

Andrew Murray:

'Jesus, answering, said unto them, Have faith in God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that what He saith cometh to pass; he shall have it. Therefore I say unto you, All things whatsoever ye pray and ask for, believe that ye have received them, and ye shall have them.'—Mark xi. 22-24.

THE promise of answer to prayer which formed our yesterday's lesson is one of the most wonderful in all Scripture. In how many hearts it has raised the question: How ever can I attain the faith that knows that it receives all it asks?

It is this question our Lord would answer today. Ere He gave that wonderful promise to His disciples, He spoke another word, in which He points out where the faith in the answer to prayer takes its rise, and ever finds its strength. HAVE FAITH IN GOD: this word precedes the other, Have faith in the promise of an answer to prayer. The power to believe a promise depends entirely, but only, on faith in the promiser. Trust in the person begets trust in his word. It is only where we live and associate with God in personal, loving intercourse, where GOD HIMSELF is all to us, where our whole being is continually opened up and exposed to the mighty influences that are at work where His Holy Presence is revealed, that the capacity will be developed for believing that He gives whatsoever we ask.

This connection between faith in God and faith in His promise will become clear to us if we think what faith really is. It is often compared to the hand or the mouth, by which we take and appropriate what is offered to us. But it is of importance that we should understand that faith is also the ear by which I hear what is promised, the eye by which I see what is offered me. On this the power to take depends. I must hear the person who gives me the promise: the very tone of his voice gives me courage to believe. I must see him: in the light of his eye and countenance all fear as to my right to take passes away. The value of the promise depends on the promiser: it is on my knowledge of what the promiser is that faith in the promise depends.

It is for this reason that Jesus, ere He gives that wonderful prayer-promise, first says, 'HAVE FAITH IN GOD.' That is, let thine eye be open to the Living God, and gaze on Him, seeing Him who is Invisible. It is through the eye that I yield myself to the influence of what is before me; I just allow it to enter, to exert its influence, to leave its impression upon my mind. So believing God is just looking to God and what He is, allowing Him to reveal His presence, giving Him time and yielding the whole being to take in the full impression of what He is as God, the soul opened up to receive and rejoice in the overshadowing of His love. Yes, faith is the eye to which God shows what He is and does: through faith the light of His presence and the workings of His mighty power stream into the soul. As that which I see lives in me, so by faith God lives in me too.

And even so faith is also the ear through which the voice of God is always heard and intercourse with Him kept up. It is through the Holy Spirit the Father speaks to us; the Son is the Word, the substance of what God says; the Spirit is the living voice. This the child of God needs to lead and guide him; the secret voice from heaven must teach him, as it taught Jesus, what to say and what to do. An ear opened towards God, that is, a believing heart waiting on Him, to hear what He says, will hear Him speak. The words of God will not only be the words of a Book, but, proceeding from the mouth of God, they will be spirit and truth, life and power. They will bring in deed and living experience what are otherwise only thoughts. Through this opened ear the soul tarries under the influence of the life and power of God Himself. As the words I hear enter the mind and dwell and work there, so through faith God enters the heart, and dwells and works there.

When faith now is in full exercise as eye and ear, as the faculty of the soul by which we see and hear God, then it will be able to exercise its full power as hand and mouth, by which we appropriate God and His blessing. The power of reception will depend entirely on the power of spiritual perception. For this reason Jesus said, ere He gave the promise that God would answer believing prayer: 'HAVE FAITH IN GOD.' Faith is simply surrender: I yield myself to the impression the tidings I hear make on me. By faith I yield myself to the living God. His glory and love fill my heart, and have the mastery over my life. Faith is fellowship; I give myself up to the influence of the friend who makes me a promise, and become linked to him by it. And it is when we enter into this living fellowship with God Himself, in a faith that always sees and hears Him, that it becomes easy and natural to believe His promise as to prayer. Faith in the promise is the fruit of faith in the promiser: the prayer of faith is rooted in the life of faith. And in this way the faith that prays effectually is indeed a gift of God. Not as something that He bestows or infuses at once, but in a far deeper and truer sense, as the blessed disposition or

habit of soul which is wrought and grows up in us in a life of intercourse with Him. Surely for one who knows his Father well, and lives in constant close intercourse with Him, it is a simple thing to believe the promise that He will do the will of His child who lives in union with Himself.

It is because very many of God's children do not understand this connection between the life of faith and the prayer of faith that their experience of the power of prayer is so limited. When they desire earnestly to obtain an answer from God, they fix their whole heart upon the promise, and try their utmost to grasp that promise in faith. When they do not succeed, they are ready to give up hope; the promise is true, but it is beyond their power to take hold of it in faith. Listen to the lesson Jesus teaches us this day: **HAVE FAITH IN GOD, the Living God: let faith look to God more than the thing promised: it is His love, His power, His living presence will waken and work the faith. A physician would say to one asking for some means to get more strength in his arms and hands to seize and hold, that his whole constitution must be built up and strengthened. So the cure of a feeble faith is alone to be found in the invigoration of our whole spiritual life by intercourse with God. Learn to believe in God, to take hold of God, to let God take possession of thy life, and it will be easy to take hold of the promise. He that knows and trusts God finds it easy to trust the promise too.**

Just note how distinctly this comes out in the saints of old. Every special exhibition of the power of faith was the fruit of a special revelation of God. See it in Abraham: 'And the word of the Lord came unto Abram, saying, Fear not, Abram; I am thy shield. And He brought him forth abroad, and said . . . **AND HE BELIEVED THE LORD.**' And later again: 'The Lord appeared unto him, and said unto him, I am God Almighty. And Abram fell on his face, and God talked with him, saying, As for me, behold my covenant is with thee.' It was the revelation of God Himself that gave the promise its living power to enter the heart and work the faith. Because they knew God, these men of faith could not do anything but trust His promise. God's promise will be to us what God Himself is. It is the man who walks before the Lord, and falls upon his face to listen while the living God speaks to him, who will really receive the promise. Though we have God's promises in the Bible, with full liberty to take them, the spiritual power is wanting, except as God Himself speaks them to us. And He speaks to those who walk and live with Him. Therefore, **HAVE FAITH IN GOD: let faith be all eye and ear, the surrender to let God make His full impression, and reveal Himself fully in the soul. Count it one of the chief blessings of prayer to exercise faith in God, as the Living Mighty God who waits to fulfil in us all the good pleasure of His will, and the work of faith with power. See in Him the God of Love, whose delight it is to bless and impart Himself. In such worship of faith in God the power will speedily come to believe the promise too: 'ALL THINGS WHATSOEVER YE ASK, BELIEVE THAT YE RECEIVE.'** Yes, see that thou dost in faith make God thine own; the promise will be thine too.

Precious lessons that Jesus has to teach us this day. We seek God's gifts: God wants to give us **HIMSELF** first. We think of prayer as the power to draw down good gifts from heaven; Jesus as the means to draw ourselves up to God. We want to stand at the door and cry; Jesus would have us first enter in and realize that we are friends and children. Let us accept the teaching. Let every experience of the littleness of our faith in prayer urge us first to have and exercise more faith in the living God, and in such faith to yield ourselves to Him. A heart full of God has power for the prayer of faith. Faith in God begets faith in the promise, in the promise too of an answer to prayer.

Therefore, child of God, take time, take time, to bow before Him, to wait on Him to reveal Himself. Take time, and let thy soul in holy awe and worship exercise and express its faith in the Infinite One, and as He imparts Himself and takes possession of thee, the prayer of faith will crown thy faith in God.

'LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY.'

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O my God! I do believe in Thee. I believe in Thee as the Father, Infinite in Thy Love and Power. And as the Son, my Redeemer and my Life. And as the Holy Spirit, Comforter and Guide and Strength. Three-One God, I have faith in Thee. I know and am sure that all that Thou art Thou art to me, that all Thou hast promised Thou wilt perform.

Lord Jesus! increase this faith. Teach me to take time, and wait and worship in the Holy Presence until my faith takes in all there is in my God for me. Let it see Him as the Fountain of all Life, working with Almighty Strength to accomplish His will on the world and in me. Let it see Him in His love longing to meet and fulfil my desires.

Twelfth Lesson. 'Have faith in God;' Or, The Secret of believing Prayer

Let it so take possession of my heart and life that through faith God alone may dwell there. Lord Jesus, help me! with my whole heart would I believe in God. Let faith in God each moment fill me.

O my Blessed Saviour! how can Thy Church glorify Thee, how can it fulfil that work of intercession through which Thy kingdom must come, unless our whole life be FAITH IN GOD. Blessed Lord! speak Thy Word, 'HAVE FAITH IN GOD,' unto the depths of our souls.