

How Faith Receives Christ.

by Andrew Bonar

Faith is occupied altogether with the Lord Jesus, casting behind it self with all its feelings, musing upon, and asking questions about nothing except the Person and the work of Christ.

Scripture: Psalm 33:9, Mark 4:40, Luke 24:32, John 1:29, Romans 3:25, Ephesians 2:8-9, Hebrews 12:2, 1 Peter 1:21, 2 Peter 1:1, 2 Peter 1:5-7

Topics: "Faith", "Receiving Christ"

Description

Andrew Bonar emphasizes the simplicity and power of faith in receiving Christ, illustrating this through the testimony of the Apostle John. He recounts how John, along with Peter and Andrew, was drawn to Jesus after hearing John the Baptist proclaim Him as the 'Lamb of God.' Bonar highlights that true faith is not about defining it but experiencing it, as the disciples found rest and joy in Christ. He encourages believers to focus on the greatness of Christ, which fuels their faith and leads to a deeper relationship with Him. Ultimately, Bonar reminds us that faith is the root of all grace and connects us to the Father through the Son.

Transcript

It is often best for us not to attempt to define Faith and its actings, but to show how the soul that has been awakened and is seeking a resting-place, may be gently led by the Spirit to meet Christ, in whom it finds all it desires, without an effort. Let us try this plan of illustrating the actings of Faith.

We go back to the early days of the Church, and we seek out Ephesus, where the Apostle John is understood to have passed his latest years. We find out his dwelling; and the aged disciple readily converses with us on our common faith. And oftentimes (as old men are wont) he goes back to the days of his youth. He is now in his ninetieth year; but how fresh and vivid are the early scenes of his life that rise up before him! We ask him to tell us how he was led to "receive and rest" in Christ, and here is his narrative: "I was the youngest of the twelve, you know, only in my twenty-fourth year, when first I saw Him.

I had been for some time uneasy, for I knew I was a sinner, and an unpardoned sinner. My two friends, Andrew and Peter, were very much in the same state of mind as myself; and when the rumours about the preaching of the Baptist, and how he was continually pointing forward to a Saviour about to be revealed, reached us, we talked together earnestly on the matter, and at length resolved to go to the banks of Jordan and hear him for ourselves. So, leaving our boats and nets in the care of my father, Zebedee, and my brother James, and promising to bring back a faithful report, we found our way to the spot where the

great preacher was standing amid a vast crowd of solemnized hearers from all parts of the land.

He was (you know) the last of the good old Nazirites, and the blessing that belonged to the true Nazirite's bodily frame rested on him. He was 'purer than snow, whiter than milk, more ruddy in body than rubies, and his 'veining was like the sapphire.' A youth of thirty, thus wonderfully attractive, his voice rang out in clear tones his message, as he declared himself no more than the herald of the Coming Messiah, a voice crying, 'Prepare the way of the Lord.' But, Oh, how he delighted to witness to that Saviour as the 'Light for a dark world!

'the only begotten of the Father,' who was to declare Him, coming forth from the Father's bosom." "Mightier than I!" he would say. 'He has the fan in His hand wherewith to winnow the barn-floor, and sweep away the chaff into the fire, which once kindled, shall not be quenched for ever. He has the axe, and He shall cut down every fruitless tree, and make it fuel for that fire. But far more. I baptize with water only, a mere symbol of cleansing from guilt, but He shall truly cleanse, and shall baptize with the Holy Ghost, as if the Holy Ghost were at His disposal, even as are the Jordan's waters at mine when I pour them on the sinner that confesses his iniquities.

Oh, I am not worthy to unloose the latchet of his shoes! " "Now, Peter, Andrew, and myself, were among those who went forward to be baptized by him, and as he baptized us he was careful to remind us, 'My baptism does not wash away your sins, but it sends you to the Mightier than I who is at hand! Often after this, did we three commune together about that Mighty One. Sometimes, by ourselves on the bank of the river, shaded by its jungle trees, we read the Fifty-first Psalm, and longed for the true hyssop that was to purge us, and make us whiter than snow.

One day, after the visits of the priests and Levites from Jerusalem, we saw One going forward towards John with indescribable meekness and lowliness, and calm dignity. The great preacher stood silent for a moment, and then, lifting up his voice, exclaimed, with rapturous delight: 'BEHOLD THE LAMB OF GOD, WHICH TAKETH AWAY THE SIN OF THE WORLD.' Every one was awed; Andrew, and Peter, and I, were filled with strange expectation. Is this He who was set forth by every lamb offered in sacrifice to God for hundreds and hundreds of years?

Is this the great Paschal Lamb? Is this He of whom Isaiah spoke, 'The lamb led to the slaughter? Is this in very deed the real atoning sacrifice, God's Lamb? "How we talked over that afternoon's announcement! And when next day, Andrew and I were just in the act of putting some questions to John, Jesus came close by, and John at once fixed our whole thoughts on Him, saying, 'BEHOLD THE LAMB OF GOD!' I found myself, at that moment, thinking of nothing but this 'Lamb of God.' I found myself without an effort laying my guilt on Him.

Yes, I laid on Him my soul, my guilty soul; just as I had often seen the offerer at Jerusalem lay his hand on the sacrifice. This Lamb of God filled my whole being! What more could I desire for my complete deliverance from guilt than this mighty Saviour thus placing Himself before me for my acceptance. "Andrew was drawn to Him just as I was, and when He had gone from us a little way, the desire of both of us was to follow Him to where He lodged. We did so, and He welcomed us most graciously.

What an evening we spent under His roof! We had no thought but of Him; and I, at any rate, had not leisure to think even of my own unworthiness, for He bade me lean on His breast, and all my moments were passed in wonder and adoration. "Ever since that blessed time I have gone on my way, living the life of faith on the Son of God. It is almost seventy years since then (for I am now in my ninetieth year); but

whether in Galilee, or in Jerusalem, whether in exile, or in quiet at Ephesus, 'the Lamb of God' has been everything to me.

Too often have I forsaken Him for a time, or faintly followed Him; but it is ever to Him, and Him alone, I return again for rest and joy. I have never needed anything new, anything more satisfying to my conscience and heart than 'the Lamb of God,' and I expect to 'hold the beginning of my confidence to the end.' I like to tell you these things, that you may have the same joy and the same fellowship. "A few years ago, when I was an exile in Patmos, I had a season of most wonderful visions.

The door of Heaven was opened to me, and nothing so rejoiced me as to see on the throne 'the Lamb!' and to hear the ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands all singing with loud voice, 'Worthy is the Lamb that was slain!' Again and again I saw Him, and I knew He was the same as I had first seen on the banks of Jordan, exalted now in view of all the universe, as the great Atoning Sacrifice accepted of the Father. And when I followed the angel that showed me these things, along the golden streets of the New Jerusalem, I saw that it was He, 'the Lamb of God,' who, by His presence, made it one great temple, and was Himself the Light that made that city and temple the most glorious region of the heaven of heavens.

It was ever on Him, as 'the Lamb that taketh away the sin of the world,' that my eye rested. I shall need Him to the end: for I should not forget to tell you that I found indwelling sin still in my heart. Even after all I had been privileged to behold, the root of folly and sin still lived in me. For, looking on the angel who had most kindly led me through these scenes, I took my eye off my Lord and Saviour and fell down to worship the bright ministering spirit. Nay, more, though gently rebuked and warned, my weak heart a second time turned aside to repeat the same folly. So I need to the very last, to lay my soul with all its sins on 'the Lamb from day to day, and in seeing Him I am filled with all joy and peace."

Christian friends, this is an example of simple faith, faith occupied altogether with the Lord Jesus, casting behind it self with all its feelings, musing upon, and asking questions about nothing except the Person and the work of Christ. A full sight of the Lamb fills the sails of faith. In truth it is even as in Luke 24. 32, our hearts burn within us, while He talks with us by the way, and opens to us the Scriptures. And if, Christian friends, you should now inquire, "What is great faith, and what is little faith?" the answer is at hand. The sinner who sees little in Christ is the man to whom we must say "O, thou of little faith" ; whereas the sinner who, in full consciousness of utter worthlessness, sees something at least of the greatness and the grace and the glory of the Saviour's Person and work, and can scarcely turn away from the sight, this is the man who has great faith. For this man sees great, very great, reasons for cherishing the largest expectations. The Centurion, at whose faith Jesus marvelled, was simply a man who had got deep insight into Christ as One so mighty to deliver, that a single word from Him was enough. "He spake, and it was done" (Psalm 33. 9). O that all of us may so discover the Saviour's unsearchable love, and the infinite power of His atoning blood! This faith unites us to Him whom we believe. An old hymn sings of it in these lines, describing its uniting effect as a "believing INTO Christ":

"And he that into Christ believes,

What a rich faith hath he!

In Christ he moves, and acts, and lives,

From self and bondage free.

He hath the Father and the Son,

For Christ and he are now but one."

But how, then, is faith spoken of in 1 Peter 1. 21, as our having "faith in God"? Because faith in Christ admits us at once into the Father's presence; nay, more, the believing man finds himself in the bosom of God, in union with Christ. But why does Romans 3. 25, speak of it as 'faith in His blood'? The answer is, "A part is taken for the whole; it is faith in Him who shed that blood." And so also it is "faith in the righteousness of Him who is our God and Saviour, Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 1. 1).

And why does the Master contrast "fear" with this "faith"? (Mark 4. 40). Because in the hour of fear we are looking on the stormy waves and listening to the wild winds; but when we look on the Saviour and listen to His voice, the faith banishes the fear.

But who can sufficiently commend this grace of faith? We must not make the attempt. Only let us remind you that (2 Peter 1. 5, 6, 7) faith is the root of every other grace; and it is by faith that the mighty power of God works in keeping you unto the salvation that is "ready to be revealed in the last time" (1 Peter 1. 5).

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