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## **FAITH ENCOURAGED.**

– FEB. 23. – Luke 8:43-55. –

**Golden Text – "Thy faith hath made thee whole: go in peace."  
– Luke 8:48.**

NO ESSENTIAL element of Christian character is given greater prominence in the Scriptures than faith. "Without faith it is impossible to please God." In this requirement we see the condescending grace of our heavenly Father, who, though so far above us, yet, like a tender parent, desires the reciprocal love and implicit confidence of his intelligent creatures. Since Christ is the appointed agent of God in his dealings with men, whom God bids all men to honor, even as they honor the Father, and since he is the appointed way of access to God, faith in Christ is necessarily a part of our faith in God. Those who believe in Christ, believe the testimony which God gave of his Son through the prophets and through Christ's [R1939 : page 33] own teachings and the mighty works which God wrought by him, to the end that men might believe, having a sure and abundant ground for confidence; so that faith might not be mere credulity, but a reasonable thing.

To believe in Jesus in those days, when his mighty works astonished the people, and the beauty of his holiness impressed every beholder, was most reasonable to those of simple hearts, who desired only to know the truth of God and to obey it, and who therefore had no crossgrained will or prejudice of their own to oppose it. Nor are the evidences, the foundation of faith in Christ, any less reliable to-day than they were then. On the contrary, they are still more abundant and strong, – a firm foundation that can never be moved. In simple faith, reliance upon the testimony of Christ, the sick woman came to Jesus, so fully assured of his power that she did not wait even to call his attention to herself when the multitudes thronged about him; "for she said, If I may touch but his clothes, I shall be whole;" and she was instantly healed. And Jesus,

perceiving her faith, said unto her, "Daughter, be of good comfort: thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace."

This miracle was immediately followed by another, still more wonderful – the raising of the dead to life. Faith had brought an anxious father to Jesus to request the healing of his daughter. But while he was making the request, a messenger came to him saying, "Thy daughter is dead, trouble not the Master." The messenger evidently knew nothing of Jesus' power to raise the dead, and the anxious father would probably have abandoned all hope except for the Lord's reassurance of his faith, "Fear not: believe only, and she shall be made whole."

In the former instance the faith was exercised by the patient; but in this case it was exercised by another on behalf of the patient, who, being dead, had no ability to exercise faith. Yet the faith in the power of Jesus of those who had requested the healing was a very weak faith, and when they saw the child was dead all hope departed. They had considerable faith in Christ, but they did not believe that his power extended to the raising of the dead, and were quite incredulous at the suggestion of the Lord's words, – "Weep not; she is not dead, but sleepeth," – knowing that she was dead. As in the case of Lazarus, our Lord here referred to death as a sleep, in view of the fact of the resurrection. The term is similarly applicable to the whole human family in the death that came upon all through Adam; because there shall be an awakening, a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust. The second death, from which there shall be no resurrection, **[R1939 : page 34]** is never likened to a sleep, anywhere in the Bible.

It is worthy of note, that while our Lord took with him the parents and three of his disciples into the chamber of death, that they might witness the awakening, when they manifested their lack of faith he put them all out, and then recalled the dead to life, and permitted them afterward to come in and minister to her. Thus, while he rewarded their faith, weak though it was, he reproved them also, and gave them overwhelming evidence of his mighty power.

The statement of verse 55, when relieved of the mists of a false theology, is very clear. "And her spirit came again," simply signifies, "And her breath returned," and is so rendered in the *Emphatic Diaglott*, the Greek word "*pneuma*," translated "spirit" in the common version, signifying breath, wind, or the spirit or breath of life. With the reinstating of the breathing process and the healing of the physical organism came reanimation, restored intelligence, and the dead lived again. Thus the Lord rewarded even the weak faith, and gave them additional and overwhelming evidence to strengthen and establish their faith. The Lord did not expect or desire the people to have faith without good substantial evidence upon which to base it; but he did desire and reward the faith that was exercised to the extent of the evidence. A faith without substantial evidence upon which to base it, is mere credulity, and generally degenerates into gross superstition unworthy of the intelligence which God has given us.

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