



Your Miracle Power

Mayan Revelation Number 174

Other Voices Speak

Prayer

Vergil

Jennyson

Franklin

A Greek Proverb

A World-Famous Philosopher

A French Proverb

Oliver Wendell Holmes

Beloved Centurion:

There isn't much that I can say as a prelude to which is to follow, except, of course, that we are still going more deeply into the study of FAITH, what it is, how to have it, and how to use it.

Faith must be made a habit which, like every other habit, is increased and strengthened by continual exercise; and it is nourished by meditation, by prayer and by the use of the scriptures.

Faith is not something you can prove, nor can you very well define it, any more than you can explain exactly what love is. We just know that we have it, or we do not have it. If someone were to ask you to prove that you had faith, to actually prove it, you could not do so.

Later on in the lesson you will find that we expect much of reason, and you must be able to reason, but this faculty cannot always be depended on; while, truly, faith always can. It will never fail you when it is real and true. Please do not feel that we underestimate the power of reason in bringing you this lesson. It is so very important, but faith is truly the force of life.

The following pages contain much for you to ponder over, so we will hasten to their message, but first, let me give you these beautiful thoughts on faith:

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"And we shall be made truly wise if we be made content; content, too, not only with what we can understand, but content with what we do not understand - the habit of mind which theologians call - and rightly so - faith in God." - Charles Kingsley.

"All the strength and force of man comes from his faith in things unseen. He who believes is strong; he who doubts is weak. Strong conviction precedes great actions. The man strongly possessed of an idea is the master of all who are uncertain or wavering. Clear, deep, living convictions rule the world." -
James Freeman Clarke.

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And now, the following prayer from your grateful heart:

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, I thank Thee that every heart has some word for faith. May every heart answer its challenge and know its reality. Amen.

VERGIL:

Many people think of inspired writings as contained only in the Bible, but they forget how universal inspiration is. It is true that the Bible thrills and throbs with inspiration, and that when rightly understood and interpreted it is the richest of all books of truth and wisdom - the divine message to mankind.

Inspiration occupies a much broader field than one book or collection of books, however high and holy their message. God was inspiring speakers and writers before the first writings in the Bible were conceived, and if the Bible should ever unfortunately cease to exist as such, He would go on inspiring them still. Central and fundamental as it is, the Bible is too small a book ever to contain all the inspired messages of the world and time.

God has raised up messengers in every land and every age, and He is still doing so. Many of the messengers themselves do not know they are thus anointed, and that at times their utterances are more than human; but their words are too much alive to leave any doubt that it is so.

The field is vast, and we can no more than consider a few scattered sentences from various sources; but for this lesson let us do that, turning to a few of the things said about faith from outside the list of Biblical writers. Let us listen for awhile to what has been said about faith by the man on the street, the man in the study, even the man in some wilderness of life, even to words that have been kept alive on the tongues of people so long that no one knows any more who said them.

First of all, let us think about a sentence from the Latin poet, Vergil,

"They can conquer who think they can."

Here is a remark by a pagan member of a pagan people, but in some way he knew about the vitality of faith. In thought or experience this revelation had been made to his soul, and he had taken it seriously and remembered. We would know it anyway, even if he had never written this sentence, for he had demonstrated its truth. One does not become an immortal without the use of faith.

"They can conquer who think they can" - Vergil's world was a warlike one, and so the clash of arms rings through his pages, but today he would know with us that causes have to be won on many other kinds of battlefields than those of war.

We have to conquer our fears, our weaknesses, our obstacles, even ourselves; and we soon learn that these struggles are not easy, nor are these victories cheaply won. "He that ruleth his own spirit is greater than he that taketh a city" is one of the truest things ever said.

Who ever rules or wins anything who does not believe he can? What can be expected of the efforts of a general who undertakes a cause in which he does not believe with an ability he does not think sufficient? No, the heights of excellence are won by people who believe they can do it.

TENNYSON:

Let us now turn to the poet Tennyson who pondered much on faith. It is said of him that he seems never to have thought of being anything else but a poet. That was his ambition, his work, and his life. No wonder he became Poet Laureate of England, and gave the world such a quantity of fine poetry, including so much that bears the mark of inspiration.

Versification is a technical thing. It can be learned from teachers, but not so with inspiration. That comes from contemplation and experience. Inspired utterance is hammered out red hot on the anvil of life itself. In the flames of sorrow that engulfed him at the death of his dear friend, Arthur Henry Hallam, Tennyson was driven to reach out into the mysteries of life and search for some real answer to the age-old question, if a man die, shall he live again?

That search took him into many areas, including that of faith. These musings he wrote into the great poem "In Memoriam". Here is a single one of the many stanzas which there ring so eloquently through the halls of thought. The poet is now addressing the Christ:

"Strong Son of God, immortal Love,
Whom we that have not seen Thy face
By faith, and faith alone, embrace,
Believing where we cannot prove."

Think of that last line, "Believing where we cannot prove". It is the point where bereavement in its search for assurance of life comes face to face with the fact that the greatest things of life are not proved but are taken by faith. Then in the assurance of that faith proof is no longer needed. Proof is superfluous to the heart that knows.

The senses have no proof of anything save existence itself. They do not save us from illusion. What they report to us is itself full of illusion. The fairest garden or the bluest sky may be a magnificent dream or only a picture thrown on a screen. All we really know by sensation is that we exist. The rest we must learn by higher means of knowing - reason, wisdom, and faith. We exist, and since we exist we have lives to live, work to do, and destinies to attain.

It is what the heart knows that is most certain. You love members of your family. If foolish people should ask you to prove the fact, you could not do it, nor would you wish to argue about it. You know what is in your heart. Debate is foolish and proof unnecessary. What you know within yourself settles the question.

The voice of faith, like that of love, is sure and final. Moving out into the shadows of the unseen how could you prove the power of Christ and the love of God? Ordinary logic does not apply in such a realm. In it are things we must "by faith and faith alone embrace." We believe where we cannot prove, and we see the pattern gradually all drops into place. After that we no longer need to prove. We

know. Faith alone finds such reality, and in its assurance the soul grows calm and sure. Human logic is but a shadow of these higher tests of truth, these answers to the ultimate questions of the soul.

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FRANKLIN:

Our next quotation is from that wise American of the revolutionary period - statesman, diplomat, scientist, inventor - Benjamin Franklin. No one would ever accuse him of making an outward show of piety, but he was a deeply religious man, and intelligently so. He had a mind that inquired into all sorts of things, originated good ideas, made important discoveries, and treasured the worthwhile. His hands were kept busy making the most of what his mind conceived. He even helped to invent The United States of America.

Such things have to be done by faith, so we know Franklin knew something about the subject, and was guided and impelled by it. Here is one of his pointed and revealing comments on it:

"The way to see by faith is to shut the eye to reason."

This is a principle not too easy but very necessary to understand.

Reason is an important thing and has its place. One cannot have too much of it while it is kept in its place. But it sometimes miscalculates, which true faith never does. If it is allowed to get in the way in a faith operation you may get the verdict of reason instead of that of faith, with ultimate confusion and failure as the result.

Too, reason has no motive power. It is illuminating but not dynamic. It only reveals, while faith both reveals and also impels. For another thing, the more reason crowds into any situation the less room there is for faith. Still again, reason is based on material fact and its permanence is measured by it, while faith is based on immaterial truth and is as immortal as its foundation.

Blessed, then, are they who know reason and its ways. May their tribe increase for they are needed in even greater numbers, but may they always be wise enough to know where reason belongs in the scheme of things and to keep it there. Reason is a step in the process of understanding, but faith is understanding itself.

The reasoners have held back on every great step of progress, and scoffed at those who would take those steps. It asks so much that it becomes negative more often than not. It demands to know in advance whether a thing is feasible and insists on proof of it done up according to logical formula. Faith knows whether a thing is possible. It sees its way clear to undertake things reason would never sanction, and it neither asks nor needs any proof save its own understanding.

Faith is for levels above reason and the reaches beyond reason's grasp. Like a booster pump of the soul, it takes over when reason has reached the limit of its power. But to let reason usurp the place and function of faith is like putting aside a high-powered telescope to search for an invisible star with a magnifying glass.

Cultivate reason, then, for the purposes of reason. Know as much about its laws and processes as you can. Apply it in dealing with the things we see, and know, and can do under our own power. But when you are dealing with the unknown, the untried, the infinite, the universal, the spiritual, and what the material mind calls the impossible, that is the place to turn reason off and turn faith on.

We should be willing to accept Franklin's recommendation and try it out. It worked very well for Franklin.

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A GREEK PROVERB:

A Greek proverb so old that no name is connected with it any more reveals an important facet of faith. It sounds like Socrates, but it may have come from some other of the many great philosophers of that land of art, literature, and wisdom. In a pagan land and a pagan age, yet a land and age of discernment, an exploring mind was looking beyond anything the Pantheon had to reveal and drew in this great thought -

"Knowledge of things divine escapes us through want of faith."

This old saying shows a distinctly religious tinge. That is why it sounds like Socrates. Whoever it was must have been scraping along the level of comprehension of the divine. Perhaps, for the moment at least, he had found it, for his declaration is not the kind of thing learned by the knowledge of things we see.

God is not at the end of a syllogism or a formula. He is at the apex of all truth, power, and love. There is nothing there for reason to rest an argument on, so after all arguments the skeptic only insists that he is still not convinced. But faith like a fog lens cuts through the dimness and sees what is there. It does not have to be convinced. It knows.

That is why they make such a great mistake who keep trying to find the divine with a lens or a chemical reaction, and who loudly insist that it does not exist because they cannot see it. The fact that they cannot see it means nothing at all, for they have not tried in the right way.

Thomas A. Edison, after long years of inventing material contributions to material progress, began turning his mind in the direction of the spirit. The writer learned by conversation with personal acquaintances in his home town how

in later life he interested himself in some means to contact the divine plane and demonstrate the immortality of the spirit. At one time he had hopes he might be able to do it, and to announce to the world the supreme discovery of his life.

But he was making the old mistake of trying to discover a laboratory God and make a laboratory demonstration of something that is not on that plane. God does not reveal himself in a material way or place. He moves in a more mysterious way his wonders to perform.

The one who searches for God by the means of science or reason and fails is like the man who went into the woods and invited God to perform a miracle, then left the miraculous woods insisting that God had not accepted his invitation, so God did not exist.

But when Edison was dying he was heard to murmur, "It is very beautiful over there." Away from the laboratory his soul had looked by faith and seen what he sought. The demonstration had come at last, but by faith and not by sight.

Let reason show you what it will, and that will be much and wonderful. But do not expect the reach of reason to be infinite or its power to be supreme. Beyond its borders you may invoke the greater power of faith which will light the farther reaches of your journey and empower your going.

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A WORLD-FAMOUS PHILOSOPHER:

Now let us listen to the voice of one who had the rank of a nobleman, the heart of a commoner, and the mind of a genius; one who had convictions and the courage to act on them; and one who said or wrote only what he had carefully considered and profoundly believed. The writer once had the privilege of taking his son for a drive over country roads and hearing first hand about the father from the son who looked and thought so much like him that it seemed as though he were himself riding there in the front seat talking with the philosopher's confidence and insight.

"Faith is the force of life", declared this famous man. He would gather up the whole sweep of the wonderful meaning of a word and put it into one short sentence like that. When you have made such a statement, what more is there to say? And what is there to do save to begin living the vastness of its meaning.

"Faith is the force of life." That is what it is, a force, a force great enough to move mountains - not just the material kind but the more stubborn kind that grow from disturbed conditions and actually get into the way of getting on with the business of living.

"Faith is the force of life." This applies it not just to one area of living but to all of it. It makes faith something that can be measured only by

life itself, vaster therefore than all our problems of mistaken thinking and confused motives. There are plenty of forces for lesser projects - steam, gas combustion, electricity, and now atomic energy - but they cannot open the way to living, much less activate our living and get us on the right road and keep us there. But faith can waken us out of our lethargies and challenge us on the way to our goals. It can keep us alert and going, and it can supply us with infinite energy from infinite sources.

"Faith is the force of life", but life means so much more than many who use the word ever realize. It is vastly more than animal existence or even physical action. It is "a great spirit and a busy heart. We live in deeds, not years, in thoughts, not breaths; in feelings, not in figures on a dial. We should count time by heart-throbs."

"Faith is the force of life." When the fires of enthusiasm burn low, and courage wanes, and interest flags, and the miasmatic mists of defeatism come moving in, and the heart begins to yield to a feeling that the cheapest way out is to give up and stop trying, that means that the flame needs refueling for a resurgence of divine energy, that the soul needs again to wait before its God and tremble out once more the old, old prayer, "Lord, increase my faith."

"Faith is the force of life." It is strong enough to keep power equal to duty and the hands adequate to conscience. It is bright enough to make the words "I can" shine with a clearer light than the words "I can't". It is sure enough to keep us sailing on our courses. It is firm enough to stand in any storm. We are all moving. Shall we without a doubt arrive safely in the right port? Faith has the answer.

If life for you seems less than it ought to be, let faith enlarge its scope, and deepen its roots, and extend its reach.

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A FRENCH PROVERB:

Let us now turn to the French for one of their familiar and numerous proverbs on the subject of faith. "It will profit me nothing if I have no faith in it", runs one of their old sayings. What a depth and reach of meaning we have to ponder here! It provides us a basis for the choices we must make of values to be had or things to be done. What is the wise choice? The one we believe in, the one we can animate with faith.

The power to choose and decide is one of the facets of our high honor in being created in the divine image. Of all the ways in which God has made us like Himself this is the one that required the greatest confidence in us. If we are to be like Him we must be free. If we are to be free we must have the power to choose. The Father believed in us enough to assume that we would learn to choose rightly.

What are we to choose, then, when two or more values lie before us, and

we can take any one we wish? The answer is that we should choose the one we can most fully believe in. If we can put no faith in any of them, then the thing to do is accept none at all, till something faith-worthy presents itself.

What way are we to go when two or more roads stretch out before us? The answer is the same - to take the one we believe in most. That makes it a road of faith, and the road of faith is a road of victory.

Think of the strongest lives you know: What has made them so? Is it not that they have chosen the things, experiences, habits, and courses in which they could most honestly and deeply believe? Is the same not true of the great souls of history? How could one be more untrue to himself than to accept values and follow ways into which he can put no faith? One may make an honest mistake now and then, and atone for it; but what can be said for one who does not even try to be right about the things he chooses?

Think what it means for us to make the choices and decisions in which we most deeply believe. It means that as we follow through with them we will be powered with the all-conquering energy of faith, the faith that moves mountains and more than mountains. Our literature of success is full of formulas for attainment, but consider this and see if you are not convinced that this has always proved the crowning one of all - choose and do only what you truly believe in. Try it in your own life for awhile, and see if you are not the gainer.

The endeavors of life are investments. What we do each day adds a little more to our lists of the stocks and bonds of destiny. If an investment turns out well, it is more often by wisdom than by chance. Besides those who do unimportant, foolish things do not invest much, and cannot get much from it. Here is a top-flight plan for investing your life, mind, energies, time, and talent - power them with faith. The one who does so will keep his treasure safe and draw good dividends. Others will wonder why things did not turn out better.

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OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES:

Sometimes a word of real inspiration slips out incidentally in some reference to quite mundane affairs. Such an instance is a seemingly chance reference to faith made in a birthday poem written by Oliver Wendell Holmes to his friend and contemporary author, James Russell Lowell. It runs -

"And faith that sees a ring of light 'round nature's last eclipse."

We have all experienced the sudden awesomeness of a total eclipse of the sun and read or heard of its still more disturbing effect on people who did not know its nature and cause. We have seen the great hulk of the moon slowly shoulder itself into a position exactly between us and the star we call the sun. Then our part of the world is for a time plunged into twilight so deep that to all

appearances night has come. We find a chill creeping about us, and even seem able to feel the sudden lack of vitalizing rays that ordinarily help invigorate and sustain us.

But there is always the corona, the ring of light, that glowing crown, reaching far out into space from the disk of the sun itself. It tells us that, though hidden for the moment, the sun is still there, that it is still shining, and that it will soon again be glowing in its usual glory.

We can always assume, or think we can, that this is not the last eclipse. But suppose it were, at least for the time being. Suppose the moon were in some way stopped in that position for awhile. We would not give up hope, for we would still see that ring of light, telling us that the sun was still there. It would be an evidence of things unseen, our hold on hope for the ultimate reappearance of our king of day. This has not yet happened in nature, but it often happens in life.

In his description of a rainy day Longfellow has written, "Be still, sad heart, and cease repining. Behind the clouds is the sun still shining." In an eclipse more than a cloud intervenes, yet the sun waves from behind it with long arms of light to let us know it is still there.

The mind has eclipses when it cannot see the wonder of things as it might. Work, weariness, preoccupation, cares, and the like, intervene, but for the faithful the aura of faith is always there to remind them that it will not long be so.

The heart has eclipses when disappointment or sorrow tries to crowd in and take possession of it. They would do so completely and permanently if we would let them, but when we look we can see the corona of faith shining around the shape that hides the peace and gladness that are our right, and we take courage again.

The soul has its eclipses when doubt and fear obscure the spiritual blessings and possibilities of which it was so sure. Voices of negation and the old, vain questionings of unbelief rise from a whisper to a roar. This is one of life's most dangerous moments, one when we need to look up and see the flaming banners of faith's ever present circle of light, telling us that all that ever gave our souls their peace and power is still there, even though eclipsed by some temporary obstruction. Eclipses are of such a nature that they have to be temporary, - so fear not.

Remember that God's law of conservation applies to all the things that are precious to you. An eclipse is only a condition, and conditions pass. Your peace and hope are eternal things. They can be temporarily veiled, but they never cease to be. Like the sun, even when eclipsed they still wave to you to tell you to take heart and keep going.

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AFFIRMATION

Souls in all times and places have testified to the power of faith. I join them in their confidence.

