

A photograph of a garden path. The path is paved with reddish-brown bricks and leads towards a dark green wooden gate. To the right of the path is a low wall made of large, rough-hewn stones. Lush green foliage and clusters of bright pink flowers are visible on both sides of the path. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting a sunny day.

Saving Faith

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1. Introduction

“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved: but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:16). These are the words of Christ, the risen Christ, and are the last that He uttered ere He left this earth. None more important were ever spoken to the sons of men. They call for our most diligent attention. They are of the greatest possible consequence, for in them are set forth the terms of eternal happiness or misery; life and death, and the conditions of both. Faith is the principal saving grace, and unbelief the chief damning sin. The law, which threatens death for every sin, has already passed sentence of condemnation upon all, because all have sinned. This sentence is so peremptory that it admits of but one exception—all shall be executed if they believe not.

The condition of life as made known by Christ in Mark 16:16 is double: the principal one, faith; the accessory one, baptism; accessory, we term it, because it is not absolutely necessary to life, as faith is. Proof of this is found in the fact of the omission in the second half of the verse: it is *not* “he that is not baptized shall be damned,” but “he that believeth not.” Faith is so indispensable that, though one be baptized, yet believeth not, he shall be damned. As we have said above, the sinner is already condemned: the sword of Divine justice is drawn even now and waits only to strike the fatal blow. Nothing can divert it but saving faith in Christ. My reader, continuance in unbelief makes Hell as certain as though you were already in it. While you remain in unbelief, you are “having no hope, and without God in the world” (Eph. 2:12).

Now if believing be so necessary, and unbelief so dangerous and fatal, it deeply concerns us to *know* what it is *to* believe. It behooves each one of us to make the most diligent and thorough inquiry as to the nature of saving faith. The more so, because all faith does not save; yea, all faith in Christ does not save. Multitudes are deceived upon this vital matter. Thousands of those who sincerely believe that they have received Christ as their

personal Saviour and are resting on His finished work, are building upon a foundation of sand. Vast numbers who have not a doubt but that God *has* accepted them in the Beloved, and are eternally secure in Christ, will only be awakened from their pleasant dreamings when the cold hand of death lays hold of them; and then it will be too late. Unspeakably solemn is this. Reader, will *that* be your fate? Others just as sure they were saved as you are, are now in Hell.

2. Its Counterfeits

There are those who have a faith which is so like that which is saving as they themselves may take it to be the very same, and others too may deem it sufficient, yea, even others who have the spirit of discernment. Simon Magus is a case in point. Of him it is written, “Then Simon himself *believed* also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip” (Acts 8:13). Such a faith had he, and so expressed it, that Philip took him to be a genuine Christian, and admitted him to those privileges which are peculiar to them. Yet, a little later, the apostle Peter said to him, “Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God . . . I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity” (Acts 8:21, 23).

A man may believe *all* the truth contained in Scripture so far as he is acquainted with it, and he may be familiar with far more than are many genuine Christians. He may have studied the Bible for a longer time, and so his faith may grasp much which they have not yet reached. As his knowledge may be more extensive, so his faith may be more comprehensive. In this kind of faith he may go as far as the apostle Paul did, when he said, “But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing *all* things which are written in the law and in the prophets” (Acts 24:14). But this is no proof that his faith is saving. An example to the contrary is seen in Agrippa: “King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou *believest*” (Acts 26:27).

Call the above a mere historical faith if you will, yet Scripture also teaches that people may possess a faith which is one of the

Holy Spirit, and yet which is a *non-saving* one. This faith which we now allude to has two ingredients which neither education nor self-effort can produce: spiritual light and a Divine power moving the mind to assent. Now a man may have both illumination and inclination from heaven, and yet not be regenerated. We have a solemn proof of this in Hebrews 6:4-6. There we read of a company of apostates, concerning whom it is said, "It is impossible to renew them again unto repentance." Yet, of *these* we are told that they were "enlightened," and had "tasted of the heavenly gift," which means, they not only perceived it. but were inclined toward and embraced it; and both, because they were "partakers of the Holy Spirit."

People may have a Divine faith, not only in its originating power, but also in its foundation. The ground of their faith may be the Divine testimony, upon which they rest with unshaken confidence. They may give credit to what they believe not only because it appears reasonable or even certain, but because they are fully persuaded it is the Word of Him who cannot lie. To believe the Scriptures on the ground of their being *God's* Word, is a Divine faith. Such a faith had the nation of Israel after their wondrous exodus from Egypt and deliverance from the Red Sea. Of them it is recorded "The people feared the Lord, and *believed* the Lord, and his servant Moses" (Exod. 14:31), yet of the great majority of them it is said, "Whose carcasses fell in the wilderness . . . and to whom sware he that they should not enter into His rest" (Heb. 3:17, 18).

It is indeed searching and solemn to make a close study of Scripture on this point, and discover how much is said of unsaved people in a way of having faith in the Lord. In Jeremiah 13:11 we find God saying, "For as the girdle cleaveth to the loins of a man, so have I caused to *cleave* unto Me the whole house of Israel, and the whole house of Judah, saith the Lord," and to "cleave" unto God is the same as to "trust" Him: see 2 Kings 18:5, 6. Yet of that very same generation God said, "This evil people, which refuse to hear My words, which walk in the imagination of their heart, and walk after other gods, to serve them, and to worship them, shall even be as this girdle, which is good for nothing" (Jer. 13:10).

The term “stay” is another word denoting firm trust. “And it shall come to pass in that day, that the remnant of Israel, and such as are escaped of the house of Jacob, shall no more again stay upon him that smote them; but shall *stay* upon the Lord” (Isa. 10:20); “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is *stayed* on Thee” (Isa. 26:3). And yet we find a class of whom it is recorded, “They call themselves of the holy city, and *stay themselves upon* the God of Israel” (Isa. 48:2). Who would doubt that *this* was a saving faith! Ah, let us not be too hasty in jumping to conclusions: of this same people God said, “Thou art obstinate, and thy neck is an iron sinew, and thy brow brass” (Isa. 48:4).

Again, the term “lean” is used to denote not only trust, but dependency on the Lord. Of the Spouse it is said, “who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, *leaning upon* her Beloved?” (Song of Solomon 8:5). Can it be possible that *such* an expression as this is applied to those who are *unsaved*? Yes, it is, and by none other than God Himself: “Hear this, I pray you, ye heads of the house of Jacob, and princes of the house of Israel, that *abhor* judgment, and *pervert all* equity . . . The heads thereof judge for reward, and the priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for money: yet will they *lean upon the Lord*, and say, Is not the Lord among us? none evil can come upon us” (Micah 3:9,11). So thousands of carnal and worldly people are leaning upon Christ to uphold them, so that they cannot fall into Hell, and are confident that no “evil” can befall *them*. Yet is their confidence a horrible presumption.

To *rest upon* a Divine promise with implicit confidence, and that in the face of great discouragement and danger, is surely something which we would not expect to find predicated of a people who were unsaved. Ah, truth *is* stranger than fiction. This very thing is depicted in God’s unerring Word. When Sennacherib and his great army besieged the cities of Judah, Hezekiah said, “Be strong and courageous, be not afraid nor dismayed for the king of Assyria, nor for all the multitude that is with him: for there be more with us than with him: with him is an arm of flesh; but with us is the Lord our God” (2 Chron. 32:7, 8); and we are told that “the people *rested themselves upon* the words of Hezekiah.”

Hezekiah had spoken the words of God, and for the people to rest upon them was to rest on God Himself. Yet, less than fifteen years after, this same people did “worse than the heathen” (2 Chron. 33:9). Thus, resting upon a promise of God, is not, of itself, any proof of regeneration.

To *rely upon* God, on the ground of His “covenant” was far more than resting upon a Divine promise; yet unregenerate men may do even this. A case in point is found in Abijah king of Judah. It is indeed striking to read and weigh what he said in 2 Chronicles 13 when Jeroboam and his hosts came up against him. First, he reminded all Israel that the Lord God had given the kingdom to David and his sons forever “by a *covenant* of salt” (verse 5). Next, he denounced the sins of his adversary (verses 6-9). Then he affirmed the Lord to be “our God” and that He was “with him and his people” (verses 10-12). But Jeroboam heeded not, but forced the battle upon them. “Abijah and his people slew them with a great slaughter” (verse 17), “because they *relied upon* the Lord God of their fathers” (verse 18). Yet of this same Abijah it is said, “he walked in all the sins of his father,” etc. (1 Kings 15:3). Unregenerate men may rely upon God, depend upon Christ, rest on His promise, and plead his covenant.

“The people of Nineveh (who were heathen) *believed* God” (Jonah 3:5). This is striking, for the God of Heaven was a stranger to them, and His prophet a man whom they knew not—why then should they trust his message? Moreover, it was not a promise, but a threatening, which they believed. How much easier then is it for a people now living under the Gospel to apply to themselves a promise, than the heathen a terrible threat! “In applying a threatening we are like to meet with more opposition, both from within and from without. From within, for a threatening is like a bitter pill, the bitterness of death is in it; no wonder if that hardly goes down. From without too, for Satan will be ready to raise opposition: he is afraid to have men startled, lest the sense of their misery denounced in the threatening should rouse them up to seek how they may make an escape. He is more sure of them while they are secure, and will labour to keep them off the threatening, lest it should awaken them from dreams of peace and

happiness, while they are sleeping in his very jaws.

“But now, in applying a promise, an unregenerate man ordinarily meets with no opposition. Not from within, for the promise is all sweetness; the promise of pardon and life is the very marrow, the quintessence of the Gospel. No wonder if they be ready to swallow it down greedily. And Satan will be so far from opposing, that he will rather encourage and assist one who has no interest in the promise, *to* apply it; for this he knows will be the way to fix and settle them in their natural condition. A promise misapplied will be *a seal upon the sepulchre*, making them sure in the grave of sin, wherein they lay dead and rotting. Therefore if unregenerate men may apply a threatening, which is in these respects more difficult, as appears they may by the case of the Ninevites, why may they not be apt to apply (appropriate) a Gospel promise when they are not like to meet with difficulty and opposition?” (David Clarkson, 1680, for some time co-pastor with John Owen; to whom we are indebted for much of the above.)

Another most solemn example of those having faith, but not a saving one, is seen in the stony-ground hearers, of whom Christ said, “which for a while *believe*” (Luke 8:13). Concerning this class the Lord declared that they hear the Word and “with joy receiveth it” (Matt. 13:20). How many such have we met and known: happy souls with radiant faces, exuberant spirits, full of zeal that others too may enter into the bliss which they have found. How difficult it is to distinguish such from genuine Christians—the good-ground hearers. The difference is not apparent; no, it lies *beneath* the surface—they have “not *root* in themselves” (Matt. 13:21): deep digging has to be done to discover this fact! Have you searched yourself narrowly, my reader, to ascertain whether or no “the root of the matter” (Job 19:28) be in you?

But let us refer now to another case which seems still more incredible. There are those who are willing to take Christ as their Saviour, yet who are most reluctant to submit to Him as their Lord, to be at His command, to be governed by His laws. Yet there are some unregenerate persons who acknowledge Christ as their Lord. Here is the Scripture proof of our assertion: “Many will

say to me in that day, ‘*Lord, Lord* have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?’ and then will I profess unto them, ‘I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity’” (Matt. 7:22-23). There is a *large* class (“many”) who profess subjection to Christ as Lord, and who do many mighty works in His name: thus a people who can even show you their faith by their works, and yet it is not a saving one!

It is impossible to say how far a non-saving faith may go, and how very closely it may resemble that faith which is saving. Saving faith has Christ for its object; so has a non-saving faith (John 2:23, 24). Saving faith is wrought by the Holy Spirit; so is a non-saving faith (Heb. 6:4). Saving faith is produced by the Word of God; so also is a non-saving faith (Matt. 13:20, 21). Saving faith will make a man prepare for the coming of the Lord, so also will a non-saving: of both the foolish and wise virgins it is written, “then *all* those virgins arose, and *trimmed* their lamps” (Matt. 25:7). Saving faith is accompanied with joy: so also is a non-saving faith (Matt. 13:20).

Perhaps some readers are ready to say, all of this is very unsettling, and if really heeded, most distressing. May God in His mercy grant that this article may have just these very effects on many who read it. O if you value your soul, dismiss it not lightly. If there be such a thing (and there *is*) as a faith in Christ which does not save, then how easy it is to be *deceived* about *my* faith! It is not without reason that the Holy Spirit has so plainly cautioned us at this very point. “A deceived heart hath turned him aside” (Isa. 44:20). “The pride of thine heart hath deceived thee” (Obad. 3). “Take heed that *ye* be not deceived” (Luke 21:8). “For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself” (Gal. 6:3). At no point does Satan use his cunning and power more tenaciously, and more successfully, than in getting people to believe that they have a saving faith when they have not.

The Devil deceives more souls by this one thing than by all his other devices put together. Take this present article as an illustration. How many a Satan-blinded soul will read it and then

say, It does not apply to *me*; I know that *my* faith *is* a saving one! It is in this way that the Devil turns aside the sharp point of God's convicting Word, and secures his captives in their unbelief. He works in them a sense of false security, by persuading them that they *are* safe within the ark, and induces them to ignore the threatenings of the Word and appropriate only its comforting promises. He dissuades them from heeding that most salutary exhortation, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; *prove* your own selves" (2 Cor. 13:5). O my reader, heed that word *now*.

In closing this first article we will endeavour to point out some of the particulars in which this non-saving faith is defective, and wherein it comes short of a faith which does save. First, with many it is because they are willing for Christ to save them from Hell, but are not willing for Him to save them from *self*. They want to be delivered from the wrath to come, but they wish to retain their self-will and self-pleasing. But He will not be dictated unto: you must be saved on *His* terms, or not at all. When Christ *saves*, He saves from sin—from its power and pollution, and therefore from its guilt. And the very essence of sin is the determination to have my *own* way (Isa. 53:6). Where Christ saves, He subdues the spirit of self-will, and implants a genuine, a powerful, a lasting desire and determination to please Him.

Again; many are never saved because they wish to divide Christ; they want to take Him as a Saviour, but are unwilling to subject themselves unto Him as their Lord. Or, if they are prepared to own Him as Lord, it is not as an *absolute* Lord. But this cannot be: Christ will be either Lord of all, or He will not be Lord at all. But the vast majority of professing Christians would have Christ's sovereignty limited at certain points; it must not entrench too far upon the liberty which some worldly lust or carnal interest demands. His peace they covet, but His "yoke" is unwelcome. Of all such Christ will yet say "But those mine enemies, *which would not* that I should *reign over them*, bring hither, and slay them before me" (Luke 19:27).

Again; there are multitudes which are quite ready for Christ to justify them, but not to sanctify. Some kind of, some degree of

sanctification, they will tolerate, but to be sanctified *wholly*, their “whole spirit and soul and body” (1 Thess. 5:23), they have no relish for. For their hearts to be sanctified, for pride and covetousness to be subdued, would he too much like the plucking out of a right eye. For the constant mortification of *all* their members, they have no taste. For Christ to come to them as a Refiner, to burn up their lusts, consume their dross, to utterly dissolve their old frame of nature, to melt their souls, so as to make them run in a new mould, they like not. To utterly deny self, and take up their cross daily, is a task from which they shrink with abhorrence.

Again; many are willing for Christ to officiate as their Priest, but not for Him to legislate as their King. Ask them, in a general way, if they are ready to do whatsoever Christ requires of them, and they will answer in the affirmative, emphatically and with confidence. But come to particulars: apply to each one of them those specific commandments and precepts of the Lord which *they* are ignoring, and they will at once cry out “Legalism!” or, “We cannot be perfect in everything.” Name nine duties and perhaps they are performing them, but mention a tenth and it at once makes them angry, for you have come too close home to *their* case. Herod heard John gladly and did “many things” (Mark 6:20), but when he referred to Herodias, he touched him to the quick. Many are willing to give up their theatre-going, and card-parties, who refuse to go forth unto Christ outside the camp. Others are willing to go outside the camp, yet refuse to *deny* their fleshly and worldly lusts. Reader, if there is a *reserve* in your obedience, you are on the way to Hell. Our next article will take up the Nature of saving faith.

3. Its Nature

“There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness” (Prov. 30:12). A great many suppose that such a verse as this applies only to those who are trusting in something other than Christ for their acceptance before God, such as people who are relying upon baptism, church membership or their own moral and religious performances. But it

is a great mistake to limit such scriptures unto the class just mentioned. Such a verse as “There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death” (Prov. 14:12) has a far wider application than merely to those who are resting on something of or from themselves to secure a title to everlasting bliss. Equally wrong is it to imagine that the only *deceived* souls are they who have no faith in Christ.

There is in Christendom today a very large number of people who have been taught that nothing the sinner can do will ever merit the esteem of God. They have been informed, and rightly so, that the highest moral achievements of the natural man are only “filthy rags” in the sight of the thrice holy God. They have heard quoted so often such passages as, “By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast” (Eph. 2:8, 9), and “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us” (Titus 3:5), that they have become thoroughly convinced that heaven cannot be attained by any doing of the creature. Further, they have been told so often that *Christ alone* can save any sinner that this has become a settled article in their creed, from which neither man nor devil can shake them. So far, so good.

That large company to whom we are now referring have also been taught that while Christ is the only way unto the Father, yet He becomes so only as faith is personally exercised in and upon Him: that He becomes our Saviour only when we believe on Him. During the last twenty-five years, almost the whole emphasis of “gospel preaching” has been thrown upon faith in Christ, and evangelistic efforts have been almost entirely confined to getting people to “believe” on the Lord Jesus. Apparently there has been great success; thousands upon thousands have responded; have, as they suppose, accepted Christ as their own personal Saviour. Yet we wish to point out here that it is as serious an error to suppose that all who “believe in Christ” are saved as it is to conclude that only those are deceived (and are described in Proverbs 14:12, and 30:12) who have no faith in Christ.

No one can read the New Testament attentively without

discovering that there *is* a “believing” in Christ *which does not save*. In John 8:30, we are told, “As He spake these words, many *believed* on Him.” Mark carefully, it is not said many believe *in* Him,” but “many believed on Him.” Nevertheless one does not have to read much farther on in the chapter to discover that those very people were unregenerate and unsaved souls. In verse 44 we find the Lord telling these very “believers” that *they* were of their father the Devil; and in verse 59 we find them taking up stones to cast at Him. This has presented a difficulty unto some; yet it ought not. They created their own difficulty, by supposing that all faith in Christ necessarily saves. It does not. There *is* a faith in Christ which saves, and there is also a faith in Christ which *does not* save.

“Among the chief rulers also many *believed on* Him.” Were, then, those men saved? Many preachers and evangelists, as well as tens of thousands of their blinded dupes, would answer, “Most assuredly.” But let us note what immediately follows here: “but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God” (John 12:42, 43). Will any of our readers now say that those men were *saved*? If so, it is clear proof that you are utter strangers to any saving work of God in your own souls. Men who are afraid to hazard for Christ’s sake the loss of their worldly positions, temporal interests, personal reputations, or anything else that is dear to them, are yet in their sins—no matter how they may be trusting in Christ’s finished work to take them to heaven.

Probably most of our readers have been brought up under the teaching that there are only two classes of people in this world, believers and unbelievers. But such a classification is most misleading, and is utterly erroneous. God’s Word divides earth’s inhabitants into *three* classes: “Give none offence, neither to [1] the Jews, nor [2] to the Gentiles, nor [3] to the church of God” (1 Cor. 10:32). It was so during Old Testament times, more noticeably so from the days of Moses onwards. There were first the “gentile” or heathen nations, outside the commonwealth of Israel, which formed by far the largest class. Corresponding with

that class today are the countless millions of modern heathen, who are “lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God.” Second, there was the nation of Israel, which has to be subdivided into two groups, for, as Romans 9:6, declares, “They are *not* all Israel, which are of Israel.” By far the larger portion of the nation of Israel were only the nominal people of God, in outward relation to Him: corresponding with this class is the great mass of professors bearing the name of Christ. Third, there was the spiritual remnant of Israel, whose calling, hope and inheritance were heavenly: corresponding to them this day are the genuine Christians, God’s “*little flock*” (Luke 12:32).

The same threefold division among men is plainly discernible throughout John’s Gospel. First, there were the hardened leaders of the nation, the scribes and Pharisees, priests and elders. From start to finish they were openly opposed to Christ, and neither His blessed teaching nor His wondrous works had any melting effects upon them. Second, there were the common people who “heard Him gladly” (Mark 12:37), a great many of whom are said to have “believed on Him” (see John 2:23; 7:31; 8:30; 10:42; 12:11), but concerning whom there is nothing to show that they were saved. They were not outwardly opposed to Christ, but they never yielded their hearts to Him. They were impressed by His Divine credentials, yet were easily offended (John 6:66). Third, there was the insignificant handful who “received Him” (John 1:12) into their hearts and lives; received Him as their Lord and Saviour.

The same three classes are clearly discernible (to anointed eyes) in the world today. First, there are the vast multitudes who make no profession at all, who see nothing in Christ that they should desire Him; people who are deaf to every appeal, and who make little attempt to conceal their hatred of the Lord Jesus. Second, there is that large company who are attracted by Christ in a natural way. So far from being openly antagonistic to Him and His cause, they are found among His followers. Having been taught much of the Truth, they “believe in Christ,” just as children reared by conscientious Mohammedans believe firmly and devoutly in Mohammed. Having received much of instruction concerning the virtues of Christ’s precious blood, they trust in its merits to deliver

them from the wrath to come; and yet there is nothing in their daily lives to show that they are *new* creatures in Christ Jesus! Third, there are the “few” (Matt. 7:13, 14) who deny themselves, take up the cross daily, and follow a despised and rejected Christ in the path of loving and unreserved obedience unto God.

Yes, there is a faith in Christ which saves, but there is a faith in Christ which does not save. From this statement probably few will dissent, yet many will be inclined to weaken it by saying that the faith in Christ which does not save is merely a historical faith, or where there is a believing *about* Christ instead of a believing *in* Him. Not so. That there are those who mistake a historical faith about Christ for a saving faith in Christ we do not deny; but what we would here emphasize is the solemn fact that there are *also* some who have *more* than a historical faith, more than a mere head-knowledge about Him, who yet have a faith which comes short of being a quickening and saving one. Not only are there some with this non-saving faith, but today there are vast numbers of such all around us. They are people who furnish the antitypes of those to which we called attention in the last article: who were represented and illustrated in Old Testament times by those who believed in, rested upon, leaned upon, relied upon the Lord, but who were, nevertheless, unsaved souls.

What, then, does saving faith consist of? In seeking to answer this question our present object is to supply not only a scriptural definition, but one which, at the same time, differentiates it from a non-saving faith. Nor is this any easy task, for the two things often have much in common: that faith in Christ which does not save has in it more than one element or ingredient of that faith which *does* vitally unite the soul to Him. Those pitfalls which the writer must now seek to avoid are undue discouraging of real saints on the one hand by raising the standard higher than Scripture has raised it, and encouraging unregenerate professors on the other hand by so lowering the standards as to include them. We do not wish to withhold from the people of God their legitimate portion; nor do we want to commit the sin of taking the children’s bread and casting it to the dogs. May the Holy Spirit Himself deign to guide us into the Truth.

Much error would be avoided on this subject if due care were taken to frame a scriptural definition of *unbelief*. Again and again in Scripture we find believing and not believing placed in antithesis, and we are afforded much help toward arriving at a correct conception of the real nature of saving faith when we obtain a right understanding of the character of unbelief. It will at once be discovered that saving faith is far more than a hearty assenting unto what God's Word sets before us, when we perceive that unbelief is much more than an error or judgment or a failure to assent unto the Truth. Scripture depicts unbelief as a virulent and violent *principle of opposition to God*. Unbelief has both a passive and active, a negative and positive, side, and therefore the Greek noun is rendered both by "unbelief" (Romans 11:20; Heb. 4:6, 11), and "disobedience" (Eph. 2:2; 5:6) and the verb by "believed not" (Heb. 3:18; 11:30) and "obey not" (1 Peter 3:1; 4:17). A few concrete examples will make this plainer.

Take first the case of Adam. There was something more than a mere negative failing to believe God's solemn threat that in the day he should eat of the forbidden fruit he would surely die: by one man's *disobedience* many were made sinners (Romans 5:12). Nor did the heinousness of our first parent's sin consist in listening to the lie of the serpent, for 1 Timothy 2:14, expressly declares "Adam *was not* deceived." No, he was determined to have his own way, no matter what God had prohibited and threatened. Thus, the very first case of unbelief in human history consisted not only in negatively failing to take to heart what God has so clearly and so solemnly said, but also in a deliberate defiance of and rebellion against Him.

Take the case of Israel in the wilderness. Concerning them it is said, "They could not enter in [the promised land] because of unbelief" (Heb. 3:19). Now exactly what do those words signify? Do they mean that Canaan was missed by them because of their failure to appropriate the promise of God? Yes, for a "promise" of entering in was "left" them, but it was not "mixed with faith in them that heard it" (Heb. 4:1, 2)—God had declared that the seed of Abraham should inherit that land which flowed with milk and honey, and it was the privilege of that generation which was

delivered from Egypt to lay hold of and apply that promise to themselves. But they did not. Yet that is not all! There was something far worse: there was another element in their unbelief which is usually lost sight of nowadays—they were openly disobedient against God. When the spies brought back a sample of the goodly grapes, and Joshua urged them to go up and possess the land, they would not. Accordingly Moses declared, “notwithstanding ye would not go up, but rebelled against the commandment of the Lord your God” (Deut. 1:26). Ah, there is the positive side of their unbelief; they were self-willed, disobedient, defiant.

Consider now the case of that generation of Israel which was in Palestine when the Lord Jesus appeared among them as “a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God” (Romans 15:8). John 1:11, informs us, “He came unto His own, and His own received Him not,” which the next verse defines as “they believed” Him not. But is that all? Were they guilty of nothing more than a failure to assent to His teaching and trust to His person? Nay, verily, that was merely the *negative* side of their unbelief. Positively, they “hated” Him (John 15:25), and would “not come to” Him (John 5:40). His holy demands suited not their fleshly desires, and therefore they said, “We will not have this man to reign over us” (Luke 19:14). Thus their unbelief, too, consisted in the spirit of self-will and open defiance, a determination to please themselves at all costs.

Unbelief is not simply an infirmity of fallen human nature, it is a heinous crime. Scripture everywhere attributes it to love of sin, obstinacy of will, hardness of heart. Unbelief has its root in a depraved nature, in a mind which is enmity against God. Love of sin is the immediate cause of unbelief: “And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil” (John 3:19). “The light of the Gospel is brought unto a place or people: they come so near it as to discover its end or tendency; but as soon as they find that it aims to part them and their sins, they will have no more to do with it. They like not the terms of the Gospel, and so perish in and for their iniquities” (John Owen). If the *Gospel*

were more clearly and faithfully preached, fewer would profess to believe it!

Saving faith, then, is the opposite of damning unbelief. Both issue from the heart: unbelief, from a heart that is alienated from God, which is in a state of rebellion against Him; saving faith, from a heart which is reconciled to Him and so has ceased to fight against Him. Thus an essential element or ingredient in saving faith is a yielding to the authority of God, a submitting of myself to His rule. It is very much more than my understanding assenting and my will consenting to the fact that Christ is a Saviour for sinners, and that He stands ready to receive all who trust Him. To be received by Christ I must not only come to Him renouncing all my own righteousness (Romans 10:3), as an empty-handed beggar (Matt. 19:21), but I must also forsake my self-will and rebellion against Him (Psalm 12:11, 12; Prov. 28:13). Should an insurrectionist and seditious come to an earthly king seeking his sovereign favour and pardon, then, obviously, the very law of his coming to him for forgiveness requires that he should come on his knees, laying aside his hostility. So it is with a sinner who really comes savingly to Christ for pardon; it is against the law of faith to do otherwise.

Saving faith is a genuine *coming to Christ* (Matt. 11:28; John 6:37, etc.). But let us take care that we do not miss the clear and inevitable implication of this term. If I say “I *come* to the U.S.A.” then I necessarily indicate that I *left* some other country to get here. Thus it is in “coming” to Christ; something has to be left. Coming to Christ not only involves the abandoning of every false object of confidence, it also includes and entails the forsaking of all other competitors for my heart. “For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now *returned* unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your *souls*” (1 Peter 2:25). And what is meant by “ye *were* [note the past tense—they are no longer doing so] as sheep going *astray*?” Isaiah 53:6, tells us: “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to *His own way*.” Ah, *that* is what must be forsaken before we can truly “come” to Christ—that course of self-will must be abandoned. The prodigal son could not *come* to his Father while he remained in the far country. Dear reader, if

you are still following a course of self-pleasing, you are only deceiving yourself if you think you have come to Christ.

Nor is the brief definition which we have given above of what it means really to “come” to Christ any forced or novel one of our own. In his book *Come and Welcome to Jesus Christ*, John Bunyan wrote: “Coming to Christ is attended with an honest and sincere forsaking all for Him [here he quotes Luke 14:26, 27]. By these and like expressions elsewhere, Christ describeth the true comer: he is one that casteth all behind his back. There are a great many pretended comers to Jesus Christ in the world. They are much like the man you read of in Matthew 21:30, that said to his father’s bidding, ‘I go, sir: and went not.’ When Christ calls by His Gospel, they say, ‘I come, Sir,’ but they still abide by their pleasure and carnal delights.” C. H. Spurgeon, in his sermon on John 6:44, said, “Coming to Christ embraces in it repentance, self-abnegation, and faith in the Lord Jesus, and so sums within itself all those things which are the necessary attendants of those great steps of heart, such as the belief of the truth, earnest prayers to God, the submission of the soul to the precepts of His Gospel.” In his sermon on John 6:37, he says, “To come to Christ signifies to turn from sin and to trust in Him. Coming to Christ is a leaving of all false confidences, a renouncing of all love to sin and a looking to Jesus as the solitary pillar of our confidence and hope.”

Saving faith consists of the complete surrender of my whole being and life to the claims of God upon me: “But first gave their own selves to the Lord” (2 Cor. 8:5). It is the unreserved acceptance of Christ as my absolute Lord, bowing to His will and receiving His yoke. Possibly someone may object, Then why are Christians exhorted as they are in Romans 12:1? We answer, All such exhortations are simply a calling on them to *continue as they began*: “As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him” (Col. 2:6). Yes, mark it well that Christ is “received” as *Lord*. Oh, how far, far below the New Testament standard is this modern way of begging sinners to receive Christ as their own personal “Saviour.” If the reader will consult his concordance, he will find that in *every passage* where the two titles are found together it is *always* “Lord and Saviour,” and

never vice versa: see Luke 1:46, 47; 2 Peter 1:11; 2:20; 3:18.

Until the ungodly are sensible of the exceeding sinfulness of their vile course of self-will and self-pleasing, until they are genuinely broken down and penitent over it before God, until they are willing to forsake the world for Christ, until they have resolved to come under His government, for such to depend upon Him for pardon and life is not faith, but blatant presumption, it is but to add insult to injury. And for any such to take His holy name upon their polluted lips and profess to be His followers is the most terribly blasphemy, and comes perilously nigh to committing that sin for which there is no forgiveness. Alas, alas, that modern evangelism is encouraging and producing just such hideous and Christ-dishonouring monstrosities.

Saving faith is a believing on Christ with the *heart*: “If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness” (Romans 10:9, 10). There is no such thing as a saving faith in Christ where there is no real *love* for Him, and by “real love” we mean a love which is evidenced by *obedience*. Christ acknowledges none to be His friends save those who do whatsoever He commands them (John 15:14). As unbelief is a species of rebellion, so saving faith is a complete subjection to God: Hence we read of “the obedience of faith” (Romans 16:26). Saving faith is to the soul what health is to the body: it is a mighty principle of operation, full of life, ever working, bringing forth fruit after its own kind.

4. Its Difficulty

Some of our readers will probably be surprised to hear about the *difficulty* of saving faith. On almost every side today it is being taught, even by men styled orthodox and “fundamentalists,” that getting saved is an exceedingly simple affair. So long as a person believes John 3:16, and “rests on it,” or “accepts Christ as his personal Saviour,” that is *all* that is needed. It is often said that there is nothing left for the sinner to do but direct his faith toward the right object: just as a man trusts his bank or a wife her

husband, let him exercise the same faculty of faith and trust in Christ. So widely has this idea been received that for anyone now to condemn it is to court being branded as a heretic. Notwithstanding, the writer here unhesitatingly denounces it as a most God-insulting lie of the Devil. A natural faith is sufficient for trusting a human object; but a supernatural faith is required to trust savingly in a Divine object.

While observing the methods employed by present-day “evangelists” and “personal workers,” we are made to wonder what place the Holy Spirit has in their thoughts; certainly they entertain the most degrading conception of that miracle of grace which He performs when He moves a human heart to surrender truly unto the Lord Jesus. Alas, in these degenerate times few have any idea that saving faith *is* a miraculous thing. Instead, it is now almost universally supposed that saving faith is nothing more than an act of the human will, which any man is capable of performing: all that is needed is to bring before a sinner a few verses of Scripture which describe his lost condition, one or two which contain the word “believe,” and then a little persuasion, for him to “accept Christ,” and the thing is done. And the awful thing is that so very, very few see anything wrong with this—blind to the fact that such a process is only the Devil’s drug to lull thousands into a false peace.

So many have been *argued into* believing that they are saved. In reality, their “faith” sprang from nothing better than a superficial process of logic. Some “personal worker” addresses a man who has no concern whatever for the glory of God and no realization of his terrible hostility against Him. Anxious to “win another soul to Christ,” he pulls out his New Testament and reads to him 1 Timothy 1:15. The worker says, “You are a sinner,” and his man assenting he is at-once informed, “Then that verse includes *you*.” Next John 3:16, is read, and the question is asked, “Whom does the word ‘whosoever’ include?” The question is repeated until the poor victim answers, “You, me, and everybody.” Then he is asked, “Will you believe it; believe that God loves you, that Christ died for you?” If the answer is “Yes,” he is at once assured that he is now saved. Ah, my reader, if *this* is how you were “saved,” then

it was with “*enticing* words of man’s wisdom” and *your* “faith” stands only “in the wisdom of men” (1 Cor. 2:4, 5), and not in the power of God!

Multitudes seem to think that it is about as easy for a sinner to purify his heart (James 4:8) as it is to wash his hands; to admit the searching and flesh-withering light of Divine truth into the soul as the morning sun into his room by pulling up the blinds; to turn from idols to God, from the world to Christ, from sin to holiness, as to turn a ship right round by the help of her helm. Oh, my reader, be not deceived on this vital matter; to mortify the lusts of the flesh, to be crucified unto the world, to overcome the Devil, to die daily unto sin and live unto righteousness, to be meek and lowly in heart, trustful and obedient, pious and patient, faithful and uncompromising, loving and gentle; in a word, to be a Christian, *to be Christ-like*, is a task far, far beyond the poor resources of fallen human nature.

It is because a generation has arisen which is ignorant of the *real nature* of saving faith that they deem it such a simple thing. It is because so very few have any scriptural conception of *the character* of God’s great salvation that the delusions referred to above are so widely received. It is because so very few realize *what* they need saving from that the popular “evangel” (?) of the hour is so eagerly accepted. Once it is seen that saving faith consists of very much more than believing that “Christ died for me,” that it involves and entails the complete surrender of my heart and life to His government, few will imagine that they possess it. Once it is seen that God’s salvation is not only a legal but also an experimental thing, that it not only justifies but regenerates and sanctifies, fewer will suppose they are its participants. Once it is seen that Christ came here to save His people not only from hell, but from sin, from self-will and self-pleasing, then fewer will desire His salvation.

The Lord Jesus did not teach that saving faith was a simple matter. Far from it. Instead of declaring that the saving of the soul was an easy thing, which many would participate in, He said: “Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it” (Matt. 7:14). The only path which

leads to heaven is a hard and laborious one. “We must through *much tribulation* enter into the kingdom of God” (Acts 14:22): an entrance into that path calls for the utmost endeavours of *soul*—“*Strive* to enter in at the strait gate” (Luke 13:24).

After the young ruler had departed from Christ, sorrowing, the Lord turned to His disciples and said, “How *hard* is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a *rich* man to enter into the kingdom of God” (Mark 10:24, 25). What place is given to such a passage as this in the theology (if “theology” it is fit to be called) which is being taught in the “Bible institutes” to those seeking to qualify for evangelistic and personal work? None at all. According to their views, it is just as easy for a millionaire to be saved as it is for a pauper, since *all* that either has to do is “rest on the finished work of Christ.” But those who are wallowing in wealth think not of God: “According to their pasture, so were they filled; they were filled, and their heart exalted; therefore have they forgotten Me!” (Hosea 13:6).

When the disciples heard these words of Christ’s “they were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, Who then can be saved?” Had our moderns heard them, they had soon set their fears at rest, and assured them that anybody and everybody could be saved if they believed on the Lord Jesus. But not so did Christ reassure them. Instead, He immediately added, “With men it is *impossible*, but not with God” (Mark 10:27). Of himself, the fallen sinner can no more repent evangelically, believe in Christ savingly, come to Him effectually, than he can create a world. “With men it is impossible” rules out of court all special pleading for the power of man’s will. Nothing but a *miracle of grace* can lead to the saving of any sinner.

And *why* is it impossible for the natural man to exercise saving faith? Let the answer be drawn from the case of this young ruler. He departed from Christ sorrowing, “for he had great possessions.” He was wrapped up in them. They were his idols. His heart was chained to the things of earth. The demands of Christ were too exacting: to part with all and follow Him was more than flesh and blood could endure. Reader, what are *your*

idols? To him the Lord said, “One thing thou lackest.” What was it? A yielding to the imperative requirements of Christ; a heart surrendered to God. When the soul is stuffed with the dregs of earth, there is no room for the impressions of heaven. When a man is satisfied with carnal riches, he has no desire for spiritual riches.

The same sad truth is brought out again in Christ’s parable of the “great supper.” The feast of Divine grace is spread, and through the Gospel a general call is given for men to come and partake of it. And what is the response? This: “They all with one consent began to make excuse” (Luke 14:18). And why should they? Because they were more interested in other things. Their hearts were set upon land (verse 18), oxen (verse 19), domestic comforts (verse 20). People are willing to “accept Christ” on their own terms, but not on His. What His terms *are* is made known in the same chapter: giving Him the supreme place in our affections (verse 26), the crucifixion of self (verse 27), the abandonment of every idol (verse 33). Therefore did He ask, “which of you, intending to build a tower [figure of a hard task of setting the affections on things *above*], sitteth not down first, and *counteth the cost?*” (Luke 14:28).

“How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?” (John 5:44). Do these words picture the exercise of saving faith as the simple matter which so many deem it? The word “honour” here signifies approbation or praise. While those Jews were making it their chief aim to win and hold the good opinion of each other, and were indifferent to the approval of God, it was impossible that they should come to Christ. It is the same now: “Whomsoever therefore will be [desires and is determined to be] a friend of the world is the enemy of God” (James 4:4). To come to Christ effectually, to believe on Him savingly, involves turning our backs upon the world, alienating ourselves from the esteem of our godless (or religious) fellows, and identifying ourselves with the despised and rejected One. It involves bowing to His yoke, surrendering to His lordship, and living henceforth for *His* glory. And *that* is no small task.

“*Labour* not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat

which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you” (John 6:27). Does this language imply that the obtaining of eternal life is a simple matter? It does not; far from it. It denotes that a man must be in deadly earnest, subordinating all other interests in his quest for it, and be prepared to put forth strenuous endeavours and overcome formidable difficulties. Then does this verse teach salvation by works, by self-efforts? No, and yes. No in the sense that anything we do can *merit* salvation—eternal life is a “gift.” Yes in the sense that wholehearted seeking after salvation and a diligent use of the prescribed means of grace are demanded of us. Nowhere in Scripture is there any promise to the dilatory. (Compare Hebrews 4:11).

“No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent Me draw him” (John 6:44). Plainly does this language give the lie to the popular theory of the day, that it lies within the power of man’s will to be saved any time he chooses to be. Flatly does this verse contradict the flesh-pleasing and creature-honouring idea that anyone can receive Christ as his Saviour the *moment* he decides to do so. The reason why the natural man cannot come to Christ till the Father “draw” him is because he is the bondslave of sin (John 8:34), serving divers lusts (Titus 3:3), the captive of the Devil (2 Tim. 2:26). Almighty power must break his chains and open the prison doors (Luke 4:18) ere he *can* come to Christ. Can one who loves darkness and hates the light reverse the process? No, no more than a man who has a diseased foot or poisoned hand can heal it by an effort of will. Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots? No more can they do good who are accustomed to do evil (Jer. 13:23).

“And if the righteous with difficulty is saved, the ungodly and sinner where shall they appear?” (1 Peter 4: 18, Bagster’s Interlinear). Matthew Henry said, “It is as much as the best can do to secure the salvation of their souls; there are so many sufferings, temptations, and difficulties to be overcome; so many sins to be mortified; the gate is so strait, and the way so narrow, that it is as much as the righteous man can do to be saved. Let the absolute necessity of salvation balance the difficulty of it. Consider your difficulties are the greatest at first: God offers His grace and help;

the contest will not last long. Be but faithful to the death and God will give you the crown of life (Rev. 2:10).” So also John Lillie, “After all that God has done by sending His Son, and the Son by the Holy Spirit, it is only with difficulty, exceeding difficulty, that the work of saving the righteous advances to its consummation. The entrance into the kingdom lies through much tribulation—through fightings without and fears within—through the world’s seductions, and its frowns—through the utter weakness and continual failures of the flesh, and the many fiery darts of Satan.”

Here then are the reasons why saving faith is so difficult to put forth. (1). By nature men are entirely ignorant of its real character, and therefore are easily deceived by Satan’s plausible substitutes for it. But even when they are scripturally informed thereon, they either sorrowfully turn their backs on Christ, as did the rich young ruler when he learned His terms of discipleship, or they hypocritically profess what they do not possess. (2). The power of self-love reigns supreme within, and to *deny* self is too great a demand upon the unregenerate. (3). The love of the world and the approbation of their friends stands in the way of a complete surrender to Christ. (4). The demands of God that He should be loved with *all* the heart and that we should be “holy in all manner of conversation” (1 Peter 1:15) repels the carnal. (5). Bearing the reproach of Christ, being hated by the religious world (John 15:18), suffering persecution for righteousness’ sake, is something which mere flesh and blood shrinks from. (6). The humbling of ourselves before God, penitently confessing *all* our self-will, is something which an unbroken heart revolts against. (7). To fight the good fight of faith (1 Tim. 6:12) and overcome the Devil (1 John 2:13) is too arduous an undertaking for those who love their own ease.

Multitudes desire to be saved from hell (the natural instinct of self-preservation) who are quite unwilling to be saved from *sin*. Yes, there are tens of thousands who have been deluded into thinking that they have “accepted Christ as their Saviour,” whose lives show plainly that they *reject* Him as their Lord. For a sinner to obtain the pardon of God he must “*forsake his way*” (Isaiah 55:7). No man can turn *to God* until he turns from *idols* (1 Thess.

1:9). Thus insisted the Lord Jesus, “Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be My disciple” (Luke 14:33).

The terrible thing is that so many preachers today, under the pretence of magnifying the grace of God, have represented Christ as the Minister of *sin*; as One who has, through His atoning sacrifice, procured an indulgence for men to continue gratifying their fleshly and worldly lusts. Provided a man professes to believe in the virgin birth and vicarious death of Christ, and claims to be resting upon Him alone for salvation, he may pass for a real Christian almost anywhere today, even though his daily life may be no different from that of the moral worldling who makes no profession at all. The Devil is chloroforming thousands into hell by this very delusion. The Lord Jesus asks, “Why call ye Me, Lord, Lord, and *do not* the things which I say?” (Luke 6:46); and insists, “Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that *doeth* the will of My Father which is in heaven” (Matt. 7:21).

The hardest task before most of us is not to learn, but to unlearn. Many of God’s own children have drunk so deeply of the sweetened poison of Satan that it is by no means easy to get it out of their systems; and while it remains in them it stupefies their understanding. So much is this the case that the first time one of them reads an article like this it is apt to strike him as an open attack upon the sufficiency of Christ’s finished ‘work, as though we were here teaching that the atoning sacrifice of the Lamb needed to be plussed by something from the creature. Not so. Nothing but, the merits of Immanuel can ever give any sinner title to stand before the ineffably holy God. But what we are now contending for is, *When* does God impute to any sinner the righteousness of Christ? Certainly not while he is opposed to Him.

Moreover, we do not honour the work of Christ until we correctly define *what* that work was designed to effect. The Lord of glory did not come here and die to procure the pardon of our sins, and take us to heaven while our hearts still remain cleaving to the earth. No, He came here to prepare a way to heaven (John 10:4; 14:4; Heb. 10:20-22; 1 Peter 2:21), to call men into that way,

that by His precepts and promises, His example and spirit, He might form and fashion their souls to that glorious state, and make them willing to abandon all things for it. He lived and died so that His Spirit should come and quicken the dead sinners into newness of life, make them new creatures in Himself, and cause them to sojourn in this world as those who are not of it, as those whose hearts have already departed from it. Christ did not come here to render a change of heart, repentance, faith, personal holiness, loving God supremely and obeying Him unreservedly, as unnecessary, or salvation as possible *without* them. How passing strange that any suppose He did!

Ah, my reader, it becomes a searching test for each of our hearts to face honestly the question, Is *this* what I really long for? As John Bunyan asked (in his *The Jerusalem Sinner Saved*), “What are thy desires? Wouldest thou be saved? Wouldest thou be saved with a *thorough* salvation? Wouldest thou be saved from guilt, and from filth too? Wouldest thou be the *servant* of the Saviour? Art thou indeed weary of the service of thy old master, the Devil, sin, and the world? And have these desires put thy soul to flight? Dost thou fly to Him that is a Saviour from the wrath to come, for life? If these be thy desires, and if they be’ unfeigned, fear not.”

“Many people think that when we preach salvation, we mean salvation from going to hell. We do mean that, but we mean a great deal more: we preach salvation from *sin*; we say that Christ is able to save a man; and we mean by that that He is able to save him from sin and to make him holy; to make him a new man. No person has any right to say ‘I am saved,’ while he continues in sin as he did before. How can you be saved from sin while you are living in it? A man that is drowning cannot say he is saved from the water while he is sinking in it; a man that is frost-bitten cannot say, with any truth, that he is saved from the cold while he is stiffened in the wintry blast. No, man, Christ did not come to save thee *in* thy sins, but to save thee *from* thy sins, not to make the disease so that it should not kill thee, but to let it remain in itself mortal, and, nevertheless, to remove it from thee, and thee from it. Christ Jesus came then to heal us from the plague of sin, to touch us with His hand and say ‘I will, be thou clean’” (C. H. Spurgeon,

on Matt. 9:12).

They who do not yearn after holiness of heart and righteousness of life are only deceiving themselves when they suppose they desire to be saved by Christ. The plain fact is, all that is wanted by so many today is merely a soothing position for their conscience, which will enable them to go on comfortably in a course of self-pleasing which will permit them to continue their worldly ways without the fear of eternal punishment. Human nature is the same the world over; that wretched instinct which causes multitudes to believe that paying a papist priest a few dollars procures forgiveness of all their past sins, and an “indulgence” for future ones, moves other multitudes to devour greedily the lie that, with an unbroken and impenitent heart, by a mere act of the will, they may “believe in Christ,” and thereby obtain not only God’s pardon for past sins but an “eternal security,” no matter what they do or do not do in the future.

Oh, my reader, be not deceived; God frees none from condemnation but those “which are *in Christ Jesus*” (Romans 8:1), and “if any man be in Christ, he is a *new creature*: old things are [*not* “ought to be”] passed away; behold, *all things are* become new” (2 Cor. 5:17). Saving faith makes a sinner come to Christ with a real soul-thirst, that he may drink of the living water, even of His sanctifying Spirit (John 7:38, 39). To love our enemies, to bless them that curse us, to pray for them that despitefully use us, is very far from being easy, yet *this* is only one part of the task which Christ assigns unto those who would be *His* disciples. *He* acted thus, and He has left us an example that we should follow His steps. And *His* “salvation,” in its *present* application, consists of revealing to our hearts the imperative need for our measuring up to His high and holy standard, with a realization of our own utter powerlessness so to do; and creating within us an intense hunger and thirst after such personal righteousness, and a daily turning unto Him and trustful supplication for needed grace and strength.

5. Its Communication

From the human viewpoint, things are now in a bad state in the

world. But from the spiritual viewpoint things are in a far worse state in the religious realm. Sad is it to see the anti-Christian cults flourishing on every side; but far more grievous is it, for those who are taught of God, to discover that much of the so-called “Gospel” which is now being preached in many “fundamentalist churches” and “gospel halls” is but a satanic delusion. The Devil knows that his captives are quite secure while the grace of God and the finished work of Christ are “faithfully” proclaimed to them, so long as the only way in which sinners receive the saving virtues of the Atonement is unfaithfully concealed. While God’s peremptory and unchanging demand for repentance is left out, while Christ’s own terms of discipleship (i.e. how to become a Christian: Acts 11:26) in Luke 14:26, 27, 33, are withheld, and while saving faith is frittered down to a mere act of the will, blind laymen will continue to be led by blind preachers, only for both to fall into the ditch.

Things are far, far worse even in the “orthodox” sections of Christendom than the majority of God’s own children are aware. Things are rotten even at the very foundation, for with very rare exceptions God’s way of salvation is no longer being taught. Tens of thousands are “ever learning” points in prophecy, the meaning of the types, the significance of the numerals, how to divide the “dispensations,” who are, nevertheless, “never able to come to the knowledge of the truth” (2 Tim. 3:7) of salvation itself—unable because unwilling to pay the price (Prov. 23:23), which is a full surrender to God Himself. As far as the writer understands the present situation, it seems to him that what is needed today is to press upon the serious attention of professing Christians such questions as: When is it that God applies to a sinner the virtues of Christ’s finished work? What is it that I am called upon to do in order to appropriate myself to the efficacy of Christ’s atonement? What is it that gives me an actual entrance into the good of His redemption?

The questions formulated above are only three different ways of framing the same inquiry. Now the popular answer which is being returned to them is, “Nothing more is required from any sinner than that he simply believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.” In the

preceding articles of this series we have sought to show that such a reply is misleading, inadequate, faulty, and that because it ignores all the other scriptures which set forth what God requires from the sinner: it leaves out of account God's demand for repentance (with all that that involves and includes), and Christ's clearly defined terms of discipleship in Luke 14. To restrict ourselves to any one scripture term of a subject, or set of passages using that term, results in an erroneous conception of it. They who limit their ideas of regeneration to the one figure of the new birth lapse into serious error upon it. So they who limit their thoughts on how to be saved to the one word "believe" are easily misled. Diligent care needs to be taken to collect all that Scripture teaches on any subject if we are to have a properly balanced and accurate view thereof.

To be more specific. In Romans 10:13, we read, "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." Now does this mean that all who have, with their lips, cried unto the Lord, who have in the name of Christ besought God to have mercy on them, have been saved by Him? They who reply in the affirmative are only deceived by the mere sound of words, as the deluded Romanist is when he contends for Christ's bodily presence in the bread, because He said "this is My body." And how are we to show the papist is misled? Why, by comparing Scripture with Scripture. So here. The writer well remembers being on a ship in a terrible storm off the coast of Newfoundland. All the hatches were battened down, and for three days no passenger was allowed on the decks. Reports from the stewards were disquieting. Strong men paled. As the winds increased and the ship rolled worse and worse, scores of men and women were heard calling upon the name of the Lord. Did He save them? A day or two later, when the weather changed, those same men and women were drinking, cursing, card-playing!

Perhaps someone asks, "But does not Romans 10:13 say what it means?" Certainly it does, but no verse of Scripture yields its meaning to lazy people. Christ Himself tells us that there are many who call Him "Lord" to whom He will say "Depart from Me" (Matt. 7:22, 23). Then what is to be done with Romans 10:13? Why, diligently compare it with all other passages which

make known what the sinner must do ere God will save him. If nothing more than the fear of death or horror of hell prompts the sinner to call upon the Lord, he might just as well call upon the trees. The Almighty is not at the beck and call of any rebel who, when he is terrified, sues for mercy. “He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination” (Prov. 28:9)! “He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and *forsaketh them* shall have mercy” (Prov. 28: 13). The only “calling upon His name” which the Lord heeds is that which issues from a broken, penitent, sin-hating heart, which thirsts after holiness.

The same principle applies to Acts 16:31 and all similar texts: “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” To a casual reader, that seems a very simple matter, yet a closer pondering of those words should discover that more is involved than at first sight appears. Note that the apostles did not merely tell the Philippian jailer to “rest on the finished work of Christ,” or “trust in His atoning sacrifice.” Instead, it was a Person that was set before him. Again, it was not simply “Believe on the Saviour,” but “the Lord Jesus Christ.” John 1:12 shows plainly that to “believe” is to “receive,” and to be saved a sinner must receive One who is not only Saviour but “Lord,” yea, who must be received as “Lord” before He becomes the Saviour of that person. And to receive “Christ Jesus the Lord” (Col. 2:6) necessarily involves the renouncing of our own sinful lordship, the throwing down of the weapons of our warfare against Him, and the submitting to His yoke and rule. And before any human rebel is brought to do that, a miracle of Divine grace has to be wrought within him. And this brings us more immediately to the present aspect of our theme.

Saving faith is not a native product of the human heart, but a spiritual grace communicated from on high. “It is the gift of God” (Eph. 2:8). It is “of the operation of God” (Col. 2:12). It is by “the power of God” (1 Cor. 2:5). A most remarkable passage on this subject is found in Ephesians 1:16-20. There we find the apostle Paul praying that the saints should have the eyes of their understanding enlightened, that they might know “what is the

exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead.” Not the strong power of God, or the greatness of it, but the “exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward.” Note too the standard of comparison: we “believe according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead.”

God put forth His “Mighty power” when He resurrected Christ. There was a mighty power seeking to hinder, even Satan and all his hosts. There was a mighty difficulty to be overcome, even the vanquishing of the grave. There was a mighty result to be achieved, even the bringing to life of One who was dead. None but God Himself was equal to a miracle so stupendous. Strictly analogous is that miracle of grace which issues in saving faith. The Devil employs all his arts and power to retain his captive. The sinner is dead in trespasses and sins, and can no more quicken himself than he can create a world. His heart is bound fast with the grave-clothes of worldly and fleshly lusts, and only Omnipotence can raise it into communion with God. Well may every true servant of the Lord emulate the apostle Paul and pray earnestly that God will enlighten His people concerning this wonder of wonders, so that instead of attributing their faith to an exercise of their own will they may freely ascribe all the honour and glory unto Him to whom alone it justly belongs.

If only the professing Christians of this untoward generation could begin to obtain some adequate conception of the real condition of every man by nature, they might be less inclined to cavil against the teaching that nothing short of a miracle of grace can ever qualify any sinner to believe unto the saving of his soul. If they could only see that the heart’s attitude towards God of the most refined and moral is not a whit different from that of the most vulgar and vicious; that he who is most kind and benevolent toward his fellow creatures has no more real desire after Christ than has the most selfish and brutal; then it would be evident that Divine power must operate to change the heart. Divine power was needed to create, but much greater power is required to regenerate a soul: creation is only the bringing of something Out of nothing,

but regeneration is the transforming not only of an unlovely object, but of one that resists with all its might the gracious designs of the heavenly Potter.

It is not simply that the Holy Spirit approaches a heart in which there is no love for God, but He finds it filled with enmity against Him, and incapable of being subject to His law (Romans 8:7). True, the individual himself maybe quite unconscious of this terrible fact, yea, ready indignantly to deny it. But that is easily accounted for. If he has heard little or nothing but the love, the grace, the mercy, the goodness of God, it would indeed be surprising if he hated Him. But once the God of Scripture is made known to him in the power of the Spirit, once he is made to realize that God is the Governor of this world, demanding unqualified submission to all His laws; that He is inflexibly just, and “will by no means clear the guilty;” that He is sovereign, and loves whom He pleases and hates whom He wills; that so far from being an easy-going, indulgent Creator, who winks at the follies of His creatures, He is ineffably holy, so that His righteous wrath burns against all the workers of iniquity—then will people be conscious of indwelling enmity surging up against Him. And nothing but the almighty power of the Spirit can overcome that enmity and bring any rebel truly to love the God of Holy Writ.

Rightly did Thomas Goodwin the Puritan say, “A wolf will sooner marry a lamb, or a lamb a wolf, than ever a carnal heart be subject to the law of God, which was the ancient husband of it (Romans 7:6). It is the turning of one contrary into another. To turn water into wine, there is some kind of symbolizing, yet that is a miracle. But to turn a wolf into a lamb, to turn fire into water, is a yet greater miracle. Between nothing and something there is an infinite distance, but between sin and grace there is a greater distance than can be between nothing and the highest angel in heaven.. . To destroy the power of sin in a man’s soul is as great a work as to take away the guilt of sin. It is easier to say to a blind man, ‘See,’ and to a lame man, ‘Walk,’ than to say to a man that lies under the power of sin, ‘Live, be holy,’ for there is that that will not be subject.”

In 2 Corinthians 10:4, the apostle describes the character of that

work in which the true servants of Christ are engaged. It is a conflict with the forces of Satan. The weapons of their warfare are “not carnal”—as well might modern soldiers go forth equipped with only wooden swords and paper shields as preachers think to liberate the Devil’s captives by means of human leaning, worldly methods, touching anecdotes, attractive singing, and so on. No, “their weapons” are the “word of God” and “all prayer” (Eph. 6:17, 18); and even these are only mighty “through God,” that is by His direct and special blessing of them to particular souls. In what follows, a description is given of where the might of God is seen, namely in the powerful opposition which it meets with and vanquishes; “to the pulling down of strong holds, casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.”

Herein lies the power of God when He is pleased thus to put it forth in the saving of a sinner. The heart of that sinner is fortified against Him: it is steeled against His holy demands, His righteous claims. It is determined not to submit to His law, nor to abandon those idols which it prohibits. That haughty rebel has made up his mind that he will not turn away from the delights of this world and the pleasure of sin and give God the supreme place in his affections. But God has determined to overcome his sinful opposition, and transform him into a loving and loyal subject. The figure here used is that of a besieged town—the heart. Its “strongholds”—the reigning power of fleshly and worldly lusts—are “pulled down;” self-will is broken, pride is subdued, and the defiant rebel is made a willing captive to “the obedience of Christ!” “Mighty through God” points to this miracle of grace.

There is one other detail pointed by the analogy drawn in Ephesians 1:19, 20, which exemplifies the mighty power of God, namely “and set Him [Christ] at His own right hand in the heavenly places.” The members of Christ’s mystical body are predestinated to be conformed to the glorious image of their glorified Head: in measure, now; perfectly, in the day to come. The ascension of Christ was contrary to nature, being opposed by the law of gravitation. But the power of God overcame that

opposition, and translated His resurrected Son bodily into heaven. In like manner, His grace produces in His people that which is contrary to nature, overcoming the opposition of the flesh, and drawing their hearts unto things above. How we would marvel if we saw a man extend his arms and suddenly leave the earth, soaring upward into the sky. Yet still more wonderful is it when we behold the power of the Spirit causing a sinful creature to rise above temptations, worldliness and sin, and breathe the atmosphere of heaven; when a human soul is made to disdain the things of earth and find its satisfaction in things above.

The historical order in connection with the Head in Ephesians 1:19, 20, is also the experimental order with regard to the members of His body. Before setting His Son at His own right hand in the heavenlies, God raised Him from the dead; so before the Holy Spirit fixes the heart of a sinner upon Christ He first quickens him into newness of life. There must be life before there can be sight, believing, or good works performed. One who is physically dead is incapable of doing anything; so he who is spiritually dead is incapable of any spiritual exercises. First the giving of life unto dead Lazarus, then the removing of the grave-clothes which bound him hand and foot. God must regenerate before there can be a “new creature in Christ Jesus.” The washing of a child follows its birth.

When spiritual life has been communicated to the soul, that individual is now able to see things in their true colours. In God’s light he sees light (Psalm 36:9). He is now given to perceive (by the Holy Spirit) what a lifelong rebel he has been against his Creator and Benefactor: that instead of making God’s will his rule he has gone his own way; that instead of having before him God’s glory he has sought only to please and gratify self. Even though he may have been preserved from all the grosser outward forms of wickedness, he now recognizes that he is a spiritual leper, a vile and polluted creature, utterly unfit to draw near, still less to dwell with Him who is ineffably holy; and such an apprehension makes him feel that his case is hopeless.

There is a vast difference between hearing or reading of what conviction of sin is and being made to feel it in the depths of one’s

own soul. Multitudes are acquainted with the theory who are total strangers to the experience of it: One may read of the sad effects of war, and may agree that they are indeed dreadful; but when the enemy is at one's own door, plundering his goods, firing his home, slaying his dear ones, he is far more sensible of the miseries of war than ever he was (or could be) previously. So an unbeliever may hear of what a dreadful state the sinner is in before God, and how terrible will be the sufferings of hell; but when the Spirit brings home to his own heart its actual condition, and makes him feel the heat of God's wrath in his own conscience, he is ready to sink with dismay and despair. Reader, do you know anything of such an experience?

Only thus is any soul prepared truly to appreciate Christ. They that are whole need not a physician. The one who has been savingly convicted is made to realize that none but the Lord Jesus can heal one so desperately diseased by sin; that He alone can impart that spiritual health (holiness) which will enable him to run in the way of God's commandments; that nothing but His precious blood can atone for the sins of the past and naught but His all-sufficient grace can meet the pressing needs of the present and future. Thus there must be discerning faith before there is coming faith. The Father "draws" to the Son (John 6:44) by imparting to the mind a deep realization of our desperate need of Christ, by giving to the heart a real sense of the inestimable worth of Him, and by causing the will to receive Him on His own terms.

6. Its Evidences

The great majority of those who read this will, doubtless, be they who profess to be in possession of a saving faith. To all such we would put the questions. Where is your proof? What effects has it produced in you? A tree is known by its fruits, and a fountain by the waters which issue from it; so the nature of your faith may be ascertained by a careful examination of what it is bringing forth. We say "*a careful examination,*" for as all fruit is not fit for eating nor all water for drinking, so all works are not the effects of a faith which saves. Reformation is not regeneration, and a changed life does not always indicate a changed heart. Have

you been saved from a dislike of God's commandments and a disrelish of His holiness? Have you been saved from pride, covetousness, murmuring? Have you been delivered from the love of this world, from the fear of man, from the reigning power of every sin?

The heart of fallen man is thoroughly depraved, its thoughts and imaginations being only evil continually (Gen. 6:5). It is full of corrupt desires and affections, which exert themselves and influence man in all he does. Now the Gospel comes into direct opposition with these selfish lusts and corrupt affections, both in the root and in the fruit of them (Titus 2:11, 12). There is no greater duty that the Gospel urges upon our souls than the mortifying and destroying of them, and this indispensably, if we intend to be made partakers of its promises (Romans 8:13; Col. 3:5, 8). Hence the first real work of faith is to cleanse the soul from these pollutions, and therefore we read, "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts" (Gal. 5:24). Mark well, it is not that they "ought to" do so, but that they have *actually*, in some measure or degree.

It is one thing really to *think* we believe a thing, it is quite another actually to do so. So fickle is the human heart that even in natural things men know not their own minds. In temporal affairs what a man really believes is best ascertained by his practice. Suppose I meet a traveller in a narrow gorge and tell him that just ahead is an impassable river, and that the bridge across it is rotten: if he declines to turn back, am I not warranted in concluding that he does not believe me? Or if a physician tells me a certain disease holds me in its grip, and that in a short time it will prove fatal if I do not use a prescribed remedy which is sure to heal, would he not be justified in inferring that I did not trust his judgment were he to see me not only ignoring his directions but following a contrary course? Likewise, to believe there is a hell and yet run unto it; to believe that sin continued in will damn and yet live in it—to what purpose is it to boast of *such* a faith?

Now, from what was before us in the above section, it should be plain beyond all room for doubt that when God imparts saving faith to a soul radical and real effects will follow. One cannot be

raised from the dead without there being a consequent walking in newness of life. One cannot be the subject of a miracle of grace being wrought in the heart without a noticeable change being apparent to all who know him. Where a supernatural root has been implanted, supernatural fruit must issue there from. Not that sinless perfection is attained in the life, nor that the evil principle, the flesh, is eradicated from our beings, or even purified. Nevertheless, there is now a yearning after perfection, there is a spirit resisting the flesh, there is a striving against sin. And more, there is a growing in grace, and a *pressing forward* along the “narrow way” which leads to heaven.

One serious error so widely propagated today in “orthodox” circles, and which is responsible for so many souls being deceived, is the seemingly Christ-honouring doctrine that it is “His blood which *alone* saves any sinner.” Ah, Satan is very clever; he knows exactly what bait to use for every place in which he fishes. Many a company would indignantly resent a preacher’s telling them that getting baptized and eating the Lord’s supper were God’s appointed means for saving the soul; yet most of these same people will readily accept the lie that it is only by the blood of Christ we can be saved. That is true Godwards, but it is not true manwards. The work of the Spirit in us is *equally* essential as the work of Christ for us. Let the reader carefully ponder the whole of Titus 3:5.

Salvation is twofold: it is both legal and experimental, and consists of justification and sanctification. Moreover, I owe my salvation not only to the Son but to all three persons in the Godhead. Alas, how little is this realized today, and how little is it preached. First and primarily I owe my salvation to God the Father, who ordained and planned it, and who chose me unto salvation (2 Thess. 2:13). In Titus 2:4, it is the Father who is denominated “God our Saviour.” Secondly and meritoriously I owe my salvation to the obedience and sacrifice of God the Son Incarnate, who performed as my Sponsor everything which the law required, and satisfied all its demands upon me. Thirdly and efficaciously I owe my salvation to the regenerating, sanctifying and preserving operations of the Spirit: note that His work is made

just as prominent in Luke 15:8-10, as is the Shepherd's in Luke 15:4-7! As Titus 3:5, so plainly affirms, God "saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit;" and it is the presence of *His* "fruit" in my heart and life which furnishes the immediate evidence of my salvation.

"With the heart man believeth unto righteousness" (Romans 10:10). Thus it is the heart which we must first examine in order to discover evidences of the presence of a saving faith. And first, God's Word speaks of "*purifying* their hearts by faith" (Acts 15:9). Of old the Lord said, "O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved" (Jer. 4:14). A heart that is being purified by faith (compare with 1 Peter 1:22), is one fixed upon a pure Object. It drinks from a pure Fountain, delights in a pure Law (Romans 7:22), and looks forward to spending eternity with a pure Saviour (1 John 3:3). It loathes all that is filthy—spiritually as well as morally—yea, hates the very garment spotted by the flesh (Jude 23). Contrariwise, it loves all that is holy, lovely and Christlike.

"The pure in heart shall see God" (Matt. 5:8). Heart purity is absolutely essential to fit us for dwelling in that place into which there shall in no wise enter anything "that defileth, neither worketh abomination" (Rev. 21:27). Perhaps a little fuller definition is called for. Purifying the heart by faith consists of, first, the purifying of the understanding, by the shining in of Divine light, so as to cleanse it from error. Second, the purifying of the conscience, so as to cleanse it from guilt. Third, the purifying of the will, so as to cleanse it from self-will and self-seeking. Fourth, the purifying of the affections, so as to cleanse them from the love of all that is evil. In Scripture the "heart" includes all these four faculties. A deliberate purpose to continue in any one sin cannot consist with a pure heart.

Again, saving faith is always evidenced by a *humble* heart. Faith lays the soul low, for it discovers its own vileness, emptiness, impotency. It realizes its former sinfulness and present unworthiness. It is conscious of its weaknesses and wants, its carnality and corruptions. Nothing more exalts Christ than faith, and nothing more debases a man. In order to magnify the riches of

His grace, God has selected faith as the fittest instrument, and this because it is that which causes us to go entirely out from ourselves unto Him. Faith, realizing we are nothing but sin and wretchedness, comes unto Christ as an empty-handed beggar to receive all from Him. Faith empties a man of self-conceit, self-confidence, and self-righteousness, and makes him seem nothing, that Christ may be all in all. The strongest faith is always accompanied by the greatest humility, accounting self the greatest of sinners and unworthy of the least favour (see Matt. 8:8-10).

Again, saving faith is always found in a *tender* heart. "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh" (Ezek. 36:26). An unregenerate heart is hard as stone, full of pride and presumption. It is quite unmoved by the sufferings of Christ, in the sense that they act as no deterrent against self-will and self-pleasing. But the real Christian is moved by the love of Christ, and says, How can I sin against His dying love for me. When overtaken by a fault, there is passionate relenting and bitter mourning. Oh, my reader, do you know what it is to be melted before God, for you to be heart-broken with anguish over sinning against and grieving such a Saviour? Ah, it is not the absence of sin but the grieving over it which distinguishes the child of God from empty professors.

Another characteristic of saving faith is that it "worketh by love" (Gal. 5:6). It is not inactive, but energetic. That faith which is "of the operation of God" (Col. 2:12) is a mighty principle of power, diffusing spiritual energy to all the faculties of the soul and enlisting them in the service of God. Faith is a principle of life, by which the Christian lives unto God; a principle of motion, by which he walks to heaven along the highway of holiness; a principle of strength, by which he opposes the flesh, the world, and the Devil. "Faith in the heart of a Christian is like the salt that was thrown into the corrupt fountain, that made the naughty waters good and the barren land fruitful. Hence it is that there followeth an alteration of life and conversation, and so bringeth forth fruit accordingly: 'A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good fruit;' which treasure is faith" (John

Bunyan in ‘Christian Behaviour’).

Where a saving faith is rooted in the heart it grows up and spreads itself in all the branches of obedience, and is filled with the fruits of righteousness. It makes its possessor act for God, and thereby evidences that it is a living thing and not merely a lifeless theory. Even a newborn infant, though it cannot walk and work as a grown man, breathes and cries, moves and sucks, and thereby shows it is alive. So with the one who has been born again; there is a breathing unto God, a crying after Him, a moving toward Him, a clinging to Him. But the infant does not long remain a babe; there is growth, increasing strength, enlarged activity. Nor does the Christian remain stationary: he goes “from strength to strength” (Psalm 84:7).

But observe carefully, faith not only “worketh” but it “worketh by *love*.” It is at this point that the “works” of the Christian differ from those of the mere religionist. “The papist works that he may merit heaven. The Pharisee works that he may be applauded, that he may be seen of men, that he may have a good esteem with them. The slave works lest he should be beaten, lest he should be damned. The formalist works that he may stop the mouth of conscience, that will be accusing him, if he does nothing. The ordinary professor works because it is a shame to do nothing where so much is professed. But the true believer works because he loves. This is the principal, if not the only, motive that sets him a-work. If there were no other motive within or without him, yet would he be working for God, acting for Christ, because he loves Him; it is like fire in his bones” (David Clarkson).

Saving faith is ever accompanied by *an obedient walk*. “Hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him” (1 John 2:3, 4). Make no mistake upon this point: infinite as are the merits of Christ’s sacrifice, mighty as is the potency of His priestly intercession, yet they avail not for any who continue in the path of disobedience. He acknowledges none to be His disciples save them who do homage to Him as their Lord. “Too many professors pacify themselves with the idea that they possess imputed righteousness, while they

are indifferent to the sanctifying work of the Spirit. They refuse to put on the garment of obedience, they reject the white linen which is the righteousness of the saints. They thus reveal their self-will, their enmity to God, and their non-submission to His Son. Such men may talk what they will about justification by faith, and salvation by grace, but they are rebels at heart; they have not on the wedding-dress any more than the self-righteous, whom they so eagerly condemn. The fact is, if we wish for the blessings of grace, we must in our hearts submit to the rules of grace without picking and choosing” (C. H. Spurgeon on “The Wedding Garment”).

Once more: saving faith is *precious*, for, like gold, it will endure trial (1 Peter 1:7). A genuine Christian fears no test; he is willing, yea, wishes, to be tried by God Himself. He cries, “Examine me, O Lord, and prove me; try my reins and my heart” (Psalm 26:2). Therefore he is willing for his faith to be tried by others, for he shuns not the touchstone of Holy Writ. He frequently tries for himself, for where so much is at stake he must be *sure*. He is anxious to know the worst as well as the best. That preaching pleases him best which is most searching and discriminating. He is loath to be deluded with vain hopes. He would not be flattered into a high conceit of his spiritual state without grounds. When challenged, he complies with the apostle’s advice in 2 Corinthians 13:5.

Herein does the real Christian differ from the formalist. The presumptuous professor is filled with pride, and having a high opinion of himself, is quite sure that *he* has been saved by Christ. He disdains any searching tests, and considers self-examination to be highly injurious and destructive of faith. That preaching pleases him best which keeps at a respectable distance, which comes not near his conscience, which makes no scrutiny of his heart. To preach to him of the finished work of Christ and the eternal security of all who believe in Him strengthens his false peace and feeds his carnal confidence. Should a real servant of God seek to convince him that his hope is a delusion, and his confidence presumptuous, he would regard him as an enemy, as Satan seeking to fill him with doubts. There is more hope of a murderer being

saved than of his being disillusioned.

Another characteristic of saving faith is that it gives the heart victory over all the vanities and vexations of things below. “For whatsoever is born of God *overcometh the world*: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith” (1 John 5:4). Observe that this is not an ideal after which the Christian strives, but an actuality of present experience. In this the saint is conformed to His Head: “Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33). Christ overcame it for His people, and now He overcomes it in them. He opens their eyes to see the hollowness and worthlessness of the best which this world has to offer, and weans their hearts from it by satisfying them with spiritual things. So little does the world attract the genuine child of God that he longs for the time to come when God shall take him out of it.

Alas, that so very few of those now bearing the name of Christ have any real experimental acquaintance with these things. Alas, that so many are deceived by a faith which is not a saving one. “He only is a Christian who lives for Christ. Many persons think they can be Christians on easier terms than these. They think it is enough to trust in Christ while they do not live for Him. But the Bible teaches us that if we are partakers of Christ’s death we are also partakers of His life. If we have any such appreciation of His love in dying for us as to lead us to confide in the merits of His death, *we shall be* constrained to consecrate our lives to His service. And this is the only evidence of the genuineness of our faith” (Charles Hodge on 2 Corinthians 5:15).

Reader, are the things mentioned above actualized in your own experience? If they are not, how worthless and wicked is your profession! “It is therefore exceedingly absurd for any to pretend that they have a good heart while they live a wicked life, or do not bring forth the fruit of universal holiness in their practice. Men that live in the ways of sin, and yet flatter themselves that they shall go to heaven, expecting to be received hereafter as holy persons, without a holy practice, act as though they expected to make a fool of their Judge. Which is implied in what the apostle says (speaking of men’s doing good works and living a holy life,

thereby exhibiting evidence of their title to everlasting life), ‘Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap’ (Gal. 6:7). As much as to say, Do not deceive yourselves with an expectation of reaping life everlasting hereafter, if you do not sow to the Spirit here; it is in vain to think that God will be made a fool of by you” (Jonathan Edwards in ‘Religious Affections’).

That which Christ requires from His disciples is that they should magnify and glorify Him in this world, and that by living holily to Him and suffering patiently for Him. Nothing is as honouring to Christ as that those who bear His name should, by their holy obedience, make manifest the power of His love over their hearts and lives. Contrariwise, nothing is so great a reproach to Him, nothing more dishonours Him, than that those who are living to please self, and who are conformed to this world, should cloak their wickedness under His holy name. A Christian is one who has taken Christ for his example in all things; then how great the insult which is done Him by those claiming to be Christians whose daily lives show they have no respect for His godly example. They are a stench in His nostrils; they are a cause of grievous sorrow to His real disciples; they are the greatest hindrance of all to the progress of His cause on earth; and they shall yet find that the hottest places in hell have been reserved for them. Oh that they would either abandon their course of self-pleasing or drop the profession of that name which is above every name.

Should the Lord be pleased to use this article in shattering the false confidence of some deluded souls, and should they earnestly inquire how they are to obtain a genuine and saving faith, we answer, Use the means which God has prescribed. When faith be His gift, He gives it in His own way; and if we desire to receive it, then we must put ourselves in that way wherein He is wont to communicate it. Faith is the work of God, but He works it not immediately, but through the channels of His appointed means. The means prescribed cannot effect faith of themselves. They are no further effectual than in instruments in the hands of Him who is the principal cause. Though He has not tied Himself to them, yet He has confined us. Though He be free, yet the means are

necessary to us.

The first means is *prayer*. “A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you” (Ezek. 36:26). Here is a gracious promise, but in what way will He accomplish it, and similar ones? Listen, “Thus saith the Lord God; I will yet for this *be inquired of* by the house of Israel, to do it for them” (Ezek. 36:3 7). Cry earnestly to God for a new heart, for His regenerating Spirit, for the gift of saving faith. Prayer is a universal duty. Though an unbeliever sin in praying (as in everything else), it is not a sin for him to pray.

The second means is the *written Word* heard (John 17:20; 1 Cor. 3:5) or read (2 Tim. 3:15). Said David, “I will never forget Thy precepts: for with them Thou hast quickened me” (Psalm 119:93). The Scriptures are the Word of God; through them He speaks. Then read them, asking Him to speak life, power, deliverance, peace, to your heart. May the Lord deign to add His blessing.

