

HOW TO HAVE FAITH

He put before them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches" (Matthew 13:31, 32).

When they came to the crowd, a man came to him, knelt before him, and said, "Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is an epileptic and he suffers terribly; he often falls into the fire and often into the water. And I brought him to your disciples, but they could not cure him." Jesus answered, "You faithless and perverse generation, how much longer must I be with you? How much longer must I put up with you? Bring him here to me" (Matthew 17:14-17).

Everyone wants to have peace of mind. But you know you can't buy it or earn it. What a relief to discover you can have it as a gift! No matter what evils may have been part of your former way of life, as you confess them to Jesus He'll forgive them all, give you a new heart (to use the Bible's metaphor), and let you start all over again. He really does give you a genuine second chance, because that's precisely what He's promised.

While on this earth Jesus taught us that the gifts He promises are ours if we believe. He healed many people of their illnesses and disabilities when they placed their faith in

His power. That help in the physical realm gave them the confidence that they could trust Him for a similar miracle in the spiritual realm.

Do you recall the story of the paralytic at Bethesda? This man was helpless; he hadn't used his limbs for 38 years. Yet Jesus simply told him, "Stand up, take your bed and go to your home" (Matthew 9:6). This poor fellow could have come up with any number of arguments why He couldn't do that, based on 38 years of experience, but he believed Jesus, believed he could walk. He made the decision to try. And the moment he made the decision to be responsive to Jesus' words, God supplied the power! He walked!⁶²

It's the same with a spiritual miracle. None of us, of ourselves, can do anything about our past sins. We can't change our hearts or make ourselves in the least good. But God promises to do it for us through Jesus. All He asks is that we believe His promise, ask forgiveness for our sins, and commit ourselves to Him. In other words, we make a decision; we use our will. And the moment we believe—believe we are forgiven and cleansed—God supplies the fact. So keep thinking about that paralyzed person. He was healed. And spiritually, the same can happen to us, too, if we believe it.

Don't wait to feel good about your decision. Say to yourself, "I believe it; it's so, because God promised." Then never turn back! From that day you'll be a new person.⁶³

You see, once you've given yourself to Jesus in this way and accepted Him as your Savior, He sees you as completely good, no matter how sinful your life may have been. In fact, from that moment Jesus' character stands in place of your character from His point of view. He sees you as if you had never sinned at all. What a gift!⁶⁴

As time goes by, you may have to deal with a suspicion

or two that this promise is meant for someone else, but not you. At such a moment God's angels will surround you, bringing God's grace and strength and the reminder that there is no sin He can't forgive if you repent and confess it.⁶⁵