

What is Faith?

What is this faith concerning which it is said, By grace are ye saved, through faith? There are many descriptions of faith; but almost all the definitions I have met with have made me understand it less than I did before I saw them. I say it is better to have faith than to be able to explain it. We may explain faith till nobody understands it. I hope I shall not be guilty of that fault. Faith is the simplest of all things, and perhaps because of its simplicity it is the more difficult to explain.

What is faith? It is made up of three things - knowledge, belief, and trust. Knowledge comes first. How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? I want to be informed of a fact before I can possibly believe it.

Faith cometh by hearing ; we must first hear, in order that we may know what is to be believed. They that know thy name shall put their trust in thee. A measure of knowledge is essential to faith; hence the importance of getting knowledge. Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live. Such was the word of the ancient prophet, and it is the word of the gospel still. Search the Scriptures and learn what the Holy Spirit teacheth concerning Christ and His salvation. Seek to know God: Hebrews 11:6 For he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. May the Holy Spirit give you the spirit of knowledge, and of the fear of the Lord! Know the gospel: know what the good news is, how it talks of free forgiveness, and of change of heart, of adoption into the family of God, and of countless other blessings. Know especially Christ Jesus the Son of God, the Saviour of men, united to us by His human nature, and yet one with God; and thus able to act as Mediator between God and man, able to lay His hand upon both, and to be the connecting link between the sinner and the Judge of all the earth. Endeavor to know more and more of Christ Jesus. Endeavor especially to know the doctrine of the sacrifice of Christ; for the point upon which saving faith mainly fixes itself is this - God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. Know that Jesus was made a curse for us, as it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree. Drink deep of the doctrine of the substitutionary work of Christ; for therein lies the sweetest possible comfort to the guilty sons of men, since the Lord made him to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. Faith begins with knowledge.

The mind goes on to believe that these things are true. The soul believes that God is, and that He hears the cries of sincere hearts; that the gospel is from God; that justification by faith is the grand truth which God hath revealed in these last days by His Spirit more clearly than before. Then

the heart believes that Jesus is verily and in truth our God and Saviour, the Redeemer of men, the Prophet, Priest, and King of His people. All this is accepted as sure truth, not to be called in question. I pray that you may at once come to this. Get firmly to believe that the blood of Jesus Christ, God's dear Son, cleanseth us from all sin; that His sacrifice is complete and fully accepted of God on man's behalf, so that he that believeth on Jesus is not condemned. Believe these truths as you believe any other statements; for the difference between common faith and saving faith lies mainly in the subjects upon which it is exercised. Believe the witness of God just as you believe the testimony of your own father or friend. If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater.

So far you have made an advance toward faith; only one more ingredient is needed to complete it, which is trust. Commit yourself to the merciful God; rest your hope on the gracious gospel; trust your soul on the dying and living Saviour; wash away your sins in the atoning blood; accept His perfect righteousness, and all is well. Trust is the lifeblood of faith; there is no saving faith without it. The Puritans were accustomed to explain faith by the word *recumbency*. It meant leaning upon a thing. Lean with all your weight upon Christ. It would be a better illustration still if I said, fall at full length, and lie on the Rock of Ages. Cast yourself upon Jesus; rest in Him; commit yourself to Him. That done, you have exercised saving faith. Faith is not a blind thing; for faith begins with knowledge. It is not a speculative thing; for faith believes facts of which it is sure. It is not an unpractical, dreamy thing; for faith trusts, and stakes its destiny upon the truth of revelation. That is one way of describing what faith is.

Let me try again. Faith is believing that Christ is what He is said to be, and that He will do what He has promised to do, and then to expect this of Him. The Scriptures speak of Jesus Christ as being God, God in human flesh; as being perfect in His character; as being made of a sin-offering on our behalf; as bearing our sins in His own body on the tree. The Scripture speaks of Him as having finished transgression, made an end of sin, and brought in everlasting righteousness. The sacred records further tell us that He rose again from the dead, that He ever liveth to make intercession for us, that He has gone up into the glory, and has taken possession of Heaven on the behalf of His people, and that He will shortly come again to judge the world in righteousness, and his people with equity. We are most firmly to believe that it is even so; for this is the testimony of God the Father when He said, This is my beloved Son; hear ye him. This also is testified by God the Holy Spirit; for the Spirit has borne witness to Christ, both in the inspired Word and by various miracles, and by His working in the hearts of men. We are to believe this testimony to be true.

There are, no doubt, many at this hour in Hell who understood the

doctrine of faith, but did not believe. On the other hand, not one who has trusted in the Lord Jesus has ever been cast out, though he may never have been able intelligently to define his faith. Oh dear reader, receive the Lord Jesus into your soul, and you shall live forever! He that believeth in Him hath everlasting life.