

Sermon on

“FAITH”

The present is a time of transition, of passage from death to life, from stagnation to activity. The actual is giving place to another form and dispensation; the last shall be first established, and then it shall be first and all. There is in every man a witness who will declare to him his duty and show him the way to perform it. Do you believe it, O formal sectarian, O imaginative spiritualist? Do you believe God can make known to each of His finite images what is His will and how they can please Him? Do you feel willing that He should do so, or do you ask and hope that He will let you follow your own chosen path, whether it lead to a returning circle or a diverging erratic course; whether it remains bounded by the wall of a sect, or disdains the control of God's laws; whether it be the blind guide or the unseeing one, the visionary, the contriver of the unworthy theory that man's reason is sufficient for him and can enable him to try the spirits?

In the minds of all men is a desire to be happy and a desire to know what future happiness will consist of. There is only one fountain of bliss and that is God. Man cannot be guided by God without experiencing the reward of obedience; neither can he be led by reason or carnal affection without experiencing unhappiness. There is for man but one path for happiness, only one strait and narrow way that leads to life eternal in God, and that is obedience and submission to God as his only Master, securing every exertion and monopolizing every faculty of the human will, and being to the man all in all. Not that man is not bound to exert every faculty pertaining to his body and mind, but that he shall exert them in submission to that Master he ought to choose and devote himself to, securing and establishing in his own and other minds the knowledge and love of God and of His will and requirements, His power and His attributes.

The love of God is a fire which consumes everything which is not of its own nature or semblance or in harmony with it. The man who possesses love of God manifests it in his conduct and realizes it in his daily life. He acts in fear of God but not in fear of God's judgments, for he loves God and believes God loves him. He fears separation from God by an obscuring or withdrawal of his love for God, not that God will punish him for this, but that in consequence of it he must be separated from God until he can again form and establish in his heart that love which brings him into harmony with God and into a reciprocal interchange of love with Him. He does not need to declare his love by words, for he declares it by his acts, but he may declare it by words whenever those words will benefit other men and lead them to establish the same relationship to God, the same union and harmony, the communion and interchange of love and action between themselves and God.

It is this union and communion of which all others are but a type, and it is this which makes a man a son of God. It is not man's own effort which accomplishes this, but it will not be accomplished without man's own effort. God will help, but He must be asked. God will work, but man must be willing to be worked upon. God is our Father, but He wants us to acknowledge it, and He will have us do so before we are allowed to experience that

we are His sons. Be, then, desirous to seek God where and when He is to be found. He is everywhere, but we can experience His presence nowhere except within ourselves! The prophet in olden time could not discover Him in the whirlwind or the earthquake, but in the still small voice which does not reach even the outward ear, much less shake and alarm a whole community. Only the internal of man can hear this voice, and he only will hear it who listens with ardent and pure desires for its manifestation within him. He only will hear it who has faith in God and love for Him: faith in Him as a Divine Master, a ruling power, an unfailing source of everlasting happiness; love for Him as a Father, affection for Him as a Friend, and confidence in Him as the source of all truth.

Let all, then, seek God where and when He is to be found; let all be ready to retain Him, or their knowledge of Him, when found; and let everyone show by his life, conversation, and action that he knew of His manifestation to them, and that he regards Him as King of Kings, by which should be understood that His commands are to them higher than any other law and that He will be obeyed rather than the favor of men, the violence of a mob, or the decrees of the most powerful of earthly governments.