

38 - The Story of Little-Faith

Then said CHRISTIAN to his fellow, "Now I call to remembrance that which was told me of a thing that happened to a good man hereabout. The name of the man was LITTLE-FAITH; but a good man, and he dwelt in the town of Sincere. The thing was this: at the entering in of this passage, there comes down from Broadway gate a lane called Deadman's Lane; so called because of the murders that are commonly done there. And this LITTLE-FAITH going on pilgrimage, as we do now, chanced to sit down there, and slept. Now there happened, at that time, to come down the lane from Broadway gate three sturdy rogues, and their names were FAINT-HEART, MISTRUST, and GUILT (three brothers); and they, espying LITTLE-FAITH where he was, came galloping up with speed. Now the good man was just awaked from his sleep, and was getting up to go on his journey; so they came all up to him, and, with threatening language, bade him stand. At this, LITTLE-FAITH looked as white as a clout; and had neither power to fight nor fly. Then said FAINT-HEART, 'Deliver thy purse;' but he making no haste to do it (for he was loth to lose his money), MISTRUST ran up to him, and thrusting his hand into his pocket, pulled out thence a bag of silver. Then he cried out, 'Thieves! thieves!' With that, GUILT, with a great club that was in his hand, struck LITTLE-FAITH on the head, and with that blow felled him flat to the ground; where he lay bleeding, as one that would bleed to death. All this while the thieves stood by; but at last, they hearing that some were upon the road, and fearing lest it should be one GREAT-GRACE, that dwells in the city of Good-confidence, they betook themselves to their heels, and left this good man to shift for himself. Now, after awhile, LITTLE-FAITH came to himself; and getting up, made shift to scabble on his way. This was the story."

Hope. But did they take from him all that ever he had?

Chr. No; the place where his jewels were they never ransacked, so those he kept still; but, as I was told, the good man was much afflicted for his loss, for the thieves got most of his spending money. That which they got not (as I said) were jewels; also he had a little odd money left, but scarce enough to bring him to his journey's end (#1Pe 4:18); nay (if I was not misinformed), he was forced to beg as he went, to keep himself alive (for his jewels he might not sell). But beg, and do what he could, he went (as we say) "with many a hungry belly" the most part of the rest of the way.

Hope. But is it not a wonder they got not from him his certificate by which he was to receive his admittance at the Celestial Gate?

Chr. 'T is a wonder but they got not that, though they missed it not through any good cunning of his; for he being dismayed with their coming upon him, had neither power nor skill to hide anything: so 't was more by good providence than by his endeavour that they missed of that good thing (#2Ti 1:14 2Pe 2:9).

Hope. But it must be a comfort to him that they got not his jewels from him.

Chr. It might have been great comfort to him, had he used it as he should; but they that told me the story, said, That he made but little use of it all the rest of the way; and that because of the dismay that he had in their taking away of his money: indeed, he forgot it a great part of the rest of the journey. And besides, when at any time it came into his mind, and he began to be comforted therewith, then would fresh thoughts of his loss come again upon him; and those thoughts would swallow up all.

Hope. Alas, poor man, this could not but be a great grief unto him.

Chr. Grief! Aye, a grief indeed; would it not have been so to any of us, had we been used as he, to be robbed and wounded too, and that in a strange place, as he was? 'Tis a wonder he did not die with grief, poor heart! I was told, that he scattered almost all the rest of the way with nothing but doleful and bitter complaints. Telling also to all that overtook him, or that he overtook in the way as he went, where he was robbed, and how; who they were that did it, and what he lost; how he was wounded, and that he hardly escaped with life.

Hope. But 'tis a wonder that his necessities did not put him upon selling or pawning some of his jewels, that he might have wherewith to relieve himself in his journey.

Chr. Thou talkest like one upon whose head is the shell to this very day; for what should he pawn them? or to whom should he sell them? In all that country where he was robbed his jewels were not accounted of, nor did he want that relief which could from thence be administered to him; besides, had his jewels been missing at the gate of the Celestial City, he had (and that he knew well enough) been excluded from an inheritance there; and that would have been worse to him than the appearance and villainy of ten thousand thieves.

Hope. Why art thou so tart, my brother? Esau sold his birthright, and that for a mess of pottage; and that birthright was his greatest jewel (#Heb 12:16): and if he, why might not LITTLE-FAITH do so too?

Chr. Esau did sell his birthright indeed, and so do many besides; and by so doing, exclude themselves from the chief blessing, as also that knave did. But you must put a difference betwixt Esau and LITTLE-FAITH; and also betwixt their estates. Esau's birthright was typical; but LITTLE-FAITH'S jewels were not so. Esau's belly was his god; but LITTLE-FAITH'S belly was not so (#Ge 25:32). Esau's want lay in his fleshly appetite; LITTLE-FAITH'S did not so. Besides, Esau could see not further than to the fulfilling of his lusts: "For I am at the point to die," said he; "and what good will this birthright do me?" But LITTLE-FAITH, though it was his lot to have but a little faith, was by his little faith kept from such extravagances, and made to see and prize his jewels more than to sell them, as Esau did his birthright. You read not anywhere that Esau had faith, no, not so much as a little: therefore no marvel, if where the flesh only bears sway (as it will in the man where no faith is to resist), if he sells his birthright, and his soul and all, and that to the devil of hell; for it is with such as it is with the ass, who in her occasion cannot be turned away (#Jer 2:24). When their minds are set upon their lusts, they will have them, whatever they cost. But LITTLE-FAITH was of another temper, his mind was on things divine; his livelihood was upon things that were spiritual, and from above: therefore, to what end should he that is of such a temper sell his jewels (had there been any that would have bought them), to fill his mind with empty things? Will a man give a penny to fill his belly with hay? or can you persuade the turtledove to live upon carrion, like the crow? Though faithless ones can, for carnal lusts, pawn, or mortgage, or sell what they have, and themselves outright to boot; yet they that have faith, saving faith, though but a little of it, cannot do so. Here, therefore, my brother, is thy mistake.

Hope. I acknowledge it; but yet your severe reflection had almost made me angry.

Chr. Why, I did but compare thee to some of the birds that are of the brisker sort, who will run to and fro in trodden paths with the shell upon their heads; but pass by that and consider the matter under

debate, and all shall be well betwixt thee and me.

Hope. But, CHRISTIAN, these three fellows, I am persuaded in my heart, are but a company of cowards: would they have run else, think you, as they did at the noise of one that was coming on the road? Why did not LITTLE-FAITH pluck up a greater heart? He might, methinks, have stood one brush with them, and have yielded when there had been no remedy.

Chr. That they are cowards, many have said; but few have found it so in the time of trial. As for a great heart, LITTLE-FAITH had none; and I perceive by thee, my brother, hadst thou been the man concerned, thou art but for a brush, and then to yield. And, verily, since this is the height of thy stomach now they are at a distance from us, should they appear to thee, as they did to him, they might put thee to second thoughts.

But consider again—they are but journeymen-thieves, they serve under the king of the bottomless pit; who, if need be, will come in to their aid himself, and his voice is as the roaring of a lion (#1Pe 5:8). I myself have been engaged as this LITTLE-FAITH was; and I found it a terrible thing. These three villains set upon me; and I beginning like a Christian to resist, they gave but a call, and in came their master: I would, as the saying is, have given my life for a penny; but that, as God would have it, I was clothed with armour of proof. Aye, and yet though I was so harnessed, I found it hard work to quit myself like a man; no man can tell what in that combat attends us, but he that hath been in the battle himself.

Hope. Well, but they ran, you see, when they did but suppose that one GREAT-GRACE was in the way.

Chr. True, they have often fled, both they and their master, when GREAT-GRACE hath but appeared; and no marvel, for he is the King's champion: but I trow, you will put some difference between LITTLE-FAITH and the King's champion; all the King's subjects are not his champions; nor can they, when tried, do such feats of war as he. Is it meet to think that a little child should handle Goliath as David did? or that there should be the strength of an ox in a wren? Some are strong, some are weak; some have great faith, some have little: this man was one of the weak; and therefore he went to the wall.

Hope. I would it had been GREAT-GRACE for their sakes.

Chr. If it had been he, he might have had his hands full: for I must tell you, that though GREAT-GRACE is excellent good at his weapons, and has done—and can do, so long as he keeps them at sword's point—well enough with them; yet if they get within him, even FAINT-HEART, MISTRUST, or the other, it shall go hard but they will throw up his heels. And when a man is down, you know—what can he do?

Whoso looks well upon GREAT-GRACE'S face, shall see those scars and cuts there, that shall easily give demonstration of what I say. Yea, once I heard that he should say (and that when he was in the combat), "We despaired even of life." How did these sturdy rogues and their fellows make David groan, moan, and roar? Yea, Heman and Hezekiah too, though champions in their day, were forced to bestir them when by these assaulted; and yet, that notwithstanding, they had their coats soundly brushed by them. Peter, upon a time, would go try what he could do; but, though some do say of him

that he is the Prince of the Apostles, they handled him so that they made him at last afraid of a sorry girl.

Besides, their king is at their whistle, he is never out of hearing; and if at any time they be put to the worst, he, if possible, comes in to help them. And of him it is said, "The sword of him that lays at him cannot hold: the spear, the dart, nor the habergeon. He esteems iron as straw, and brass as rotten wood. The arrow cannot make him flee; slingstones are turned with him into stubble. Darts are counted as stubble; he laughs at the shaking of a spear" (#Job 41:26-29). What can a man do in this case? 'Tis true, if a man could at every turn have Job's horse, and had skill and courage to ride him, he might do notable things. For "his neck is clothed with thunder; he will not be afraid as the grasshopper; the glory of his nostrils is terrible. He paws in the valley, rejoices in his strength, and goes out to meet the armed men. He mocks at fear, and is not affrighted, neither turns back from the sword. The quiver rattles against him; the glittering spear, and the shield. He swallows the ground with fierceness and rage; neither believes he that it is the sound of the trumpet. He saith among the trumpets, Ha, ha; and he smells the battle afar off, the thundering of the captains, and the shouting" (#Job 39:19-25).

But for such footmen as thee and I are, let us never desire to meet with an enemy, nor vaunt as if we could do better, when we hear of others that they have been foiled; nor be tickled at the thoughts of our own manhood, for such commonly come by the worst when tried. Witness Peter, of whom I made mention before. He would swagger, aye, he would: he would, as his vain mind prompted him to say, do better, and stand more for his Master, than all men; but who was so foiled and run down by these villains as he?

When, therefore, we hear that such robberies are done on the king's highway, two things become us to do; first, to go out harnessed, and to be sure to take a shield with us; for it was for want of that, that he that laid so lustily at Leviathan, could not make him yield. For, indeed, if that be wanting, he fears us not at all. Therefore he that had skill hath said, "Above all, take the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked" (#Eph 6:16).

'Tis good also that we desire of the King a convoy, yea, that he will go with us himself. This made David rejoice when in the Valley of the Shadow of Death; and Moses was rather for dying where he stood, than to go one step without his God (#Ex 33:15). Oh, my brother, if he will but go along with us, what need we be afraid of ten thousands that shall set themselves against us? but without him, the proud helpers fall under the slain (#Ps 3:5-8 27:1-3 Isa 10:4).

I, for my part, have been in the fray before now; and though (through the goodness of him that is best) I am, as you see, alive, yet I cannot boast of my manhood. Glad shall I be if I meet with no more such brunts; though I fear we are not got beyond all danger. However, since the lion and the bear hath not as yet devoured me, I hope God will also deliver us from the next uncircumcised Philistine.

Then sang Christian:

"Poor LITTLE-FAITH! hast been among the thieves?
Wast robbed? Remember this: whoso believes,
And gets more faith, shall then a victor be
Over ten thousand, else scarce over three."

1Pe 4:18 2Ti 1:14 2Pe 2:9 Heb 12:16 Ge 25:32 Jer 2:24 1Pe 5:8 Job 41:26-29 Job 39:19-25 Eph 6:16
Ex 33:15 Ps 3:5-8 27:1-3 Isa 10:4

“Now “If the righteous one is scarcely saved, Where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?”” (1Pe 4:18 NKJV)

“That good thing which was committed to you, keep by the Holy Spirit who dwells in us.” (2Ti 1:14 NKJV)

“*then* the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment,” (2Pe 2:9 NKJV)

“lest there *be* any fornicator or profane person like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright.” (Heb 12:16 NKJV)

“And Esau said, “Look, I *am* about to die; so what *is* this birthright to me?”” (Ge 25:32 NKJV)

“A wild donkey used to the wilderness, *That* sniffs at the wind in her desire; In her time of mating, who can turn her away? All those who seek her will not weary themselves; In her month they will find her.” (Jer 2:24 NKJV)

“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.” (1Pe 5:8 NKJV)

“²⁶ *Though* the sword reaches him, it cannot avail; Nor does spear, dart, or javelin. ²⁷ He regards iron as straw, *And* bronze as rotten wood. ²⁸ The arrow cannot make him flee; Slingstones become like stubble to him. ²⁹ Darts are regarded as straw; He laughs at the threat of javelins.” (Job 41:26-29 NKJV)

“¹⁹ ¶ “Have you given the horse strength? Have you clothed his neck with thunder? ²⁰ Can you frighten him like a locust? His majestic snorting strikes terror. ²¹ He paws in the valley, and rejoices in *his* strength; He gallops into the clash of arms. ²² He mocks at fear, and is not frightened; Nor does he turn back from the sword.

²³ The quiver rattles against him, The glittering spear and javelin. ²⁴ He devours the distance with fierceness and rage; Nor does he come to a halt because the trumpet *has* sounded. ²⁵ At the *blast of* the trumpet he says, ‘Aha!’ He smells the battle from afar, The thunder of captains and shouting.” (Job 39:19-25 NKJV)

“above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.” (Eph 6:16 NKJV)

“Then he said to Him, “If Your Presence does not go *with us*, do not bring us up from here.” (Ex 33:15 NKJV)

“⁵ I lay down and slept; I awoke, for the LORD sustained me. ⁶ I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people Who have set *themselves* against me all around. ⁷ Arise, O LORD; Save me, O my God! For You have struck all my enemies on the cheekbone; You have broken the teeth of the ungodly. ⁸ Salvation *belongs* to the LORD. Your blessing *is* upon Your people. Selah” (Ps 3:5-8 NKJV)

“¹ ¶ *A Psalm of David.* The LORD *is* my light and my salvation; Whom shall I fear? The LORD *is* the strength of my life; Of whom shall I be afraid? ² When the wicked came against me To eat up my flesh, My enemies and foes, They stumbled and fell.

3 Though an army may encamp against me, My heart shall not fear; Though war should rise against me, In this I *will be* confident.” (Ps 27:1-3 NKJV)

“Without Me they shall bow down among the prisoners, And they shall fall among the slain." For all this His anger is not turned away, But His hand *is* stretched out still.” (Isa 10:4 NKJV)