

SAVING FAITH

Again, in our *Baptist Confession of Faith*, we are brought to the fundamentals ... the foundations of what we believe. Spurgeon referred his people to this body of doctrine time and time again, "This ancient document is the most excellent epitome of the things most surely believed among us. It is not issued as an authoritative rule or code of faith, whereby you may be fettered, but as a means of edification in righteousness. It is an excellent, though not inspired, expression of the teaching of those Holy Scriptures by which all confessions are to be measured. We hold to the humbling truths of God's sovereign grace in the salvation of lost sinners. Salvation is through Christ alone and by faith alone."

Yes, these doctrines *pour out* of our Bible. *Grace* is the overwhelming theme that runs the whole way through its pages. Based upon this Book is the whole counsel of God, - this body of doctrine (the *Confession of Faith*). As Spurgeon said though, the *Confession* itself is not inspired ... but we its teachings are taught plainly in Scripture. When someone denies these great truths they also deny the Word of God.

I assure you I am not a Baptist because I was born into a Baptist home ... for I wasn't. Neither am I a Baptist out of convenience. But I'm a Baptist because of what the Word of God plainly and simply teaches ... and I adhere to this *Confession of Faith* ... which I believe is a faithful presentation of sound Biblical Truth.

Moving a step on ... **Saving faith** is the bedrock of what we believe. Take my Bible away and I have nothing upon which I can prove to you my faith. Feelings aren't sufficient ... neither is good works, baptism or church membership, - people of other faiths have feelings and organisational structures. But the Bible clearly teaches the doctrine pertaining to **saving faith**, - a doctrine that no other faith or religion can claim. Therefore, it follows then that if anyone says they are a Christian and denies the doctrine of **saving faith** ... no matter how sincere they try to seriously and passionately convince you, I have it on good authority, - *the Bible*, - they are not saved. It's an eternally important subject so let's take it slowly ...

THE GRACE OF FAITH

* What does that mean ... the *grace* of faith? It simply means that without God's grace you wouldn't have faith to believe.

- * Does give grace to everyone? Yes ... and no.
- * Yes ... in that God shows grace to all humanity.
 - * Ps. 107:8,15,21,31 Oh that men would praise the LORD for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!
- * God is good to the saved and unsaved alike! God shows 'grace' (in theological terms, 'common grace') to this world all the time.
- * Imagine if God did not show grace ... this world would be totally out of control. There would be no measure of restraint or order
- * If God didn't show grace the seas would overflow the land, the planets would be crashing into each other.
- * God carries out this work which is 'common' and shared by mankind.
- * In these matters God is as good to the unbeliever as to the believer.
- * However, whilst there is 'common' grace, - enjoyed by *all* mankind, - there is also 'saving' grace.
- * Saving grace, - as our *Confession* teaches us, - is "the grace of faith by which the elect are enabled to believe to the saving of their souls [*and*] is the work of the Spirit in their hearts".
- * Whereas *common grace* is God's gift to all mankind, *saving grace* is the particular gift to those He has chosen in eternity to save, His elect.
- * To believe in God to be saved is not possible until and unless saving faith is granted by Sovereign grace, i.e. you will only believe in Christ to be saved when the Holy Spirit imparts the ability for you to believe.
- * Now, of course, some draw back from this Biblical teaching and they *explode* and tell you this is wrong and that you are speaking error! ... But how can it be wrong/error if it is what the Bible plainly teaches?!
 - * It doesn't matter to me that you can't work it out in your mind ... and if you think you can work these kinds of things out in your mind you're putting yourself on the same level as God! These things are beyond you and me! Job said, 42:3 *therefore have I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not. Ps. 139:6 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it.*
- * By the way, ... this isn't 'calvinism' ... This truth was round long before Calvin and the Reformation. This truth is what the Bible plainly teaches ... and it is also what our *Baptist Confession of Faith* plainly teaches!
- * This is "the grace of faith", - the gift of God whereby we would believe in His Son to save us. Without this gift of God, - to believe, - we would never believe of ourselves.

* Now, how do we hear about this **saving faith**? Is it through Christian ‘clowns’ or Christian rock concerts or workshops or inter-faith discussion? ☹

* The Bible teaches us that it is through the preaching of the Word of God. You see, once again ... God is to get all the glory!

* When the disciples preached on the Day of Pentecost they preached from the Old Testament, e.g. Acts 4:4 many of them which heard the word believed ... 31 And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.

* They went on from there ... Acts 8:4 tells us they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word ... 25 And they, when they had testified and preached the word of the Lord, returned to Jerusalem, and preached the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans. ... Acts 11: 19 Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word ... 13:5 And when they were at Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews ... 49 And the word of the Lord was published throughout all the region. ... 14: 25 And when they had preached the word in Perga, they went down into Attalia ... etc, etc, etc Paul told Timothy, II Tim. 4:2 Preach the word!

* It is through the preaching of the Word that sinners are saved and it is through the preaching of the Word the saints are matured and established!

* Where the Word is not preached any growth that there is can often be seen to be spurious!

* Saving faith, “brought into being through the preaching of the Word”.

* ... Moving on ... Why should I believe in something I cannot fully understand? ...

THE CONFIDENCE TO BELIEVE

* Can you understand that God is able to be everywhere at all times? Can you understand that God is three actual Persons in One? Can you understand all there is to understand concerning some of these great mysteries of the faith ... because I can’t understand them all ... but I believe them ... because the Bible teaches them!

* How can I believe them? Is it *blind* faith? ... No, it’s not *blind* faith ... instead, it is faith in what the Bible teaches.

* Do I believe the shepherd boy faced up to the giant Goliath? Yes, I do because the Bible says it!

* Do I believe a whole nation walked through the sea as they left Egypt on their way to the Promised Land? Yes, I do because the Bible says it!

- * Do I believe three men walked out of a fiery furnace without suffering any harm? Yes, I do because the Bible says it!!
- * This **confidence to believe** is not mine to boast of ... because I might be gullible and easy fooled; no, this **confidence to believe** is something God installs within the believer ... to believe.
- * The *Confession* says, “In this way the Christian is enabled to trust himself implicitly to the truth thus believed, and to render service according to the different requirements of the various parts of Scripture”. In other words, obedience to the whole counsel of God’s Word is a non-negotiable requisite of being an obedient child of God.
- * We cannot choose to obey or to question God’s Word. “To the commands he [*the believer*] yields obedience”.
- * “How do I know Christ has saved me? I don’t want to think I’m saved and then find out I’m not; how can be I be certain I’m saved?” Paul wrote to the Corinthians, [II Cor. 1:19 For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us ... was not yea and nay, but in him was yea. 20 For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us. 21 Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; 22 Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts. ...v.24 for by faith ye stand.](#)
- * If you don’t stand by faith upon God’s Word ... your faith will fall or become polluted with the false doctrines and erroneous superstitions of men. Your obedience to His Word is the prerequisite and it is the constant thread that runs through the process of sanctification that God is working by His Holy Spirit within you.
- * Only in God’s Word are we called to be confident to believe. If the Bible says it ... then believe it!

This **grace of faith** ... this **confidence to believe** ...

THE DEVELOPMENT OF OUR FAITH

- * One way to cause harm to anything we have is simply not to look after it. If you don’t look after your car ... it will soon become a ‘rust bucket’!
- * It is the same regarding our walk with God. If we don’t seek to develop our faith in Him, - the faith He has gifted us through grace, - will soon flounder and falter.
- * And if you are not going forward you are going backward, - there is no standing still! ... Certain characteristics of the backslider, - ... acknowledging that they were truly born again in the first place, - are:

- * Dissatisfaction, argumentative, prone to cause strife and to speak only half-truths, absent from the place of prayer and Christian fellowship, - ... study the Scriptures for further examples!
- * On the other hand, those who are determined to live faithfully and Biblically for Christ are a different type altogether. Any difficulties they have, they will confront them knowing that Jesus said He would never leave them or forsake them.
- * No matter what circumstances you find them in they will always speak to you about God.
- * Some of the old hymns illustrate this;
 - * When thickly beat the storms of life,
And heavy is the chastening rod,
The soul, beyond the waves of strife,
Views the eternal Rock—her God.
 - * Upon life's boundless ocean where mighty billows roll,
I've fixed my hope in Jesus, blest anchor of my soul;
When trials fierce assail me as storms are gathering o'er,
I rest upon His mercy and trust Him more.

Conclusion.

- * Yes, you see, the Christian's confidence is in God. To become a Christian – by grace – He gives you the grace to believe.
- * We, - who were dead in sin, - He breathed into us life that we would receive Him; He drew us unto Himself and He saved us.
- * He brought about the circumstances whereby we would believe in Him ... and He opened up our hearts, - in an even mightier way, - than He opened up the tomb of Lazarus!
- * And then He put within us the desire to follow Him, to read His Word and pray and be with His people.
- * He gave us a longing to be faithful to what His Word teaches and He helps us to believe what it says ... even though we mightn't always understand it.
- * The arrows and darts of affliction and opposition might come at us from all roads and directions ... but in it all we know He has us in the palm of His hand for *he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.*
- * Saving faith, - *looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith*, it is a doctrine all of God ... and only through God can we believe it!