

PRECIOUS FAITH



JEREMIAH BURROUGHS

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Precious Faith

To them that have obtained like precious Faith with us. - 2 Peter 1:1

CHAPTER I

The Meaning of the Words of the Text

In the Preface, or Frontispiece, to this Second Epistle (which is summed up in these first two verses), three key elements are evident.

Firstly, the Identification of the Person Saluting: by his name, Simon Peter; his Condition, a Servant; his Office, an Apostle; his Master, Jesus Christ.

Secondly, a Description of the Persons addressed: *To them that have obtained like precious Faith with us*, etc.

Thirdly, the Apostolic Benediction, or Salutation itself: *Grace and Peace be multiplied unto you*, etc.

The words of particular relevance here pertain to the Persons addressed, who are thus characterised by the Spirit of the Lord in this description: *To them that have obtained like precious Faith with us*.

This Epistle was written and sent to the Jews who had been converted and dispersed across the Earth; indeed, it was addressed to all converted Jews. Now, without question, many among them were rich and honourable, so that numerous high titles could have been attributed to them. Yet, the Apostle grants them no title other than this: *To them that have obtained like precious Faith with us*.

When we write letters, we commonly give those we address the most respectful titles befitting their position and authority. If we write to people of honour, we typically bestow the title of honour upon them, such as “the Honourable.” Yet the Apostle, though writing to many who were both wealthy and eminent, applies no title other than this: *To them that have obtained like precious Faith with us*; regarding this (as indeed it is) as the most noble Christian title and badge of honour with which he could crown them—that they have obtained like precious Faith with us.

**Precious Faith
Faith of value
And Obtained**

Here, Faith is compared to a precious stone, a valuable pearl, or a diamond. The phrase *to them that have obtained* refers to those who have had this precious faith given to them by lot (that is the meaning of the word). The Greek word translated as *obtained* in your books signifies to have a thing by lot (κλήρος, "kleros"). For instance, in Luke 1:9, it is said of Zechariah that he went to burn incense by lot—it was his lot to perform that duty. This same word appears in Luke as it does here in Peter, translated as *obtained*. Similarly, I could show you various other places in Scripture where this word is used to indicate the acquisition of something by lot.

To you that have obtained like precious Faith.

To you who by lot have obtained like precious Faith—such is the significance of the word.

Question. But you may ask, what does it mean to have it by lot?

Answer. Much in this phrase highlights the blessed condition of believers. It implies that the faith they possess has come to them purely by the free grace of God, through His providence and His work, with no other cause whatsoever distinguishing them from unbelievers. For instance, when a man receives something by lot,

there is little or nothing to be attributed to secondary causes. In a lottery, if one has a better lot than another, it is not due to the skill of the person drawing it but is entirely a matter of God's providence. God, in His free grace, arranges that one person should have a good lot, and another less so. When the Lord gave the land of Canaan to the people of Israel, He gave it by lot so that, if one man had a better portion than another, it would be evident that this was due only to the free grace of God. No man could boast, saying, "I am better than you," or, "I am richer than you," or, "I am worthier than you." No, it was solely by God's free grace and love, not because of anything within themselves.

For you have obtained like precious faith with us, as though the Apostle were saying, "While the whole world lay before Him, only God, through His free grace, assigned you this lot of precious faith, that you should be enriched with this unspeakable gift. This lot became your portion, while others had their lot fall to receive some part of the earth. He gives the earth to the children of men."

Consider an entire congregation or town, all coming before God to receive their lot. God says, "I will grant this man a certain estate in the world; he shall be the master of a ship, and he shall have a certain amount of money or land—that shall be his lot." Another comes forward to receive his lot, and he shall have excellent talents; I will grant him the tongue of the learned, so that he may gain respect in that way. Another shall be born into noble parentage, carrying noble blood in his veins. Thus, God casts from all eternity the lots of men.

Then another appears, who shall not have much in this world but shall possess faith in Jesus and inherit heaven and eternal life—that shall be his lot. In this way, God from all eternity assigns to everyone their distinct lot and portion. Your lot is to have precious faith. Oh, your lot has fallen upon good ground; you have a blessed inheritance. You stood in the presence of God among all men—unbelievers, heathens, and infidels—who might also have received the lot of faith,

while you might have received only what they have. But no, it is your lot to possess precious faith, while it is their lot to inherit the world. This is the meaning of the word *obtained*, and the elegance of the phrase is much obscured by the English word.

You have obtained like precious Faith—not only precious faith but *like* precious faith, like ours; as if the Apostle were saying, “It is true, we are apostles and hold that privilege. We are the apostles of Jesus Christ and are called to this great office, endowed by Christ with gifts suited to this calling. Yet none of you—the poorest and humblest believer, the weakest Christian—is so lowly that your faith is any less precious than ours. God has made you equal with us in this, though perhaps the Lord has not given you the same gifts. You may not be able to preach as we do; perhaps you do not have the gift of miracles as we do, nor are you called to public service. Some of you may even be servants or young people, but you have like precious faith with us. We regard you as our brethren and do not consider ourselves distant from you. Though you may be of lesser status in other respects, in faith (the most excellent grace of all), you have the same as we do.”

The Apostle does not say you have as *much* faith as we do; perhaps the apostles had more faith in degree than many of them, but you have faith of the same quality. Your faith is of the same nature as ours, and by it, you are entitled to the same privileges as we are. Thus, the Apostle teaches that even those Christians who have greater grace and gifts, who are engaged in more excellent work, should not despise the weakest and humblest Christians but regard them with high esteem as those who have obtained like precious faith with them.

It is a profound expression: the poorest and humblest believer in the world is here ranked alongside the apostles, and so by the same reasoning may be ranked with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. You share the same precious faith they had, the faith that all the prophets, patriarchs, apostles, and martyrs possessed. This the Apostle declares for the encouragement of even the smallest babes in Christ,

those who can only cry, “Abba, Father,” with a spirit of faith—to those who have obtained the same precious faith with us.

Thus, you have the meaning of the words. The precious doctrinal truths that arise from this understanding are threefold.

CHAPTER II

Three Observations Drawn.

The First: That Faith is a Precious Grace Explained, showing what Faith is.

First, that faith is a most precious grace.

Secondly, that even the weakest believer has the same precious faith as the strongest.

Thirdly, that from the significance of the term, as it is by lot, God, wholly out of His free grace and without any cause in ourselves, has made the difference between others and us. These are the three points.

I shall chiefly address the preciousness of faith, and the two following points will be interwoven in the unfolding and summing up of this essential and always timely truth—that faith is a most precious grace, a diamond, a jewel of great worth. This same Apostle, in another place in this epistle, Chapter 1, verse 7, says that even the trial of their faith is much more precious than gold that perishes. The very testing of the saints' faith is more precious than gold; take all

the mines of gold in the earth, and even for a man's faith to be tried is of far greater worth. Now, if it is worth more to have one's faith tested than all the gold in the world, how much is faith itself worth? If a man has gold, he would pay to have it tested by the touchstone; but if it is worth something to test it, how much more valuable is the gold if it proves genuine? Surely, faith is precious if even its trial is more valuable than gold.

Our Saviour says in Matthew 23:23, speaking of the weighty matters of the Law, rebuking the Pharisees for their exactness in minor matters such as tithing cumin and anise, but their neglect of the great matters of the Law—mercy, judgment, and faith. I believe this pertains to dealings between man and man, but by way of argument, we may draw a confirmation of our point at hand. If faith between man and man is one of the great matters of the Law, how much more precious is our faith in Jesus Christ! This faith is one of the great and weighty matters of the Gospel. Faith is a most precious grace.

To explore this, it is necessary to first uncover what faith is, and then to examine where the preciousness of faith lies, and so proceed to the application and enhancement of this point.

Firstly, faith is a most precious grace. But what faith? What is faith?

Briefly, this faith that we are discussing is the grace of God by which the soul receives Jesus Christ, as He is offered in the Gospel.

Jesus Christ is presented and offered as a complete Saviour, in whom all the grace of God is gathered like a fountain, from which the Lord intends to flow and communicate to the children of men unto eternal life. Christ is offered as one who possesses all the fullness of God's grace, which God intends to impart to all those elected by grace unto everlasting salvation. Now, by faith, the soul is enabled to receive and rest upon Jesus Christ alone. This grace of God, which Christ grants, is bestowed through His fulfilment of the threefold office—as King, Priest, and Prophet. In these roles, Christ imparts all the grace

and goodness of God, which the Lord intends to offer to the children of men for their eternal salvation. It is through faith that the soul comes to understand and apprehend this.

Firstly, being emptied of self and released from relying on any creature comforts or broken cisterns, or anything within itself, the soul is enlightened to see the fullness and freeness of God's grace, which He has placed in His Son. The soul then surrenders itself to Jesus Christ, gives itself up to Him, rolls upon Him, and rests upon Him for all the good that God offers in Christ. It is willing to stake everything it has and all it hopes for on the grace it perceives in Jesus Christ, finding its satisfaction in Christ alone. This is the nature of faith in general.

Now, a grace such as this is worth more than ten thousand worlds. Whenever the Lord blesses a soul with such a grace, He gives that soul more than if He were to grant it possession of all that Adam enjoyed on this side of heaven at the dawn of creation. Indeed, if He made ten thousand worlds for the sake of this soul, it would not be as much as giving that soul the grace of faith.

CHAPTER III

The Preciousness of Faith Discovered:

Firstly, It is the Fruit of God's Eternal Election. Secondly, It is Precious because it is Faith that first detects land in the storm of a troubled conscience. Thirdly, Faith is Precious with regard to its Object.

You may ask, how does this grace appear so precious, that it is worth so much?

Firstly, it is the fruit of God's election and therefore precious. It is the lot (as discussed in the explanation of the words) that God, in His free grace, grants to certain souls over others. This is evident in the Book of Acts, where it speaks of those who believed, "the Lord added to the Church such as should be saved" (Acts 2:41). In another place, it says, "those that were ordained to life believed"; it is the fruit of God's ordination to life. In Titus 1:1, it is called "the faith of God's elect." Faith is the first evidence that God, from all eternity, separated this soul for His good purposes. What a precious thing it is, then, that is the first revelation of those eternal thoughts and counsels of love God has for the good of a soul, showing that He separated this soul for Himself unto eternal life. Is that not a precious thing? I say it is the first revelation of God's eternal counsel, showing that He has everlastingly intended to do good to your soul.

The soul that God has set apart for Himself from all eternity is in a blessed condition. But how can it be known? Who can know whom God, before the foundations of the earth were laid, elected for Himself? Who can know this? If one of you knew of another's election, and the other did not, you would think, "If only I could go and tell this soul that God has eternally elected them and make it certain to them, surely I would be the bearer of the best news." Now, faith is the first thing God sends to proclaim what these determinations, decrees, and counsels of God have been for the everlasting welfare of this soul from all eternity. God, who has kept His eternal purposes within His own heart for a long time, now, when the time comes to work faith, says, "I will unburden My heart to this soul, and reveal what My love has been toward them from all eternity." God sends faith as a jewel to the soul, to make them understand that He has elected them to life from all eternity.

Imagine the greatest man alive setting his heart upon another person, resolving to employ his power, honour, and wealth to make this person his companion. But alas, the person is in prison all this time. This great man sends a diamond from his own crown, carried by his own son, to this man in prison. "Go," says he, "take him this

diamond, and tell him that this diamond is a sign that I have set my heart upon him, and if I have any power, honour, or wealth, I will use it all for his benefit.” Would not this be a precious diamond to this man, given under such terms? Even if it were only a small piece of silver, if it came as a token of such affection and intention, it would be worth more than thousands of pounds.

Surely, wherever God savingly works faith in a soul and sends it there by the Spirit of His own Son, He sends it as a testimony that He has set His heart upon that soul and intends to bless it forever. Whenever God works faith in your soul, He does as much as if He were to say, “Here, take this grace as a certain sign that I have set my heart upon you from all eternity. And if I have any power, mercy, or happiness in Myself to make you happy, then you shall be a happy creature forever; take this as evidence of it and cherish it.” Now, is that not precious? How valuable is such a gift when it comes in this way to a soul?

All of you who have experienced the work of faith in your own souls, take it as a sure pledge of God’s infinite, eternal love. Each time you meditate on the way God has worked this grace in your hearts, let your thoughts rise to value it as something sent from God as the fruit of His eternal election. It is the faith of God’s elect. God may give a man riches, ships, successful ventures, or even kingdoms, and these are no signs of His eternal love. If He should give someone a kingdom, what of it? He might give a man or woman dominion over the whole world, and yet that person could still be the object of His eternal wrath—a vile person, the lowest of men. Therefore, there is no true preciousness in all these things. But when the Lord grants faith, that is the evidence of His eternal love, and that is the first reason faith is precious.

Secondly, regarding its work, faith is the first grace that discerns, if I may say, land in sight. When the soul is in the tempest and storm of a troubled conscience, faith is the grace that first discerns land amid the soul's extremity, and therein lies its preciousness. The soul that

understands its own misery, the danger it is in, and the wrath of God that hangs over it—such a soul is like one caught in a storm at sea, ready to be swallowed up by the waves of a troubled conscience. It is faith that rises to the top of the mast and cries, “I see land!”

You would count it a precious thing if you were at sea, ready to perish and unaware of how far you were from land. If, at that moment, someone climbed the mast and shouted, “Oh, take comfort, I see land!”—you would value that more than any amount of money. This is the work of faith: when the soul is tossed by waves of affliction and troubled conscience, feeling ready to be engulfed in the gulf of eternal despair, seeing itself on the brink of being plunged into the bottomless pit of eternal misery, faith is the grace that ascends to the mast, finds some promise, and cries to the soul, “I see land! I see hope of mercy, hope of help. Though my condition is miserable, though I sense a dreadful breach between God and my soul, I perceive God as an eternal enemy. I feared I would be the one lying under the eternal curse of an infinite God, the fuel for His provoked wrath forever. Yet, blessed be God—I see land! I discern a way of help for a soul like mine.”

Oh, how precious is this faith that enables the soul to see hope in the greatest extremities! God grants this grace to the soul, allowing it to discover hope when the heart is at its lowest and ready to be overwhelmed.

Thirdly, faith is a most precious grace because it has the most excellent and glorious objects. The preciousness of faith is shown by the preciousness of its object. What is the object of faith? God Himself—indeed, God in a special sense as reconciled; it is God in Christ, God manifesting Himself in His Son. Thus, God becomes a more glorious object to the soul than if taken merely as He is in Himself, the first Being of all things.

And unless God is made an object of faith, He cannot be an object for the exercise of any other grace, except in a natural way. Without faith

making God the soul's object in this manner, even if the soul were to love or fear Him, or exercise any other grace, it would only love Him as the First Being and the fountain of all good, or fear Him as the mighty God of all creation. However, faith presents God to the soul in a higher way than otherwise could be, thus shaping the object for all other evangelical graces.

Faith is exercised upon God in a way of mystery, not a natural way. Its object is the Son of God, the second person of the Trinity, God-man, God reconciling the world to Himself. All the mysteries of the Gospel are the objects of faith, as well as the glorious counsels of God concerning man's eternal state. These are things that "eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man"—those merely natural and without divine perception. These are the things that are the objects of faith, and indeed, until faith enters the soul and presents these glorious objects for other graces to act upon, those virtues we call love, fear, humility, and others were operating only in a natural way.

There was a kind of love, fear, and humility before, but what distinguishes that love which is merely a common grace, or humility that is but common, from the true saving grace of God? Love, fear, humility—though they seem alike, they are merely common graces and gifts. The difference lies here: previously, these graces acted upon God only in a natural way. Now, faith presents God and the mysteries of the Gospel to the soul in a supernatural, mysterious manner, such that the love which once focused on God merely as the First Being of all things now acts upon Him as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Before, the soul feared God only as the great God above it; now, it fears God as He reveals glorious things in His Son, fears Him as a Father with a filial reverence, being reconciled to Him through His Son.

Thus, faith is a precious grace because its objects are so precious. Faith is that which presents these objects to other graces in a

supernatural way and indeed makes their objects supernatural to them. Therefore, this grace of faith is truly most precious.

CHAPTER IV

Fourthly, Faith is Precious Because it Gives Substance to Things Hoped For, and is Evidence of Things Not Seen.

Fourthly, the grace of faith is a most precious grace because it gives substance to things hoped for and evidence to things not seen. In Hebrews 11:1, there is a description of faith unlike any other in all the Book of God: “*Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen.*” To open this a little, so that we may see the abundant excellence and preciousness in faith:

It is the *substance*. The Greek word here implies that faith gives a real, substantial being to things hoped for—things that, for the present, have no actual existence. Faith makes them real and present to the soul. That is the meaning of this expression, *the substance of things hoped for*. Those things that might otherwise seem like mere notions, imaginations, fancies, or human conceits are, through faith, made the greatest realities in the world. Faith gives them substance, making them substantial things.

Many of you have perhaps heard much about the Kingdom of Heaven, the glory of the departed soul, and what body and soul will one day experience with God in Heaven—the vision of God, His presence, and so on. But if this grace of faith is absent from the soul, these things are merely fictions to people; and, I fear, they may have been so to many—mere imaginations, pleasant notions that a minister speaks of, clever ideas and fanciful thoughts. Certainly, all carnal hearts possess such thoughts about the Kingdom of Heaven.

Some might say, “What do you tell me of such things? Give me a house, land, and an estate in this world. As for these heavenly matters, they are beyond us.” Such whisperings are found in some people’s spirits.

Oh, the low thoughts people have of the Kingdom of Heaven before faith enters the soul! But when faith does come, those things are made the most real of any in the world. Now the soul begins to see the blessed and glorious things revealed in Christ concerning the Kingdom of Heaven as the most real and substantial things that exist. It now feels ashamed of the vain ideas it once held about these matters. Indeed, to believers, the things of this world become mere fancies. Here is the transformation that faith brings: before faith came, the things of this world seemed substantial, while the things of Heaven appeared imaginary and fanciful. But when faith comes, the things of this world appear as mere fancies, and the things of Heaven become the true substances. Scripture even speaks of worldly things as mere show, as when it says of Agrippa that he came with much pomp. But regarding the things of Heaven and eternal life, they have true substance, true reality. Thus, the Apostle says, *faith is the substance of things hoped for*; it realises them for the soul.

Further, though these things are not yet possessed, faith gives them a present substance. You are not currently in Heaven, enjoying God’s presence; yet faith makes it seem as if it were already done. It grants these heavenly things a present subsistence in your soul. Sometimes, Scripture even says that the Kingdom of Heaven *is in you*. Ecolampadius, lying on his deathbed, was once told to think of Heaven. “I thank God,” he said, “I am already in Heaven.”

Consider how it is with despair, which stands in opposition to faith: despair makes Hell as real and present to the despairing soul as faith makes Heaven to the believer. One who despairs feels the very wrath of God burning upon him now; he does not merely fear that he will go to Hell one day, but feels himself in Hell already. Spira famously said, *“Truly, desperation is Hell itself.”* Many people, wicked and

ungodly, lying on their deathbeds in torment of conscience, have cried out that they were already in Hell.

In this way, despair on one side, being the opposite of faith, has the power to make the torments of Hell real and present to the soul. So too, on the other side, faith, in contrast to despair, has the virtue and efficacy to make all the glory and blessedness of Heaven real and substantial to the soul.

I shall proceed to the Second Branch of this Description:

The Evidence of Things Not Seen.

Objection. But are these things certain?

Answer. Yes, faith gives an evidence.

Objection. But they are not seen; if Heaven were open to men as it was to Stephen, and I could see Christ at the right hand of the Father as he did, then it would be something.

Answer. The text says, *“Faith is the evidence of things not seen.”* It is the demonstration—the word translated in your Bible as *evidence* signifies to demonstrate and to convince by the strongest arguments possible. Faith convinces by argument, making things clear and evident to the soul, and rendering them sure and certain. Faith gives the soul such a piercing eye that it can look up to Heaven, to the Throne of God, and see Jesus Christ sitting at the right hand of the Father, making intercession for it—as clearly as if it saw someone at the right hand of a judge presenting a petition. Truly, faith has a piercing eye equal to Stephen’s bodily eye.

God is able to elevate the eye of the body, allowing it to look into Heaven, as He did for Stephen; but certainly, faith—the eye of the soul—is capable of a higher elevation than the bodily eye ever could be. The eye is precious, that crystal pearl in a person’s eye. Who would give even one eye for any diamond or pearl on earth? It would

be unworthy for anyone to make such an exchange, to give both eyes and lose the beauty of the things seen in nature—the sun, moon, and stars, or the seas. What person in the world would give up such blessings? Certainly, no wise person would forfeit what they see and their ability to see for all the world.

Now, if God has placed such a gift in one's body that enables the discovery of such marvellous works of God as our eyes do—by our eyes we come to see His wonders, and much of God is let into the soul through them—then you who have travelled and seen God's wonders, oh, how much of God has been revealed to you, especially if you have had gracious hearts. Much of God has come into your souls through what you have seen with your eyes. But consider this: if such a bodily thing as the eye possesses such excellence, preciousness, and brings so much of God into the soul, oh, how much more does the diamond of faith let God into the soul!

With faith, a person sees the wonders of God's law and gospel. There is a great difference between a person who has no faith and one who does. It is like the difference between a man born blind or shut up in a dungeon and one whose eyes are suddenly opened, allowing him to behold the great works of God in the world. This man may see the glory of the sun, having only heard people talk of its light and of the heavens, stars, moon, seas, trees, fields, and all the beautiful things in the world, but he knew not what they meant—he only heard others talk about them. But now his eyes are opened, and he comes to behold them all.

Such is the change in the hearts of men when God grants them faith. They gain a new eye, allowing the great things of Christ to shine brightly before them, with such an evidence that the soul is content to stake all upon it. This is the nature of faith: while others may not risk anything for the promise of eternal life they hear preached, nor part with any cherished sin, nor risk losing their wealth for fear of losing some sinful gain—since they do not perceive these things as real—when God grants faith, the soul says, *“Take all; I am content to*

risk my estate, my name, my liberty, and all my comforts. I am willing to entrust my soul and eternity upon this Word of God, which reveals such things.”

This is faith: it is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen. Many truths of God are known to us through reason, but faith elevates reason and reveals these truths even more gloriously than reason could ever do. This is why the Apostle says in Hebrews 11:3, *“Through faith, we understand that the worlds were framed.”* Why could we not understand that without faith? A person, by natural light, knows that nothing can be eternal in itself; yet the Apostle says that by faith, we know the worlds were made. He implies that, while reason grants us some knowledge, faith allows us to know on a higher level than before. Faith sheds a new light on all things, creating a new world.

As there is a difference between the light in Heaven, the place of the blessed, and the light here on earth, so there is a difference between reason and faith. Here, we have the light of the world through the sun, but in the highest Heaven, there is no sun, and yet there is far more light. The blessed saints in Heaven possess light, though there is no sun there. So, too, there is a great difference between the light a man uses to understand things through reason and the light given through faith. Through reason, we see things as by candlelight; through faith, as by sunlight; and in Heaven, we will see by the light of God Himself.

Thus, faith is like the light in Heaven, the place of the blessed, which reveals things by God’s very presence—a radiance of His presence in the soul. Luther described faith as *“a certain beam of Divinity shed into the heart of a believer.”* Just as God fills Heaven with the beams of His own light, making it a glorious place of light, so He fills the soul with His presence by working faith within it, filling it with light. Faith, indeed, is a kind of omnipotent thing, and its virtue is inestimable and infinite. Such is the preciousness of faith, as Luther, who understood its excellence as well as anyone since the Apostles,

once said. And thus, we see what a precious thing faith truly is. The application of this point follows.

CHAPTER V

Application. What Has Been Shown Before May Justly Make Men Question Whether Their Faith is of the Right Kind. A Note of Trial Laid Down.

From what has already been discussed regarding faith, it should be enough to make many people somewhat suspicious about whether their faith is of the right kind and quality. Faith is a most precious grace; you have heard how precious it is in various respects. Many may now think to themselves, “Lord, how far is this from my faith!” True, some faith is higher than others; but know this: the weakest faith in the world is equally precious in nature, though it may not appear as glorious. Faith is this precious stone, and the difference between this faith and the faith most people in the world have is like the difference between a precious diamond and the common pebble stones that lie in the streets.

You who are mariners have seen the abundance of small stones on the seashore—stones with fine streaks and curious colours among the shells. Perhaps children, seeing such party-coloured smooth stones, would be pleased with them. But a wise man would think these are but common stones; if you loaded your ships with such stones, what profit would you make? You would lose your entire voyage and be laughed at for your trouble.

The truth is, the faith that must save the soul is a diamond, but the faith of most people is like those glittering pebbles. Perhaps you have many common gifts, and you think these are the fruits of your faith.

You might think that your stone is genuine because of your common gifts, but when the Lord, that great jeweller, comes to test your stone, He may find your supposed diamond to be nothing but a Bristol stone. There are stones that children mistake for diamonds, but they lack the hardness and endurance of a true diamond. Just so, a man may be convinced that he has acquired a diamond and believes himself enriched by it, but when it is examined by a skilled jeweller, he may hear, *“I wouldn’t give you two pence for it.”* Oh, how disheartened such a person would be!

Oh, what sorrow there will be in the hearts of men and women hereafter who think they have faith, only to find it wanting. If your faith proves to be this precious faith, you are a blessed creature forever, regardless of what you may lack in this world. But if, upon examination, your faith proves to be as soft as a Bristol stone, it will be worthless. It is not enough for someone to say, “Well, perhaps my stone isn’t quite a diamond, but it’s close, so I hope I may receive half the price of a diamond.” No, it must either be a true diamond or it is worth no more than an ordinary stone. Even if your faith resembles true faith and comes close to it—even if it is the faith of miracles—on the Day of Judgment, it would not be worth two pence to you.

Oh, then, you must ensure that your faith is not the common faith found on every roadside! If a man has faith and yet can swear by it, it’s a sign he does not value it as precious, for he will use it carelessly. If a man had a diamond worth ten thousand pounds, would he pawn it over every trivial matter? Would he risk it on a whim? If you possess true faith, do you not understand its worth?

I shall lay down one point as a test to see if your faith is true or not. Certainly, if it is this precious faith, then God makes the soul rightly aware of its own worth. By this, I mean that the soul, believing it has faith (though some may possess it unknowingly), will undoubtedly treasure this faith more than if God had given it ten thousand worlds. If you can say you hope to have this precious faith, then surely this will be true: you esteem this gift above all else. You see the infinite

riches of God's grace toward your soul in granting you this faith. God does not give faith like someone handing a diamond to a fool or child. Rather, if He gives a diamond, He says, "Now, look after it, for this diamond can make you rich forever." And therefore, He urges you to preserve it and use it well.

Whenever God grants this precious faith to the soul, He also reveals it to the soul, for all the while it is undiscovered, God's hand keeps it safe so that the soul shall not lose it. But when God reveals it to the soul, He says, "See to it—here is what you must live on; here is what will bring you to eternal life if ever you are saved." The soul that hopes to possess faith will stand in awe of God's infinite goodness for granting this grace.

Now, let me appeal to you with this single test: You who hope to be saved by faith, when was your heart captivated by the excellency of this grace? When did you go into your closet in secret, blessing God for it? When have you marvelled at God's goodness, adored, magnified, worshipped, and praised His great Name for bestowing such a rich jewel upon you—a gift that, for His glory, you must confess is more valuable than all that He ever created? If you have done this, it is a good indication that the soul which so treasures faith, though it be weak, possesses that precious faith spoken of in the text.

CHAPTER VI

Fifthly, Faith is a Precious Grace Because it Frees the Soul from the Guilt of Sin.

Fifthly, faith is a precious grace because it is the grace that frees the soul from the guilt of sin. The great commendation of faith that we

find so often in Scripture—that we are justified by faith—demonstrates its preciousness. It is the grace that delivers the soul from the guilt of sin, and no other grace accomplishes this. Other graces may serve as signs that a person has been delivered from the guilt of sin, but no other grace brings deliverance from guilt itself. A man cannot indeed be delivered from the guilt of sin without repentance; he must repent, but repentance alone does not free him from guilt. All the repentance in the world will not do so without faith. Thus, while it is true that one cannot be freed from guilt without other graces, faith alone is the grace that accomplishes this.

The Scriptures say we are justified by faith; they never say we are justified by love, but by faith. No means under heaven can achieve this except faith. The soul engages with Christ in justification only through faith. Luther has an expression on this: he says that in the matter of justification, only Christ and faith are present, like the bridegroom and bride alone in the bedchamber. When they come out, they are accompanied by their attendants and friends; but in the bedchamber, they are alone. Similarly, in the course of our lives, we have the accompaniment of all other graces; but in the matter of justification, as in the bedchamber, there is only Christ and faith. If you attempt to bring anything else to join with your faith in justification, you spoil it all.

There may be various means to seek pardon of sin—hearing the Word, performing many duties, and the like—but none of these frees the soul from guilt. Even many prayers, cries for mercy, tears, sorrow, and distress cannot accomplish this. What cannot be achieved by all these duties, tears, or any assistance that men or angels can provide, is done by faith alone. Therefore, faith is a most precious grace.

Many souls have long laboured under the weight of sin (the spirit of bondage), desperately seeking pardon and willing to give all they possess, if they had it, to obtain forgiveness and free themselves from the chains of guilt. But when God grants faith to the soul, the work is

done immediately—in an instant, in the twinkling of an eye. What all other means, diligently and laboriously applied over many years, could not accomplish, faith does in a moment. A sinner who has committed the greatest, vilest, and most notorious abominations—if God sends faith into that soul, this precious grace—becomes immediately as clear from sin as a newborn child (I mean from the guilt of it), and even more so. The very instant faith enters the soul, that sinner, no matter how vile before, is as clear from the guilt of sin as Abraham, Isaac, or Jacob, or as any of the prophets or apostles; indeed, as clear from guilt as the saints in heaven.

Oh, what a precious grace is this faith that can make such a mighty change! One who previously bore such a heavy load of guilt, feeling as if under the chains of darkness, bound by the cords of sin and condemned to eternal death, is now, in a single instant, freed from all guilt forever, with no possibility of it returning. This is the work of faith in justifying the sinner, not only freeing them from the guilt of sin but also bestowing an everlasting righteousness, clothing them in the white robes of Christ's righteousness. Now, before God, with all guilt removed, the soul stands clothed in the righteousness of its elder Brother, Jesus Christ, and is seen as righteous in and through Him—the Lord, our Righteousness.

Oh, how precious is the grace of faith! And that is the fifth point.

CHAPTER VII

Sixthly, Faith is Precious Because it Gives an Interest in God, in Christ, in the Promises, and in Heaven Itself.

Sixthly, the grace of faith is precious because it gives the soul an interest in God, in Christ, in all the promises, and in Heaven itself. I

say that faith gives the soul an interest—not only freeing it from the guilt of sin but giving it an interest in God. It makes the infinite, eternal, first Being of all things, the fountain of all goodness, the soul's portion. Such a soul can say, "My God and my Lord," by a spirit of faith, which is a spirit of personal application.

Faith is not merely a grace that reveals, as previously explained, not only the crystal eye that lets glorious objects into the soul, but it is an applying grace, an appropriating grace, a uniting grace. It is that which grants you a right to all the attributes of God. If there is anything in God that can make you rich or happy, faith grants you a right to it—it becomes your own. By faith, you, who were once without God in the world, who had no right to Him and indeed were His enemy, now come to have a right to all that is in God: His power, His wisdom, His mercy, His faithfulness, His holiness, and His goodness—they are all yours.

There is infinite excellence in this, though I cannot take the time to expand on each benefit we gain through faith. It will suffice to name them collectively to display the splendour and value of this grace of faith.

Likewise, you have an interest in Christ—Christ is yours. The Christ in whom God the Father is infinitely satisfied is now made yours. If there is anything in Christ that can benefit you, anything Jesus Christ has purchased to make you happy, it is yours; you may claim it as your own, as you are made one with Christ.

Here is the difference between faith and other graces: other graces make the soul resemble Jesus Christ, but faith makes the soul one with Jesus Christ. There is a great difference between being like something and being one with it. Your patience, humility, and heavenly-mindedness make you resemble Jesus Christ, but your faith makes you one with Him, a member of His body, one with Him as the husband and wife are one, as the branch and the vine's root are one. Indeed, it is an even closer union, for Scripture says of

believers that Christ is in them and they are in Christ. Now, this is not so with the branches of a vine and its root; though the branches come from the root, they are not *in* the root. But believers are in Christ, and Christ is in them. You are made one with Jesus Christ, and this oneness will be seen even more clearly hereafter: *“Father, I will,”* says Christ, *“that those whom thou hast given me may be one with thee, as thou and I are one.”* By being one with the Son, you come to be one with the Father, and this is the preciousness of faith.

Moreover, faith grants you an interest in all the precious promises, which further demonstrates its value. For this, we need not look beyond the words of our text; just read the fourth verse of this chapter: *“Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these you might be partakers of the divine nature.”* Here are precious promises by which we come to partake in the divine nature. Surely, the grace that grants us an interest in such precious promises, by which we partake of the divine nature, must be a precious grace.

Consider how a voyage or ship may be deemed valuable because it brings great riches from the East Indies; you say, “Here is a ship worth so many thousand pounds.” The ship itself is not worth that much, but you value it because of the wealth it carries from distant lands. If a ship is called valuable because of the riches it brings, then surely faith may well be called precious, for it brings in all the precious and rich promises, worth more than all the riches of the Indies, indeed, of the entire world. That which gives the soul an interest in so many promises must certainly be precious.

If you were granted an interest in valuable leases, bonds, or bills worth thousands of pounds, you would consider those who granted you such an interest to have given you something precious. Surely, all the promises of the Gospel are like so many bonds, bills, leases, and conveyances from God to the soul. And it is faith that brings them all in and makes them yours. Before, you might have read of precious promises in the Gospel, but what claim did you have to

them? They were not yours. But immediately upon faith entering the soul, all these promises become yours, and all the precious things in the Gospel are granted to you. Now you may read through the Book of God and find precious promises made to any of God's saints of old, and you may say and claim in Christ's name, "*This is mine.*"

Some people, driven by presumption, may think they have an interest in God, Christ, and the promises, but this is mere delusion. I recall reading of a madman in Athens who would run to the shore, crying out of every ship that came in, "*This is mine! This is mine!*" and he would record them in a book, truly believing all was his. Later, when he regained his senses, he was troubled at the loss of such pleasures. Many, through presumption, believe they have an interest in all the glorious things of God and Christ as revealed in His Word, but it proves to be mere fantasy.

Yet faith provides a real interest in these things. Now, as you read the Word of God and read of the excellence of God, you can say, "*Yes, this God is my God.*" When you read of the excellencies of Jesus Christ, "*Yes, He is my Saviour.*" When you read a promise, "*This is my inheritance.*" And with Heaven, faith grants you an interest in all that you have heard or read about the glory of Heaven. It becomes as truly yours as anything you possess in your own home, and even more real and certain. Holiness indeed brings you to the possession of Heaven and is necessary for reaching it, but faith is that which grants you an interest and title to it. One thing may grant you the title to a piece of land, but something else is needed to give you possession. Faith grants you the interest and title to Heaven, while holiness brings you to it; for, as Scripture says, "*Without holiness, no one shall see the Lord.*"

CHAPTER VIII

Seventhly, Faith is Precious Regarding the Dignities it Bestows Upon the Soul

Seventhly, the glorious dignities that faith bestows upon the soul demonstrate the preciousness of faith. And what dignities does it bestow upon the soul?

1. **It makes a person a child of God.** As John says, *“To as many as received him, he gave the power to become the sons of God”* (John 1). That phrase translated in English as *power* actually implies authority, a deeper right and privilege. Faith grants authority to be called the children of God; they can claim this rightfully as their own, for the text says, *“even to them that believe on his name.”* Others may call God “Father,” but they do so without this right and authority; on what grounds do they do it? But now, through faith, you have the warrant to call God “Father.” You have been made the children of the living God; whereas before, you were children of the Devil, now you are sons and daughters of the Living God. You are welcomed to sit at God’s table as His children, and His heart is towards you as towards His own children. You are now part of God’s household.

When you have faith, you gain this dignity, for we are called the children of God *by faith*. In his letter to the Galatians, Paul attributes this sonship to faith rather than to any other grace.

2. **Faith makes you an heir of all the world.** A believer, as soon as they possess faith—no matter how humble or poor they may be in this world—becomes an heir of all the world. We find this promise made to Abraham in Romans 4:13: *“For the promise that he should be the heir of the world was not to Abraham or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.”* This promise, that Abraham would be heir of the world, did not come through the righteousness of the law, but through the righteousness of faith. By faith, we are

counted as the seed of Abraham, and you know that children inherit their father's estate when he passes.

In the case of Abraham's children, it is not as with other families where the eldest inherits all; rather, every child of Abraham inherits the blessing of Abraham. Whatever was the real blessing given to Abraham is the blessing of every child of Abraham. Now, Abraham was made heir of the world by faith, and so it follows that every believer, as a child of Abraham, is likewise an heir of all the world.

You might say that believers are heirs of Heaven.

Indeed, we all acknowledge that they shall inherit Heaven and are heirs of that eternal kingdom. But perhaps you have not considered that they are also heirs of the world. Nevertheless, it is true that even the poorest believer in the world is heir of all the world.

You might ask, *"How can this be?"*

I would pose the same question to you: *"How was Abraham the heir of the world?"* You may say, *"I have but little of this world."* So had Abraham when the promise was made to him; he possessed nothing in the land of Canaan but a burial place. Abraham took possession of the world through Canaan, yet he held nothing in Canaan during his lifetime except a simple burial plot. Yet, he was heir of all the world. In the same way, a believer is heir of all the world. They have a right to all good things in the world, so far as they may be useful and beneficial to them. You who are poorest—if you had more of the world than you now possess, perhaps you would have less grace. If God placed the choice before you, with perfect knowledge, you would not wish for more than you have, for God takes care to provide what is best for you, and all things are meant to work together for your good. If you lack something others have, yet that very lack is turned to some spiritual advantage. I dare affirm that no believer is deprived of anything in this world without it being compensated for in some way or other.

There is also reason to believe that this Scripture may be fulfilled in the sense that believers will indeed inherit the earth, though at present it is mostly possessed by wicked men. Why? Because the world is so defiled with sin, so corrupted; and God allows those He hates, even many reprobates, to inherit the world's great treasures because it is so polluted. But there is a time coming when there will be a *restitution of all things*; when the corruptions of the world shall be cleansed, sin shall be removed, and the world will be made fit for the saints of God. Then they shall inherit the earth. They are heirs of all the world now and shall possess it when God's time arrives.

3. Not only are they heirs, but co-heirs with Jesus Christ.

This is a greater dignity bestowed upon the saints, all through faith. It is a great honour not only to receive an inheritance but to be made a co-heir with Him, ensuring that it can never be taken away. It is an unparalleled privilege to be a co-heir with Jesus Christ. We have a right to all things through faith—a right of purchase, a right of gift, and a right of inheritance. This inheritance is joined to Jesus Christ's own inheritance, so that if Christ is the rightful heir of all the world, then believers are rightful heirs as well. The saints possess a right to all the good things of this world, along with Heaven, so that if Jesus Christ is a rightful heir, then you are a rightful heir, for you are a co-heir with the Lord Jesus Christ. You have an interest by inheritance, and this inheritance is strengthened by the inheritance of Jesus Christ, as He is the heir of all things.

4. Furthermore, these dignities include being made free citizens of the New Jerusalem, which is above and of which such glorious things are spoken in Scripture. "*So many as believed were added to the Church.*" Oh, how precious is that grace which bestows such dignities and honours upon the saints, those who have obtained like precious faith.

And yet, beyond this...

CHAPTER IX

Eighthly, Faith is Precious Because it Sanctifies. Ninthly, Because it Renews the Image of God and Puts New Life. Tenthly, It is Precious Because it Quickens All Other Graces. Eleventhly, It is Precious Because it Puts Dignity Upon All the Works of the Saints.

Eighthly, faith is that grace which is the cleansing and purifying grace, the sanctifying grace. The heart is purified by faith, as we see in Acts 15:9: “*And ye are sanctified by faith.*” All the resolutions that men make against their sin will not cleanse their hearts or sanctify them; only faith can accomplish this. The exercise of faith, even for just a short time, does more to purge sin from the soul than all the mourning, sorrow, and performance of duties in the world. No other effort, no matter how prolonged, can purify the heart from sin as much as the exercise of faith.

Ninthly, faith renews the image of God in the soul; it is through faith that we live and have any true life. In the Gospel of John, chapter 20, verse 31, it says, “*These things are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing, ye might have life through his name.*” He that hath the Son hath life, but he has it through believing. You may be familiar with the passage in Habakkuk, which is quoted again in Romans and Hebrews: “*The just shall live by faith.*” Some read this with different emphases in the wording: “*The just by faith shall live,*” or, “*The just shall live by faith.*” These variations in punctuation can bring about different meanings.

If we read it as “*The just by faith, shall live,*” it indicates that men are made just only by faith, and by being justified through faith, they

begin to live, having been spiritually dead before. Or if we read it as “*The just shall live by faith*,” it does not refer to becoming just through faith but to living the very life of God through faith. As Paul says, “*I live by the faith of the Son of God*.” Through faith in the Son of God, we begin to live, and that life is nothing less than the beginning of everlasting life.

Scripture often speaks this way. In John 6:47, “*Verily, verily, he that believeth on me hath everlasting life*.” Mark that it says *hath* everlasting life, not merely *shall have*; he possesses it now and lives the life of Heaven even now, with eternal life already begun within the soul. Faith brings everlasting life into the present. You who were, before faith, a dead carcass in the eyes of God, a dead soul, now stand alive in God’s sight when faith enters the soul. You now live an eternal life, having the very life that the saints possess in Heaven—its beginning within you now. The kingdom of God has come into you; Heaven has descended into your soul. Thus, as it says in the previous passage, we are made partakers of the precious promises, and through them, partakers of the Divine Nature. Faith brings the promises, and by them, the Divine Nature enters the soul. This is the preciousness of faith: it cleanses the heart from impurity, sanctifies it, brings new life, everlasting life, and the Divine Nature, establishing the image of God in the soul and implanting the principle of eternal life in the hearts of sinners. This is the work of faith.

Tenthly, faith not only brings all other graces (for all other graces are, as it were, the train and attendants of faith), but it also puts a quickening spirit into all graces. When other graces begin to lose their luster and brightness, or their strength and vitality, faith revives them. Faith not only quickens a dead soul but revives graces that seem to lie dormant. A learned writer, Guilielmus Parisiensis, compared faith to a crystal: when other jewels lose their brilliance, merely touching the crystal revives the virtue of all precious stones. Similarly, when other graces lose their vigor and activity, faith brings them to life again, making them lively and active once more.

Many Christians have graces that lie dormant within their hearts; it is often the lack of active faith that causes these graces to remain inactive. Those Christians who exercise faith most are the most vibrant, always finding their graces fresh, lively, and vigorous through faith's continual exercise. You may experience this yourself: if you feel spiritually dead and find that virtues such as humility and patience are lacking, the way to restore them is to strengthen and quicken your faith, which will then enliven all other graces.

This is yet another excellency of faith. Such precious faith indeed works precious things within the soul.

Eleventhly, faith is precious because, as it quickens and enlivens all graces, it also dignifies all the works of the saints. Faith ennobles any work that the children of God do, making all their actions acceptable to God. Consider what is said of Abel's faith in Hebrews 11, where we read a thorough commendation of faith: *"By faith, Abel offered a sacrifice more acceptable than that of Cain."* What was it that made Abel's sacrifice more acceptable than Cain's? It was faith.

A person who is not a believer may do something that, in substance, is as good as what a believer does; but if you are not a believer, all you do is rejected by God in regard to eternal life. The Lord does not accept what is done, nor does He accept you for life; He cannot be pleased with what you do. It is true that some actions may remove certain obstacles to the work of faith, but until you become a believer, you cannot please God. Even if an action is less sinful or materially good—and is thus your duty to perform—this alone does not make it pleasing to God. An unbeliever should not say, "Shall we do nothing, then, since we are unbelievers?" You must do whatever God requires of you, as it is good in essence. But overall, you cannot please God without faith; as Scripture says, *"Without faith, it is impossible to please God."* Not only do you not please Him, but it is impossible to do so. You may think that good intentions, good desires, sorrow for past wrongs, attending church, hearing the Word,

and just dealings with others will please God; but without faith, they cannot.

Don't simply consider what you do; consider the principle by which you do it. Even if you live better than you once did and improve many things in your actions, if your state and condition have not been changed by being brought into Jesus Christ, then what you do is not accepted. It is faith that renders what you do acceptable.

Luther, a man of great faith who admired it all the more for possessing it so deeply, said that the actions of the poorest milkmaid or servant are more glorious than all the deeds of Alexander, Julius Caesar, or other famous conquerors who nearly ruled the world. The humble tasks of a believing servant—whether milking a cow or sweeping a house—are more honourable in God's eyes than the achievements of those great conquerors because the servant's actions are done in faith. Faith not only drives the soul to draw near to God but also motivates all actions, making each duty acceptable to Him. Such works become a sweet fragrance in God's sight. That broken, stumbling prayer of yours, though you may struggle to put words to your heart's desires and can only breathe and sigh out your spirit to God, if it comes from faith, is more accepted by God than all the glorious deeds that all the hypocrites in the world could ever do.

Faith brings acceptability not only to our persons but also to our actions. It graces both the individual and their works at the throne of grace, and that is indeed a precious grace. Is it not worth more than the riches of this world to possess something that makes our poor, humble, and feeble services acceptable to God? This acceptability is accomplished only by the grace of faith.

CHAPTER X

In the Twelfth Place, Faith is Precious Because it Enables the Soul to Do Glorious Things: (1) It Prevails with God; (2) It Resists Temptations; (3) It Rises Above Discouragements; (4) It Rejoices in Tribulations; (5) It Overcomes the World; (6) It Looks Upon the Face of the Holy and Just God and Even Death with Joy.

Twelfthly, faith is that which enables the soul to perform glorious deeds. Not only does it add value to our simplest acts, but it also grants power and strength to the soul to accomplish great things. Even the humblest believer can achieve great things by faith. You know the marvellous deeds recorded in Hebrews 11—when you have a moment, read that chapter, for it is a fitting conclusion to a message like this one. It is a brief chronicle of faith's heroes and their acts, showing the glorious accomplishments wrought by faith.

However, when reading that Scripture, some of you may feel discouraged, thinking, "Surely, I shall never be able to do such things." When you read that chapter, pay close attention to verse 33: *"Who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, and turned to flight the armies of the aliens."* These are mighty deeds! But perhaps you wonder, "What relevance do they have to me? I cannot subdue kingdoms or stop the mouths of lions." Yet, consider this: between subduing kingdoms and stopping the mouths of lions, we also read *"worked righteousness, obtained promises."* You may not subdue a kingdom or stop a lion's mouth, but you can work righteousness and obtain promises through your faith. These acts are included here as deeds of equal value, just as praiseworthy as the other great deeds of faith.

Who knows what the faith of humble believers might yet accomplish? Although you cannot go to the battlefield to fight this nation's enemies, through faith you may still subdue them, making

them a footstool, and stop the mouths of those lions who come roaring to devour God's servants.

What, then, can faith do?

1. **Faith prevails with God in prayer.** Faith, like a prince, can overcome and prevail with God. If any prayer is effective, it is because of faith. Faith can obtain from God whatever it seeks. To the woman of great faith, Christ said, "*O woman, great is thy faith; be it unto thee as thou wilt.*" It was as if Christ said, "Woman, if you have such faith, then nothing can stop you; you may receive whatever you ask." Many are determined to have their own way, but here is the true path to having your desires fulfilled. Luther was known for being able to accomplish whatever he set his heart upon, for he was a man full of faith.
2. **Faith has the power to resist temptations.** In Ephesians 6:16, faith is described as a shield that quenches all the fiery darts of the devil. This is a powerful image—the devil's darts are fiery, yet faith not only deflects these darts but quenches them. What shield can ordinarily extinguish fire? Faith does not only repel attacks; it quells fiery darts. Just as the enemies in warfare may shoot red-hot iron balls into a town, so the devil fires his heated darts into the hearts of the saints. Without a shield that quenches, they would be overcome. But faith, the right shield, will quench even the hottest of the devil's darts.

Many of you may lament when you are overcome, saying, "The devil overcame me; his temptations are too strong." Why are they strong? Because you lack the right shield. Perhaps you have the shield of resolution, intending to do better than before, but when it comes to the fiery darts of the devil, these resolutions fall short. While resolutions alone may falter, faith is strong enough to resist all temptations. It is also faith that dispels fear; as Tertullian expressed, "Faith does not fear hunger." Indeed, faith overcomes all fears, as

could be discussed further, but I shall continue with the remaining points.

3. It is faith that raises the soul above all discouragements; it is this grace that carries the soul through every kind of difficulty. Many things come along that would discourage the soul: sense may say, “It cannot be,” reason may question, “How can it possibly be?” and the world may declare, “It shall not be.” Yet faith steps in and affirms, “It shall be.” After reason, sense, and the world have all concluded against something, faith rises up and insists, “Nevertheless, it shall be done.” Faith keeps the head above water amidst waves and tempests, even if the body is submerged.

The saints of former times faced enough discouragement to sink any soul if not upheld by faith, which we will explore further later. Consider the example of Abraham: what greater discouragement could he have had than when commanded to offer up his son, especially when faced with the question of God’s promise? Yet Abraham said to his servants, *“I and the lad will go yonder, and we will return.”* Isaac was to be sacrificed and burnt to ashes, yet Abraham declared, *“We will return.”* It was as if Abraham said, “I must burn this child to ashes, yet we must come back together, for in this child all nations of the world shall be blessed.” God had promised, and though Isaac was to be reduced to ashes, faith would bring him back to life.

It’s a sign that people are unfamiliar with this heroic grace of faith when they are so easily discouraged by the smallest obstacles. If faced with even a minor challenge, they give up. But faith breaks through difficulties, as noted in Hebrews 11:34 and following, where we see the many obstacles overcome through faith. No matter how small or inadequate the means appear, if God calls us to use them, faith will carry it through. The less the means, the greater the glory. This is highlighted in Hebrews 11 in the example of Joshua’s faith, through which the walls of Jericho fell.

Sometimes I wonder why Joshua's faith in making the sun stand still is not mentioned here, yet the faith that brought down the walls of Jericho is. The former was an extraordinary act, a moment of divine inspiration. But Jericho's conquest was full of discouragements. Here was a strong city with fortified walls, and the means to take it down? A group of priests circling and blowing trumpets. Those in Jericho must have laughed, as this seemed so contrary to reason—a feeble and strange method. Yet, Joshua's faith is commended. It was as if God said, "My servant Joshua undertook a daunting task with only a few ram's horns as his means, yet he believed and, through faith, saw Jericho's walls fall." So, if God calls us to a great work, even if means seem weak or inadequate, faith will carry it through—and this is the honour of faith.

4. What else can faith do? It can *rejoice in tribulations* and find sufficiency in God for every need. No matter how great the affliction, faith knows how to rejoice, able to see light through the smallest crevice. As Romans 5 says, "*We rejoice in tribulations.*" Others may be patient in tribulations, but faith enables us to rejoice and even glory in them, a level far beyond mere patience. For a believer, it is not enough to endure tribulations; faith enables one to rejoice and be exceedingly glad.

5. What more can faith do? It can *overcome the world*. As the Apostle says, "*This is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith.*" Faith lifts the believer above the enticements, fears, and threats of the world, overcoming not only because it prevents the world from doing harm but because it can turn the world's devices to its own good. Through Christ, we are more than conquerors.

6. Finally, would you know what else faith can do? It can *look upon the face of the holy and just God with joy*, and it can look upon the face of death and judgment with joy. Let God appear in His infinite holiness and justice, and yet, by faith, the soul is enabled to look upon Him with joy. How

precious, then, is this grace of faith! As we continue, we shall see that much of what passes for faith in the world is not true faith. Common faith is as ordinary as stones in the street, but this jewel is a rare and priceless thing.

There are still several points I hope to cover to reveal further the preciousness of this grace.

CHAPTER XI

XIII. Faith is Precious Because it is the Special Grace that Most Glorifies God.

I shall briefly add a few more points in praise of faith and then proceed to some application, as the exploration of this subject has already included practical insights.

XIII. Faith is the special grace that most glorifies God. No other grace honours God as faith does. We glorify God through our humility, patience, and by exercising every grace He has given us, but no grace brings Him as much honour as faith. Thus, it is said of Abraham in Romans 4: “*Abraham believed and glorified God; he glorified God in believing.*” This is why Christ teaches that faith is the work God desires from us—this is the greatest work of all, the act that brings God more glory than anything else.

In truth, nothing glorifies God like faith. Other graces honour God insofar as they contain the virtues of faith within them, but faith alone gives glory to God in a unique way. It magnifies God’s truth and faithfulness, attributes on which God sets great importance. Faith also honours His power by resting upon Him, and it glorifies His mercy, especially these three attributes. It is an extraordinary

honour that faith brings to God—a soul's deepest worship, casting itself and all its hope, for both present and eternal good, upon the mere word of God, even when everything else seems to oppose it.

Imagine a person willing to stake their life and wealth solely on the promise of another's faithfulness, valuing that promise as dearly as life itself. How honoured would such a person feel! Similarly, God esteems it a great honour when you can place your entire soul upon His faithfulness alone, especially in the face of temptations, trials, and adversity. When you can say, "*Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him,*" this brings God great glory.

Many Christians are hesitant to believe. They do not hesitate to pray, hear the Word, or obey other commandments, but they are fearful of believing. Why are you afraid of doing that which God sees as the highest honour to His name? Of all the acts you could do, none please God as much as the act of placing your soul upon Him and trusting your eternal welfare to His free promise.

Faith honours God uniquely because, through faith, God achieves His primary purpose: the magnification of His own name and the riches of His free grace. Above all, God's aim in creation is to magnify His grace. It is true that if God would create a world, He must display His almighty power in its creation; if He would govern the world, He must show His wisdom to prevent confusion; and to preserve His creatures, He must display His goodness. But God's ultimate purpose in creating the world was to have creatures who would magnify the riches of His free grace for all eternity. Everything God has ever done in this world serves, in some way, this ultimate goal.

What other grace so directly serves to magnify God's free grace as faith does? Faith lifts up the glory of God's grace in His Son. For this reason, it is the most precious grace, for it most glorifies God. If Christians truly understood this, they would fear unbelief as much as any other sin. Just as you tremble at the thought of sins like theft, blasphemy, murder, or adultery, so should you tremble at the

temptation to unbelief. If faith is the greatest grace that glorifies God, then unbelief is the greatest sin that dishonours Him in the world.

CHAPTER XII

XIV. Faith is a Precious Grace Because it Places the Believer in a State of Happiness That Can Never Be Lost.

XIV. I shall be brief: Faith is a precious grace because it places the believer in a state of happiness that cannot be lost. This indeed is precious. Even the graces that Adam possessed did not secure him in such a condition. Adam bore the image of God and was created in holiness and righteousness; yet all the holiness Adam had in his innocence did not secure him in an immutable or eternal state—he was still capable of losing it. However, faith secures the soul in a state of happiness that can never be lost. Thus, it is said, “*We are kept by the power of God*”—but it is *by faith* that this power of God keeps us, as in a fortress, unto salvation. Faith makes all other graces unlosable because it connects us to a principle, a source, of spiritual life.

This is the reason why a Christian’s state of happiness cannot be lost, unlike the state of Adam’s graces.

The reason is this:

Adam was given grace directly by God, and the principle of his life was placed within him. He had, so to speak, the spring of spiritual life in himself, like a watch with its own springs to keep it moving. But the Christian, while receiving grace as Adam did, holds the principle of life in another—in Jesus Christ, the head to whom the believer is united by faith. Faith is the grace by which the soul steps

outside itself to draw from this source of life, living not by its own internal principle but in the life of its head, Christ, within the same mystical body.

Faith not only draws life from Christ at the start but is the grace that continuously draws life from Jesus Christ, the head. Because of this, a Christian's state through faith is even more secure than Adam's state was in his innocence before he sinned. Faith is a precious grace that unites us not only to the fountain and root of life but also enables us to draw a continual supply of life. Therefore, a Christian cannot perish because he lives by a principle of life that exists outside of himself, in Christ, and has within him this grace that continually draws life from Christ.

CHAPTER XIII

XV. Faith is Precious Because It Is the Only Condition of the Second Covenant.

XV. The final aspect demonstrating the preciousness of faith is this: that it is the only condition of the Second Covenant. As Scripture says, *"For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life."* In the first covenant, the condition was, *"Do this and live."* But in the Second Covenant, the condition is *"Believe and live."* Faith is the only condition of the Second Covenant, giving the soul access to all the rich treasures contained within it. The entirety of a Christian's blessing stems from the Second Covenant; whatever riches a believer possesses flow from this source. The comfort of a saint lies in the covenant of grace that God has established with him.

Only faith serves as the condition of the Second Covenant made between God and the soul through Jesus Christ. God requires nothing else as the condition for this covenant. Even the works of preparation that come before are not conditions of the Second Covenant, nor are the works of sanctification. Works of preparation merely enable the soul to receive faith; for instance, we must know who Christ is, understand that He is the Saviour, know from what He saves us, and feel our need for Him. These are necessary steps leading up to faith but are not conditions in themselves.

Works of preparation are not the condition of the Second Covenant, nor are works of sanctification. Sanctification is the evidence of a justified person, but not the condition for justification or for the covenant that God has made with us in Christ. Rather, works of sanctification are the fruits of the covenant, not the condition of it. All works of sanctification flow from the covenant, and faith alone is the grace that serves as its condition. God chose faith as the condition of the Second Covenant to magnify the glory of His free grace, so that no one may boast and the covenant may remain free. If God had chosen other graces as conditions, the covenant would not be as free; for those graces reflect, in part, the image of God that Adam had before his fall. But faith, by its very nature, reaches beyond itself to another. This unique aspect of faith demonstrates the freeness of the covenant of grace more than any other grace could.

Faith is merely the hand that receives, not a condition in the sense that works were a condition for Adam. It is, in itself, one of the humblest of works, a grace that humbles man as nothing else can, leading him to rely wholly on another. Its excellence lies in its function as an instrument, by which the soul receives abundant blessings. Thus, it is a condition, not as a work in itself, but as an instrument appointed by God to draw blessings from Jesus Christ. For this reason, it is the most fitting condition for a covenant of free grace.

Moreover, God chose faith as the condition of the covenant because it provides certainty. This certainty would be lacking if other graces were the condition, as they could not give the heart assurance of the perfect righteousness needed to stand before an infinite, just, and holy God. If other graces, being weak and imperfect, were the condition, the soul would hesitate, questioning how such graces could be worthy of a holy God. But with faith, even if it is weak and imperfect, the soul need not hesitate, as faith is the hand that receives perfect righteousness. A weak hand can grasp a precious jewel as effectively as a strong hand; though it may lack strength in work, it can still hold fast to something precious. Therefore, the covenant is more secure because faith, even when weak, is designed to receive a perfect righteousness.

Understanding faith as the condition of the covenant guards the soul from many temptations. Those who misunderstand the covenant of grace often believe that God's mercy depends on their ability to overcome sin or fulfil certain duties. It is natural for people to think that God will only have mercy if they obey, overcome their sins, or meet certain standards. This misconception stems from the first covenant, where God dealt with Adam on terms suited to a rational creature, requiring obedience for life.

Now, people who seek peace with God but remain natural in their thinking often assume that God requires the same approach. They believe, "If I overcome my sins, then God will have mercy upon me." This is to view God as if He deals with us in a merely natural way. But when we understand the covenant of grace correctly, we see that God does not extend mercy on the basis of overcoming sin or performing duties (though these do accompany true faith). Rather, the condition is to go beyond oneself, to believe in a Mediator, and to draw righteousness from another.

This understanding protects the soul from many temptations that trouble other Christians. Thus, it is the excellency of faith that it is the only condition of the Second Covenant.

CHAPTER XIV

Use 1. Faith Is a Rare Thing.

Use 2. Comfort for Those on Whom God Has Bestowed Faith.

Use 3. Encouragement for Those Seeking Faith.

Use 4. Be So in Love with the Grace of Faith as to Be Restless Until You Know You Possess It.

Use 1. Now, to conclude with some further application, besides what has already been said: If this is the faith spoken of, then surely faith is very rare. This could even serve as another point to illustrate the preciousness of faith, as its rarity itself shows its worth. Precious stones, as you know, are considered valuable because they are rare. From what has been discussed, we may confidently conclude that faith is indeed precious. In 1 Samuel 3:1, at the beginning, it is said, *“The word of the Lord was precious in those days.”* Is it not precious in these days as well? Oh yes, it is a precious jewel. But in those days, the word was precious because it was so rare—there was very little of God’s word in those times. So we may well say that faith is a precious grace because it is so rare. And when the Son of Man comes, *“shall he find faith upon the earth?”* Little faith will be found when Jesus Christ returns. While we may all profess to believe in Jesus Christ, when Christ, the great Lapidary, comes to test our precious stones to see if they are true, many will prove to be false. All these points I have explained about the preciousness of faith will then serve as specific tests of our faith.

Use 2. Comfort. Secondly, this point is of great comfort to all believers upon whom the Lord has bestowed this precious faith. Perhaps the Lord has not given you gold or silver, nor adorned you with jewels around your neck as others have; but He has given you

this jewel of faith. Indeed, this is in place of all riches—true wealth is contained within this jewel of faith. Many a poor man or woman to whom God has given little of outward wealth is, by being given faith, made truly rich. As it says in James 2:5: *“Listen, my beloved brethren.”* This should comfort the hearts of the poor, a point of wonder and great consolation: *“Has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith?”* Suppose God had given you all the riches in the world and denied you this pearl—you would still be a miserable creature without it. But surely this makes you truly blessed. It is better than all, and through it, you may have the supply of all things.

Consider these points as a comfort. This precious jewel of faith is a treasure beyond all earthly wealth, as it gives you a right to all the riches of the world. It enables you to receive all that you need, and with it, you need not fear any evil. For within you is that which can help against any kind of trouble or danger you perceive. God has placed within your soul a help against any conceivable evil in this life, so your heart may be at rest.

God expects His saints, upon whom He bestows this precious jewel, to be content, even if they receive little else from Him. He expects them to see this as a worthy portion, a good inheritance, in having such a jewel as this.

Use 3. Encouragement. Furthermore, this can be a great encouragement to all those seeking the grace of faith when they hear what a precious jewel this grace truly is. Is there anyone whose heart the Lord has begun to stir, and who is now seeking to gain faith? They see the breach that sin has made between God and their souls and hear that God has made a gracious covenant of life and salvation for believers. They think to themselves, “Oh, if only I had faith! Oh, that I were sure of possessing faith!” Now, as you seek after it, you may feel that you would give a thousand worlds, if they were yours to offer, to be certain of this grace of faith.

It may be that you have been seeking it for a long time and still feel unable to believe. Do not be discouraged in your pursuit. Even if God makes you wait long in seeking, remember that faith is worth all the seeking. If you obtain it at last, you are blessed forever. Consider the labour that people invest in seeking pearls; they travel to the far ends of the earth and into places where they risk their lives in extreme heat, journeying across the world to enrich themselves with pearls and precious stones. Certainly, you who seek this pearl of faith are like the merchant in Matthew 13:45, who searched for fine pearls. At last, he found a pearl of great price and went to sell all he had to buy it. Indeed, Jesus Christ is the ultimate pearl, and faith is precious as well, for through faith, we gain our interest in Jesus Christ.

If you are willing to part with all else to gain this pearl of faith and, in turn, Jesus Christ, be at peace, even if you endure a long season under the spirit of bondage or suffer from a troubled conscience for many years. If God is at work in you, developing this grace within your soul, you need not murmur or complain, saying, “Oh, the trouble of my conscience! Oh, the long time I have waited in darkness, praying without an answer!” If God is working this grace within you, even at a high personal cost, it will be worth all. Faith will ultimately make amends for all that you endure.

So, whenever you read or hear anything about this precious grace of faith, if God is working upon your heart, be willing to persevere, even if it takes many years. When faith finally takes root, it will repay all the costs and bring spiritual riches to your soul for all eternity.

Use 4. Finally, upon hearing of the preciousness of this grace, let us all so fall in love with it that we remain restless until we know for certain whether we possess it. I will not provide specific signs or evidences here, as the explanation itself has included them. What are the signs of a precious stone but its very glory and lustre? In the same way, the glory and radiance of faith, as I have described, are signs and evidences enough. Let us be restless until we find these

qualities in ourselves, for without this grace of faith, all the truths of God vanish and come to nothing.

You may hear wonderful truths, but they will fade away like mere tales unless you possess faith. Without it, you will likely abandon your profession when afflictions, troubles, and difficulties arise. In these times, if you lack faith, you are unprepared for the challenges that God has placed before you. Therefore, let your spirit remain restless until you have this precious grace of faith.

CHAPTER XV.

Directions on How to Obtain Faith

First, God gives faith through hearing. Secondly, receive every truth as something that infinitely concerns your soul. Thirdly, consider how miserable you would be to lose Heaven for a mere lust. Fourthly, add prayer to your hearing. Fifthly, do not give yourself the liberty to indulge your senses too much. Sixthly, you must not only deny your senses but also your carnal reason. Seventhly, if you desire this precious faith, do not sin against the historical faith that God has given you.

You may ask, "How shall we be restless in our spirits until we have faith? How can we obtain it, since faith is the gift of God?"

First, although faith is indeed a gift, Scripture says that faith comes by hearing the Word of God. When God grants this precious faith, He usually gives it through hearing—that is the ordinary way. Do not expect that God will give you faith just because you seek it in your own way. Where does God promise that? But He does say that faith comes by hearing the Word of God.

Therefore, how precious should God's Word be to you! Be cautious not to neglect the Word, especially those teachings that reveal the doctrine of the Gospel and present Christ to you. Avoid neglecting any opportunity God provides to hear it. Perhaps you are reluctant to rise early, or you ignore an opportunity. How do you know that might not have been the moment God intended to give you this precious stone of faith? Many have come to hear the Word, even by accident, and found this grace of faith, realising afterward they would not trade it for ten thousand worlds. So, do not neglect these opportunities; wait at Wisdom's gates. If God does not work faith in one sermon, He may do so in another.

Let it be your purpose to attend upon the Word with the hope that God will work faith in you. Say, "Lord, you have promised that faith comes by hearing, and this grace is precious. Oh, that my soul might receive it as I listen to your Word!" Attend, not merely to hear what the speaker says, but with the aim that God will work faith in your soul. How just it would be if those who neglect the means of obtaining faith were to perish without it. If you stay at home in idleness, occupied with lowly concerns, while others attend to the Word, how righteous it would be if, when you lie upon your deathbed, crying to God for faith and forgiveness, He withholds it. Proverbs 1 speaks to this.

Secondly, when you come to hear the Word, listen to each truth as though it infinitely concerns your soul and eternal state. Come with this disposition, for it is often the reason people lack faith—they do not listen as if it pertains to them personally.

For instance, if someone tells a story that I think has little relevance to me, I am less inclined to pay attention or believe it. But if I hear something that deeply concerns me, I weigh and consider it carefully, making it easier to believe. In the same way, know that every truth you hear in the Word pertains to your life. Weigh and ponder these truths, for God works faith in us in a way that engages our rational capacities, even though the work itself is supernatural.

Thirdly, when you hear the Word, even if you lack the ability to embrace it as you should, hold this thought in your mind: consider, if these teachings prove true, what would it mean for me? I hear truths about the excellence of Jesus Christ, faith, eternal life, and the glory of Heaven. Although I may lack the faith to fully grasp these realities now, what if they are true? Would I not be a most miserable person to lose all the glory of Heaven, trading it for the temporary enjoyment of some base, sinful desire?

Fourthly, if you desire God to work faith in you (since it is indeed His gift), add prayer to your hearing. Before you hear, prepare yourself in prayer. As you hear any truth of excellence, lift up your heart to God in silent prayer, asking that He cause the truth to sink deeply into your heart. Afterward, pray over what you have heard once you are home. Then faith may come. Many hear truths hundreds of times without receiving faith, yet eventually, God, in His time, impresses it so powerfully upon their hearts that they cannot help but receive it.

Fifthly, do not indulge your senses too freely. In Jude, we read, “sensual, not having the Spirit.” Sensuality—gratifying the senses, whether in gluttony, impurity, or any other indulgence—hinders the work of God and impedes faith in the soul. Sense is a powerful enemy to faith. “We walk by faith, not by sight,” says the Apostle. Therefore, take care to avoid sensuality. Discipline your body and refrain from excessive pleasures; this prepares the way for faith to grow within you.

Sixthly, not only must you deny your senses, but you must also deny your own reasoning. Be careful not to place too much reliance on your own understanding. Do not reject God’s truth simply because you cannot fully comprehend it. Luther once said that corrupt human reason is a terrible enemy to faith, and no greater adversary exists. This is often why many learned people are left without faith. In Matthew 11, Jesus prays, “I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and

prudent and revealed them unto babes.” The wise of the world cling to their own reasoning, and so God has made the gospel truths above human reason. Thus, the simple can embrace them, but those who rely on intellect often stumble.

Many educated people mock the plain truths of the Gospel as those in Athens scorned Paul’s simple preaching of Christ. God has deliberately ordered it so that these truths might be a stumbling block to those who rely on reason, just as Christ crucified was to the Jews.

Seventhly, if you desire God to work this precious faith in you, do not sin against the historical faith He has already given. Many, though lacking justifying faith, still possess a kind of faith—they believe the Scriptures and hold that much of what the preacher says is true. Be careful not to sin against this historical faith if you would ever come to saving faith.

Many attend church, understanding that those who live in certain ways will not inherit eternal life, yet they leave and sin against their own convictions. God often leaves such people in unbelief, denying them saving faith that would unite them with Christ. Whenever God convinces your soul of any truth, leave resolved to follow it, saying, “Lord, you have convinced me of this truth, and I dare not sin against it.” A soul that refuses to act against God-given truth is near the Kingdom of Heaven.

Although you cannot produce saving faith on your own, do not wilfully sin against any light God has given you. Those who do so may find that God withholds this precious faith that could save their souls.

CHAPTER XVI.

Another Use: If Faith Be So Precious, What a Pity It Is That Those
Who Possess It Should Not Use It More Often

Only one more application remains regarding the preciousness of faith: if faith is indeed so precious, then how great a pity it is that those who have it do not make greater use of it. Many believers to whom God has granted precious faith make but little use of it. Solomon says, "It is a grief to see a man who has riches yet knows not how to use them." So too, it is sorrowful to see a believer have faith yet know so little of how to employ it. Therefore, you who are believers—seeing that God has bestowed this precious faith upon you—make use of it in every opportunity. God delights in seeing faith exercised; thus, make a habit of putting this grace of faith into practice.

I emphasise this point particularly because, often, Christians—when faced with trials, afflictions, or temptations—fail to exercise their faith as they should. In such moments, the primary response ought to be to put faith to work. However, observe carefully: when trials arise, what is the first thing most Christians do? Rather than engaging their faith, they turn to thoughts that only weaken it. For example, if a believer faces a great affliction that God lays upon them, what should they do? They should immediately employ their faith, allowing it to be the main effort of their soul in response to the trial.

But if we examine our responses closely, we often find that, rather than turning to faith, our minds are busy with thoughts that weaken it. Many begin by questioning their own standing, saying, "I fear I have been but a hypocrite all this time." At once, their sins appear before them, their consciences accuse them, and they fixate upon their own corruptions, seeing how vile they are. Now, it is true that examining our hearts and considering our hypocrisy is important for

humbling ourselves. Yet, the strength of our souls ought to be directed foremost towards faith.

This is a common but mistaken response among Christians, one which the Devil uses greatly to disturb the faithful. When God expects that we should exercise our faith, our first reaction often is to focus on things that merely weaken it. I urge you to guard against this, and since God has given you this faith, use it in every trial. This leads to a second point: you may say, “But I am poor and weak.” While it is true that those who are strong in faith may indeed call upon their faith during trials and temptations, remember that even the smallest exercise of genuine faith will sustain you.

CHAPTER XVII.

The Second Doctrine Explained: Showing How Your Faith is of Like Value to That of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob

First, it is wrought by the same Almighty Power.

Secondly, it justifies you equally and fully.

Thirdly, it as truly grants you an interest in God.

Fourthly, it as truly makes you a child of God.

Fifthly, it as truly grants you an interest in the Covenant.

Objection: If weak faith accomplishes all this, does it matter whether our faith is weak or strong?

Answer:

1. Weak faith does not bring as much glory to God as strong faith.
2. Strong faith brings much greater comfort than weak faith.

Doctrine 2. The Faith of the Weakest Believer is of Like Value to the Faith of the Strongest

"To you who have obtained like precious faith with us."

Therefore, this is the next point: what do you say that others may do? More importantly, what can you do? Your faith is of like precious faith with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, with any of the apostles or martyrs. I could cite various scriptures regarding this: *One faith, one Lord, one baptism*. And in 1 Peter 5:13, it is said of the church of Babylon that they *did obtain the like election with us*; in the city of Babylon (not spiritual Babylon), they shared in the same election as other believers. Just as the election is the same for all saints, so is their faith of the same nature: it is *like precious faith*, of equal worth and nature.

First, your faith is wrought by the same Almighty power as the faith of others. The faith of one person is formed by the same power as that of another. There was as much of God's almighty power at work in creating faith in your soul as in creating faith in the soul of Abraham, Peter, or Paul. Your faith cost, if I may put it this way, God as much as the faith of any of His servants who ever lived on the face of the earth. Your faith is *like precious*, and it is as true an indication of God's election as was the faith of Abraham or any of the apostles.

Secondly, your faith justifies you equally—indeed, justifies you as much as the faith of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. While there may be differences in sanctification—for weak faith does not sanctify as greatly as strong faith—it justifies as fully as strong faith. If God has made me equal with them in justification, ought I not strive to be as similar to them as possible in sanctification? Justification is the foundation upon which my eternal estate depends, the pardon of sin and the salvation of my soul. Therefore, it is indeed a *like precious faith* with theirs.

Thirdly, your faith as truly grants you an interest in God and unites you to Jesus Christ as does the strongest faith in the world. It as

genuinely makes you one with Jesus Christ, grants God to be your portion, and secures the Word as your inheritance, just as the strongest faith does.

Fourthly, your faith as truly grants you privileges such as being a child of God and an heir of life. You are as truly an heir to life and salvation as Abraham ever was, and your faith sanctifies you as genuinely as does the faith of the strongest believer, though perhaps not to the same degree.

Fifthly, your faith as truly grants you an interest in the Covenant as does the faith of the strongest. You are as fully brought into the Covenant as David, or Daniel, or any of those great men of God were. And your faith, like theirs, is of an enduring nature—one that shall never fail. By this, I mean that it brings you into a state where you shall never fall away from Jesus Christ.

Oh, you might think that those with strong faith, whatever temptations come their way, may remain steadfast in Christ and never fall. But be comforted! Every believer, even one with the smallest measure of true faith, is as secure in Christ as Abraham or any of the Apostles were. It is as impossible for the Devil to tear you from Christ as it would be for him to tear away Abraham, Paul, or any of the Apostles. And you are as assured of reaching Heaven as any of them.

Objection: But you might say, “Won't this make people become slothful and sluggish if even the smallest degree of faith achieves as much as the strongest? What does it matter, then, whether our faith is weak or strong, if weak faith will still bring us to Heaven?”

Answer: Oh! Such reasoning is unworthy of a believer. Do you think you have faith only for your own ends—to have your sins forgiven and to enter Heaven? Is that all the value you see in your faith? You have heard that faith is precious because it enables you to bring glory to God. In that respect, you may indeed be on equal footing with

other believers, but you cannot bring as much glory to God as one who has strong faith.

Secondly, a strong faith brings far more comfort than a weak one. Though weak faith may bring you to Heaven, it will be with much difficulty. Think of a ship: would anyone reason that because they've seen a poor, battered ship with tattered sails and broken masts barely make it through a storm and reach harbour, it doesn't matter if their own ship's sails and masts are in disrepair? No one would say, "It doesn't matter about my sails or masts; I might still make it to the harbour." Of course not. There's a great difference between a ship that struggles to reach its destination and another that sails with all its sails raised, in full control, arriving safely and easily.

This is much like Christians on their way to Heaven. Some saints possess only a little faith, and trials come to tear and batter them. They fear that each wave and storm will swallow them up, and they rise and fall with every difficulty. Yet, in the end, God's Almighty power brings them to Heaven. But other Christians sail toward Heaven with full sails, with the wind and tide in their favour, overcoming all obstacles in their path. Isn't it a far more glorious sight to see a Christian heading towards Heaven in this way, steady amidst difficulties and temptations, yet carrying on undeterred?

Some Christians, filled with doubt and fear, may indeed have enough faith to reach Heaven. But this state of constant worry dishonours God and detracts from the glory of their profession. Others, however, live above their anxieties and the distractions of the world, and thus glorify God and their faith. Those with weak faith are prone to stumble over every little thing, just as a weak man stumbles easily. But a strong man can walk firmly without stumbling, and so too, strong faith endures without faltering. Therefore, let none of you fall into such reasoning as this.

CHAPTER XVIII

Use 1: Comfort to the weak.

Use 2: By this we may see that the faith of most people is not genuine.

Use 3: Examine whether your faith surpasses that of the devils.

Use 4: Stir up every believer to pursue the greatest works done by any believer, as you have the same precious faith.

Use 5: Encourage Christians who believe they are advanced in grace to hold their weaker brethren in honour.

I shall conclude with a few words of application.

Use 1: This may be a great comfort to believers. Perhaps you do not possess the same precious gifts that others have. You might say, “Such a saint has an excellent memory; oh, that I had the same!” Well, though you may not have the same gift of memory, yet you have the same precious faith as that saint. Likewise, though you may lack the natural understanding that others have, you still possess the same precious faith. Set this in contrast to the differences God has made between you and others in other respects.

God has indeed created a vast difference between you and others in areas such as talents or worldly estate. Consider the great distinction between you and others in these things. Yet, while God has made such distinctions in matters that are not as necessary or excellent, in that which is the very highest excellence, there is no difference at all: you share the same precious faith. This faith will accomplish the same purposes in you as it does in others, regardless of other differences. Take comfort in this when you consider the distinctions God has made between you and others.

When we see the differences in gifts, abilities, and status, it often deeply affects us. Remember, though, that while outward things may seem to create great differences among people, the greatest distinction lies in faith. Faith, or the lack of it, is the defining mark between people. It is a distinguishing grace. Therefore, if God has given you any measure of faith, know that there is no one in the world so far from you. Indeed, there is not a great difference between you and a saint in Heaven, so let this be a source of comfort.

Use 2: In the second place, this teaches us that the faith most people claim to have is surely not true faith, because it does not resemble the precious faith of the saints. You say you have faith, but is it the same kind of faith that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had? Is it the same as Paul's or the faith of the great saints? If your faith is the kind that will carry you to Heaven, it will be the same faith. Now, if we examine it, does your faith go further than Herod's? What was Herod's faith? Herod heard John gladly. Does your faith go beyond his? You might come to hear the Word, believe parts of it, and even listen gladly. But Herod's faith coexisted with a cherished sin.

If any man comes to the Word, hears it, believes much of it, rejoices in it, and would not miss a sermon for anything, and if he also reforms his outward behaviour, he may think he has faith. Maybe he lived very wickedly before, perhaps as a drunkard, and never prayed with his family. But now, under the Word, he leaves his old company and begins to perform family duties. Blessed be God for the reformation we see in many of you. But take note: if you live in even one cherished sin, if there is any known sin you refuse to part with, then know this—your faith is no different from Herod's. It is not like the faith of Peter, Paul, or Abraham. The weakest degree of true faith is still of the same kind as theirs.

Use 3: Again, you say you have faith, but what kind of faith is it? Perhaps it is no stronger than the faith of the devils. You know that Scripture says, "The devils believe and tremble." You hope you have faith in Jesus Christ to be saved. But what does it do? You may say,

“Thank God, when I hear the Word, it pricks my conscience, and my heart trembles.” This is good. But is that all? This is only the same faith as the devils, for they also believe and tremble. Perhaps you haven’t even reached that level.

Is your faith like the faith of Abraham, Paul, and Peter? When you hear the Word and its fearful truths, which should shake your heart and conscience, do you go away laughing or scorning? If so, your faith is not even as great as the devils’. Read through Hebrews 11, and see what faith accomplished there, then ask if your faith is of a similar precious nature. Perhaps you think you believe in Jesus Christ, but if you find yourself among ungodly company who mock religion, or if you stand to suffer for your beliefs, how strong is your faith then? Consider those saints who suffered torments and mockings and wandered in search of refuge, even though they had not yet received the promises. If you have a faith like theirs, then in some measure, you may be enabled to endure as they did.

Use 4. The next application is this: if the faith of the weakest believer is the same as that of the strongest, then we should each strive to attain the same heights of faithfulness seen in other believers in Scripture. You may say, “Not everyone can achieve the same,” but what holds you back? Their faith was once as weak as yours. How did they rise so high and endure such great sufferings? It was the truth of their faith that carried them through, enabling them to do more than human strength alone could achieve. By making use of the same means, they grew to those degrees of faithfulness. Since your faith is of the same kind, why should you not aspire to the same strength?

Their hearts, at first, were as flawed as yours. If they became better, it was by faith that they were transformed. They had no better means than you have now—indeed, you who live in the “noonday” of the Gospel Light have far greater means than those believers described in Hebrews 11, a chapter that reads like a little book of martyrs.

Are you troubled, fearful of having committed yourself too deeply to the cause of God, worrying that your possessions may be taken from you? Look to the faith of those saints: their faith enabled them to wander in sheepskins and goatskins, in rough garments of leather, being destitute, afflicted, and tormented—yet they remained excellent in spirit. Their faith made them so precious that the world was not worthy of them. They not only lived by faith but also died in faith, obtaining a good report.

Now, let me ask your conscience: can you think that any of those believers mentioned by the Apostle had the same means of revelation of Jesus Christ as you do? They had not a single text of the New Testament, for they lived during the time of the Maccabees, a dark period when they had neither prophets nor apostles to guide them. They had none of the New Testament to serve as their guide. So, what a shame it would be for any believer, even the weakest, not to think that their faith should enable them to do as much as those saints did.

Let this consideration prepare you for any suffering to which God may call you. You have the same faith and an even clearer revelation of grace. Therefore, when you think of their sufferings, ask yourself: “Why should I not be able to endure as much, through Jesus Christ who strengthens me?”

Do not be discouraged, for you do not yet know what your faith is capable of. It was nothing but faith that enabled those saints to persevere through the worst of times and the greatest of sufferings. You may think, “But their hearts were not as flawed as mine.” If their hearts were better, it was only through faith that they became so. They did not have the precious means you have now, and therefore, God expects that your equally precious faith should be able to accomplish and endure much, should you be called to it.

Use 5. Another use is this: let all Christians who consider themselves more advanced in grace learn to have an honourable

regard for their brethren who may have lesser degrees of grace. Do not look down on them or hold yourself aloof, but instead, show respect and love toward all Christians on the basis that they share the same precious faith. Perhaps you came to faith earlier than they did, but they now possess the same faith as you. You may have more gifts, but they have the same precious faith.

In these times of spiritual enlightenment, it's common to see those who think they have gained more knowledge than others—often in some new speculative point that others have not considered before (though, when examined, it is often an old error)—tend to look down on other godly people as simple or unworthy of their company. Be careful with such thoughts. It may be that you have more ideas, but a humble soul may possess not only the same precious faith (if you have any at all) but even more. Surely, there are many humble, broken-hearted souls whose faith honours God far more than that of a hundred so-called “talking Christians” whose religion is mostly talk.

Therefore, do not lift yourself up because of your gifts or knowledge, but regard others as having the same precious faith as you. In James 2, it says, *"My brethren, do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with partiality."* Some interpreters even refer “glory” to faith itself, suggesting, “My brethren, have not the faith of our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with respect of persons.” Since faith is glorious and precious, we should not hold it with partiality.

Even the Apostle Paul, strong in faith as he was, cried out to the Romans for support, recognising that even the smallest encouragement can kindle even the greatest fire. So, Christians who may possess great strength and gifts are often revived and encouraged by weaker Christians. Therefore, the strongest saints should not disdain to spend time with the weakest, as they are equally graced and imbued with the same Spirit. This unity is the basis for the Apostle's appeal in Ephesians 4, where he calls for the preservation of unity in the Spirit in the bond of peace, grounded in

the truth that there is *one Father, one faith, one baptism*. Though we may differ in opinion, we share a unity of faith.

It is said of the reformer Martin Bucer that if he could see even a hint of Christ in someone, that alone would draw his love to them. It is a sad and telling sign of God's displeasure with us when Christians, over small differences in opinion, are so estranged from each other that they make no use of one another's graces. We should learn to appreciate each other's gifts and live in communion, even if we do not hold identical opinions. True peace is not achieved by forced uniformity in worship, but by unity in diversity. When we walk in love and peace with one another, we are much more likely to grow in understanding together than if we remain distant.

Some people think that Christians travel different paths to reach the same heavenly destination, but this is not true. There is only one faith, and therefore, we should regard the actions and devotion of God's people throughout all ages as the same today. Often, a Christian who travels some distance and meets a fellow believer, a person they have never met before, will find that their hearts are bound together within minutes, recognising the same Spirit within them both.

It's like the sympathy in musical instruments: if two strings of a lute are tuned to the same pitch, striking one string will cause the other to vibrate as well. In the same way, the hearts of God's people, sharing the same precious grace, naturally resonate with each other. Similarly, just as the spirit of wickedness acts consistently across ages, the spirit of faith should likewise draw the saints together to love and support one another.

Consider these things, and may the Lord grant you understanding in all matters.

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