went to the right Person. **Let us do the same.** (C. H. Spurgeon.)

Several of my favorite "faith" scriptures:

- **Luk 18:8** *I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?"*
- **Rom 1:17** *For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "THE JUST SHALL LIVE BY FAITH."*
- **Rom 10:17** *So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*
- **2Co 13:5** *Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you are disqualified.*
- **Gal 3:2** *This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?—*
- **Eph 2:8** *For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God,*
- **Heb 11:6** *But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.*

SUMMARY:

- The apostles requested a great thing – the same need we all have – "Increase my faith!"
- We need to be extremely careful about our faith, because faith is salvation-grace and we are saved by it!
- All our grace hangs upon our faith! Christ thinks much of it; it is the only way we can obtain blessings; because of our enemies; we need it to perform what the Lord has for us; and it often is so weak, it demands all of our attention.
- It was the hearts' desire of the apostles.
- Their prayer for an increase in faith was directed to our Lord Jesus Christ!

My Faith Looks Up To Thee – Roy Palmer/Lowell Mason

1. My faith looks up to thee, Thou Lamb of Calvary, Savior divine!
Now hear me while I pray, take all my guilt away, O let me from this day be wholly thine!

2. May thy rich grace impart strength to my fainting heart, my zeal inspire!
As thou hast died for me, O may my love to thee pure, warm, and changeless be, a living fire!

3. While life's dark maze I tread, and griefs around me spread, be Thou my guide;
bid darkness turn to day, wipe sorrow's tears away, nor let me ever stray from Thee aside.

4. When ends life's transient dream, when death's cold, sullen stream shall o'er me roll;
blest Savior, then in love, fear and distrust remove; O bear me safe above, a ransomed soul!

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The New Park Street Pulpit



The Necessity of Increased Faith



A Sermon

(No. 32)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, July 1, 1855, by the

REV. C. H. Spurgeon

At New Park Street Chapel, Southwark.

"And the apostle said unto the Lord, increase our faith."—Luke 17:5.



VERILY IF THE APOSTLE said this, one and all of us had need take up the prayer. If the twelve mightiest in the army of the Lord of hosts had need of such a supplication, what shall we say who are but the interior soldiers—the feeblest saints? If ye hope to win the day, does it not well become us to pray, "Increase our faith?"

It is a matter of dispute as to the occasion when these words were uttered. Some think that we must look at the connection of the chapter for the explanation. Jesus Christ had been teaching his disciples that if their brother should trespass against them seven times a day, and seven times a day turned again to them, saying, I repent, they were to forgive him, and that constrained the apostle to say "increase our faith." They conceived it to be so hard a duty incessantly to pardon and constantly to forgive, that they felt unable to accomplish it without a large increase of faith. Others think—very possibly with greater truth—that the prayer was offered when the apostles endeavored to cast out the evil spirits from the poor demoniac and failed in the attempt. "And they said to Jesus, why could not we cast him out? And he said, verily, 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." Then they said to the Lord, "Increase our faith." However, whatever was the occasion in this particular instance we shall always find good enough occasion for presenting the prayer: and I know not but this morning may be a season when each of us may have special necessity

to put it up to God.

"Increase our faith." Proceeding at once to the subject, the first thing we shall consider is the object of their solicitude. It was their "faith." Secondly, the desire of their hearts—"Increase our faith." And then, thirdly the person on whom they trusted to strengthen their faith—"They said to the Lord, increase our faith."

I. First, then, **THE OBJECT OF THEIR SOLICITUDE WAS THEIR FAITH.** Faith is of the utmost importance to a Christian. There is nothing of which we should have a greater and a more earnest concern than our faith. I shall endeavor to show you this from seven or eight reasons, and may God press them to your have a real vital faith which unites us to the Lamb and brings salvation to our souls. hearts and send them so home, that every one of us may become deeply anxious as to whether we

1. We ought; my friends, to be extremely careful of our faith—both of its rightness and of its strength, First of all: when we consider the position which faith occupies in salvation. Faith is the salvation-grace. We are not saved by love; but we are saved by grace, and we are saved by faith. We are not saved by courage, we are not saved by patience; but we are saved by faith. That is to say, God gives his salvation to faith and not to any other virtue. It is nowhere written—he that loveth shall be saved. It is nowhere recorded—that a patient sinner shall be saved. But it is said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." Faith is the vital part of salvation. If a man lacks faith he lacks everything. "Without faith it is impossible to please God." If a man has true faith—however little he has of any other virtue—that man is secure. But supposing it possible for a man to possess every virtue in the world, let him be as much a Christian in his exterior; the apostle Paul himself; let him be as earnest as a seraph; let him be as diligent in the service of his Master as you could conceive even an angel on high to be, still "Without faith"—so God's Word declares—"it is impossible to please God." Faith is the saving grace—it is the connecting-link between the soul and Christ. Take that away and all is gone. Remove faith, you have sawn through the ship's keel, and she must sink. Take away faith, you have taken away my shield and I must be slain. Remove faith, and Christian life becomes a nonentity: it is extinct at once, for "the just shall live by faith:" and without faith how could they live at all? Consider then, that since faith is so important in salvation, it becomes each of us more earnestly to inquire whether we have faith or not? O, my brethren, there are a thousand shams in the world—a thousand imitations of faith; but there is only one true vital saving faith. There are scores of notional faiths—a faith which consists in holding a sound creed, a faith which bids men believe a lie, by wrapping them up with assurances of their safety, when they are still in the gall of bitterness and the bonds of iniquity, a faith which consists in presumptuously trusting to ourselves. There are scores of false faiths; but there is only one true one. Oh! as ye wish to be saved at last; as ye would not be self-deceived and go marching to damnation with your eyes shut, take your faith in your hand this morning and see whether it is genuine sterling coin. We ought to be more careful of our faith than of anything else. True, we ought to examine our conduct, we ought to search our works, we ought to try our love, but, above all, our faith: for if faith be wrong all is wrong; if faith be right, we may take that as the touchstone of our sincerity. "He that believeth on the Son of God hath eternal life abiding in him."

2. Secondly:—Be anxious about your faith, for all your graces hang upon it. Faith is the root-grace: all other virtues and graces spring from it, Tell me of love; how can I love him in whom I do not believe. If I do not believe that there is a God, and that he is the rewarder of all them that diligently seek him, how can I possibly love him? Tell me of patience: how can I exercise patience unless I have faith? For faith looks to the recompense of the reward: she says, that "all things are working together for our good," she believes that from our distresses the greater glory shall spring, and therefore she can endure. Tell me of courage: but who can have courage if he has not faith? Take what virtue you will, and you will see that it depends on faith. Faith is the silver thread upon which the pearls of the graces are to be strung. Break that, and you have broken the string—the pearls lie scattered on the ground, nor can you wear them for your own adornment. Faith is the mother of virtues. Faith is the fire which consumes the sacrifice. Faith is the water which nurtures the root. Faith is the sap which imparts vitality to all the branches. If you have not faith all your graces must die. And in proportion as your faith increases so will all your virtues, not all in the same proportion, but all in some degree. The man of little faith is the man of little love. The man of great faith is the man

of great affection. He that has great faith in God could give himself to die for God, but he who has little faith in him would shrink at the stake because his love would be feeble. Have care of your faith, for on that your virtue depends; and if you would cultivate things that are goodly, "things that are lovely, things that are of good repute," things that are honorable to yourself, and pleasing to God, guard well your faith, for on your faith all things must rest.

3. Thirdly:—Take heed of your faith, because Christ thinks much of it. There are three things in the New Testament which are called precious:—One of them, you know, is the precious blood of Christ; another is the exceeding great and precious promises; and faith has the honor of being the third thing—"To them that have obtained like precious faith." So that faith is one of God's three precious things. It is one of the things which he values above all others. I was astonished yesterday, when I met with an idea in an old divine, concerning the honor which God puts on faith: says he, "Christ takes the crown off his own head to put it on to faith's head." Mark you how often he says, "Thy faith hath saved thee." Now it is not faith that saves, it is Christ that saves. "Thy faith hath healed thee," says Christ. Now faith did not heal, it was Christ that healed, but Christ did uncrown himself to crown faith. He took the royal diadem of salvation from his own head and placed it on the brow of faith, and therein he made faith "the King of kings"—for it wears the crown which the King of kings alone can wear—"the crown of salvation." Do you not know that we read, "We are justified by faith." Now, in one sense this is not the fact, for the matter of justification is the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ. We are justified by Christ, but Christ arrays faith in his own royal garments, and renders it truly illustrious. Jesus Christ always puts faith in the seat of honor. When that poor woman came whose daughter was ill, he said, "O woman great is thy faith!" He might have said, "Woman, great is thy love" for it was great love that made her force her way through the crowd and speak on her daughter's behalf, or, "Great is thy patience," for when he called her "dog," she still stuck to him, and would not depart: or, he might have said, "Great is thy courage;" for she said, "Yet the dogs eat of the crumbs." Or, he might have said, "Great is thy wisdom;" for she was a wise woman to extract sweets out of the bitters, and to say, "Truth, Lord, but the dogs eat of the crumbs." But he overlooks all that, and says, "Great is thy faith." Well, if Christ thinks so much of faith ought we not to esteem it most highly. Is it possible to think too highly of that jewel which Christ reckons to be the most valuable? If he sets faith in the forefront of the forehead of virtue, and if he regards it as the choicest gem in the crown of the Christian, oh! will it not awaken us to see whether we have it or not? For if we have it we are rich—rich in faith and promises; but if we possess it not, whatever we have, we are poor—poor in this world, and poor in the next.

4. Next, Christian, take good care of thy faith, for recollect faith is the only way whereby thou canst obtain blessings. If we want blessings from God, nothing can fetch them down except faith. Prayer cannot draw down answers from God's throne except it is the earnest prayer of the man who believes. Faith is the ladder on which my soul must walk to ascend to heaven. If I break that ladder how can I ever approach my God? Faith is the angelic messenger between the soul and heaven. Let that angel be withdrawn, I can neither send prayer up nor receive the answers down. Faith is the telegraphic wire which links earth and heaven—on which God's blessings move so fast that before we call he answers, and while we are yet speaking he hears us. But if that telegraphic wire of faith be snapped, how can we receive the promise? Am I in trouble: I can obtain help for trouble by faith. Am I beaten about by the enemy: my soul on that dear refuge leans by faith. But, take faith away—in vain I call to God. There is no road betwixt my soul and heaven. In the deepest winter time faith is a road on which the horses of prayer may travel—ay, and all the better for the biting frost! But blockade the road, and how can we communicate with our great king? Faith links me with divinity. Faith clothes me with the robes of deity. Faith engages on my side the omnipotence of Jehovah. Faith gives me the might of God; for it ensures that power on my behalf. It gives me to defy the hosts of hell. It makes me march triumphant over the necks of my enemies. But without faith how can I receive anything of the Lord? Let not him that wavereth—who is like a wave of the sea—expect that he will receive anything of God! O then, Christians watch well thy faith; for with it thou canst win all things, however poor thou art, but without it thou canst obtain nothing. It is said of Midas, that he had the power to turn everything into gold by the touch of his hand; and it is true of faith—it can turn everything into gold; but destroy faith, we have lost our all; we are miserably poor, because we can hold no fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.

5. Next, my friends, take care of your faith perpetually, because of your enemies; for if you do not want faith when you are with friends, you will require it when you have to deal with your foes. That good old warrior, Paul, once led the Ephesians into the armoury and after he had shown them the shoes they were to wear, the girdle, the breast plate, the helmet, and the sword, he solemnly said, "Above all take the shield of faith." Even if you forget the helmet, be quite sure of the shield, for if your helmet should be off you may ward off a blow with the shield, and save it from your head. You had better put on the "shoes of peace and the breast-plate of righteousness," but if you omit one of them, take care that you have "the shield of faith, where with you shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one." Well, now, faith makes a man very mighty when he deals with enemies. If a man believes he is right, only taking it in a natural point of view—bring that man before princes and kings, for the sake of truth, how lion-like will he be! He will say, "I cannot yield, I must not, for I have the truth on my side." Ay, though others may style it dogged obstinacy, it is a true nobility of soul which bids a man declare, "I will not yield." Much more strong is true spiritual faith; it has taken the martyr to the stake, and enabled him to sing when the flames have girdled him. It has led another to the sea; and like him of whom we read in the old martyrologies, it has helped even the aged matron to cry, "Christ is all yet." Faith has quenched the violence of the flames, shut the mouth of lions, and out of weakness it has made us strong. It has overcome more enemies than the whole host of conquerors. Tell me not of the victories of Wellington; mention not the battles of Napoleon; tell me of what faith has done! Oh! if we should erect a monument to the honor of faith, what various names should we carve upon the mighty pedestal! We should inscribe, here "The lion's den," there, "The battle of the leopards;" or, here, we should have recorded how faith divided the Red Sea; and there, how faith smote the Midianites; and there, how Jael slew Sisera by faith. What conflicts of faith should we have to engrave? O, faith! thy banner high shall wave! Thine escutcheon is most glorious! Great art thou and full of victories! With thee, O faith, I cast the gauntlet to the world, secure of victory. Give me a child to fight with, and without faith—like poor Peter before the little maid, I should tremble and deny my Master. But that same Peter, with faith, fears not to stand before a frowning sanhedrim; to speak of his Master amid the scoffings of the high priests. Mary, Queen of Scots, said she was "more afraid of John Knox's prayers and faith than she was of an army of ten thousand men," and a sensible enemy may well tremble when such invincibles are at war with him. I should not like to have a man of faith opposing me. Tell me the world hates me, and I will rejoice at it; but tell me that a man of faith has determined to crush me, and I have need to tremble then, for there is a potency in that man's arm; his blows strike hard; and, when he does smite, he smites home, as with a rod of iron. Tremble, ye foes of God, for faith must overcome. And O ye servants of the living God, guard well your faith, for by this shall ye be victorious; and shall stand like rocks, unmoved amid the storms, unshaken by the tempests of persecution.

6. And now for a sixth reason. Take care of your faith, because otherwise you cannot well perform your duty. Faith is the foot of the soul by which it can march along the road of the commandments. Love can make the feet move more swiftly; but faith is the foot which carries the soul. Faith is the oil enabling the wheels of holy devotion and of earnest piety to move well; but without faith the wheels are taken from the chariot and we drag along heavily. With faith I can do all things; without faith I shall neither have the inclination nor the power to do anything in the service of God. If you would find the men who serve God the best, you will find them the men of the most faith. Little faith will save a man, but little faith cannot do great things. Poor Little Faith could not have fought "Apollyon." No, it wanted "Christian" to do that. Poor Little Faith could not have slain "Giant Despair;" it required "Greatheart's" arm to knock that monster down. Little faith can get to heaven very surely, but it often has to run and hide itself in a nutshell; and to lose all but its jewels. If there are great battles and great works to do, there must be great faith. Assurance can carry mountains on its back; little faith stumbles at a mole-hill. Great faith, like Behemoth, can "snuff" up Jordan at a draught: little faith is drowned in a drop of rain: it beginneth to think of going back at the slightest trouble. Great faith can build temples; she can pile castles; she can preach the gospel; she can proclaim Christ's name before enemies; she can do all things; and if you would be great indeed, and serve your Master much, as I trust you will, you will seek increased faith! for by so doing you will be more diligent in duty. O ye active Christians, be full of faith! ye busy Christians, be sure to guard that I for once let that fall, what will ye do? As Sabbath-school teachers, as preachers, as visitors of the

sick, or whatever ye have to do, rest assured that faith must be your strength and confidence. If that fails, where are you then?

Again: take care of your faith; for only faith can comfort you in your troubles. Ay, say some, this is about all we think of, the uses of faith to console us in our troubles. Now I never like to laugh at God's people because they desire comfort. I believe that it is a very great proof that they are children that they like sweet things. If they did not, I should fear they were not God's children at all. But I hear ministers saying, "Ah, you are always saying you want comfort, you want comfort." Ay, to be sure, I say, they do; and they want it because they never get it from you, sir. I believe God's people do need comfort, though, it is true, they want too much of it when they ought not to have it. But they require a promise very often, and they ought to have it. Now faith is the best cordial to the soul. O, how faith will realize a promise at a time when there is great trouble coming! "Ah!" says faith, "God says, 'As thy days so shall thy strength be.' "Ah!" says faith, "it is a rough road; the thorns are sharp; the flints are strewn about it, but then; thy shoes shall be iron and brass," and faith looks at the strong old shoes, and say, "I will even venture," and off she goes. Little faith sits murmuring in a corner; great faith is singing in the fire. "They shall praise him aloud in their beds, they shall sing his high praise in the fire." Little faith stands desponding, mingling her tears with the flood. Great faith says, "When thou passest through the river, I will be with thee, the flood shall not overflow thee; when thou passest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flames kindle upon thee." Would you be comfortable and happy? Would you enjoy religion? Would you have the religion of cheerfulness and not that of gloom? Then seek more faith. You will be saved with ever so little faith, but you will not be saved happily. You will be happy hereafter if you believe in the slightest degree; but you will not be happy here unless you fully, habitually, and earnestly believe—believe strongly in the faithful promises of Jehovah, in all the glorious dignity of his person, and in all the faithfulness and immutability of his grace. If ye would be Christian larks, and not Christian owls, seek to have more faith. If ye love darkness, and would fly about in it in gloom and misery, then be content with little faith. But if ye would mount in sunshine, and carol like the bird of day, then seek strong confidence.

One more reason. Take care of your faith, my friends; for it's very often so weak, that it demands all your attention. I do not know whether any of you feel that your faith is too strong; but I never feel mine strong enough. It seems to be exactly strong enough to bear the day's troubles, but it would not stand cutting in the least degree with the plane. I could not afford to take the least atom off; it is just enough, and no more. As for some of us, our faith is so weak that the least trouble threatens to devour it. The goat passes and nips its tender shoot, the winter chills and freezes it; it is almost ready to die. And my faith very often hangs upon the feeblest thread; it appears ready to expire. Take care of your faith, Christian take care of your faith whatever you leave out of doors of a night, do not leave that little child of faith, whatsoever plant is exposed to the frost, be sure to put faith within. Take care of faith, for it is so weak generally, it needs well to have a good preservation.

Thus have I tried, as well as I can, this morning, to set forth the great necessity of looking to our faith; and our prayer must be, as it was that of the apostles, "increase our faith."

II. This brings us, secondly, to consider THE HEART'S DESIRE OF THE APOSTLES.

"Increase our faith." They did not say, "Lord keep our faith alive: Lord sustain it as it is at present," but, "Increase our faith." For they knew very well that it is only by increase that the Christian keeps alive at all. Napoleon once said, "I must fight battles, and I must win them: conquest has made me what I am, and conquest must maintain me." And it is so with the Christian. It is not yesterday's battle that will save me to-day; I must be going onwards. A wheel will remain erect as long as it moves, but when it begins to stand still it falls. Christian men are saved by progress: constantly going onwards keeps the Christian alive. If it were possible for me to stop, I know not where my life would be. The Christian must be going onward; for the arrow will mount while still it is in progress, but it stalls the moment the power stops that keeps it aloft. So the apostle said unto the Lord, "increase our faith."

First: "Increase our faith," in its extent; the extent of what it will receive. Usually, when we commence the Christian life, faith does not grasp much; it only believes a few elementary doctrines. I find that many young converts have not gone much farther than believing that Jesus Christ died for sinners, by-and-bye they get a little advanced, and believe election; but there is something a little beyond that they do not receive, and it is not until after years that they believe the entire gospel. Some

of you, my hearers, and a great many that are not my hearers are miserable little cramped souls; you have learned a cast-iron creed, and you will never move out of it. A certain somebody drew up five or six doctrines, and said, "There are the doctrines of the Bible," and ye believe these, but you want to have your faith increased, for you do not believe a great deal more that is in the Bible. I do not think I differ from any of my hyper-calvinistic brethren in what I do believe, but I differ from them in what they do not believe. I do not believe any less than they do, but I believe a little more, and think, as we grow we shall have our belief increased; not only are there a few cardinal doctrines that will be enough to steer our ship by, north, south, east, or west, but we shall begin to learn something about the north-west and north-east, and that which lies between the four points. Many people, when they hear something a little contrary to what they have usually heard, say at once, "That is not sound." But who made you a judge of what is sound? And there are some little souls who set themselves up for princes in Israel, and think every man must believe as they believe, or else he is decidedly wrong, and will hold no Christian communication or fellowship with him. I am sure I may pray to the Lord for them—"Increase their faith!" Help them to believe a little more; help them to believe there may be Christian Wesleyans; that there are good Church people; and not only that particular Baptists are very good sort of people, but that there are some of God's elect everywhere. I am sure I pray for all bigots, that they may have a little wider heart. I should like to stretch their hearts a little. But, no, they have reached the ultima thule, they have come to the last of the fortunate islands, there cannot be any shore beyond. It is dangerous for a mariner to spread his sails on untried seas. "Hitherto," says pious Crisp, and therefore many fancy, "hitherto shalt thou go, and no further." Dr. Gill declares just so much, and who shall venture to say more; or perhaps Calvin is made the standard and what business has any man to think a single thought beyond Calvin? Blessed be God, we have gone a little beyond that; and we can say, "Increase our faith." With all our admiration for these great standard divines, we are not prepared to shut ourselves up in their little iron cages; but we say, "Open the door, and let me fly—let me still feel that I am at liberty. Increase my faith, and help me to believe a little more." I know I can say I have had an increase of faith in one or two respects within the last few months. I could not, for a long time, see anything like the Millenium in the Scriptures; I could not much rejoice in the Second Coming of Christ, though I did believe it; but gradually my faith began to open to that subject, and I find it now a part of my meat and drink, to be looking for, as well as hastening unto, the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. I believe I have only just begun to learn the A B C of the Scriptures yet, and will constantly cry to the Lord, "Increase my faith," that I may know more and believe more, and understand thy Word far better. "Increase my faith," in its extent.

Next, "Increase my faith," in its intensity. Faith needs to be increased in its power, as well as in its extent. We do not wish to act as some do with a river, when they break the banks, to let it spread over the pasture, and so make it shallower but we wish, while it increases in surface, that it may increase likewise in its depth. Increase "the intensity of our faith!" Faith at first takes God's mercy with an open palm: as it increases it holds it with his fingers, and not more firmly; but when faith grows strong, ah! she takes it, as with an iron vice, and grasps it, and not death nor hell could rend a promise from faith's hand when faith is strong. The young Christian at first is not constant in his faith a little wind comes, and he shakes, when he gets an old Christian he will take old Boreas, with fifty of his winds, to move him. Do you not feel, my dear friends, that you want faith to be increased in its intensity? Would you not sing with Watts:

"Oh! that I had a stronger faith,
To look within the veil;
To credit what my Saviour saith,
Whose word can never fail?"

Your poor little faith cannot see many yards before it, for there are clouds of darkness all around; but strong faith can climb the hill that is called "Clear," and from the top thereof can see the celestial city, and the land that is very far off. Oh! may God increase your faith to such a degree, that you may often have visions of heaven"—that you may sweetly sing, as Moses might have done at the top of

Pisgah,—

"Oh! the transporting rapturous scene
That rises to my sight.

Sweet fields arrayed in living green,
And rivers of delight."

That you may climb up there, bathe your eyes in splendor, plunge your soul in rivers of bliss, and be thoroughly transported and carried away by visions of that state of beatitude which shortly shall be yours, let me exhort you to cry to the Lord, "Increase my faith "in its power of realizing heaven and in every other way.

III. I have no time to dwell upon this, but must close up by very briefly mentioning THE PERSON TO WHOM THE APOSTLES ADDRESSED THEIR PRAYER. The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith!" They went to the right person. They did not say to themselves, "I will increase my faith," they did not cry to the minister, "Preach a comforting sermon, and increase my faith," they did not say, "I will read such-and-such a book, and that will increase my faith." No, they said to the Lord, "Increase our faith." Faiths author can alone increase it. I could inflate your faith till it turned into presumption, but I could not make it grow. It is God's work to feed faith, as well as to give it life at first; and if any of you desire to have a growing faith, go and take your burden this morning to God's throne, crying "Lord, increase our faith!"

If you feel that your troubles have been increased, go to the Lord, and say, "increase our faith!"

If your money is accumulating, go to the Lord, and say, "Increase our faith;" for you will want more faith as you get more prosperity.

If your property is diminishing, go to him, and say, "increase our faith," so that what you lose in one scale you may gain in the other.

Are you sickly and full; of pain this morning? Go to your Master, and say, "increase my faith," so that I may not be impatient, but be able to bear it well."

Are you tired and weary? Go and supplicate, "Increase our faith!"

Have you little faith? Take it to God, and he will turn it into great faith. There is no hot-house for growing tender plants in, like a house that is within the curtains—the tabernacle of God, where the Shekinah dwelleth.

I have been speaking in very great pain; but I would, if possible, close by asking you, who are Christians, whether you do not think this prayer very necessary to your own state. Let each one ask himself, Do not I want more faith? My brethren and sisters in the Lord Jesus Christ, rest assured, you will never get too much of this precious grace. If you pay all the way to heaven, you will never have a penny to spare when you get to heaven's gate, if you live on faith all your journey through, you will not have a pot of manna left. Pray, then, for an increase of faith. You want this church to stand, do you not? It can stand only in proportion as you are men of faith. I know I might exhort you to be men of prayer; but faith is the foundation stone; prayer comes next. Prayer without faith would be an empty mockery; it would win nothing of God. Do you want us to stand? Do you know how the world speaks of us—how the enthusiasm of the renting people of Park Street is talked of? How is it to be kept up, except through your faith. How shall your minister's hands be held up, except by your faith and your prayers? Let faith be the Aaron; let prayer be the Ur; and faith and prayer can hold up the hands of Moses, whilst the army below is fighting the enemy. Would ye be kept from falling? Ye must be strong in faith. Little faith falls, strong faith stands. Would ye win the day, and reign in heaven, with a starry crown more brilliant than you might otherwise expect? Then be ye increased in faith. And would ye honor God much, and enter heaven, after having fought a good fight and won a crown? Then I will offer the supplication, "increase the faith of my people," and put up the prayer, "increase my faith."

But there are some of you, dear friends, who could not use this petition, and dare not. What would it avail you if you did so? Seeing you have no faith, how could that be increased which has no existence. Rather, your first need is the possession of the simple germs of faith. Oh! my hearers, I marvel what some of you do without the comforts which faith can alone afford. Some of you are very poor people: how do you manage to endure your toils and troubles without faith? Where is your comfort? I do not wonder at your going to get drunk, or rioting in the ale-house, if you have no other comfort in this world. When I have penetrated some of our back streets and seen the poverty of the people, I have thought, "If these people have no religion, what have they to comfort them? They are not like the rich man, who can indulge himself in every way: what have they got in this world worth

living for?" I suppose they have some kind of happiness: what sort of a thing it is I cannot tell: it is to me a source of continual inquiry. And you rich men, what will you do without faith? You know that you must leave all your property behind you; surely this will make the idea of death dreadful to you. I cannot understand even your happiness, if you have any. I know this—that

"I would not change my blest estate
For all the earth calls good or great;
And while my faith can keep her hold,
I envy not the sinner's gold."

But I want to ask you what would you do in the next world without faith. Remember, you are standing now upon the edge of the vast gulf of an unknown future. Your soul stands quivering on the verge of the dark abyss; each time your pulse heats your soul is brought nearer to eternity. Faith gives wings to the soul; but what will you do without wings? There is a narrow gulf dividing earth from heaven; the Christian flaps his wings, and borne upon them, he flies to heaven; but what will you do without wings? It will be a leap—a leap into perdition, to sink for ever, without the power of ever recovering yourself. If a Christian could sink on his journey to heaven he would not sink far for he would flap his wings and be up again. But there you will be, perpetually descending through that pit that has no bottom—struggling to rise, but you cannot, for you have no wings. Once more, oh! unbeliever, what will you do without faith? For faith gives eyes to the soul; faith gives us to see things that are not seen: it is "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." The Christian, when he dies, will enter the land of death with his eyes open; by means of which, goodly hosts of angels shall cheer his vision; but you must die a blind and eyeless spirit. Unhappy is the lot of the blind in this present world, but how infinitely deplorable that eternal blindness which shall prevent a sight of the splendours of paradise, and shut out for ever even the feeblest ray of joy or hope. And, once more; faith is the hand of the soul. The Christian, when he dies, catches hold of Christ's garment, and Christ bears him into heaven. A bright angel descends,—I clasp that angel, and on his wings he wafts me up to bliss. But when the unbeliever dies the angel would have a useless errand, for he has no hands. Suppose, O sinner, Christ is there, but you cannot even touch his garments, for you have no hands to do it with. What will you do in the next world without hands? Do you think God will suffer such deformed souls in heaven, without hands and without eyes? No, not at all. But how could you get in without hands? You could not open the gates of heaven. What would you do? You would call on God for mercy; and if the mercy were held out to you, you have not hands with which to lay hold upon it. I do not understand how some of you are happy without religion, I do not know what you mean to do if you die without faith. Go home and think of what you will do if you die without religion; whether you intend to brazen it out before the face of the Eternal, or tamely to submit. Sinner! thou canst not enter into heaven without faith, but what hast thou made up thy mind to do?

Dost thou intend to rend down the gates of heaven?

Dost thou think thou hast omnipotence enough to force thy way through squadrons of cherubim and legions of angels, and so to enter by main force? Or what dost thou design to do?

Dost thou intend quietly to lie down in beds of sulphur?

Dost thou design to be willingly tossed perpetually in that brimstone lake where there is no bottom; where briny tears for ever fall? Will ye do that? Will ye make your bed in hell? Sirs, are you so besotted that ye are content with such a doom eternally? Is your reason clean gone? Are your senses so benighted that ye can thus cast yourselves away? Surely ye have resolved to do something. What, then, will ye do? Do you fancy that without faith you will enter heaven, when it is written, "Without faith it is impossible to please God?" And when God has said. "He that believeth not shall be damned," dost thou think thou canst reverse the decree? Wilt thou mount the throne of Jehovah, and forswear Jehovah's self? Wilt thou change his mandate and admit the unbeliever into heaven? No, thou canst not! Tremble, then, unbeliever, tremble; for there awaits thee nothing but "a fearful looking for of judgment and of fiery indignation." What will ye do in the swellings of Jordan, without faith to keep your heads above the waters? God give faith to those that have none; and as for others, may he increase their faith!