

Title: **FAITH'S BECAUSE**
Text: 2 Corinthians 5:16-17
Subject: *Faith in Christ*

Introduction:

I received a letter last week from Pastor Henry Mahan that was such a great blessing and help to me that it has been on my heart all week. Bro. Mahan made a few brief comments about faith in Christ that I want to expand just a little in this message. I trust they will be a blessing to you. Turn with me to 2 Corinthians 5. The title of my message is "**FAITH'S BECAUSE**." You will see my reason for that title when I get to the last point of the message.

In 2 Corinthians 5:14, Paul declares that all who are born of God are constrained, motivated, and ruled by the love of Christ. The love of Christ rules in our hearts, he tells us in verse 15, because we have been born again. We have been born again because Christ died for us. His death as our Substitute obtained and guaranteed of new birth. And, being born of God, we live, not unto ourselves, but unto Christ, who died for us. Then, in verse 16, the inspired writer tells us that our knowledge of Christ is not a carnal apprehension of the intellect, but the gift and revelation of God the Holy Spirit.

Be sure you get that. — Our knowledge of Christ is not a carnal apprehension of the intellect, but the gift and revelation of God the Holy Spirit.

(2 Corinthians 5:16) "Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we *him* no more."

Proposition: Being born again by the omnipotent grace and irresistible mercy of God the Holy Spirit, all who are taught of God, know Christ after the Spirit, and not after the flesh.

Being born of God, because we know Christ after the Spirit, by the revelation of God the Holy Spirit, we know that all who are in Christ are new creatures in him who has made all things new for us by his accomplishments as our mighty Redeemer (v17).

(2 Corinthians 5:17) "Therefore if any man *be* in Christ, *he is* a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."

SUBTLE HERESY

Before I get to my message, I think it is needful for me to say a few things about a subtle heresy with which I am sure many of you are likely to be confronted. When I speak of heresy, I am not talking about insignificant doctrinal error. I am talking about

that which is damning to all who are deceived by it, that which corrupts people from “*the simplicity that is in Christ Jesus*,” that which is seditious and subversive to the gospel of God. I make it a point not to preach or write about religious heresies to which you are not likely to be exposed. But when I know you are likely to be exposed to that which is deadly, as your pastor, I am duty bound to deal with it plainly and warn you beforehand. So I ask you to give me your undivided attention, as I talk to you about faith in Christ.

In the 1600s John Owen wrote, “Of all the poison which at this day is diffused in the minds of men, corrupting them from the mystery of the gospel, there is no part that is more pernicious than this one perverse imagination, that to ‘believe in Christ’ is nothing at all but to ‘believe the doctrine of the gospel!’” Yet, that horrible Gnostic heresy is taught and promoted by many today.

MODERN GNOSTICS

For many years, Arminians have taught that faith in Christ is nothing but an act of the will, mental assent to the historic facts of the gospel. When I was a seven year old boy, I was conned into a profession of faith by will worshipping fundamentalists, who told me that salvation would be mine if I would simply believe “God’s plan of salvation.” Giving assent to what I was told, a “soul-winner” put his arms around me, with tears in his eyes, and announced, “Praise the Lord, son, you’re saved! You are born again.” But I didn’t know God from a gourd.

Such deception is common among modern fundamentalists. But today, there are some who claim to believe the gospel, or what we refer to as the doctrines of grace, who teach the same heresy, utterly denying the gospel of God’s free and sovereign grace in Christ. Theirs is the subtle heresy of Gnosticism.

Basically, Gnosticism is the teaching that salvation is arrived at by acquired knowledge, not by divine regeneration, — by an act of the will, not by the revelation of grace. This philosophy of vain deceit denies the necessity of the new birth, denies that the believer is given a new nature by the Spirit of God, denies that righteousness is imparted and that we are made partakers of the divine nature in regeneration. Gnostics speak of God’s saving grace as nothing but a “principle” (an accepted philosophical rule).

They look upon those of us who believe God’s revelation of himself in his Word and trust Christ as our Wisdom as well as our Righteousness, Sanctification, and Redemption as poor, ignorant people, without spiritual understanding. In essence, Gnostics are people who, as Paul puts it, know “*Christ after the flesh*,” by mere carnal reason, which is to say, they are people with religious knowledge who are totally void of grace and spiritual life, groping in darkness.

EXAMPLE — Let me give you one current example of this heresy. I read this just last week in an article written by a modern, self-appointed “theologian,” who describes himself as “a pit-bull guardian” of truth. — “Mental assent itself is equal to faith.” That is

Gnosticism in its very essence. That is freewillism of the most deceptive form. It is the assertion that salvation is nothing but a man's decision to agree with irrefutable facts!

FAITH BRINGS KNOWLEDGE

Most people presume that knowledge is the basis of faith. But the Scriptures assert exactly the opposite. **Hebrews 11:3** declares, "*Through faith we understand.*" Through faith we see, perceive, and comprehend all things spiritual. And this faith by which gives spiritual understanding is the result of the new birth, without which no man can see the kingdom of God (John 3:5-7).

Faith in Christ is the basis of spiritual knowledge and understanding. Spiritual knowledge is the result of faith in Christ. As we've heard Bro. Henry Mahan say so many times. — "You don't get Christ by doctrine. You get doctrine by Christ."

MY CONCERN

I am not interested in straightening out heretics. I am content to leave little imps to fight among themselves. But I am interested in you and your soul. So let me get to the good stuff. I want you to trust Christ and to know the joy of faith in him. I suspect the things that concern me are the things that concern you.

- I don't need faith to stop the mouths of lions, but faith to trust God and set a watch before my mouth and to keep the door of lips from uttering words of doubt, fear, unbelief, and murmuring against my God.
- It is not faith to move mountains that is my great concern, but daily faith to cope with all the little hills of my own making.
- It is not faith to build an ark that is important to me, but faith to enter the Ark God has built, Christ Jesus, and rest in him.
- It is not faith to perform miracles that I want, but faith to experience and know the wondrous miracle of God's free, saving grace in Christ.

I want to trust God's eternal Word,
'Til soul and body sever,
The words of men shall pass away. —
God's Word abides forever!

I am interested in saving faith, not historic faith, not intellectual faith, not emotional faith, not theoretical faith, but saving faith. That faith our Lord Jesus spoke of when he said to the woman in Luke 7:50, "*Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.*"

There are certain things specifically mentioned in the Word of God that are always characteristic of God-given faith in Christ. Let me show you some of those things that

characterize saving faith. A religious decision never possesses these things. Mere religious knowledge never possesses them. But saving faith always possesses them.

A CALL

First, the Word of God teaches that faith has a call. All true faith is the result of God's gracious, effectual call (Heb. 11:8; 1 Tim. 6:12).

(Hebrews 11:8) "By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went."

(1 Timothy 6:12) "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses."

Abraham believed God when he was called of God. Timothy came to possess faith in Christ when he was called to life and faith in Christ by God the Holy Spirit.

A SACRIFICE

Second, the Scriptures tell us that saving faith has a Sacrifice (Heb. 11:4).

(Hebrews 11:4) "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh."

The only way any sinner can approach God, worship God, and find acceptance with God is by offering him the Sacrifice that was typified in Abel's offering, "*Jesus Christ crucified.*"

I must needs go home by the way of the cross,
There's no other way but this;
I shall ne'er get sight of the gates of light,
If the way of the cross I miss.

When the cold sweat of death is on your brow, when you are about to leave this world of time and go out to meet God in eternity, nothing will do your soul good except the precious blood of Christ.

Illustrations: *Voltaire's Son*

Darrell McClung

Christ Jesus, Lamb of God,
For chosen sinners slain;
You shed Your precious blood;

And it was not in vain!

My faith now lays her hand
On Jesus crucified.
Confessing all my guilt and sin,
In Him I'm justified!

I see, (Oh, yes!) by faith I see
My guilt my Savior bore,
When hanging on the cursed tree,
And I'm condemned no more!

Believing, I rejoice
To feel the curse removed;
I bless the Lamb with cheerful voice,
And trust His bleeding love.

AN EXPERIENCE

Do you rejoice to feel the curse removed? If so, you know that my *third* point is delightful. — Saving faith has an experience. We do not trust an experience; but any religion that is without experience is worthless religion. **Faith in Christ is the blessed experience of grace. Faith experiences what Christ accomplished** (Ecc. 1:16; Rom. 4:25-5:11).

(Ecclesiastes 1:16) "I communed with mine own heart, saying, Lo, I am come to great estate, and have gotten more wisdom than all *they* that have been before me in Jerusalem: yea, my heart had great experience of wisdom and knowledge."

(Romans 4:25) The Lord Jesus Christ, God's darling Son, "was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification."

(Romans 5:1-11) "Therefore being justified, by faith we have **peace** with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: (2) By whom also we have **access** by faith into this **grace wherein we stand**, and rejoice in **hope** of the glory of God. (3) And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; (4) And patience, experience; and experience, hope: (5) And hope maketh not ashamed; because **the love of God** is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us. (6) For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. (7) For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. (8) But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. (9) Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. (10) For if, when we were enemies, we were **reconciled** to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we

shall be saved by his life. (11) And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now **received the atonement.**”

Faith doesn't justify us. Christ did that at Calvary. But faith experiences justification! — **Faith doesn't reconcile us to God.** Christ did that on the cross. But faith experiences reconciliation! — **Faith does not give us a standing in grace before God.** That was given to us in Christ, in whom we were accepted before the world began. But faith experiences the blessed security of standing in grace! — **Faith does nothing to make atonement for our sins.** Christ's shed blood made atonement for us. But faith receives and experiences atonement! — **Faith does not cause God to love us.** God loved us with an everlasting love in Christ eternally. But faith experiences the love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit!

A WALK

Fourth, saving faith has a walk. We “walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised” (Rom. 4:12). We have the same faith Abraham had, and walk in his steps, trusting Christ alone for righteousness before God. — “We walk by faith, not by sight” (2 Cor. 5:7).

Faith is **the eye** of the soul, by which we look to Christ for righteousness, peace, pardon, life, and salvation — Faith is **the hand** by which we receive Christ. — Faith is **the foot** by which we come to Christ, follow Christ, and walk in him. — “As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him” (Col. 2:6).

Faith in Christ is not an event in life, but a walk, a continued course of life. — “We walk by faith, not by sight.” We walk with God now, just as we first came to God, trusting Christ alone. We see him, not by carnal reason, or by a religious vision, but by faith. The evidence of things not seen in any other way, or by any other means.

AN OBEDIENCE

Fifth, saving faith has an obedience. When Paul spoke about his experience of faith before Agrippa, when Christ was revealed to him on the Damascus road, he said, “I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision” (Acts 26:19). So saving faith has an obedience (Rom. 16:24-26).

(Romans 16:24-26) “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you all. Amen. (25) Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of **the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began,** (26) But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, **made known to all nations for the obedience of faith.**”

The obedience of faith is obedience to the command of God in the gospel. — “*And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and*

love one another, as he gave us commandment" (1 John 3:23). The whole obedience of faith is incorporated in these two things:

1. "*That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ.*"
2. And, "*That we...love one another.*"

"*Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law*" (Rom. 3:31). — By these two things every believing sinner fulfils the whole law of God.

A TRIAL

Sixth, saving faith has a trial (1 Pet. 1:7-9). But even the trial of faith, difficult and heavy as it may be, is a great blessing of grace. If you are in heaviness through manifold temptations, there is a needs be for it, and "We'll understand it better, by and by."

(1 Peter 1:7-9) "That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: (8) Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see *him* not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: (9) Receiving the end of your faith, *even* the salvation of *your* souls."

Farther along we'll know all about it,
Farther along we'll understand why;
Cheer up my brother, live in the sunshine,
We'll understand it all by and by.

Faithful 'til death, said our loving Master
A few more days to labor and wait,
Toils of the road will then seem as nothing
As we sweep through the beautiful gate.

When we see Jesus, coming in glory,
When He comes from His home in the sky,
Then we shall meet Him in that bright mansion,
We'll understand it all by and by.

Soon we will see our dear, loving Savior,
Hear the last trumpet sound through the sky;
Then we will meet those gone on before us,
Then we shall know and understand why.

Farther along we'll know all about it,
Farther along we'll understand why;
Cheer up my brother, live in the sunshine,
We'll understand it all by and by.

A JOY

Yes, faith has its trial, but even in the midst of our trials, let us never fail to remember this *seventh* thing. — Saving faith has a joy. Paul wrote to the Philippians about “*the joy of faith*” (Phil. 1:25), while he was prisoner, thinking about his execution at the hands of the Romans.

(Philippians 1:21-25) “For to me to live *is* Christ, and to die *is* gain. (22) But if I live in the flesh, this *is* the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not. (23) For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: (24) Nevertheless to abide in the flesh *is* more needful for you. (25) And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith.”

What is the joy of faith? What is it that causes believing sinners, in the midst of great heaviness and sorrow, to rejoice in the Lord? The joy of faith is...

- The grace we have received (Rom. 5:1-11). — Forgiveness! — Righteousness! — Reconciliation! — Acceptance! — The Atonement!
- The love of God shed abroad in our hearts!
- The peace we enjoy!
- The confident hope we have!

A REWARD

The confident hope we have is the *seventh* possession that is characteristic of saving faith. By faith Moses forsook Egypt, having “*respect unto the recompense of the reward*” (Heb. 11:26). And saving faith has a reward (Heb. 10:35-37; Rom. 8:16-18; 1 Cor. 2:9).

(Hebrews 10:35-37) “Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward. (36) For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. (37) For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry.”

(Romans 8:16-18) “The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: (17) And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with *him*, that we may be also glorified together. (18) For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time *are* not worthy *to be compared* with the glory which shall be revealed in us.”

(1 Corinthians 2:9) “But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.”

A BECAUSE

Let me show you one more thing, and I will send you home, and I pray send you home in “*the joy of faith.*” Turn to John 11:42 and you will see that saving faith has a because.

(John 11:42) “And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said *it*, that they may believe that thou hast sent me.”

We believe because God the Holy Spirit has wrought faith in us by the mighty operation of his grace by the Word of God (Rom. 10:17; 1 Pet. 1:18-25; 1 Thess. 2:13; 1 John 5:6-13).

(Romans 10:17) “So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”

(1 Peter 1:18-25) “Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation *received* by tradition from your fathers; (19) But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: (20) Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, (21) Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God. (22) Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, *see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently:* (23) Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. (24) For all flesh *is* as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: (25) But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.”

(1 Thessalonians 2:13) “For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received *it* not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.”

(1 John 5:6-13) “This is he that came by water and blood, *even* Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth. (7) For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. (8) And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one. (9) If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son. (10) He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. (11) And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. (12) He that hath the Son hath life; *and* he that hath not the

Son of God hath not life. (13) These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.”

“The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit (by the Word of God), that we are the children of God: And if children then heirs, heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ” (Rom. 8:16-17).

Feelings come and feelings go,
And feelings are deceiving;
My warrant is the Word of God —
Naught else is worth believing.

Though all my heart should feel condemned,
For lack of some sweet token,
There is One greater than my heart
Whose Word cannot be broken.

I'll trust in God's unchanging Word
Till soul and body sever,
For, though all things shall pass away,
God's Word abides forever!

Oh, may God give you this faith in Christ his dear Son! What unspeakable blessedness there is in those words found in Philippians 1:29. — *“Unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ...to believe on him!”*

Amen.

[\[1\]](#) Date: Danville — Sunday Morning (Bible Class) — April 16, 2006
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