

PAUL and God's answer to a sceptical world
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(Hebrews 7:25)

There is an interesting contrast in the Gospel story. We are told that the people looked at the dying Saviour and exclaimed, "Let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him" (Matt. 27 :42). Yet that order was reversed when Christ spoke to Martha in Bethany. He said, "If thou wouldst believe, thou shouldst see the glory of God" (John 11:40). In the economy of God, faith foreruns vision, for it is " the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Heb. 11: 1). The infidel declares that no tangible evidence can be found to prove the reality of God; yet the humblest Christian constantly discovers the facts the existence of which is denied by the people whose hearts are barren of faith.

The Lord Jesus Christ is Able to Save (Heb. 7 :25)

"Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." The Christians of the early Church were soon called upon to face great persecution. Some of the best Roman governors were the most fierce enemies, for believing that the denial of their pagan gods would bring disaster upon the empire, they used all means at their disposal to annihilate the new movement. Christians were fed to hungry lions, and even burnt at the stake. Such opposition shook the faith of the people, and many were tempted to return to their former beliefs. Yet the Jewish converts still encountered difficulty, for the temple life had ceased, and the daily offering was no longer placed upon the altar. Caught between the cessation of the old system of worship and the unparalleled persecution of the new, the weaklings of the Church faltered and questioned their leaders. The writer of the epistle to the Hebrews explained that the living Christ superseded all acts of priesthood, and now lived at God's right hand to make intercession for His people. And the greatest evidence in favour of this fact was His ability to save. Every miracle constituted a challenge to agnosticism, and every transformed life an indication of Christ's power.

The Lord Jesus Christ is Able to Keep (2 Tim. 1:12)

..... for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." This represents one of the most triumphant declarations of Pauline doctrines. When Timothy visited his great leader to sit with him in the prison cell, many questions filled the mind of the younger man. There at his side was the indomitable Paul, who could say, "Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep" (2 Cor. 11:24-25). Other people had long since slipped back into error; yet this brave apostle had persistently continued along his appointed course. Nothing had been permitted to prevent his following Christ, and now at the end of his journey he was able to say, "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness" (2 Tim. 4: 8). The secret of Paul's continuance lay in the keeping power of his Lord. He said, "Not I, but Christ liveth in me"; "He is able to keep," and his life-story

PAUL and God's answer to a sceptical world endorsed the truth of his testimony.

The Lord Jesus Christ is Able to do the impossible (Eph 3:20)

"Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us." This is a superlative verse, and is all the more remarkable because it was addressed to the Church at Ephesus. The assembly in that leading city of Asia had been born in much travail. The heathen worshippers of Diana had striven to overthrow the Church, and even Paul had been in danger of losing his life. In an amazing fashion the power of God had triumphed over all opposition, and under the leadership of their beloved minister the Church had continued to grow and had witnessed many miracles. Then Paul declared, "He is able to do still far greater things. He can do mere than the wildest imaginations would consider possible - exceeding abundantly above all you can ask or think." There were times when Paul revealed a daring disregard for the constraining laws of grammar. He mixed his superlatives in the most bewildering fashion, for language seemed utterly inadequate to express the wonder of his message.

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