

What is True Faith

Heb 11:1-6 Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good testimony. By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible. By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and through it he being dead still speaks. By faith Enoch was taken away so that he did not see death, "and was not found, because God had taken him"; for before he was taken he had this testimony, that he pleased God. But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

On this Confirmation Sunday as we receive Catherine and Michael Wilkinson into communicant membership I have chosen to preach this morning's message from the instruction found in the Heidelberg Catechism number 21. What is true faith? True faith is not only a sure knowledge, whereby I hold for truth all that God has revealed to us in His Word, but also a hearty trust, which the Holy Ghost works in me by the Gospel, that not only to others, but to me also, forgiveness of sins, everlasting righteousness, and salvation are freely given by God, merely of grace, only for the sake of Christ's merits.

I would commend them for their carefulness and faithfulness in preparation for membership in that they have studied an overview of the Scriptures showing how Christ is presented throughout the whole of Scripture. Have carefully studied the doctrines of the church as taught in the Three Forms of Unity, searching the Scriptures at each class as to whether these things we believe and teach are true according to the Scriptures. And thus as it were I have reduced the several years of training to this one question, "What is true faith?"

A. True Faith is a Certain Knowledge.

1. A certain knowledge, in the Latin translation of the Catechism "certa notitia," does not refer so much to a particular kind of knowledge, but to an exact, definite, firm knowledge, even as the revelation of God in His Word is clear and definite.

*2 Peter 1:16 And so we have the prophetic word **confirmed**,*

2. Peter wants us to understand that we have the very voice of God through written Scripture even equal to the very voice of God they heard that glorious day when Christ was transfigured before them

2 Peter 1:21 for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.

3. True faith is to believe that the history as recorded for us in Scripture is factual and that all that is recorded did happen as it is written.

- a. We have the testimony of our Lord concerning the certainty of history as recorded in Scripture

Luke 24:27 And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.

- b. He spoke of events recorded as historical facts (Lk. 4 20:37; Matt 19:4,5; 24:37; 12:40 Lk 6:3,4)
- c. We have the testimony of Stephen the first recorded martyr of the church (cf. Acts 9)

4. True faith is to believe that the God of Holy Scripture is the true and only God.

Isa 45:22 "Look to Me, and be saved, all you ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other.

*Heb 11:6 But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God **must believe that He is**, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.*

- a. All men know God to exist by creation.

*Rom 1:19-20 ". . . because what may be known of God is manifest in them, **for God has shown it to them**. For since the creation of the world **His invisible attributes are clearly seen**, being understood by the things that are made, **even His eternal power and Godhead**, so that they are without excuse,*

- b. To the elect God has opened our eyes to behold His glory clearly revealed in creation.

*Ps 19:1-3 The **heavens declare the glory of God**; and the firmament shows His handiwork. **Day unto day utters speech, and night unto night reveals knowledge**. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard.*

5. And more perfectly God is known by revelation revealing Himself to mankind through the Holy Scriptures
2 Tim 3:16-17 All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

B. It is a Holy Spirit given knowledge therefore for the elect of God it is a certain, a true knowledge of God which the Holy Spirit has worked in us that we might know God as He has revealed Himself in Holy Scripture

1. Dt. 29:29 tells us that the secret things belong to God but the revealed things belong to us.

*1 Cor 2:12 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, **that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.***

2. We have an anointing from God that has given us a proper understanding of who God is, and what He has provided for us

1 John 2:19 But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things.

3. This gives to us an assurance of salvation - not only to others but to me also

Rom 8:16-17 The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,

4. I do not mean that we know God perfectly for His ways are far above us, but we do have a necessary knowledge that is, a sufficient knowledge to know Him as our Lord and Redeemer

*1 John 5:20 And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding, **that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true,** in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.*

5. Thus it is an acceptance of all that is recorded in Holy Scripture as true and without error evidenced to us in our hearts and minds by the Holy Spirit.

1 John 2:27 But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him.

Conclusion: The knowledge and the experience of salvation wrought in us by the Holy Spirit brings the certainty of salvation which alone gives to our hearts perfect comfort, rest, peace and joy in life and in death.

Hearty or full and complete confidence in all that God says to us in Scripture

Rom 10:10-12 For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the Scripture says, "Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame."

An awareness which the Holy Spirit works in us through the gospel - *Rom 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.*

Matt 16:17 Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.

Assurance of salvation (to me also) - *Tim 4:8 Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.*

His benefits which we receive and accept in true faith are:

Forgiveness of sin — Ps. 103:1,2

Everlasting righteousness. — 1 Cor. 1:30

Eternal salvation — John 6:47,48

The ground of our confidence and assurance of salvation is:

Merely of grace — Eph. 2:8.

Only for the sake of Christ's merits —Rom. 4:5-8