

Andrew Murray:

‘Therefore I say unto you, All things whatsoever ye pray and ask for, believe that ye have received them, and ye shall have them.’—Mark xi. 24

WHAT a promise! so large, so Divine, that our little hearts cannot take it in, and in every possible way seek to limit it to what we think safe or probable; instead of allowing it, in its quickening power and energy, just as He gave it, to enter in, and to enlarge our hearts to the measure of what His love and power are really ready to do for us. Faith is very far from being a mere conviction of the truth of God’s word, or a conclusion drawn from certain premises. It is the ear which has heard God say what He will do, the eye which has seen Him doing it, and, therefore, where there is true faith, it is impossible but the answer must come. If we only see to it that we do the one thing that He asks of us as we pray: BELIEVE that ye have received; He will see to it that He does the thing He has promised: ‘Ye shall have them.’ The key-note of Solomon’s prayer (2 Chron. vi. 4), ‘Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, who hath with His hands fulfilled that which He spake with His mouth to my father David,’ is the key-note of all true prayer: the joyful adoration of a God whose hand always secures the fulfilment of what His mouth hath spoken. Let us in this spirit listen to the promise Jesus gives; each part of it has its Divine message.

‘All things whatsoever.’ At this first word our human wisdom at once begins to doubt and ask: This surely cannot be literally true? But if it be not, why did the Master speak it, using the very strongest expression He could find: ‘All things whatsoever.’ And it is not as if this were the only time He spoke thus; is it not He who also said, ‘If thou canst believe, ALL THINGS are possible to him that believeth;’ ‘If ye have faith, NOTHING shall be impossible to you.’ Faith is so wholly the work of God’s Spirit through His word in the prepared heart of the believing disciple, that it is impossible that the fulfilment should not come; faith is the pledge and forerunner of the coming answer. Yes, ‘ALL THINGS WHATSOEVER ye shall ask in prayer believing, ye receive.’ The tendency of human reason is to interpose here, and with certain qualifying clauses, ‘if expedient,’ ‘if according to God’s will,’ to break the force of a statement which appears dangerous. O let us beware of dealing thus with the Master’s words. His promise is most literally true. He wants His oft repeated ‘ALL THINGS’ to enter into our hearts, and reveal to us how mighty the power of faith is, how truly the Head calls the members to share with Him in His power, how wholly our Father places His power at the disposal of the child that wholly trusts Him. In this ‘all things’ faith is to have its food and strength: as we weaken it we weaken faith. The WHATSOEVER is unconditional: the only condition is what is implied in the believing. Ere we can believe we must find out and know what God’s will is; believing is the exercise of a soul surrendered and given up to the influence of the Word and the Spirit; but when once we do believe nothing shall be impossible. God forbid that we should try and bring down His ALL THINGS to the level of what we think possible. Let us now simply take Christ’s ‘WHATSOEVER’ as the measure and the hope of our faith: it is a seed-word which, if taken just as He gives it, and kept in the heart, will unfold itself and strike root, fill our life with its fulness, and bring forth fruit abundantly.

‘All things whatsoever ye pray and ask for.’ It is in prayer that these ‘all things’ are to be brought to God, to be asked and received of Him. The faith that receives them is the fruit of the prayer. In one aspect there must be faith before there can be prayer; in another the faith is the outcome and the growth of prayer. It is in the personal presence of the Saviour, in intercourse with Him, that faith rises to grasp what at first appeared too high. It is in prayer that we hold up our desire to the light of God’s Holy Will, that our motives are tested, and proof given whether we ask indeed in the name of Jesus, and only for the glory of God. It is in prayer that we wait for the leading of the Spirit to show us whether we are asking the right thing and in the right spirit. It is in prayer that we become conscious of our want of faith, that we are led on to say to the Father that we do believe, and that we prove the reality of our faith by the confidence with which we persevere. It is in prayer that Jesus teaches and inspires faith. He that waits to pray, or loses heart in prayer, because he does not yet feel the faith needed to get the answer, will never learn to believe. He who begins to pray and ask will find the Spirit of faith is given nowhere so surely as at the foot of the Throne.

‘Believe that ye have received.’ It is clear that what we are to believe is, that we receive the very things we ask. The Saviour does not hint that because the Father knows what is best He may give us something else. The very mountain faith bids depart is cast into the sea. There is a prayer in which, in everything, we make known our requests with prayer and supplication, and the reward is the sweet peace of God keeping heart and mind. This is the prayer of trust. It has reference to things of which we cannot find out if God is going to give

them. As children we make known our desires in the countless things of daily life, and leave it to the Father to give or not as He thinks best. But the prayer of faith of which Jesus speaks is something different, something higher. When, whether in the greater interests of the Master's work, or in the lesser concerns of our daily life, the soul is led to see how there is nothing that so honours the Father as the faith that is assured that He will do what He has said in giving us whatsoever we ask for, and takes its stand on the promise as brought home by the Spirit, it may know most certainly that it does receive exactly what it asks. Just see how clearly the Lord sets this before us in verse 23: 'Whosoever shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that what he saith cometh to pass, he shall have it.' This is the blessing of the prayer of faith of which Jesus speaks.

'Believe that ye have received.' This is the word of central importance, of which the meaning is too often misunderstood. Believe that you have received! now, while praying, the thing you ask for. It may only be later that you shall have it in personal experience, that you shall see what you believe; but now, without seeing, you are to believe that it has been given you of the Father in heaven. The receiving or accepting of an answer to prayer is just like the receiving or accepting of Jesus or of pardon, a spiritual thing, an act of faith apart from all feeling. When I come as a supplicant for pardon, I believe that Jesus in heaven is for me, and so I receive or take Him. When I come as a supplicant for any special gift, which is according to God's word, I believe that what I ask is given me: I believe that I have it, I hold it in faith; I thank God that it is mine. 'If we know that He heareth us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions which we have asked of Him.'

'And ye shall have them.' That is, the gift which we first hold in faith as bestowed upon us in heaven will also become ours in personal experience. But will it be needful to pray longer if once we know we have been heard and have received what we asked? There are cases in which such prayer will not be needful, in which the blessing is ready to break through at once, if we but hold fast our confidence, and prove our faith by praising for what we have received, in the face of our not yet having it in experience. There are other cases in which the faith that has received needs to be still further tried and strengthened in persevering prayer. God only knows when everything in and around us is fully ripe for the manifestation of the blessing that has been given to faith. Elijah knew for certain that rain would come; God had promised it; and yet he had to pray the seven times. And that prayer was no show or play; an intense spiritual reality in the heart of him who lay pleading there, and in the heaven above where it had its effectual work to do. It is 'through faith and patience we inherit the promises.' Faith says most confidently, I have received it. Patience perseveres in prayer until the gift bestowed in heaven is seen on earth. 'Believe that ye have received, and ye shall have.' Between the have received in heaven, and the shall have of earth, believe: believing praise and prayer is the link.

And now, remember one thing more: It is Jesus who said this. As we see heaven thus opened to us, and the Father on the Throne offering to give us whatsoever we ask in faith, our hearts feel full of shame that we have so little availed ourselves of our privilege, and full of fear lest our feeble faith still fail to grasp what is so clearly placed within our reach. There is one thing must make us strong and full of hope: it is Jesus who has brought us this message from the Father. He Himself, when He was on earth, lived the life of faith and prayer. It was when the disciples expressed their surprise at what He had done to the fig-tree, that He told them that the very same life He led could be theirs; that they could not only command the fig-tree, but the very mountain, and it must obey. And He is our life: all He was on earth He is in us now; all He teaches He really gives. He is Himself the Author and the Perfecter of our faith: He gives the spirit of faith; let us not be afraid that such faith is not meant for us. It is meant for every child of the Father; it is within reach of each one who will but be childlike, yielding himself to the Father's Will and Love, trusting the Father's Word and Power. Dear fellow-Christian! let the thought that this word comes through Jesus, the Son, our Brother, give us courage, and let our answer be: Yea, Blessed Lord, we do believe Thy Word, we do believe that we receive.

'LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY.'

— — — — —

Blessed Lord! Thou didst come from the Father to show us all His love, and all the treasures of blessing that love is waiting to bestow. Lord! Thou hast this day again flung the gates so wide open, and given us such promises as to our liberty in prayer, that we must blush that our poor hearts have so little taken it in. It has been too large for us to believe.

Lord! we now look up to Thee to teach us to take and keep and use this precious word of Thine: 'All things whatsoever ye ask, believe that ye have received.' Blessed Jesus! it is Thy self in whom our faith must be

Believe that ye have received

rooted if it is to grow strong. Thy work has freed us wholly from the power of sin, and opened the way to the Father; Thy Love is ever longing to bring us into the full fellowship of Thy glory and power; Thy Spirit is ever drawing us upward into a life of perfect faith and confidence; we are assured that in Thy teaching we shall learn to pray the prayer of faith. Thou wilt train us to pray so that we believe that we receive, to believe that we really have what we ask. Lord! teach me so to know and trust and love Thee, so to live and abide in Thee, that all my prayers rise up and come before God in Thee, and that my soul may have in Thee the assurance that I am heard. Amen.