

BLESSEDNESS OF THE TRUTH: THE BELIEVER'S FAITH!

- Intro:** - We are saved by the grace of God. By faith we are engrafted into Christ, the body of Christ, receiving from him all his benefits by faith.
 - What is the connection between those who are saved and the wonderful Mediator? The answer is faith!
 - Now the question comes, "What is faith? What is true faith? What must we believe? Can we have definite assurance that we are saved?"

I. WHAT IS FAITH?

- A. Faith is a living bond which unites the believer organically with Christ.
1. It is not the work of man, as it is often presented. It is not a figurative hand that man extends to take hold of Christ.
 2. But it is the sovereign work of God (John 6:44 Eph. 2:8).
 3. By God's work, the regenerated sinner is engrafted into Christ and possesses Christ and all his benefits.
 4. Faith is a spiritual power and ability to appropriate Christ, a mystical union.
 5. We are made members of Christ's body, the church. Faith is the channel along which all the blessings of salvation flow
- B. Faith is activity; the activity of believing.
1. The Philippian jailor asks, "What must I do to be saved?" Paul answers, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.
 2. The Catechism reminds us of two essential elements of faith: a certain knowledge and a hearty confidence.
 3. Romans 4 speaks of the faith of Abraham: he held to God's promise and had a hearty confidence (vs. 18-21).
- C. This activity must come forth from an ability or potential to believe
1. It is not the case that all people have this ability in them. By nature we are dead.
 2. God gives this ability or power in regeneration, and it becomes an actual power through the activity of the Spirit.
 3. The Spirit works and strengthens faith in the calling. He uses the preaching of the Word.
 4. Faith is the activity not only of the mind, but of the whole soul of man and all his life, as proceeding from the heart.
 5. We are saved not because of this faith, but through the means of faith
- D. The Catechism speaks of **true** faith.
1. There are counterfeits;
 2. There is a mere intellectual assent or historical faith (James 2:19).
 3. There is temporary faith, excitement for awhile which withers and is choked out with cares, pleasures, and hardships.
 4. There is miraculous faith which looks for great things, but does not latch on to the giver (the nine lepers),
 5. There is faith that does not live, hypocritical faith, dead orthodoxy or mysticism
 6. In contrast, the Catechism speaks of true faith, God worked faith that draws and saves irresistibly.

II. TO WHAT FAITH HOLDS.

- A. Faith holds to all that which is promised in the gospel.
1. Negatively, not to feelings or experience. It is not what I think or what I feel.
 2. Positively, faith holds to what God has said.
 3. Satan harasses with temptations and a proneness to doubt.
 4. God's Word is sure, having authority for what we believe and how we live.
 5. Faith is not merely knowledge about God, but a personal knowledge of God as Lord and Redeemer.
- B. Faith holds to the wonder of salvation through the cross of Jesus Christ.
1. This is the central wonder of God made flesh to dwell among us, to suffer and die for us, granting us salvation.
 2. Faith holds this as true, and applicable to us (Rom. 4:24,25).
 3. Faith holds to the truthfulness of all of Scripture (Q.A. 22).
 4. It is a certain knowledge because God hath spoken!
- C. Faith holds to that Word, so that it expresses itself.
1. Faith is not merely an inward commitment.
 2. Faith is expressed by way of public confession in the church.
 3. Faith holds these truths as they have been historically confessed by the church. The Apostle's creed summarizes this faith
 3. Faith is lived out in our lives by obedience, not merely hearers of the Word, but doers of the Word (James 1:22).
 4. Faith implies conversion and sanctification.

III. OF WHAT FAITH ASSURES.

- A. Faith is not only knowledge but confidence.
1. There are those who say that a person might have faith, but not assurance of salvation.
 2. Assurance then is an extra gift that some saints have, and other saints lack.
 3. The catechism clearly teaches that faith involves assurance of salvation (John 3:36a).
 4. We by faith know that we are children of God, saved by the blood of Jesus Christ, and indwelt of the Holy Spirit.
- B. Without faith, one is not saved!
1. "he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him (John 3:36b)."
 2. Can an unbeliever enter into heaven? No!
 3. In answer to the Philippian jailer, God's answer is "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Not a condition, but a means!
- C. We are assured:
1. All God's elect will come to faith, for those whom he predestined he calls and works faith.
 2. We are assured of the forgiveness of our sins, for we are justified by faith and have peace with God (Romans 5:1).
 3. We are assured that the righteousness of Christ, the righteousness of God is freely given to us of God's grace.
 4. We are assured of personal salvation (Gal.2:20) and eternal life. No one is able to take this away from us!
 5. As a little child feels secure in his mother's arms, so we are secure in the shadow of the Almighty God in Christ.