

190213-4 Doctrine Series, What is Faith – Craig Thurman

In our confession of faith we have two articles which have faith as its subject. They are articles 25, & 27.

25. Faith*

Faith is the gift of God, wrought in the hearts of the elect by the Spirit of God. By this faith they come to know and believe the truth of the Scriptures and the excellency of them above all other writings and all things in the world and so are enabled to cast their souls upon His truth thus believed. ... **(The remainder of this article detracts from the subject, which is faith. It would be best put with article #8, The Holy Scriptures.)**

Eph.2:8; Jn.6:29, 4:10; Phl.1:29; Gal.5:22; Jn.17:17; He.4:11, 12; Jn.6:63.

**Formerly Article 22 of 1644 COF*

27. Faith: a Gift*

Faith is begotten by the preaching of the gospel, or word of Christ, without respect to any power or agency in the creature because those to whom faith is given are wholly passive and dead in trespasses and sins. Those given this faith do believe and are converted by no less power than that which raised Christ from the dead. **(This article would be better joined with article 25.)**

Ro.10:17; 2Ti.1:10; 1Co.1:28; Ro.9:16; 3:12, 1:16; Eph.1:19, Col.2:12.

**Formerly Article 24 of 1644 COF*

Man in his original or natural, sin-fallen state has no saving faith. He enters into this world not having that *kind* of faith.

Ro.3.10 As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one:

11 There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.

12 They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.

1Co 2:14 But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

The world does not know what genuine faith is and because Christendom has become so unfamiliar with the truths of the word of God it has confused faith

with the world's conception of it. Faith, as the world thinks of it, is nothing more than actions based on a natural understanding. So, Christendom thinks that all men have a natural capacity to believe in God and be saved. But natural faith is not a fruit of the Spirit. It is what every man, apart from Christ, has naturally. Even the devils show this kind of faith.

Jas 2:19 Thou believest (πιστεύεις) that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe (πιστεύουσιν), and tremble.

Natural faith has nothing to do with a *biblical faith*. Because faith is an understanding there is a natural understanding and a spiritual understanding.

Ro 3:11 There is none that understandeth ...

It is not that men do not understand anything. But they do not understand any of the things of God, but for those things which He has naturally revealed of Himself.

*Eph.4.17 ¶ This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind,
18 Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart ...*

Heb 11:3 Through faith we understand ... things that are unseen.

Man understands God only through his natural understanding. Man can only know God as far as God has revealed Himself in nature.

Ro.1.18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;

19 ¶ Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them.

20 For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:

This kind of understanding is not from a *faith* which the Spirit of God produces.

For a moment let's consider what is commonly called *saving faith*. *This is* the time when we first believed in Jesus Christ to the saving of the soul. It was when we first *began* to understand for ourselves the wonderful, unchangeable, and eternal work of God's salvation.

Heb 10:39 But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.

This kind of faith is *supernatural*. It is above & beyond nature. Therefore for a man to come into faith he must first be brought into a realm above nature – a supernatural realm. A man must first receive everlasting life before he can believe to the saving of the soul. Life necessarily precedes faith.

Jn.11.26 And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?

*Joh 3:36 He that believeth on the Son **hath** everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.*

*Joh 6:47 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me **hath** everlasting life.*

Once we have received this life of God – come into this supernatural realm – the Spirit begins to work in us to instruct our minds: the Spirit working in conjunction with the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ results in our believing the truth. The gospel leads us into the new life received in the new birth, in much the same way that a map directs us to our destination. It points us to look in faith to Jesus Christ.

*Jn.5.24 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, **hath** everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.*

Eph.1.13 In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise ...

Apart from the prerequisite of life the gospel is ineffectual. It is foolishness to the natural man because it falls on sin-deafened ears. Remember how that the apostle Paul raised the issue that the gospel was being preached but many were not receiving it? Ro.10.16, *But they have not all obeyed the gospel.* He cites why that was the case. He wrote, *faith cometh by hearing [the gospel], and hearing [the opening of the ear] by the word of God.* [or, word of command, v.17]) Until the ears are opened by the sovereign God there can be no hearing. Until then the gospel is a message perceived by the lost as foolishness.

1Co 2:14 But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

1Co 1:18 For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God..

When once the preaching of the gospel is mixed with an hearing ear, suddenly, it becomes *the power of God unto salvation.*

Ro 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

Ac.4.4 Howbeit many of them which heard the word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand.

Ac.8.35 Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus.

36 And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?

37 And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

Ac 15:7 And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up, and said unto them, Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe.

While the Spirit of God is the *direct* or *immediate* cause of life in the elect, He is also the cause of faith by the *mediate means* of the gospel. He through the gospel convinces men of the sinner's God and Savior, the Person and work of Christ in His behalf.

The Spirit is the great convincer:

Joh 14:26 But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

Joh 16:13 Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.

1Jo 2:20 But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.

Faith is a fruit, or result of the inward working of the Spirit with the word of God.

Ga 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith ...

Joh 6:29 Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.

Faith is a gift of God. No man in his natural condition can produce this saving faith apart from the Spirit's work. Why? Because man died in Adam's sin. The great divide in Christendom is just how dead dead is. The doctrine of the major part of Christendom refuses to declare all men in Adam dead in trespasses and sins. They refuse to acknowledge that man has absolutely no capacity to spiritual things. He can't pray to God. He can't worship God. He can't know the true God of the Bible. He can't praise God. He can't love God. He doesn't seek after God even in his most religious, good, and righteous actions. He can't believe in God to

the saving of the soul. He is dead. Faith is a gift of God which is produced only those in whom the Spirit works.

Php 1:29 For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake ... (Read these words until we understand what it says without smothering the life out of it by the superimposition of a man-made religious system. Read them and believe them just as they are.)

1Ti 1:14 And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.

Joh 3:27 John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven.

Ac 17:31 Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance (Gr. faith) unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.

Ac 18:27 And when he was disposed to pass into Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him: who, when he was come, helped them much which had believed through grace ...

1Co 4:7 For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?

Once faith is begotten by the gospel it can continue to grow as it is exposed to the word of God.

2Ti 3:15 And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

1Co.15.1 ¶ Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand;

2 By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.

Christ is the source of our faith. Because of Him we can come to God by faith. Christ is the finisher of our faith. He not only perfects our faith along our pilgrim journey, but He is its end. When He returns from glory our faith will be completed. We shall finally see Him as He is in all of His glory. So, He is the author and finisher of our faith.

Heb 12:2 Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith ...

author, ἀρχηγόν, acc. sing. of ἀρχηγός, and tss. Ac.3.15; 5.31, Prince; He.2.10, captain; He.12.2, author.

finisher, τελειωτήν, acc. sing. of τελειωτής, a noun only used in this text; the verb τελειόω, is tss. to fulfill, perfect, finish, consecrate.

Ro 8:24 For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?

2Co 5:7 (For we walk by faith, not by sight:)

Heb 11:1 Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

Heb 11:7 By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear,

Heb 11:13 These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off,

Heb 11:27 By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible.

Christ is the object this genuine, Biblical faith. Faith, which has not Christ as its object, can be a lot of things, but it is not Biblical, saving faith.

Heb 11:6 But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

...

Joh 8:24 I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins. (So, if you believe, you shall be saved from sins and live forever.)

Finally, faith is the experimental life of the children of God. By faith we come to God. We have boldness and confidence to come to God. (He. 11.6; Eph.3.13) By faith we know Him. (1Jn.5.20) By faith we serve Him. (1Th.1.2, 3; Ja. 2.18, 22) By faith we pray. (Ja.1.6; 5.15) And, our faith is the proof positive that we have overcome the world; that we have in fact passed from death to life. (1Jn.5.4; Jn.5.24)

Summary:

Man in his natural, sin-fallen condition has not a Biblical, saving faith.

The world does not know what this faith is.

Christendom has confused faith with the world's conception of it because of ignorance of the word of God.

Faith is supernatural.

The Spirit produces it in conjunction with the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Apart from the Spirit's work the gospel is foolishness to our ears, but by the Spirit it becomes the power of God unto salvation.

Faith is a fruit; it is a gift, and it can grow. But one day it will be completed at the coming of Christ.

Faith is the experimental relationship of the Christian with God.
This is some of what I believe the Bible teaches about saving faith.

Believe whatever we will, but if we do not believe that God sent His only begotten Son into the world as the sinner's only hope of everlasting life we shall perish in our sins; die the sinner's death for an eternity in hell and the lake of fire.

Do you have saving faith?