

The Believer Catechized

by C.H. Spurgeon

C.H. Spurgeon challenges believers to examine their faith deeply by personally affirming each revealed truth of Scripture, emphasizing that true comfort and spiritual growth come from a living, informed belief in Christ as the Resurrection and the Life.

Scripture: John 11:26, 2 Peter 3:18, Romans 8:29, Ephesians 1:3-5, Romans 5:1, John 15:5, Acts 26:27

Topics: "Faith and Belief", "Christian Doctrine"

Description

In "The Believer Catechized," C.H. Spurgeon invites Christians to a profound self-examination of their faith by asking the pivotal question, "Do you believe this?" Drawing from the story of Martha and the powerful declaration of Christ as the Resurrection and the Life, Spurgeon teaches that true faith is personal, informed, and active. This sermon encourages believers to deepen their knowledge of Scripture and Christ to find comfort and assurance in all circumstances.

Transcript

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

"Do you believe this?" John 11:26.

THE Savior said to Martha, "I am the resurrection and the life: He that believes in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. DO YOU BELIEVE THIS?" When Believers are sorrowful, they may be assured that a consolation is provided exactly adapted to their cases. For every lock that God has made, He has provided a key. As every blade of grass has its own drop, so every grief has its comfort. I doubt not that for every pain which racks this mortal frame there is a pain reliever among the herbs of the fields and for every disease there is a remedy in God's wondrous laboratory if we could but find it.

As for us who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, we may rest assured that if we are borne down by excessive sorrow, it is almost always our own fault and arises from a defect in our faith—for if our faith were as strong as it ought to be, we would "take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches and in distresses for Christ's sake." We would find that as our tribulations abounded, so would our consolations abound by Christ Jesus. It will be well, therefore, when we are greatly distressed, not so much to look to the apparent cause of the present trouble as at the condition of our own hearts—it will be wise to inquire where our faith is lacking and what it may be which prevents our laying hold upon the comfort provided for the present

distress.

It frequently happens that our faith is defective because of slender knowledge. A man cannot believe what he does not know. My dear, tried Friend, there is a promise in the Scriptures which would exactly meet your case and, if grasped by faith, it would immediately cheer you! But you know nothing of its efficacy because you may never yet have read it, or, having read it, you may never have paused over it and considered its meaning and so you are needlessly distressed because your relief lies close at hand. It may be that as yet you have not learned the whole circle of Gospel doctrines and this, also, deprives you of comfort. You have laid hold upon the vital and saving part of Revelation, but the strengthening and exhilarating part of it you know not.

You have fed on the necessary bread of Christ's house, but not upon the luscious fruits of His garden! You have been in the field, but you have not walked in the garden to eat His pleasant fruit. Faith cannot believe what it does not know and, therefore, you have missed fat things full of marrow and wines on the lees well-refined which might have been your strength and your joy. We would, all of us, grow in comfort if we grew in Grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and had a more intelligent appreciation of the preciousness of the Truths of God which He has revealed! Faith may be defective through ignorance and it may also be defective through a lack of appreciation of the Person of Christ. It was so in Martha's case—she did not know enough about her Lord to perceive His power to meet her sorrow.

The Apostle Paul says, in the passage which I just now quoted, "Grow in Grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ," as if the knowledge of Jesus were, indeed, the most important and gracious knowledge which a Believer can obtain and so it is! If we are but half instructed as to our Lord, we shall be but half-comforted. O mourners, you have not rated the Savior highly enough! You have not yet a large enough idea of His love for you and of His design of Infinite Wisdom in permitting you to be afflicted. If the Lord Jesus were better known, our afflictions would be lightened and our hearts would even rejoice in them! If we did but know You, O blessed Christ, then if the same trials remained with us they would lose their gloom beneath Your smile and we would even come to rejoice in them as ministering to our fellowship with You in Your sufferings! Jesus known, sorrow loses its sting—surely even the bitterness of death is past!

It is not to be supposed that every true Believer in Christ is assuredly a perfect Believer. Martha truly believed in Jesus, but she did not perfectly believe in Him. I do not know how many here have, or think they have, perfect faith—such good people will get very little from the discourse of this morning—but then, happily, they do not need it! Those of us who have

an imperfect faith—and I suspect that this would describe most of us—may gather instruction from the Savior's question to Martha, "Do you believe this?" May the Holy Spirit cause it to be so. Let us think we hear His loving lips enquiring of us at this time concerning this Truth and the other—"Do you believe this?"

We desire to believe everything that is true and we wish to receive into our minds every doctrine which the Holy Spirit has revealed, for we would perfect our discipleship and is not this one of its privileges—"When He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He shall guide you into all Truth"? We long to believe everything that is within the range of our spiritual knowledge, so that our faith, taking the entire range of Divine Truth, may be complete for every emergency and mighty in every conflict. Submit, then, to a heart-searching enquiry as to your faith and hear Jesus say, by His Spirit, "Do you believe

this?"

I. Our first head will be—DO YOU BELIEVE THIS PARTICULAR DOCTRINE? I will not just now suggest any one doctrine above another, but merely advise your putting the question about every revealed Truth of God. You who are Believers have faith in the Scriptures in general. You can boldly declare that from the first word of Genesis to the last word of Revelation you believe all that is written in the Inspired volume. Now, the point is to take out of this general mass of things believed, or supposed to be believed, each one separate item and look it over in detail and then say with your heart and conscience, "I believe this."

It is easy to talk in the whole and it is very easy to think that we have a vast amount of faith and yet we may have little or none worth having! We may have put the treasure of the Truths of God into a bag that is full of holes and so may have lost it as fast as we have found it. We may fancy that we embrace within our arms the whole of revealed Truth and yet, when we come to a quiet examination of our soul, we may find that much is slipping away from us by a process of questions and doubts which we hardly dare acknowledge! Things believed and never used are like a sluggard's farm which lies fallow and is never tilled—we hardly call such ground a farm and can we call such belief real faith? Why, some Truths of God taught in the Word are not even known by numbers of professors and we cannot believe what we do not know! It is the same case as that supposed in the Apostle's question, "How shall they believe in Him when they have not heard?" If we do not see the surface meaning—which is within our reach—we cannot be said to believe in any real sense.

Martha, when our Savior questioned her, had already expressed her faith in certain great Truths of God. She said, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother had not died." She believed in the Savior's power to heal the sick. She believed that so long as her brother breathed, the power of Christ could have kept him alive. She was convinced that Jesus was the Master of disease and could restore the suffering to health. This was something worthy of her faith, but it was not enough. Our Lord set a further fact before her and asked, "Do you believe this?" It is for us to grow in knowledge and to exercise faith in proportion as we do so.

Next, Martha believed that though her brother was dead, such was the efficacy of Christ's prayer that He could do something. She does not quite say what, to comfort the bereaved—"I know, that even now, whatever You will ask of God, God will give it You." She had faith in our Lord's prevalence with God in prayer and that to an unlimited degree. She believed in Jesus as a mighty Intercessor, One who had but to speak with the Most High and His request would surely be answered—this is a very commendable measure of faith—I wish that we all had as much! So much faith was something admirable, but it was not enough for her present comfort and, therefore, Jesus puts before her a fact even more honorable to Himself and then adds, "Do you believe this?"

Martha also expressed her firm conviction as to the certainty of the general Resurrection—"I know that my brother shall rise again in the Resurrection at the Last Day." She had gathered this, doubtless, from the Old Testament Scriptures and from the general belief among orthodox Hebrews. She may also have learned this master Truth of God from the teaching of the Savior, Himself. She was, in this great fundamental doctrine, a thoroughly sound believer, but she had not yet seen the Resurrection in the Christian light and perceived our Lord's connection with it. She had not yet learned enough to afford her comfort under her heavy loss, for it is clear that she derived very little consolation from the fact of a distant and general Resurrection—she needed resurrection and life to come nearer home and to become more a present fact to her.

Our Savior points her to a Truth concerning Himself which would answer that purpose and says to her, "I am the Resurrection and the Life: he that believes in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?" Here was a well of comfort from which she had never drank, because, like Hagar in the wilderness, she had never seen the Divine supply! Christ points her to it and asks her if she will not drink. I would to God,

dear Friends, that all of us who call ourselves Christians would, every now and then, go over the Bible and rehearse the great doctrines, in order, before our minds. We need to stop at each one of them and ask our heart and mind, "Do you believe this?"

Take, for instance, that great and earliest of doctrines, the Election of Grace. "Whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son." "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ; according as He has chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will." Pause over these texts and consider their evident meaning and then say to your own hearts, "Do you believe this?"

Some believers in Christ do not attempt to accept this doctrine and even call it horrible! And others speak of it as so mysterious and unpractical that it is not to be preached in public! I would invite such, honestly, to look the doctrine in the face and see whether they believe it or not, for if they do not, they may as well take a pen and cross out of the Word of God all passages which plainly teach it! They would not want to do this and yet they do that which amounts to the same thing! When a man is afraid of a doctrine—or ashamed of it—has grave cause to suspect that he does not believe it!

Take another grand Truth of God—"A man is justified by faith and not by the works of the Law." "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." "He that believes in Him is not condemned." The perfect pardon of the Believer—the complete justifying power of the righteousness of Christ to them that believe is plainly taught in the Bible—"Do you believe this?" If you do, why do you go every day and perpetually call yourself a "miserable sinner," when you are so no longer, but a blood-washed saint and a happy child of God? Why do you talk about your sin as if it were not forgiven and speak of yourself as if you were still "an heir of wrath, even as others," whereas you are justified in Christ Jesus and accepted in the Beloved? Look at the Scriptural Truth of God and at your conduct and then say to your-

self, "Do you believe this?"

Suppose you turn to the Scriptures and read of the union of Christ to His people, "I in them and You in Me, that they may be made perfect in one." "I am the vine, you are the branches." When you thus read, inquire of your heart, "Do you believe this?" Do you believe that all who live unto God are one with Christ? Do you believe this? If so, why are you troubled as to your acceptance with God since you are one with Christ? Why do you think that you shall ultimately perish if you are one with Him? Will Christ lose the members of His body? Shall it be that one after another the limbs of His mystical frame shall rot away and die? Has He not said, "Because I live you shall live also"? "Do you believe this?"

It may be that Brothers and Sisters will say of a certain Truth of God that this is a high doctrine, or a mysterious doctrine which seems almost too good to be true—but all this is wide of the mark. The one question is—Is it revealed? "King Agrippa," said Paul, "Do you believe the Prophets? I know that you

believe." So would I say to each one of you—if you believe the Prophets and the Apostles, why do you not believe, one by one, those great Truths of God which He has spoken by them? And if you believe them to be revealed, how dare you cast a slur upon them as being this, that and the other? I will not ask you to believe my statement, nor the statements of the theologians and divines, but turn to the Infallible Book, itself, and see what is written there and then ask yourself, "Do you believe this?"

As you meet with such-and-such a statement of Holy Writ, do not cut it down or quibble at it, nor twist it, nor try to see if some eminent commentator has not evaporated the very soul out of it! But believe it just as you find it and if you cannot do so, stop until you can and cry out to God for further Light till you can, without hesitation, answer the Savior's question and say, with Martha, "Yes, Lord." How this enquiry, well managed and pressed home, will enlarge the range of faith! How it will strengthen its grasp and hold! How rich would our souls become! Upon what meat would our inward confidence be fed if we would but treasure up each crumb of revealed Truth!

Search the Scriptures and take the teaching of the Word of God in detail, line by line and word by word—and then ask your soul, "Do you believe this?" Ask for an anointing from the Holy One that you may know all things and understand with all saints what are the heights and depths and know the love of Christ which passes knowledge. There will be profit connected with this, our first point, if each one will conscientiously catechize his mind and say, "Do you believe this particular doctrine of the Word?"

II. Our next division shall be briefly handled. DO YOU BELIEVE THIS DISTINCT DOCTRINE? I find, especially

among members of certain churches, great cloudiness as to their faith. I would not judge severely, but I notice that those

converted persons who come to us from certain quarters, which I will not now name, believe the Gospel, but it is too much after the manner of the collier in the old story. When he was asked, "What do you believe?" He answered, "I believe as the church believes." He was then questioned, "But what does the church believe?" He replied, "The church believes what I believe." Being further asked, "And what do you and the church believe?" He answered, "We both believe the same thing."

There was no getting further with him. Is not this kind of faith common enough at this day? Many who are called Christians have this blind faith and little more. This doting faith, in you know not what, is more fit for idiots than rational beings! Let those delight in it who are of slavish mind, or too idle to think for themselves. As for us, so long as we have eyes we shall not yield to walk blindfolded! We like a man to do his own thinking. Put your garments out to wash, if you please, but your thinking, you should do at home. There is no reaching the land of the Truth of God unless you will work your passage by thinking over the teaching of the Lord.

What I tell you, you may believe or not at your pleasure. But I beseech you, do not accept it for any other reason than that in your own judgment it is in accordance with the mind of God as unveiled in Holy Writ. God has given to each man a judgment and a conscience and an understanding—and these, the owner of them is bound to use! The Light of God is not given to all alike and hence the use of guides to such as have not great knowledge. But it can only be seen by a man's own eyes and he cannot look at objects by proxy. By experience some men have learned far more than others and hence they are useful helpers. But still, no man's experience of Grace can stand instead of my own—each one must feel and know the Divine Life in his own soul. As food must be masticated and digested by each man for the sustenance of his own

body, so must the Truth of God be read, marked, learned and inwardly digested by each man for the sustenance of his own soul.

The church of Rome says, "Yield an implicit faith to the church"—this is a fine platform for priestcraft and you see through the scheme in a minute! But we say the very reverse and charge you not to believe a single word that any one of us, or all of us put together, shall say to you if it is contrary to the Word of God! Read that Word for yourselves and search the Scriptures to see whether these things are so or not, for so did the Bereans of old and they were noble because of it and you shall be noble if you rise to the dignity of your manhood and, by the help of God, use your own sense and understanding and pray for the teaching of His Spirit that you may know what the Truth of God is.

Our Savior puts a certain Truth before good Martha in distinct terms. He left the general haze of the Resurrection in which she believed and said, "I who stand before you am the Resurrection and the Life. Do you believe this?" Do you believe the doctrine put in this clear form and shape? He gave her crisp, sharp, definite teaching and said, "Do you believe this?" He brought before her mental vision not an impalpable, shadowy image and specter of truth, but a solid, substantial statement that He, Himself, was the Resurrection and the Life, raising those who believe in Him from the dead and keeping in life those who, being alive, believe in Him. And then He demanded—"Do you believe this?"

A great many persons see doctrines in a kind of dim, hazy light and in that "darkness visible" they exercise a sort of faith, but they will never get comfort out of the Truth of God in that fashion. We must believe revealed Truth as we see it, in its own clear, well defined and accurate form as Scripture shows it. For instance, the doctrine of the Atonement is robbed of half its delight if indistinctly stated. Thousands of Christians believe in a kind of atonement, a means of reconciliation, a sort of propitiation made by Christ, which, in some way or other brings us to God. But, Beloved, I would have you believe that, "He, His own self bore our sins in His own body on the tree." "The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." Do you believe this?

"He has made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." Do you believe this? Read the 53rd chapter of Isaiah, in which you have Substitution set forth most clearly. Yes, read the chapter through and pause over such a verse as the 11th, "He shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied: by His knowledge shall My righteous Servant justify many; for He shall bear their iniquities." And then put it to yourself—Do you believe this? The very life and soul and sweetness of Atonement will be found in the Substitution of the innocent Savior for the guilty sinner in the actual bearing of the penalty of sin, the real payment of the debt—for then I know that I am clear, because He, in my place, has vindicated Justice, honored the Law and glorified God! Do you believe this?

Dear Friend, ask God to give you Grace that you may believe in what Christ has taught and what the Prophets and the Apostles have spoken exactly as it was meant that you should believe it, not in a haphazard, unreal way, but with your whole heart and soul and mind, accepting God's Word as it stands, in all its clearly cut lines and features. Have a quick and

true answer to the question, "Do you believe this distinct and clear Truth of God?" Pray to be able to answer, by His

Grace, "Yes, Lord!"

III. We will now go a little further, in the third place, to ask, "DO YOU BELIEVE THIS DIFFICULT TRUTH?" Certain Truths of God are hard to grasp. There are points about them which almost stagger faith till faith rises to her true character and is no longer dwarfed into carnal reasoning! But these difficult things are to be believed. It was not easy for Martha to understand how the Lord Jesus could, Himself, be the Resurrection and the Life and yet her brother was dead. It was not an easy Truth for her to believe, for it is not easy for us. How can he that died be alive? How can the Son of Man have such a wonderful power that resurrection and life should be entirely dependent upon Him? How can these things be?

We know the fact, but we do not understand it. It is well for us if we do not need to understand it, but regard it as sufficient for us to believe what is revealed even though, to our reason, it may seem a fathomless deep. Indeed, it was difficult for Martha to believe her Lord to be the Life because it seemed contrary to her experience. "Though he were dead, yet shall he live." She might hope that this was possible in the case of Lazarus, but then the Lord had said, "He that lives and believes in Me shall never die." How could that be true? Lazarus lived and believed in Jesus and yet he had died! Her experience seemed to be contrary to Christ's statement and this might have rendered it difficult to believe and, therefore, the Lord asked, "Do you believe this?"

But, my Brothers and Sisters, when we become Christians we cease to consider difficulties of belief, for we take the Scriptures upon Divine authority and submit ourselves implicitly to their teaching. At any rate, I have done so. What their church is to the Romanists, that is what the Bible and the Holy Spirit are to me! This done, no difficulty remains one-half so great as those which I have surmounted! I believed, first of all, that God was in Christ—that He who made the heavens and the earth came down below and took upon Himself human nature, was born at Bethlehem, was cradled in a manger and did suck His nourishment from a woman's breast. After having believed that, I can believe anything! An Incarnate God, once accepted, no difficulty need stagger my faith!

Martha's speech—"I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world"—proved her readiness to believe all else that Jesus might teach. The Incarnation, to begin with—without which believing a man can be no Christian at all—is so profound a mystery that other teachings are simple in its presence! "Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh." Once rejoice in the Light of God, which is the very daystar of hope to us—that God has taken into union with Himself our human nature—and you are ready for all Light! Only let me know that God says anything is true and that is enough for me!

I do not quite join with the poor old woman in her words, but I agree with her spirit, who put her implicit faith in Scripture in the most unguarded way, when someone ridiculed her for believing that the whale swallowed Jonah. "Dear," she said, "if the Word of God had said that Jonah swallowed the whale I would have believed it." Brothers and Sisters, prostrate yourselves before the utterance of God! Not before man's dictum or dogma! Not before the utterance of priest, presbyter, pastor, or philosopher! But before God, who cannot err, we prostrate our souls! In Him you must place implicit faith. Let Him say what He wills, we must believe it and that not in one case or 20, but in all that He says. "Do you believe this?"—and this?—and this? Whatever it is?

Yes, if it is, indeed, taught in Infallible Scripture by the Holy Spirit of God, we believe it! If your faith does not rise to this mark, evil will happen to it. Our Lord said, one day, to a company of those who were His followers, "Except you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. For My flesh is meat, indeed, and My blood is drink, indeed. He that eats My flesh and drinks My blood dwells in

Me and I in him." What followed? Read on. "Many, therefore, of His disciples, when they had heard this, said, This is an hard saying; who can bear it? From that time many of His disciples went back and walked no more with Him."

They said, "Can this Man give us His flesh to eat?" and they came to the conclusion that it could not be and deserted their Teacher. Do we wish to do this? The Lord Jesus Christ, at the very outset of His ministry, prepares us to believe hard things. He bids us count the cost about this as well as everything else. Although we already believe certain mysteries, there are many more that we do not know of as yet which will, in due course, demand our faith. Did not Jesus say to Nicodemus when Nicodemus had been told of being born again and that had staggered him, "If I have told you earthly things and you believe not, how shall you believe if I tell you of heavenly things?" As if even regeneration, which is really full of heavenli-ness, were but a commonplace Truth of God compared with what Nicodemus had yet to believe!

If Nicodemus had said, "Good Master, I can go as far as this, but I reserve my judgment and shall venture no further," then the ruler of the Jews and the Son of God would have parted, for he cannot be Christ's disciple who will not receive all Christ's words—let those words be what they may. Do you believe this, then? This difficult Truth of God? I put this very earnestly to some of you because it may be that at this moment you are in trouble from lack of faith in a promise or a doctrine which seems hard to you. You have a promise, "When you pass through the fire you shall not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon you." Do you believe this, though all things appear to be consumed in the heat of your affliction?

It may be that you are under a peculiar cloud and dense gloom and yet Jesus declares, "I am the Light of the world, he that follows me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the Light of life." And, again, "Whoever believes Me shall not abide in darkness." Do you believe this? Can you laugh at impossibility and say it shall be done because God has said it? Do you not know that things impossible with men are possible with God? Can your faith leap over the head of carnal reason? Can present circumstances and the deductions of your own judgment all be waved aside by the left hand as you say, "Let God be true and every man a liar"? If so, you have the faith which will comfort and bless you! But if not, like Martha, you will be bowed down with sorrow since you have not yet believed the Truth of God which can cheer you.

IV. Fourthly, to pass on—"Do you believe this?" that is, DO YOU BELIEVE THIS TRUTH AS IT STANDS CONNECTED WITH JESUS? I called your attention, just now, to the fact that Martha believed that there would be a resurrection. "Yes," says Christ, "but I am the Resurrection. Do you believe this?" Now it is one thing to believe doctrine, but it is another thing to believe that doctrine as it is embodied in the Person of Jesus Christ. "Do you believe this?" There the comfort lies—in believing the Truth of God as you find it in Him who is the Truth of God! Martha was called upon to believe, first, in Christ's personal power. "The dead will rise." "True, Martha, but do you believe that I shall make them rise—that it is through Me the dead shall live? Yes, that I am the Life and Resurrection? Do you believe that?"

She was to believe, moreover, in His present power. Mark that. "Even now," says Jesus, "I am the Resurrection and the Life; he that lives and believes in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live and whoever lives and believes in Me, shall never die." It is one thing to believe that Jesus will have power at the Last Day to raise the dead—but do we believe that He is, even now, the Resurrection and the Life? Oh the bliss of believing in the personal power of Christ and in the present power of Christ! Jesus, the I AM, says, "I am the Resurrection and the Life."

Moreover, Martha was called on to believe in the union of Christ with His people—that they are one with Him, that they are partakers of His life, that if they should come under the power of death they should be delivered out of it and that being out of the power of death they shall never come under it—in Christ the dead shall live, the living shall not die. "Oh," says one, "but I myself do not comprehend this, for I see good people die." Yes, you see what you think is death, but they do not truly die—they rise into a higher life. That which is the essence of death never touches Believers—they "depart out of the world unto the Father." They go "to be with Christ, which is far better"—they do not die! Death as a penal sentence, in its innermost meaning, never comes near to those for whom Jesus has borne death upon the Cross! His death, in their place, is the death of Death to them. Do you believe this?

Come now, let us each one ask, Do I really believe that Christ Jesus has all power in Heaven and in earth? Do I worship Him as God over all, blessed forever? Do I believe He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that I ask or even think? And when I come in prayer before God, do I so believe in Christ that I remember His promise, "Whatever you shall ask the Father in My name I will give to you"? Not the Father, but Jesus! Even Christ Himself will give you all things! Have you such a notion and idea of your Lord that you know that He can do all things for you right now and, that in answer to your prayer He can grant you any blessing and save you out of any trouble and every trouble—do you believe this? If you do not you have no right idea of Christ, for He is Lord of all. "You are the King of Glory, O Christ," and as such we do believe in You and trust You and find comfort in Your present, personal power!

V. We must now pass on to a fifth head. Do you believe this?—that is to say, DO YOU BELIEVE THIS TRUTH

WHICH IS APPLICABLE TO YOURSELF NOW? That was the point with Martha and this was the place wherein she fell

short. She believed that all would rise. But Jesus virtually says—"Do you believe that I am the Resurrection and the Life, because if it is so, I am able to raise your brother at once—do you believe this?" Now, observe that we sometimes believe great Truths of God and yet we are staggered by lesser Truths because, it may be, the great Truth has no practical bearing upon us just now, while the present Truth, though it is somewhat less in other respects, has a greater practical bearing upon ourselves and our condition.

We doubt the promise most necessary to our comfort! For look, she believes that all will rise—well, then, it was a much smaller thing to believe that one would rise! She doubts whether Lazarus can rise because he is in the grave, yet she believes that millions upon millions will rise from the ground. Doubtless that was because of the distance of the time and the scene. Some such feeling must have operated on her mind, for the general Resurrection is the greater difficulty. Is it hard to believe that Lazarus can rise who has been dead four days? Well, then, it is a great deal harder to believe that bodies can be quickened which have been dead several hundreds of years! Yet she did believe that the dead would rise at the Resurrection at the Last Day—not only those who were stinking, but those whose bodies had been dissolved by corruption and scattered by the four winds of heaven to the utmost ends of the earth!

She believed the miracle on a grand scale, so she said, but when it came home to one person who had only been dead four days she could not believe it! She believed that there should be a general Resurrection of all sorts of people and yet, if that can be believed, it is much easier to expect that a favorite of Christ like Lazarus should rise! Jesus loved Lazarus— surely He will call him from the tomb! I

say she professed to believe the larger Truth of God and then she staggered at the lesser because it was applicable to herself. I beg you to see whether you are not often walking in the same path. Yonder is a poor soul who believes that Jesus Christ can wash away all sin. Now, my dear Friend, do you believe that He can wash your sins away?

That is the point because all the sins of millions are much greater than yours can be and if Jesus can take away the sins of so many, surely He can take away yours! Do you believe this? Will you come and trust Him for yourself? And you, Christian, you believe, in general, that all things work together for good to those who love God—do you believe that all your ills, little and great, are working good for you? Will that toothache of yours work for your good? Do you believe that yesterday's bad debt will work for good? Do you believe that the death of your child will work for good? You know it must be easier to believe that the events of one day will work for good than to believe that all things in the world throughout life will do so and yet it may be you are staggered at your present trials and you confess your misgivings!

Have you faith in everything but that which would comfort you? Have you everything but the special requirement of the hour? How odd! How sad that the carpenter needs to drive a nail and he has all his tools with him except his hammer! What is he to do? What is the good of all his other tools? If you can believe everything except the Truth of God which would cheer you at this present moment, you are depriving yourself of comfort and strength! Believe this present promise given for this very day—the Lord has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." Do you believe this? "Underneath are the everlasting arms." Do you believe this?

"Your shoes shall be iron and brass, and as your days so shall your strength be." Do you believe this? God's Word is as the Tree of Life which yields its fruit every month. What a blessing to take the fruit from the Tree of Life in its month just when it is ripest and full of flavor. He has said, "Delight yourself, also, in the Lord and He will give you the desire of your heart." Since you delight in Him, He will hear your prayer and give you the light of His Countenance. "Do you believe

this?"

VI. The last point shall be this—DO YOU BELIEVE THIS PRACTICAL TRUTH? Martha said that she believed it. But her actions did not prove it. She comprehended the belief in the Lord's word in her declaration, "Yes, Lord, I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world." But yet she did not believe so as to act on the belief. Coleridge says, "Truths, of all others the most awful and mysterious and at the same time of universal interest, are too often considered as so true that they lose all the power of truth and lie bed-ridden in the dormitory of the soul, side by side with the most despised and exploded errors."

How true is the remark! Do you not know people who are better than their creed? Why is that? Why, for the very same reason that many people are worse than their creed, because their creed is asleep and is not operating upon them—they believe as though they did not believe! This is a poor imitation of faith. There is, at this moment, a house on fire in London. I will suppose that I know the fact and tell you of it and you believe it. But what do you care? Not one of you stirs. Yes, but if you saw the engine hurrying along the street and believed that your own house was blazing, I guarantee you, you would bestir yourselves!

Your belief would come a little more home to you as your own concern. So there are certain Truths of God which do not seem to concern us to any high degree, at least for the present. They are true and important, but they operate no more upon us than if they were fictions. Martha says she believes in Jesus as the

Resurrection and the Life, yet what is her action?

Christ commands the bystanders to take away the stone from the sepulcher and she interposes with her cry, "Lord, by this time he stinks!" She fears the obnoxious consequences of uncovering such a mass of corruption, though He who is the Resurrection and the Life stands at the grave's mouth! Ah, Martha, where is your faith in Him? Dear heart, she says that she believes in Jesus as the Resurrection and the Life and yet she is afraid that her brother will not rise though the Mighty One stands there to raise him!

Is she not just like you and I? We believe that God hears prayer and, therefore, we pray. But if the Lord desires to surprise us, He has only to answer our requests! I have seen God's children running with vast astonishment to tell their friends, "Here is a wonderful thing! Oh, such a marvelous event has happened to me! I offered a prayer and God has heard me." An amazing thing that God should do as He said He would? They put these things in books as marvels and call the volume, "Remarkable Answers to Prayer." Dear me, is it remarkable that it is cold when it freezes? Do we speak of the remarkable warmth of the sun's beams at midsummer? Is it remarkable that the fires in our houses should warm us when we put our hands to them? Is He a remarkable God because He says He will hear prayer and does? An answer to prayer should be remembered with gratitude and yet it should be regarded as the most natural thing in all the world that our heavenly Father should fulfill His promises to His children.

It is a great wonder that God should promise, but not a wonder that He should perform. It is marvelous that God should promise to hear prayer, but no wonder at all that when He has promised to do so He is as good as His Word. Brothers and Sisters, we are, to a great degree, unpractical in other respects, also, and we may take up many and many a Truth of God that we do not act upon and say to our heart, "Do you believe this?" Might I not step outside the door, this morning, and, putting my hand upon a fainting Believer as he left the house say, "Do you believe your God?" You say, "I am so faint in spirit that I shall utterly fall and perish at the last." But the Lord has said, "He gives power to the faint and to them that have no might, He increases strength." Do you believe this?

I might go to another who is sighing and crying because of his poverty and say to him, "God has said, 'No good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly.' Do you believe this?" What would the complainer say? How could he reconcile his discomfort and his murmuring with his belief in the comforting promise? My Brothers and Sisters, let us, then, go over these matters with our souls. We call ourselves Believers, but are we? If it is so that one after another we doubt the precious things of God when they come before us in detail, where is our faith? Let us entreat our God to grant us Divine Grace that we may put our finger on this doctrine, on that promise and on the other assurance and say of each one, "Lord, I believe this, and I believe this, and I believe this—for I believe whatever You say in Your Word and I know that it shall be even as You have told me."

God bless you, Beloved, and be always with you for Christ's sake. Amen.

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