

Things That Accompany Salvation

by Charles Ewing Brown

Charles Ewing Brown preaches about Antecedent Grace, highlighting how the atonement suspended the immediate penalty of Adam's sin and launched mankind on a new probation, emphasizing the universal grace of God given through the atonement. He also delves into Faith for Salvation, explaining that repentance and faith are intertwined, with faith being trust in Jesus Christ as a person, not just accepting historical facts. Brown emphasizes that faith is a gift granted by the Spirit of God, leading to salvation through a contrite heart and submission to Christ as a person.

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Transcript

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 hasTranscript: true oneLinerSummary: "Faith in salvation is trust in a person, namely, our Lord Jesus Christ, and confidence in his character and promises." sermonType: "teaching" topics: - name: "Divine Grace" slug: "divine-grace" - name: "Saving Faith" slug: "saving-faith" bibleRefs: - text: "Romans 10:9" bookId: "ROM" chapter: "10" verse: "9" outline: - heading: "Antecedent Grace" - heading: "Faith in Salvation" - heading: "The Nature of Faith" - heading: "The Importance of Repentance" - heading: "The Relationship between Faith and Love" - heading: "Faith is a Phase of Love" - heading: "Love and Trust are Essential for Faith" - heading: "Faith as Reliance on God's Promises" faq: - q: "What is prevenient grace?" a: "Prevenient grace is the universal grace of God given to all mankind through the atonement, which seeks every man out, woos him to righteousness, and makes his moral failure -- if he fails -- a result of his rejecting the offer of the grace of God." - q: "What is the nature of faith in salvation?" a: "Faith in salvation is trust in a person, namely, our Lord Jesus Christ, and confidence in his character and promises." - q: "Is faith a meritorious work?" a: "No, faith is not a meritorious work, but rather a gift from God that allows us to receive salvation." - q: "What is the relationship between faith and love?" a: "Faith is a phase of love, and love and trust are essential for faith." - q: "Is repentance essential for salvation?" a: "Yes, repentance is

essential for salvation, and it is a lifelong attitude of a Christian believer." quotes: - "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." - "Faith is a phase of love." - "The faith that saves is trust in a person, namely, our Lord Jesus Christ." applicationPoints: - "Faith in salvation is a gift from God that allows us to receive salvation." - "Repentance is essential for salvation, and it is a lifelong attitude of a Christian believer." - "Love and trust are essential for faith, and faith is a phase of love." keywords: - "Prevenient Grace" - "Faith in Salvation" - "Trust in Jesus Christ" - "Confidence in God's Character" - "Reliance on God's Promises" - "Repentance" - "Lifelong Attitude" - "Love and Trust" ---

ANTECEDENT GRACE

If the sentence against Adam had been carried out promptly with sharp rigor, then his wife and he would have died almost instantaneously. This is the logical implication of the sentence: "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." Moreover, it is wholly in accordance with our moral judgment to insist that if there were nothing else than penalty in the mind of God, then it were contrary to God's mercy to permit a race of doomed and lost men to perpetuate themselves under an everlasting curse of sin. It is at this place that the atonement comes in. To the serpent in the presence of Adam the promise is made that the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head (Gen. 3:15). Thus it was that the atonement was interposed to suspend the immediate penalty of Adam's sin and to launch the race of mankind upon a new probation.

Man entered the first probation unfettered by any nature of sin, but was pure and holy so far as his nature was concerned. He was created in God's image. It would seem that the new probation, therefore, placed man at a disadvantage due to the fact that all men are now born with a nature of sin. However, it is the universal teaching of nearly all the great Christian communions that this disadvantage of being born with the nature of sin is offset in man's favor by the universal grace of God given to all mankind through the atonement, which seeks every man out, woos him to righteousness, and makes his moral failure -- if he fails -- a result of his rejecting the offer of the grace of God.

This grace which is offered to all men at the very beginning of their conscious moral life is commonly called prevenient grace by technical theologians. A very good definition of this universal grace is given by the fathers of the Council of Trent, the great Roman Catholic Council of the sixteenth century which fixed the doctrines of that church for all time since. The doctrine is stated in the following decree: "The Synod furthermore declares, that, in adults, the beginning of the said Justification is to be derived from the prevenient grace of God, through Jesus Christ, that is to say, from his vocation, whereby, without any merits existing on their parts, they are called; that so they, who by sins were alienated from God, may be disposed through his quickening and assisting grace, to convert themselves to their own justification, by freely assenting to and co-operating with that said grace: in such sort that, while God touches the heart of man by the illumination of the Holy Ghost, neither is man himself utterly inactive while he receives that inspiration, forasmuch as he is also able to reject it; yet is he not able, by his own free will, without the grace of God, to move himself unto justice in his sight. [39]

Protestant creeds generally agree with this statement of the doctrine with the exception that the old Calvinistic creed restricted the antecedent grace of God to "the elect," at least insofar as its effectual working was concerned. The language of the Council of Trent differs somewhat from the ordinary phraseology of Protestant Christians, but unless we are merely seeking to debate about words I think practically all Christians can agree on the general idea there expressed. Men are saved because the antecedent grace of God seeks them out and presents salvation to them. They have the power to reject or

accept it.

FAITH FOR SALVATION

It is impossible to make a sharp distinction between repentance and faith on the part of an unsaved person, for the kind of faith that saves is only another aspect of repentance. Repentance and faith are simply two sides of one attitude of the heart. The nature of God being what it is, supremely holy and utterly abhorring sin, it is impossible for a sinner intellectually and sincerely to believe that God smiles on him while he is continuing in any known sin. Moreover, it should be emphasized that this penitent attitude toward sin, hating it, fleeing from it, rejecting it, is in a sense what many Christians fail to realize, a lifelong attitude of a Christian believer. He is saved from his sorrow and grief in a sense of alienation from God, but he is not saved from a continuous abhorrence of and opposition to sin. There is no true faith in the scriptural sense without an accompanying abhorrence of sin. In the convicted sinner this abhorrence of sin is given almost wholly to a backward look and a negative attitude toward the evil of the past life. After a person is converted, the shame and grief of his sin is healed in the joy of the grace of God and his faith takes a forward look toward the positive and creative possibilities of a life of fellowship with God. This fact has concealed from many Christians the knowledge that they are yet of necessity in an attitude of repentance throughout their whole life insofar as their rejection of sin is concerned, and that is the primary quality of repentance.

But faith in the seeker is not wholly concerned with repentance. Rapidly, in conformity with its strength, it turns its eyes, trustfully expecting the grace of pardon and the joy of salvation. It is the clear teaching of the New Testament emphasized by most Protestant creeds that salvation is obtained only by faith, and that is certainly the truth if we remember that repentance is an essential part of faith. But what is the faith that saves, and how does it save?

Too much of our teaching on faith is concerned with minor and marginal aspects of the doctrine. Literally millions of hours of speaking have been done and millions of pages of written exposition have been put forth stressing faith as believing certain doctrines or certain facts. This is undoubtedly one aspect of faith, but it has been caricatured by unbelievers to create the impression that the church is constantly asking people to believe certain statements and theories regardless of whether they are true or not. "Open your mouth and shut your eyes and I'll give you something to make you wise" is the way this truth is perverted.

No one believes more strongly than we that there are certain historic facts about Christ and certain doctrinal interpretations of these facts which it is essential to understand and believe. Nevertheless, the essential faith which saves is something even more radical than this. The faith that saves is trust in a person, namely, our Lord Jesus Christ.

We honor all the labor of scholars who assemble cogent proofs of the truths of the Bible from the fields of archaeology, philosophy, and science, but we must insist that the faith that saves is a gift granted by the Spirit of God. The antecedent or prevenient grace of which we have written carries with it the preliminary gift of repentance. We believe the message of the gospel, the truth of the Bible, because we believe God, even though we are immeasurably assisted in developing our faith in God through the revelation of the truths of his written Word. These two aspects of faith are not exclusive, but they work together. It is likely that some minds approach through one avenue of faith and others through another. But for me, at least, there is nothing which illuminates the problems of religion like contemplation of the relation of man to God as that of person to Person.

Faith is a phase of love. It is true one can have faith in a fact or in several facts without feeling any love for them, but faith in a person implies a certain amount of love. In thinking of this one asks, Is it not true that sometimes parents love grown children who are so wicked and depraved that these parents do not trust them completely? Do not Christians love all men and yet find themselves unable to trust people whom they know to be deceitful and given to fraud? These things are true, but it cannot be denied that such lack of faith in any given person constitutes a hindrance to love. And perfect love would be a love absolutely without doubt. If a father has a son so wicked and depraved that he cannot trust him, and if later an improvement in the character of the son takes place so that the father can, with good reasons, trust him more fully, no one can deny that this development would mean an increase of love on the part of the father. Suspicion and unbelief are barriers to love.

Faith is an expectation of benevolent behavior from another person. When two strangers meet, if one suspects that the other will try to cut his throat this mistrust will create ill will and resentment. A baby learns to love its mother, not because they are related by blood, as many imagine, but solely because the mother gives the baby pleasure by her kindly ministrations. Gradually the child comes to recognize that the source of this pleasure is the mother, and therefore it comes to love the mother. In exactly the same proportions it comes to have confidence in her, to expect good from her, and consolation in grief and sorrow, relief from pain, entertainment to avoid boredom, food for its hunger, and a display of affection which the faith and love of the child has learned to enjoy. Transfer these things to the spiritual realm and we see the meaning of the text, "He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Heb. 11:6).

Faith in a person is confidence in his character. A child was deserted by its mother after it was old enough to understand and remember. This child was adopted by an earnest, worthy Christian woman who loved it and cherished it tenderly, but the grave wrong which had been done it by its own mother wounded its mind very deeply. When the child would be playing in the yard it would suddenly stop, run in and look up piteously into the face of its foster mother, and say, "Mother, you are not going to run off and leave me as my other mother did, are you?"

The faith of a Christian is founded on a trustworthy character. It is the Character known and trusted by Paul, and of whom he said: "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day" (II Tim. 1:12). It is this which gives Christians a firm faith in the Bible and in the promises of God. It also gives them faith in the principles or doctrines of the Christian religion because the truth of these things depends upon the character of a faithful God.

Faith in a person makes one rely upon his promises. At any time there are always multitudes of men and women who can only find peace and fortitude to endure the pain of separation from those they love by relying upon the promises of faithfulness and devotion these loved ones have made at the time of parting. Homesick men and lonely women do not have to read books on psychology to understand the meaning of faith. They know that when they trust the absent one fully they find peace. If for any reason enough doubts come to tantalize them too much, something breaks and love is gone. Why is it so hard for people to understand that this is a parable of the love that constrains us as strangers and pilgrims in this troubled world? (I Pet 2:11). So long as their faith holds good, love continues to remain in their hearts.

These thoughts will enable us to understand that faith in God is not simply a strained effort to believe something without regard to its truth or to accept doctrine contrary to reason. It is firm confidence in, reliance upon, and trust in, God. This is the faith that saves.

"If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Rom. 10:9-10). Here it is taught that no mere assent to the historic creeds will suffice. This is a heart-felt experience, or it is nothing. Nevertheless, the man who believeth in his heart shall be saved. "Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses" (Acts 13:38-39). Thus we see that justification is the result of believing in him who forgives sins. "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law" (Rom. 3:20-28).

It would clarify our exposition if space permitted the discussion of the theory of salvation by meritorious works. Some have even asserted that faith is a meritorious work by means of which salvation is obtained. It is easy to see, however, that faith is not a meritorious work of any kind. It corresponds to the behavior of a wounded soldier on the battlefield who is sought out, found, treated, and carried away by the stretcher bearers. The man has done simply nothing to merit or earn their care, judged merely by the single event itself. He receives rescue, redemption, deliverance, escape, and successful treatment of his wounds all as a gift without paying a cent or doing anything to obtain them. He merely accepts the offer. That is a parable of the plan of salvation, for "to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness" (Rom. 4:5). "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (5:1). "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law" (Gal. 2:16). "Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham" (3:6-7).

If this faith seems too easy, it must be remembered that it follows a contrite and heartbroken repentance and confession of sin. To the man or woman who thus repents of sin and forsakes it from the heart, faith is not a hard task.

Still, we must insist that faith is not the mere acceptance of some historical fact, even though it be a fact as sublime as the life and death of Jesus. The faith which justifies is a faith which submits itself fully to Jesus Christ as a person, and looking longingly into his face, and praying earnestly, believes that God for Christ's sake forgives the seeker now of all his past sins.

Many years ago a brilliant and consecrated young Indian man, A. D. Khan, came to America from India, and during his stay here a certain young American man became so inspired and fascinated by Brother Khan's personality and message that he felt a burning desire to accompany this wonderful saint and scholar to India to do missionary work there. This young man did not even dare to ask for such an honor. Another young man was chosen, however, to accompany Brother Khan, and from the moment of his election he seemed to belong to India.

This reminds us of the person who chooses Christ and is accepted of him. Though that person is still on this earth in the flesh, he already belongs to heaven. Such a person need have no fear of death for he goes abroad to that strange land accompanied by his dearest and best Friend. Christ is the bridge from earth to heaven, and the man who is in Christ has now passed beyond the terrors and the fear of death in proportion as his faith claims victory.

39 Council of Trent, Sixth Session, Decree on Justification, chap. 5

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