

Heidelberg Catechism 20-21 – How to get what the Deliverer Offers

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: The only one who could save mankind had to be a truly pure man (man sinned, man had to die) and truly God (great enough to take God's punishment and save the world). Jesus was that one – the only one who had those qualifications and actually delivered salvation!

The question then arises: What is the apparatus for receiving this salvation? In other words, how do you get what the Deliverer offers? This is the message for today.

Our headings are:

The Necessity of Faith for Salvation

The Nature of Faith for Salvation

Our goals are: That you will thank God for the gift of faith, that you will work to strengthen your faith by receiving God's Word, and that you will adjust your evangelism to make the hearer properly understand what true faith is.

The Necessity of Faith for Salvation

20 Q. ARE ALL MEN SAVED THROUGH CHRIST JUST AS ALL WERE LOST THROUGH ADAM?

A. No. Only those are saved who by true faith are grafted into Christ and accept all his blessings.

1. God saves no man unless he has true faith in Jesus-trusting Jesus lived for him and Jesus died for him!

John 3:16"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. 18 "He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. 36 "He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."

2. That faith must continue and be visible in man's life and throughout his life.

Faith is not a one-time event. Faith is not a ceremonial thing. Faith is not an abstract idea. It is real. And this faith must continue. You are bound to have true, living, active, continuous faith in God.

3. What happens if a man does not continue in faith and make that faith visible?

He is lost! He is not a believer. He just gave the appearance of faith! You can see this lostness when you consider God's judgment on Israel who thought faith was inherited-passed on naturally from father to son-instead of being individually required. Romans 11: 16 ...and if the root is holy, so are the branches. 17 And if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them, and with them became a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree, 18 do not boast against the branches. But if you do boast, remember that you do not support the root, but the root supports you.19 You will say then, "Branches were broken off that I might be grafted in." 20 Well said. Because of unbelief they were broken off, and you stand by faith. Do not be haughty, but fear. 21 For if God did not spare the natural branches, He may not spare you either.

The Jews could not plead for salvation based on who their earthly father was...or who their ancestors were...or by the fact they were circumcised. They had to have faith for themselves – faith in Christ and his work...a continuous active faith. Because the Jews did not place their faith in Christ but trusted in other things for salvation, they were cut-off!

4. This means the noblest man, or the most charitable woman, or the boy who helps his parents, or the girl who babysits her siblings, or that nice father-in-law who fixes your dishwasher- cannot enter into heaven on account of those good actions.

This means all, every single one of your non-Christian friends and acquaintances, even those born in a Christian home, will go to hell...unless they have faith in Jesus.

This means that nice old lady in the next cubicle at work...that neighbor who seems kind and friendly and picks up your garbage can when the garbage men throw it on the road, will go to hell and stay in the eternal fires of hell...unless they have faith in Jesus.

There are no shortcuts out of that condemnation. There is no other way to please the true God but by faith in Jesus.

The Nature of Faith for Salvation

21 Q. WHAT IS TRUE FAITH?

A. True faith is not only a knowledge and conviction that everything God reveals in his Word is true; it is also a deep-rooted assurance, created in me by the Holy Spirit through

the gospel, that, out of sheer grace earned for us by Christ, not only others, but I too, have had my sins forgiven, have been made forever right with God, and have been granted salvation.

1. True faith is knowledge, and conviction that everything in God's Word regarding the nature and work of Jesus is true.

John 17: 3 "And this is eternal life, **that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.**

The word "know" here means to love or to experience. It means "to know in the heart" – to have "intimate knowledge" of something. This results in a **firm conviction Christ died for your sins.**

There is no other way to be saved but by faith in Jesus—very specifically – even in the Old Testament.

Hebrews 12: 1 Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great **a cloud of witnesses**, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 2 **looking unto Jesus**, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

2. True faith is deep-rooted assurance (you are convinced and the conviction continues) your sins are forgiven and you have been made forever right with God because of Jesus.

This is why we say that "faith" is the hand that receives. **It is not what you do but what you received**-just like father Abraham. **He was firmly convinced by God's promises and waited for God's blessings.**

Look at how Apostle Paul describes Abraham's faith!

Romans 4: 18 who, contrary to hope, **in hope believed**, so that he became the father of many nations, according to what was spoken, "So shall your descendants be." 19 **And not being weak in faith**, he did not consider his own body, already dead (since he was about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah's womb. **20 He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief**, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, 21 and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform.

And now look at how this faith is expressed in your personal assurance!

Hebrew 4: 14 Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. 15 For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. 16 Let us **therefore come boldly to the throne of grace**, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

3. True faith is worked in you by God through his Holy Spirit and none else.

The Holy Spirit moves you to know, be convinced of, and be assured Christ died for your sins.

So faith is a gift the Holy Spirit works...as man naturally **would not want** to believe in God, **nor is man able** to believe in God. No one is able to even call God "Father" unless the Holy Spirit works in him.

Matthew 16: 16 Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." 17 Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, **for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.**

Jesus further explained this in light of his conversation with Nicodemus that **a man is passive in his birth**, just as you were in your new birth. God's Spirit opens men's hearts as he did to Lydia. Acts 16:14.

John 3: 5 Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, **unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.**

4. True faith is worked by the Holy Spirit in you through the Word of God.

No other book contains the way of salvation. The Holy Spirit does not use any other book. Where do you think this leaves our Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists friends? If someone does not believe the Word of God, he bound for hell. **So tell him of Jesus.** Don't watch them go to hell. Love them! Speak up!

Romans 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. 17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "**The just shall live**

by faith."

Romans 10: 17 So then **faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.**

1Corinthians 1: 21 ...it pleased God **through the foolishness of the message preached to save** those who believe.

a. God uses means. God is pleased to **use you to bring his Word** to the hearer and the Holy Spirit is then pleased to use that word to bring new life to the lost. God uses his Word to kindle the fire that results in salvation. And this is why he trained men to do the job. He sent out 12, then 70, then 500, then all his disciples throughout the world to preach – preach the full Gospel, from Genesis to Revelation!

b. The teaching of God's Word takes time. It is often a long process. You have to work to see men engrafted into the kingdom. **Don't be confused by what you saw at Pentecost.** That was exceptional. Those 3000 who believed that day were already knowledgeable of much of the Bible from their youth. They traveled long distances **to go to Jerusalem to worship!**

c. The Gospel must be pointedly preached to achieve this effect. It must never be watered down as it would result in weak faith in the new believer.

5. True faith is the common characteristics of all who believe in Jesus.

To further prove the object of your faith, read Romans 3:21-26 and Ephesians 2:10. Also:

Galatians 2: 16 "knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.

God would not have given you faith if Christ had not perfectly obeyed and suffered for you. It is because of your restoration to favor with God that he is pleased to give you faith so you can receive the precious work of Jesus Christ. When you are grafted into the vine you will be nourished.

Romans 1: 17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith."

6. This true faith you have as a gift of God is effective forever.

It saves you and it sanctifies you.

Conclusion:

Everyone needs faith to be saved. Faith comes **from hearing the Word** and the **working of God's Holy Spirit.** **Faith then receives the work of Christ.** There is no other way to be saved.

Brothers and Sisters:

1. Thank God for what you have – true faith that makes you grab hold of Christ's work and makes you spiritually rich. This faith **gives you heaven as your home with treasures** that the CRA can't take.

2. Continue to listen to the Word of God read and explained and pray the Holy Spirit will strengthen your faith. Continue to receive the nourishment of the sacraments! This too will strengthen your faith.

3. Let the Gospel go out and pray the Holy Spirit will work through the Word as you speak it. If someone will not listen, **don't use force.** Matthew 7: 6 "Do not give what is holy to the dogs; nor cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you in pieces." But you must make every effort to let the Gospel go out **so nice and nasty people will be saved through faith. Both need salvation!**

Finally, if you are not a Christian, have one definite expectation: You will die in your sins and go to hell. If you want to be a Christian and have hope, receive what Christ has done for sinners-receive his life and his death. Salvation is free.