

Leaning on the Beloved.

Andrew Bonar:

'Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved ?'

Song 8: 5

Leaning on the Beloved is faith - faith which looks out to Christ, as distinguished from feeling, which looks in to self. Faith has regard to what the Lord has done and spoken, both in respect of justification and sanctification.

I. There are many cases in which we have no express promise to plead, and yet faith has room for work.

The Syro-Phoenician woman had no such promise, neither had the centurion, and they were both Gentiles, and their requests were for temporal blessings. Yet in both cases Christ was delighted with their confidence in Him. These were the only cases in which He said He had found great faith, and He gave them all they wanted. The Syro-Phoenician woman had heard about Christ and His ways, the kindness and compassion He showed to multitudes. What He did for others He could do for her daughter, and she determined to apply to Him. All apparent repulse could not shake her out of faith in Himself. 'Truth, Lord, yet' -. The centurion felt utterly unworthy, and had very low thoughts of himself but he had most lofty thoughts of Christ's Person, and true thoughts of His heart. 'Speak the word only.' Faith believes no ill of God, but all good of Him. It leans on His graciousness, even when it cannot point to His faithfulness and say, 'Do as Thou hast said.'

II. The Lord is delighted with faith manifested in this form. 'Do this for me, for Thou art gracious,' rather than 'because Thou art faithful.' David showed this faith in God when he preferred to fall into the hands of God rather than into those of men. Such confidence in Him gives Christ joy. Shall we not gratify Him by confiding in Him, whether we have a promise or no?

III. The Lord owned the faith of these two by doing what He had not promised to do, after trying their faith. Similar cases are ever occurring amongst ourselves. You are praying for a friend in sickness or trouble. You can't go to Him saying He has promised to remove these, and it may not be for His glory that they should be removed. Perhaps you look at the verse, 'Whatsoever ye shall ask in faith, believing, ye shall receive,' and yet you can't put your foot on a promise for the blessing asked, and so you can't ask believing that you have it. But yet faith has its sphere here. It looks at God's graciousness - just what Abraham did on Mount Moriah. He offered up Isaac, believing that the Lord who had given him would raise him up again, though he knew not how. God has not bound Himself to give you what you ask, but your prayer will be heard, and He will have respect to your faith in Him.

So with prayer for the conversion of friends, either for an individual, a family, or a community. He does in hundreds of cases what we ask because He has respect to our faith in Him. But, nevertheless, all who are prayed for are not saved. Were it so, what would be the result? If it were certain that all prayed for by Christian friends would be saved, the unsaved would put their trust in these prayers. Ambrose's assurance to Monica, the mother of Augustine, 'The child of so many prayers cannot be lost,' was only strong feeling. Absalom was such a one, and yet, 'O Absalom, my son, my son, would God I had died for thee!' Unconverted one, repent and believe the Gospel, or prayers for you will be in vain.

Hold up to God, in pleading for others, the atoning sacrifice, and point to Pentecost in your pleadings for the souls of men, and, at the same time, testify to them of these - pleading with God for them, and pleading with them for God.

Believer, have you ever taken your stand on a promise and got all the blessing contained in it?