

Afternoon Lesson. Genesis 18.

21-05-1978!

~~TEXT~~ HEBREWS 10 V 35, 36

I will notice the degrees of saving faith that the Lord is pleased to bless His dear children with. There is first the faith of credence. You will be favoured in your souls to receive the Person of Christ as the Son of God; His essential Deity, eternal Sonship and glory. This is the blessed foundation for holy faith, and by giving credence to every word of divine truth, especially that which is spoken by divine power to your souls, and to receive the glorious truth on which the sunshine of glory communicates the efficacy of it to your souls. Notwithstanding our sinful infirmities and inadequacy, we recognise by the Spirit's teaching that what the Lord speaks to our souls we receive embrace and believe. I was thinking last Sunday, and the Lord knows how important it is; seeing Joshua and knowing the overwhelming weight of responsibility that would devolve on his soul and person, the Lord gave him a cluster of promises concerning His faithfulness to him. In the evening at Galeed we meditated on the word spoken to dear Moses; "Certainly I will be with thee." What the Lord speaks you will embrace, believe and prove His divine faithfulness to. Moses was a meek man and felt he was not eloquent; he was slow of speech. "Who made man's mouth? The word has complete coverage, and it was not only a comfort and strength initially; it was all through the long journey leading to the border of the promised land, a land flowing with milk and honey. What the Lord gives faith receives and holds fast, and it may be thousands of times in your journey you plead by faith the promises of the Lord to you.

So there is first the faith of credence, - a firm belief. I will mention this to you as it occurs to my spirit. Dear Mr Housden, who is

delivered from all his afflictions and is with Christ, which is far better, came from Bedford, where he enjoyed a good position with an oil company. The Lord sent him into the ministry, and this is one thing that drew me to him. The time came when the deacon at Hastings invited him for the first time to Ebenezer. He told me a few days ago that before the day ended there were no words but he had a firm persuasion that he should be the pastor of the Church. You may have a Scripture or a firm persuasion or a clear revelation. When he left for Bedford he was persuaded that he would be pastor at Ebenezer. Living faith embraced it. He kept it to himself for some months. He said to me, they were sitting round the fire and he suddenly said to his wife, "My dear, what would think of moving to Hastings?" She could not believe it. He told her the time would come when they would move to Hastings. He so begged that it would be mentioned when he went back for his second visit, but it came to the close of the day and not a word was said. He felt distressed because his faith was tried. "Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath greater recompence of reward." The dear man was not to be disappointed. He got in the car of his son-in-law, and driving back through Blackboys his son-in-law said, "I put my foot in it, and said to one of the members, "I am surprised you do not ask him to be our pastor." The answer came, "That is the very thing that was laid on our hearts at the first visit." Faith believed it and it was accomplished. The very ~~very~~ first time in the pulpit it was revealed to him and to the congregation. He had a firm persuasion and the Lord brought it to pass. "Cast not away therefore your confidence." One further word concerning our dear brother: this I so loved of him. Feeling so sure it was the will of God he sacrificed a good position and every prospect of promotion. He said to his firm, "I must go to Hastings because God has called me there." He was like Abraham: he went out not knowing whither he went, He told me when he got there and his job gone and he had paid his rates, he put his hand in his pocket and he had got fourpence left. He said, "David you are favoured. You are out of debt and you have fourpence left." The Lord provided for him and honoured him. Faith is a wonderful grace. You behold the Son of God, and believe in Him to the saving of your soul. You embrace Him, and build your house on the Rock, and all the Lord seals on your spirit you believe, and it is eternal: it never vanishes.

(Housden)

It is sweet to me concerning the reference to David. You see, I could appreciate it as on the island platform at Polegate the Lord put this Church into my arms and heart, and I did not say anything about it; it was done. Whatever it is in life, the Lord speaks with sovereign power and you believe it. How often this applies to the children of the Lord's people. There was a time in your life when the Lord spoke a word with sovereign, divine power to your soul, and you said, "Blessed Lord, this is one of Thy children, a chosen vessel." The Lord has dropped a word in your soul, "This is the way, walk ye in it." and you believed it and you were obedient. You moved in divine providence: you took a step in the fear of God. You believed the word. When the Lord touches your heart with His love you believe you will be with Him in Glory. It is well with you, and you will see Him face to face. "Certainly I will be with thee."

There is the faith of adherence. You cling to Christ, to His Person, work, precious atonement, blood, righteousness, intercession. By faith you cling to Him and to every promise He gives you. And there is the faith of assurance, when the Lord by His sweet presence and love, - perfect love casts out fear, and you receive forgiveness, - fear is completely banished, your wounds are healed, your guilt is gone, and you have the faith of rich, heavenly assurance. This is a sweet subject to me because there are those blessed with like precious faith. He says, "Cast not away therefore your confidence," It means a sure, blessed, firm belief and trust in the Lord Jesus, and a sure expectation and blessed, holy boldness. This is the point to make; "Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward." The Lord always rewards, honours, crowns living faith. I will cite to you a dear Biblical character, the poor dear woman who came concerning her demented daughter, and there seemed to be a rebuff and everything to discourage her. "He answered her not a word." And the disciples said, "Send her away." One can hardly think of their frame of mind. You will know it all by the power of the adversary. You go to the Lord and importune Him, and there are times when Satan says, "The Lord is weary of you. You keep on day after day with this." It is far from that. You do not know how much the Lord loves you, and loves to hear your cry. He knew how to draw out the dear woman concerning the children's bread and the dogs. The Lord

gave her faith, and she knew how to answer Him. "Truth, Lord; yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table. Truth, Lord there are dogs that are scavengers. There are dogs that are favourites of the family, and they have a place under the table, and as the crumbs fall they partake of them. Dear Lord, I am happy to be one of the little dogs under the table. I realise I am favoured, and I do not mind being under the table if I get a crumb." You do not mind, do you? This is a word that demonstrates the appendix to the first verse. Presently He said to her, "O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt." You will rejoice. He recognises by His omniscience the smallest grain of faith He gave. "Give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth." Keep going: pray without ceasing.

When the Lord gives you a word in revelation, He gives you to realise that He has power to perform it. Well do I know what this is. He has power to accomplish it. This word will expound it; "Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh: is there any thing too hard for me?" When you see that you will be convinced that the Lord has power to do. Another facet is, the Lord can bless you with strong faith concerning salvation. You are so blessedly assured of your eternal salvation and safety that you are able to say,

"Yes, I to the end shall endure,
As sure as the earnest is given;
More happy, but not more secure,
The glorified spirits in Heaven." (340)

You will know abundant assurance, strong faith; you will firmly believe you will endure to the end and be with Him for ever. Sweet these seasons are. When I get this in my soul I feel I could go to Glory. I have no doubt in my spirit. You have such sweet peace, comfort, joy, happiness, the satisfaction of the Lord's dear presence you feel you could go straight to be with Him in Glory. Do you get those seasons? When the Lord gives strong faith, you will feel so assured of things He has spoken to you it will be as though it is already done. You are so persuaded, yet there is a waiting interim.

I will endeavour to show you further why this exhortation is so needful, precious, timely, apposite. It infers there there is the trial of faith, and in the trial of faith the inference is that there is so

much that appears to contradict. I am not thinking only of external, but of internal things. There is the dreadful sin that does so much harm and desolates and brings us to an impoverished state and dishonours the Lord: it is the sin of unbelief. As living^{faith} is a root grace, and from this will grow the tree of love, bearing precious fruit, so there is an evil root in our nature. I know if you could you will wish it to be extirpated. You know weeds that are so difficult to eradicate: so there is this evil root in fallen nature, the sin of infidelity; a sin too base to name. Some do not understand this. From this root evil springs the base, immoral sin of unbelief. The origin is in the fall of man. So often this becomes a great temptation to young people: with lectures on the sciences there emerges this type of infidelity and there is a tendency to throw all religion away. I do hope our dear young friends will never be left to it. Mr Sam Stevens, a godly man, said one thing I remember: a forceful character he was and an entertainer. He came into his teens, and it was not long before he was running off into the world though they told him he did not belong to them. He told me that all through the days one thing never left him. With every avenue of sin explored and all the gaiety it was always there. "There is a God." In the midst of mirth it kept ringing. The Lord grant you this. There is a God. They are trying to entice you into all forms of ungodliness, and they ridicule you if you do not consent. My friends, it is the road to hell. You can well receive this. Satan makes the road to hell attractive to sinful nature. You do not see the flames of the pit in the gaiety, grandeur, pomp, and all there is to seduce. Remember, "There is a God, and I must stand before Him. He sees me. I shall receive my sentence from Him." It has come to me spontaneously to say this.

I will show you a little further concerning the evil root of infidelity. How many profess to be atheists! They say, "You die, and that is the end of you. You might as well have enjoyment^{while} you are here." There is dreadful infidelity and things that are attractive to fallen nature. They say religious folk are simpletons and have no great education." and this suits the pride of fallen nature. Remember, "Thou God seest me." You have to stand before Him: you must die. With a child of God there is the evil root of infidelity and unbelief and all doubts. One of the most incredible doubts is that which relates to the

resurrection of Christ. The women brought back a message and the disciples did not believe that He was risen. It was to them as idle tale. Assailing us all along the line are these doubts. You try to pray, and unbelief rises, and says, It is futile: there is nothing in it. You will never get an answer; you will die deceived. God will forsake you, and you will die in sadness and distress." We need to be convinced of the sin of these things, and to confess and receive forgiveness. If we have indulged unbelieving thoughts the Spirit of God will convince us that this is sin, and we shall confess it. The Lord mercifully forgive the slavish fear and doubts and unbelief of His unworthy children, and cleanse from this sin that defiles the soul. What a place to be in, with unbelief and doubts all day, as if you are going down! The Lord convince His people that this is sin, "What? after all My faithfulness over the years, and you doubt Me? From whence this fear and unbelief?" You will get on your knees and confess and blush. Has He spoken, and will He not perform? Will He not make good His promise? He says, "Cast not away therefore your confidence." There is everything rises against it, and the impossibilities presented to human nature and the delay as it seems, are devastating. The Lord brings it to a place where it is sheer impossibility. He is saying to us to day, "Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward." Blessed be God, Amen