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FAITH, THE CHANNEL OF BLESSING

- MATTHEW 9:18-34. - APRIL 3. -

**Golden Text: – "All things are possible to him that believeth."
– Mark 9:23.**

FAITH in God consists in taking him at his word – accepting and believing his Revelation of his Character and his Plan in respect to ourselves and others. We should clearly distinguish between faith and credulity. Some very good people make the mistake of supposing that the more absurd the thing which they believe, the greater is the faith. Faith does not spurn reason, but uses it within certain prescribed and rational lines. In order to have faith in God, we must first satisfy our reasoning faculties: –

(a) That there is a God;

(b) That he has a dependable character – is Just; is Wise; is Powerful; is Gracious;

(c) We must reasonably assure ourselves that what we accept as his message is worthy of acceptance – bears marks of truthfulness and harmony with the Divine Character. He who does not seek such evidences as a foundation for faith is merely credulous – not faith-full.

Because so many Christian people ignore the proper definition of faith many candid minds are repelled from Christianity, refusing, they tell us, to believe absurdities. We urge Christian people to a more rigid examination [R4588 : page 109] of their faith in God and in the Bible, that, as the Apostle says, We may be able to "give a reason for the hope [the faith], that is within us." (I Pet. 3:15.) We owe this to ourselves, as well as to those whom we would endeavor to interest in God's Word.

In the light now shining upon God's Word it is possible, as it was in the days of the Apostles, for the man of God to be "thoroughly furnished" and able "to rightly divide the Word of Truth" and to show to his friends and neighbors solid, logical grounds for each item of his faith. We admit that this was not, apparently, possible during the dark period which intervened between the first century and now. Knowing how to sympathize with the many who have perplexities respecting the reliability of the Bible as the inspired Word of God, we invite correspondence from such, feeling sure that we can assist them.

Our present study illustrates faith from four different standpoints: –

(1) The faith of Jairus – the father, on behalf of his daughter;

(2) The faith of the woman who, on her own account, touched the hem of the Lord's garment;

(3) The faith of the two blind men who encouraged one another;

(4) The faith of those who brought to the Lord a deaf and dumb man possessed of a demon.

Jairus, the ruler of the synagogue in Capernaum, our Lord's home city, knew Jesus well. He sometimes called upon him to read the Sabbath lesson. (Luke 4:16.) On a previous occasion with others he entreated the Lord on behalf of the centurion's servant. (Luke 7:4.) Now affliction had invaded Jairus' home. His only daughter, twelve years old, was dying. The Master had been absent across the sea. Amongst the throng awaiting him was Jairus, who, because of his prominence as a representative man, was properly given first audience. He manifested his faith not merely by his request that the Lord would come and heal his daughter, but also by his conduct in prostrating himself,

figuratively expressing his homage, obedience and faith. He had left the daughter in a dying condition. She was dead at the time that he was talking to Jesus and urging haste. Before they reached the house messengers came, saying that it was too late, that she was dead. When Jesus arrived, neighbors had gathered, in harmony with the Jewish custom. Some were playing doleful tunes on flutes; others were groaning and lamenting. It was the custom for the females of a family and neighborhood, when they heard of a death, to give a shriek and then to continue murmuring, mourning as they entered into the death chamber a while later. The Master bade all these to depart, lightly saying, "The maid is not dead, but sleepeth." The language is similar to that used respecting Lazarus. She was dead, according to the usual human expression. But she was not dead from the Divine standpoint – not extinct as is a brute in death. God's provision from the first was that the death sentence upon humanity would be cancelled by the Redeemer's sacrifice and that as a result there will be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and of the unjust. From this standpoint the Scriptures speak of death as a sleep, from which there will be a glorious awakening in the resurrection morning – in the dawning of the Millennial Age. Thus Abraham and others of the past, both good and bad, are referred to as falling asleep, sleeping with their fathers, etc. Thus Stephen, the first Christian martyr, fell asleep. (Acts 7:60.) Evidently this does not mean that the dead go to sleep in either heaven, purgatory or hell. The Bible explains the matter, saying that many that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake. (Dan. 12:2.) As all in Adam die, even so all in Christ shall be made alive. (I Cor. 15:22.) What would have been death to them and eternal cessation of being has been changed by virtue of the Redeemer's sacrifice and is a sleep of unconsciousness, until the morning when the great Redeemer will say to all, as he did to Lazarus, "Come forth," or as he did in this case, to Jairus' daughter, "Talitha Cumi" – "Come, my child." So, we are assured that eventually all that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of Man and come forth. (John 5:28.) On

the way to Jairus' home a woman in the crowd surrounding the Lord touched the hem of his garment, believing in his greatness and power and that thus she would get a blessing. The thrill of life and strength immediately came into her body, just as the touching of the storage battery with a wire would draw the electric current. Our Lord was full of vital energy. He was perfect, not only free from sin, but free from sickness and death conditions. He noticed the loss of vitality and, turning, inquired, "Who touched me?" The poor woman was fearful that she had stolen a blessing, of which she felt herself unworthy. But soon she was assured by the kindly words and look of the Master. This incident teaches us clearly that our Lord's miracles drained upon his vitality. [R4589 : page 109] Thus from Jordan to Calvary he willingly, gladly, responded to the needs of those about him – laying down his life.

The two blind men who met Jesus, hailing him as Messiah, the promised King of David's line, encouraged one another and both got the desired blessings, according to their faith. Here we have illustrated the advantages of Church fellowship in respect to faith stimulation. Let us assist one another in the most holy faith. Let us be helpers and not hinderers to fellow-pilgrims. The Master did not attempt the healing of all the people. For instance, there was but one healed at the Pool of Siloam, though many were there. So here Jesus admonished those whose eyes were opened to keep the matter quiet. But they could not. Their joy was so great and the Lord's humility in the matter served to draw forth their praise the louder. So with us – quickened from the dead, spirit-healed, and with the eyes of our understanding opened – we cannot refrain from telling the good tidings and praising the Lord. – Romans 1:12; Acts 4:20.

The man possessed of a demon and made both deaf and dumb was in such a deplorable condition that he could not help himself, neither could he ask the Master's aid; neither could he

hear, if anyone should exorcise the demon. His friends, however, exercised faith in his behalf. Jesus responded and cast out the demon. The man was healed. The multitude marveled. But the Pharisees were envious. They wished to pose as the chief religionists and to have and to hold the popular respect, which was rapidly passing to Jesus. The poison of envy in their minds so perverted them that they declared that Jesus himself was Satan, Beelzebub, the Prince of devils. Let us learn the lesson and avoid envy, malice, hatred, and fill our hearts instead with the spirit of meekness, gentleness, patience, love, and thus become more and more like our Master, increasing our faith.

O for a faith that will not shrink,
Though pressed by every foe;
That will not tremble on the brink
Of any earthly woe;
That will not murmur nor complain
Beneath the chastening rod,
But in the hour of grief or pain,
Will lean upon its God.

