

THE WESTMINSTER CONFSSION OF
FAITH
XIV. OF SAVING FAITH

Second Presbyterian Church, Greenville, SC

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I. THE SOURCE OF FAITH

The grace of faith, whereby the elect are enabled to believe to the saving of their souls, is the work of the Spirit of Christ in their hearts, and is ordinarily wrought by the ministry of the Word, by which also, and by the administration of the sacraments, and prayer, it is increased and strengthened.

I. THE SOURCE OF FAITH

- “The grace of faith...”
 - Faith is the gift of God by His grace
 - “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast” (Eph. 2:8-9).
 - “That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace” (Rom. 4:16).
 - “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven” (Mt. 16:17).
- “Whereby the elect are enabled to believe to the saving of their souls”
 - By God’s grace, the elect are “enabled to believe” by the Holy Spirit
 - “And when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord, and as many as were appointed to eternal life believed” (Acts 13:48).

I. THE SOURCE OF FAITH

- Faith Comes by Hearing!
 - “Faith is the work of the Spirit of Christ in their hearts” and “is ordinarily wrought by the ministry of the Word.”
 - Since faith is a supernatural gift, it requires supernatural means.
 - “Ordinarily,” means preaching God’s Word in a “normal” rather than “extraordinary” way.
 - Strong New Testament support:
 - “You have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God” (1 Pet. 1:23).
 - “So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ” (Rom. 10:17).
 - Emphasis on the *preached* Word:
 - “And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching?” (Rom. 10:14).
 - “Where the Word of God is not expounded, preached, and applied, the people perish” (William Greenhill, member of Westminster Assembly).
 - “For this reason Christian elders impress upon every believer the importance of attending as often as possible to the preaching of the Word.” (van Dixhoorn).

I. THE SOURCE OF FAITH

The Ordinary Means of Grace

- Faith “is ordinarily wrought by the ministry of the Word, by which also, and by the administration of the sacraments, and prayer, it is increased and strengthened.”
- The Word:
 - “And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified” (Acts 20:32).
- Sacraments:
 - “He received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised” (Rom. 4:11).
- Prayer:
 - “The apostles said to the Lord, “Increase our faith!” (Lk. 17:5).
 - “by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:6-7).

II. THE ACTS OF FAITH

By this faith, a Christian believeth to be true whatsoever is revealed in the Word, for the authority of God himself speaking therein; and acted differently upon that which each particular passage thereof containeth; yielding obedience to the commands, trembling at the threatenings, and embracing the promises of God for this life, and that which is to come. But the principle acts of saving faith are accepting, receiving, and resting upon Christ alone for justification, sanctification, and eternal life, by virtue of the covenant of grace.

II. THE ACTS OF FAITH

- The “general object” of faith is “the whole Word of God,” and the “special object” of faith “is the Lord Jesus Christ” (R. Shaw).
- Faith is in God’s Word
 - By faith, we believe “to be true whatsoever is revealed in the Word, for the authority of God.”
 - “when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God” (1 Thess. 2:13).
 - “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me” (Jn. 10:27).
 - “I worship the God of our fathers, believing everything laid down by the Law and written in the Prophets” (Acts 24:14).
- Faith Responds to God’s Word
 - “Yielding obedience to the commands” (Rom. 16:26)
 - “Trembling at the threatenings” (Isa. 66:2)
 - “Embracing the promises of God for this life and that which is to come.” (Heb. 11:13).

II. THE ACTS OF FAITH

- Faith is in Jesus Christ
 - “But the principle acts of saving faith are accepting, receiving, and resting upon Christ alone for justification, sanctification, and eternal life, by virtue of the covenant of grace.”
 - “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved” (Acts 16:31).
- Faith in the Person & Work of Christ
 - “Simon Peter replied, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Mt. 16:16).
 - Christians believe that Jesus is God’s Son
 - Christians believe in Jesus as the Christ (Prophet, Priest, and King).
 - Christians believe that Jesus, incarnated by the Holy Spirit, died on the cross for our sins.
 - Christians believe that Jesus rose again from the grave in a true body.
 - Christians believe that Jesus is enthroned in heaven, interceding for His church (Rom. 8:34).
 - Christians believe that Jesus is returning to judge the living and the dead.

II. THE ACTS OF FAITH

- Believing in Jesus for *My* Salvation
 - I am justified through faith alone in Christ
 - I am sanctified in Christ by the Spirit whom He sends
 - I will be glorified with Christ at the final judgment
- The Principle Acts of Saving Faith
 - Accepting, Receiving, and Resting on Christ alone.
 - This is more than bare assent or “implicit faith”!
 - I “accept” Christ personally; I “receive” Christ by trusting Him; I “rest” on Christ by relying on His finished work.
 - “The true believer receives and rests upon Christ for a *complete salvation*. He trusts in Christ for salvation not only from wrath, but also from sin – not only for happiness thereafter, but also for holiness here.” (R. Shaw).

III. THE VICTORY OF FAITH

This is faith is different in degrees, weak or strong; may be often and in many ways assailed, and weakened, but gets the victory: growing up in many to the attainment of a full assurance, through Christ, who is both the author and finisher of our faith.

III. THE VICTORY OF FAITH

- Weak faith saves, but a strong faith is better!
 - A weak faith is one that knows little doctrine and has little experience of God's power. A strong faith bears great fruit, conveys the blessings of salvation to our hearts, and gives joy to Christ.
 - "A weak faith grasps a strong Savior!" (C. H. Spurgeon).
 - "Truly, I tell you, with no one in Israel have I found such faith" (Mt. 8:10).
- While true faith is assailed by doubts, temptations, and trials, it is upheld by Christ unto salvation, getting the victory.
 - "You, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (1 Pet. 1:4-5).
 - "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail" (Lk. 22:31-32).
- Faith may (and should) but will not always yield full assurance.
 - "We desire each one of you to show the same earnestness to have the full assurance of hope until the end, so that you may not be sluggish" (Heb. 6:11-12).
- Looking to Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith (Heb. 12:2).
 - "And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1:6).