

Of Faith in God.

by John Gill

Faith is a vital aspect of the Christian life, and it is exercised on God the Father as the creator, preserver, and savior of men, as having loved his people in Christ before the foundation of the world, and as having chosen his people in Christ to grace and glory from the beginning.

Scripture: John 14:1, Romans 10:17, Ephesians 2:8, Hebrews 11:1, James 2:19

Topics: "Faith", "Worship"

Description

John Gill emphasizes the critical role of faith in God and Christ as the foundation of true worship and internal religion. He explains that faith is essential for prayer, understanding the gospel, and participating in the ordinances of the church, such as baptism and communion. Gill categorizes different types of faith, including historical, temporary, and saving faith, and highlights that true faith is rooted in a personal relationship with God and Christ. He stresses that faith must be active, involving knowledge, assent, love, and trust in Christ as the Savior. Ultimately, Gill asserts that faith is a gift from God, necessary for salvation and a life of obedience.

Transcript

A Body of PRACTICAL Divinity

Book 1--Chapter 6

OF FAITH IN GOD AND IN CHRIST

Faith is another branch of inward experimental religion and godliness, for "with the heart man believeth unto righteousness"; and of internal worship, and without which external worship cannot be performed in a manner acceptable to God, for "without faith it is impossible to please him": there is no drawing nigh to God in any part of worship without it; if a man prays to God he must "ask in faith, nothing doubting"; for it is the "prayer of faith" that is availing and saving; if a man hears the gospel, unless the word is "mixed with faith" by them that hear it, it is not profitable; and both a profession of faith and the exercise of it, are necessary to a due subjection to the ordinances of the gospel.

As to baptism, "if thou believest with all thy heart thou mayest", said Philip to the eunuch desiring baptism; and so for the ordinance of the supper, a previous examination whether a man has faith, and the exercise of it, are requisite to eating of it; and without this a man cannot discern the Lord's body, nor answer the

ends and design of that ordinance; concerning which may be observed, 1. The kind of faith to be treated of; for faith is a word of different use and signification, and there are divers kinds of faith. 1a.

It sometimes signifies the veracity and faithfulness of God; as when the apostle says, "Shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect?" (Rom. 3:3,4), yea faith sometimes signifies veracity and fidelity among men, and is no other than a virtue belonging to the moral law, and is one of the weightier matters of it (Matthew 23:23). 1b. It is sometimes used for the doctrine of the gospel, the word of faith, which the apostle preached, though he once destroyed it as much as in him lay (Gal. 1:23), and is the faith once delivered to the saints, which they should earnestly contend for, and build up one another in (Jude 1:3,20), so called, because it contains things to be believed upon the credit and testimony of God; and because it directs to the great object of faith in salvation, the Lord Jesus Christ; and because it is the means of ingenerating and increasing faith in men, for "faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:8,17). 1c.

There is a divine and an human faith; a divine faith proceeds upon a divine testimony, upon the authority and veracity of God the testifier; an human faith proceeds upon the testimony of man, and upon the authenticity and truth of the witness bore by him; concerning both which the apostle John says, "If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater", by how much the greater is his veracity and faithfulness; "for this is the witness of God, which he hath testified of his Son" (1 John 5:9), namely, that life and salvation are in him and by him; and to believe this witness, and to receive it within a man's self, is what is commonly called saving faith. 1d.

There is a faith of miracles which proceeds upon a revelation some way or other made by God to a man, which he believes; either that a miracle should be wrought by him, or should be wrought for him, for his benefit and advantage; of the former sort, and which is called "faith in God" (Mark 11:22,23), the apostle is to be understood, when he says, "Though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains" (1 Cor. 13:2; Matthew 17:20; Luke 17:6), of the latter sort was the faith of the centurion, of the woman having an issue, of Jairus, and of the Canaanitish woman (Matthew 8:8,10; 9:18,20,22; 15:28), and of the lame man at Lystra (Acts 14:9,10).

The one is called active, the other passive faith; and this faith of miracles, in the first times of the gospel, was common to good and bad men, to the true disciples of Christ (Matthew 10:1; Mark 16:17-20), and to Judas, and to false teachers (Matthew 10:1,4; 7:22,23). 1e. There is what is called an historical faith, not because it is only giving credit to the historical part of the scripture, which is to be believed as well as other parts; nor because the scripture is read, and attention paid to it only as a common history or human testimony; for men, with this faith, believe it to be a divine testimony, and regard it as such; it may rather be called a theoretic faith, a speculative one, receiving all things in the theory but reducing nothing to practice; or a bare naked assent to the truth of what is contained in the word concerning God and Christ, and divine things; it is a faith common to good men and bad men; it must be and is where true faith is, and there can be no true faith without it; but if a man stops here and goes no further, it falls short of spiritual, special faith, or the faith of God's elect, and is no other than the faith of devils, and of bad men. 1f.

There is also a temporary faith, which continues only for a time, in some persons, as in the stony ground hearers, "Who for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away" (Luke 8:13), this sort of faith differs from the former, in that it is not a mere assent to truth, but is attended with affection, joy, and gladness, as in Herod, who heard John gladly, and did many outward things (Mark 6:20 and in those the apostle speaks of, "who tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come" (Heb. 6:5), all of a natural and

superficial kind, arising from a principle of self-love, and from the novelty, harmony, and connection of truths, and from a false presumptuous hope of future happiness in consequence of their assent unto them; and so is different likewise from the faith of devils, who believe and tremble, but have no joy; and it differs also from true faith, because it is without the root of grace in the heart, and is loseable, is only for a time, for when trouble and persecution arise because of the word, such who have it, drop their profession of it; whereas where there is true faith, such do not "draw back", but continue "to believe" to "the saving of the soul" (Heb. 10:39). 1g.

There is a special faith, which is peculiar to God's elect, and is by some called saving faith, though strictly speaking salvation is not in faith,[1] nor in any other grace, nor in any duty, only in Christ; there is no other name but his under heaven whereby we must be saved; he only is the author of eternal salvation; and yet there are some things in scripture which seem to countenance such a phrase; as when Christ said to the woman who repented of her sins, and had the forgiveness of them, loved Christ, and believed in him, "Thy faith hath saved thee, go in peace" (Luke 7:50), unless the object of faith should be meant; and certain it is that salvation is promised to faith, and connected with it, "He that believes shall be saved", and is what faith issues in; true believers receive "the end of their faith, even the salvation of their souls" (Mark 16:16; 1 Pet. 1:9), and this is the faith that is to be treated of; and next will be considered, 2.

The objects of it, and acts of it on those objects. The objects of it are not bare axioms or propositions; for, as Dr. Ames[2] observes, the act of the believer does not terminate at an axiom but at the thing; for axioms are not formed, but that by them knowledge may be had of things; the principal term to which the act of a believer tends is the thing itself, which is chiefly regarded in the axiom; and so promises are not to be considered as objects unless in a tropical and metonymical sense, being put for the things promised; so the Old Testament saints, "not having received the promises", the things promised, "but having seen them afar off", that is, by faith, "were persuaded of them, and embraced them" (Heb. 11:12), nor even the benefits of Christ, or the blessings of his grace, no otherwise than as they are the "end" faith has in view in receiving him; he is viewed and dealt with as the object of faith in order to enjoy the good things which come by him: or they may be considered as motives encouraging to acts of faith on him, and are the fruits and effects of it received thereby from him.

The proper and formal object of faith is twofold, God and Christ; God as the first primary and ultimate object of faith, and Christ as mediator is the mediate object of it, "Ye believe in God, believe also in me" (John 14:1). God is the principal object of faith (Mark 11:22; Titus 3:8 1; Thess. 1:8), which act of faith on him is not barely to believe there is a God, and but one; which is "credere Deum", and which the devils themselves believe; nor is it merely to believe whatever he delivers in his word, as prophecies, promises, doctrines, &c. this is "credere Deo", to give credit to God, believe what he says; but "credere in Deum,"[3] by believing to cleave to God, lean upon him, and acquiesce in him as our all sufficient life and salvation (Deut. 30:20), and so it is not merely to believe there are three persons in the Godhead, but to go forth in acts of faith and confidence on them, in things relative to our welfare and happiness here and hereafter.

And, 2a. First, on God the Father, "Ye believe in God", that is, in God the Father, the God of Israel, as distinct from Christ, for it follows, "in my Father's house are many mansions" (John 14:1,2), and so our Lord further says, "He that believeth on me", that is, not on him only, nor does his faith stop and terminate there, "but on him that sent me", that is, on the Father of Christ (John 12:44 and it is also observed, that Christ was raised from the dead and had glory given him, that the "faith and hope" of his people "might be in God", in God his Father, who raised him (1 Pet. 1:21). 2a1.

On him as the creator, though not only on him as such; so runs the first article in the creed commonly called the apostles' creed, "I believe in God the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth"; to believe the creation of all things out of nothing by the word, even out of things which did not appear, is an act of that faith in God which is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen (Heb. 11:1,3), besides, a true believer in God fetches arguments to strengthen his faith in God, for relief, help, support, and supply from him with respect to things spiritual, as well as temporal, from his being the maker and creator of all things; "My help", says David, "cometh from the Lord, who made heaven and earth" (Ps. 121:1,2), and it is a special act of faith believers are directed to under sufferings, to "commit the keeping of their souls to" God "in well doing, as unto a faithful creator" (1 Pet. 4:19 and so likewise on him as the preserver and savior of men, for he is "the Saviour of all men, especially of those that believe"; and therefore saints put their trust in him, the living God, as such (1 Tim. 4:10).

But more especially, 2a2. Faith is exercised on God the Father as the object of it, as having loved his people in Christ before the foundation of the world; that the Father, as distinct from Christ, has loved his people with a free, sovereign, unchangeable, and everlasting love, is certain; "Now God, even our Father, which hath loved us and given us everlasting consolation" (2 Thess. 2:16), of which they may be most comfortably assured, and may most firmly believe, by his appearing to them as he did to his church of old, saying, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love" (Jer. 31:3), by his spirit witnessing it to their spirits, and by shedding it abroad in their hearts, and giving them some feeling sensations of it, so as to comprehend with other saints, the height and depth, the length and breadth of it; by remembering to them his former lovingkindness, the favour he bears to his own people; and by acts of love done in eternity, as choosing them in Christ, &c. and by giving him for them in time, and by commending his love towards them through Christ's dying for them, while they were yet sinners; and by quickening them by his Spirit and grace when dead in trespasses and sins, and all because of the great love wherewith he hath loved them; and by drawing them with lovingkindness to himself, as well as by his word and oath, the two immutable things in which he cannot lie (Isa. 54:9,10).

So that there is good and sufficient reason for the acting and exercise of faith, on the everlasting love of the Father; and what a strong act and expression of faith is that of the apostle with respect unto it; "I am persuaded", I firmly believe it, that nothing, "nor any creature" whatever, "shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord?" (Rom. 8:38,39), this is to be "rooted and grounded in love" (Eph. 3:17). 2a3. Faith is exercised on God the Father, as having chosen his people in Christ to grace and glory from the beginning, from everlasting, before the world began (Eph. 1:3,4 2; 2 Thess. 2:13,14) this is the act of the Father of Christ, "Elect, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father" (1 Pet. 1:2), and this election of God is to be known by the gospel coming not in word only but in power, by being effectually called, for "whom he did predestinate, them he also called"; and by their having the faith of God's elect, for "as many as were ordained to eternal life believed" (Rom. 8:30; Acts 13:48), wherefore this may be most firmly believed, as it was by the apostle Paul, both with respect to himself and others, for which he blessed God, and gave thanks to him (Eph. 1:3,4; 2 Thess. 2:13), and our Lord exhorts and encourages his disciples to "rejoice because their names were written in heaven" (Luke 10:20), which supposes knowledge of it, and faith in it. 2a4.

God, as the covenant God of his people, is the object of their faith; the covenant runs thus, "I will be their God, and they shall be people"; and this is made to appear in effectual calling, when they who were not the people of God, not known to be so, are openly such; then it is God makes good his promise, "I will say, It is my people; and they shall say, The Lord is my God" (Zech. 13:9), as David did, "I trusted in thee, O

Lord; I said, Thou art my God" (Ps. 31:14), and so may every believer say, and be assured, that this God is their God, and will be their God and guide unto death, for covenant interest always continues; it was a noble act of faith in the sweet singer of Israel a little before his death, "Although house be not so with God, yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure" (2 Sam. 23:5). 2a5.

God, as he is the Father of Christ, so he is the Father of all that believe in him; "I ascend", says Christ, "to my Father and your Father" (John 20:17). So God, in the covenant of his grace, has declared himself, "and will be a father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord almighty" (2 Cor. 6:18), and as such faith is to be exercised on him with joy and wonder, saying, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God" (1 John 3:1), of the truth of which the leadings and witnessings of the Spirit are an evident proof, from whence he is called the Spirit of adoption; "for as many as are led by the Spirit of God", off of themselves to Christ, and by him to the Father, "they are the sons of God"; and who also "receive the Spirit of adoption, whereby they cry, Abba, Father; the Spirit itself beareth witness with their spirits, that they are the children of God" (Rom. 8:14-16), so that their faith is grounded on good authority, on a divine testimony, true, sure and firm; this blessing of adoption is revealed to faith, the witness of it is received by it, and so believers become openly and manifestly "the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus"; for to "as many as receive him, to them gives he power", authority, right, privilege, "to become the sons of God, even to them that believe in his name" (Gal. 3:26; John 1:12), and henceforward it is enjoined them that in the exercise of faith they call God their father, and not "turn away from" him, by giving way to an evil heart of unbelief, but say to him, "Doubtless thou art our Father" (Isa. 63:16), and they are directed in all their addresses to God at the throne of grace to say, "Our Father, which art in heaven" (Matthew 6:9). 2a6.

God is the object of faith as a God forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin for Christ's sake; and in him he has proclaimed his name as such, and there is none like him on that account; he has promised pardon in covenant, saying, "I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins, and their iniquities will I remember no more" (Heb. 8:12). He has set forth Christ in his purposes to be a propitiation through faith in his blood for the remission of sin; and he has sent him to shed his blood to obtain it, and has exalted him as a Saviour to give it, and to him give all the prophets witness, that whosoever believes in him shall receive it; and he applies it to them, saying, Son or "daughter, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee; I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins" (Matthew 9:2; Isa. 43:25).

Hence upon such acts and declarations as these, the believer has sufficient ground to make God, as a forgiving God, the object, of his faith, and to call upon his soul and all within him to bless his holy name (Ps. 103:1-3), such an act of faith David put forth on God as a forgiving God, when, having acknowledged his sin, and confessed it before the Lord, added, "And thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin" (Ps. 32:5). 2a7. Faith deals with God as a justifier; its language is, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? it is God that justifieth" (Rom. 8:33; 3:30), and faith is exercised on him as he that "justifieth the ungodly"; and therefore not by works, nor on account of any good dispositions and qualifications in men; and they come to him not as workers, but as ungodly and sinners, and believe on him as justifying them without works, and that by imputing the righteousness of his Son unto them; "even as David, also describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works" (Rom. 4:5,6).

Christ of God is made to them righteousness; and they are made the righteousness of God in him; that is, by his gracious imputation of Christ's righteousness to them: and thus God appears to be a just God and a

Saviour: just, while he is "the justifier of him that believes in Jesus"; and as such he is the object of faith; what Christ the federal head of his people, in whom they are all justified, said, his believing members may say, "He is near that justifieth me, who will contend with me?" (Isa. 50:8). 2a8.

The God and Father of Christ is "the God of all grace"; it has pleased him, the Father, that all fulness of it should dwell in Christ as Mediator; he has made large provisions of it, and stored the covenant of grace with it; and is the author, giver, and planter of all grace in the hearts of his people by his Spirit; and as he is able to make all grace to abound towards them, so he grants them a supply of it from time to time: now as such he is the object of faith; faith deals with him as such, and the believer applies to the throne of his grace, that he may obtain mercy, and find grace to help him in time of need. 2a9.

Lastly, God, as a promising God, is the object of faith, he has made many exceeding great and precious promises, and these are all yea and amen in Christ, and God is faithful who has promised, and is able also to perform; and though promises themselves are not, strictly speaking, the object, rather the things promised, yet especially a promising God is the object faith is concerned with (Heb. 10:23). 2b. Secondly, God the Son is the object of faith; which faith lies not merely in believing that he is the Son of God, which is most certainly to be believed; it was not only the confession of the faith of Peter, "Thou art Christ the Son of the living God"; which faith, or rather the object of it, is the Rock on which the church of Christ is built, and against which the gates of hell shall never prevail; but it was the faith of all the disciples, and which they express with the strongest assurance; "We believe and are sure that thou art that Christ the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:16,18; John 6:69 and it was with respect to this article that the eunuch expressed his faith in Christ previous to his baptism; "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God" (Acts 8:37), and all things relating to Christ, his doctrines, and his miracles, were written by the evangelists, "that men might believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God; and that believing, they might have life through his name" (John 20:31), but true faith is not barely a believing that Christ is the Son of God, but a believing in him as such; according to the question put by Christ to the blind man; "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" (John 9:35).

"And this is his commandment", the commandment of God, "that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ". And again, "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself" (1 John 3:23; 5:10). Believing in him is a going forth in acts of faith and confidence, and is called "faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 20:28). Christ, as the Son of God, is the true God and eternal life; he is God equal with the Father, and as such is equally the primary object of faith; which is strongly expressed by Thomas; "My Lord and my God!" and therefore our Lord says, "Ye believe in God", in God the Father, "believe also in me" equally as in him, he being equal with him in nature, perfections, power, and glory.

But Christ, as Mediator, Redeemer, and Saviour, is the mediate object of faith, or in and through whom men believe in God; thus the apostle Peter, speaking of Christ as Mediator, being foreordained before the foundation of the world; but made manifest in human nature in these last times for the sake of his people, described by him as such, "Who by him do believe in God" (1 Pet. 1:21). As Christ is the Mediator through whom all grace is communicated to his people, so it is through him that all grace is exercised on God, and particularly faith; "Such trust have we through Christ to Godward", says the apostle (2 Cor. 3:4).

So believers reckon themselves "alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 6:11). Now faith in Christ as the Redeemer and Saviour includes in it the following things, and is expressed by a variety of acts, which show the nature of it. 2b1. First, I shall consider the various parts of faith in Christ, or what is requisite to constitute it. 2b1a. Knowledge of Christ is necessary to the exercise of faith on him, for "How

shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?" and if they have not so much as heard of him, they cannot know him, and consequently cannot exercise faith upon him; and "How shall they hear without a preacher" to make him known unto them? (Rom. 10:14).

When our Lord put the question to the man who had been blind, "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" he answered and said, "Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him?" upon which Christ made himself known unto him, "Jesus said unto him, Thou hast seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee"; his eyes had been opened to see him, and his ears now heard him, and both being true in a spiritual sense he immediately expressed his faith in him, saying, "Lord, I believe", and as a proof and evidence of it, "worshipped him" (John 9:35-38).

Previous to faith in Christ, as a Saviour, there must be knowledge of the want of him; as such a man must be made sensible of the sinfulness of his nature, and of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and of the just demerit of it, and of the miserable state and condition it has brought him into, out of which none but Christ the Saviour can deliver him; and therefore he then applies to him as the apostles in distress did, saying, "Lord, save us, we perish!" (Matthew 8:25), he must be made acquainted with his impotency to save himself; that his own right hand, his works and services, cannot save him; that if ever he is saved it must be by the grace of God, through the blood and righteousness of Christ, and not by them; he must have knowledge of the fulness and abilities of Christ as a Saviour; he must have seen him full of grace and truth, as having all the fulness of the blessings of grace in him suitable to his wants, whose redemption is plenteous, his salvation complete, he being made everything to his people they want, and able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him; and he being just such a Saviour they need, and his salvation so suitable to them, they that know his name, Jesus the Saviour, put their trust in him; and the more ready they are to do this, as they are fully convinced there is no other Saviour; that salvation is in him, and in none else; that it is in vain to expect it from any other quarter from the works and services of the creature, and therefore determine upon it they shall not be their saviors; but say, with Job, "Though he slay me yet will I trust in him--he also shall be my salvation!" (Ps. 9:10; Job 13:15,16).

Hence knowledge being so requisite to faith, and included in it, faith is sometimes expressed by it (Isa. 53:11; John 17:3), both in spiritual knowledge and special faith, eternal life is begun, and with which it is connected; and so knowledge and faith are joined together as inseparable companions, and as expressive of the same thing; "And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us", are firmly persuaded of it (1 John 4:16), and some of the strongest acts of faith in the saints have been expressed by words of knowledge; "I know that my Redeemer liveth, &c.

I know in whom I have believed", &c. (Job 19:25; 1 Tim. 1:12). 2b1b. An assent unto Christ as a Saviour, enters into the true nature of faith; not a bare naked assent of the mind to the truth of the person and offices of Christ; that he is the Son of God, the Messiah, Prophet, Priest, and King, such as has been yielded to him by men destitute of true faith in him, as by Simon Magus and others, yea, by the devils themselves (Luke 4:34,41). "Of all the poison, says Dr. Owen,[4] which at this day is diffused in the minds of men, corrupting them from the mystery of the gospel, there is no part that is more pernicious than this one perverse imagination, that to "believe in Christ" is nothing at all but to "believe the doctrine of the gospel!" which yet we grant is included therein." Such a proposition, that Christ is the Saviour of the chief of sinners, or that salvation is alone by him, is not presented merely under the notion of its being "true", and assented to as such, but under the notion of its being "good", a suitable, acceptable, and preferable good, and to be chosen as the good part was by Mary; as being both a "faithful saying" to be believed as true, and as "worthy of all acceptance", to be received and embraced as the chiefest good.

Faith is an assent to Christ as a Saviour, not upon an human, but a divine testimony, upon the record which God has given of his Son, and of eternal life in him. Some of the Samaritans believed on Christ because of the saying of the woman; but others because of his own word, having heard him themselves, and knew that he was indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world: true faith, in sensible sinners, assents to Christ, and embraces him not merely as a Saviour of men in general; but as a special, suitable Saviour for them in particular: it proceeds upon Christ's being revealed "in" them, as well as "to" them, by the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, in the knowledge of him as a Saviour that becomes them; it comes not merely through external teachings, by the hearing of the word from men; but having "heard and learned of the Father", such souls come to Christ, that is, believe in him (John 6:45), not the doctrine of him only, but in him himself. 2b1c.

Knowledge of Christ as a Saviour, and an assent unto him as such, is attended with love and affection to him; faith works by love, love always accompanies faith, at least follows it; Christ is precious to them that believe; they love him, value him, prefer him, to all others as a Saviour; and every truth respecting Christ is not "barely assented to", but as they receive Christ, they receive the "love of the truth" with him. 2b1d. True, spiritual, special faith in Christ includes in it a dependence on him, trust and confidence in him alone for everlasting life and salvation; it is a soul's venturing on Christ, resolving if it perishes it will perish at his feet; it is a resignation of itself to Christ, a committing its soul, and the important welfare and salvation of it into Christ's hands, trusting him with all, looking to him, relying on him, and acquiescing in him as the alone Saviour.

All which will more fully appear by considering, 2b2. Secondly, the various acts of faith on Christ, as described in the sacred Scriptures. 2b2a. It is expressed by seeing the Son; this is one of the first and one of the lowest acts of faith, and yet eternal life is annexed unto it; "This is the will of him that sent me", says Christ, "that everyone which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life" (John 6:40), it is a sight of the glories and excellencies of Christ's person, of the fulness of his grace and righteousness, and of the completeness and suitableness of his salvation.

It is a looking to Jesus, the author and finisher of faith, a view of him as altogether lovely, the chiefest among ten thousand. Faith is a light struck into the heart of a sinner whose understanding was darkened, yea darkness itself, till God commanded light to shine in darkness; by which, though first but glimmering, he sees himself a sinner, miserable and undone, without a Saviour, when Christ is held forth in the gospel to be looked at by him; that is a glass in which he is to be beheld, and where he is openly set forth crucified and slain for sinners; and so is the hope set before them, both to be looked at and to be laid hold on by them, who was typified by the brazen serpent set upon a pole by Moses, for the Israelites bitten by the serpents to look at and live (John 3:14,15).

And not only sensible sinners are directed to behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world, as John's hearers were by him; and are encouraged by the ministers of the word, who show unto men the way of salvation, to look to and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved; but they are encouraged by Christ himself; who says, "Behold me, behold me", to a nation not called by his name, "look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth, for I am God, and there is none else!" (Isa. 65:1; 45:22), which sight of him fills their souls with love to him, as the most lovely and amiable one, with eager desires after him, and an interest in him, signified by hungering and thirsting after his righteousness, and panting after his salvation.

And this sight of Christ by faith is nigh, and not afar off; now, and not hereafter; and for a man's self, and not another; he looks to him not merely as a Saviour of others, but to him as a Saviour and Redeemer suitable for him. 2b2b. Faith is a motion of the soul unto Christ; having looked and gazed at him with wonder and pleasure, it moves towards him; this is expressed by coming unto him; "He that cometh to me", says Christ, "shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me", which explains what is meant by coming, "shall never thirst" (John 6:35), which coming to Christ is upon an invitation given, encouraging to it; not only by others, by the Spirit and the bride, who say "come" (Rev. 22:17), and by the ministers of the word; "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money, come!" and who, through the gospel trumpet being blown with power, and the sound of it attended with efficacious grace, they that are "ready to perish" come (Isa. 55:1; 27:13), but also by Christ himself, who says, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest!" (Matthew 11:28), such souls come, being influenced and powerfully wrought upon by the grace of God; "All that the Father giveth me", says Christ, "shall come to me"; efficacious grace will cause them to come, will bring them to him, through all discouragements, difficulties, and objections, and which are all removed by what follows; "and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37).

This coming to Christ as a Saviour, or believing in him, is owing to the Father's teachings, instructions, and drawing; "No man can come to me", says Christ, that is, believe in him, "except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him", draw him with his lovingkindness, and through the power of his grace, and of his divine teachings; "every man therefore that hath heard and learned of the Father cometh unto me"; yea, this is a pure gift of his grace, "therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me except it were given unto him of my Father" (John 6:44,45,65), and such souls come to Christ in a view of the blessings of grace, of righteousness, and strength, peace and pardon, salvation and eternal life; these are the goodness of the Lord, they flow unto him for with great eagerness, swiftness, and cheerfulness.

For 2b2c. This motion of faith towards Christ is expressed by fleeing to him; and such souls that believe in him are described as having "fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before them" (Heb. 6:18), and by "turning to the stronghold as prisoners of hope", that is, to Christ, whose name is a "strong tower", whither the "righteous run" and are "safe" (Zech. 6:12; Prov. 18:10), fleeing supposes danger, and a sense of it; Christ is the city of refuge, the strong hold and tower, they are directed to; whither coming, they find shelter and safety from avenging justice and every enemy, a supply of wants, and ground of hope of eternal life and happiness; and thus being come to Christ various acts of faith are put forth upon him; such as the following, 2b2c1.

A venturing act of their souls, and of their whole salvation on him, like Esther, who ventured into the presence of king Ahasuerus, saying, "If I perish, I perish!" faith at first is such a venture of the soul on Christ, not knowing as yet how it will fare with it; yea, a "peradventure", perhaps there may be salvation in Christ for it; as Benhadad's servants said to him; "Peradventure he" (the king of Israel), "will save thy life"; reasoning in like manner as the four lepers did when ready to perish with famine; "Let us fall into the host of the Syrians; if they save us alive, we shall live; and if they kill us, we shall but die": so sensible sinners, seeing their perishing condition, resolve to venture themselves on Christ; if he saves them it is well, if not they can but die, as they must without him. 2b2c2.

A casting or throwing themselves into the arms of Christ, to be bore and carried by him as a nursing father bears and carries in his bosom a sucking child; so Christ carries the lambs in his arms (Isa. 40:11), weak believers, who cast themselves and all their burdens, the whole care of their souls upon him; this sense Nmah has (Num. 11:12), from whence comes a word which in many places signifies to believe (see Isa.

60:4 compared with Isa. 66:12).[5] 2b2c3. A laying hold on Christ, who is "a tree of life to them that lay hold upon him" (Prov. 3:18), from which tree they may pluck and eat all the fruits of grace and life.

Christ is the hope of Israel, and the Saviour of his people; and there is great encouragement for sensible sinners to hope in him, because there are mercy and plenteous redemption with him; and he is in the gospel set forth before them as the ground of hope "to lay hold upon" (Heb. 6:18), he is that Jew who sprung from the seed of David and from the tribe of Judah; and his righteousness "the skirt" ten men are said to "take hold of" (Zech. 8:23), even the robe of his righteousness; which being revealed and brought near to faith, it lays hold upon and puts it on, as its justifying righteousness, seeing the insufficiency of its own, and the excellency of this.

Socinus[6] treats such an apprehension of Christ by faith for justification as a mere human invention, and a most empty dream; but the true believer finds abundance of solid peace and comfort in it. As Adonijah and Joab fled and laid hold on the horns of the altar for safety, and under a consciousness of guilt; so a sinner, sensible of its sin and guilt, and of its own incapacity to make atonement for it, flees to Christ, and lays hold on his sacrifice, and brings this offering in the arms of his faith, and pleads with God that he would be propitious to him through it, and take away his sin from him.

Faith lays hold on the covenant of grace, and upon Christ the Mediator of it, and upon the promises in it, which are yea and amen in Christ, and on the blessings of it, the sure mercies of David, redemption, justification, pardon, peace, reconciliation, and salvation, and claims interest in them. It lays hold on Christ for strength as well as righteousness; "Let him take hold of my strength", to enable him to exercise every grace, perform every duty, bear the cross of Christ, and persevere in faith and holiness to the end (Isa. 27:5,6). 2b2c4.

Faith is a retaining Christ, and an holding him fast; the soul being come to Christ, and having laid hold upon him, keeps its hold of him: it is said of Wisdom, or Christ, "happy is everyone that retaineth her" (Prov. 3:18), so the church having lost her beloved, and upon search found him, she "held him, and would not let him go", as Jacob the angel that wrestled with him until he blessed him (Song of Sol. 3:4), which denotes not only an holding fast the profession of the faith of Christ, but a continuance of the exercise of the grace of faith on him; an holding to him, the Head, and deriving nourishment from him, a walking on in him as he has been received; a being strong in the grace that is in him, firmly believing its interest in him.

It is expressive of strength of faith in Christ, and of great affection to him; for it is sometimes with difficulty it keeps its hold of him when things go contrary, and Christ has withdrawn himself and is out of sight. 2b2c5. Faith is sometimes expressed by leaning on the Lord, and "staying" upon him, "the Holy One of Israel in truth"; and even those who walk in darkness and have no light, are directed and encouraged to "trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon their God" (Isa. 10:20; 50:10), where trusting in the Lord, and staying on him, are manifestly the same; faith or trust in the Lord, is a staying or leaning on him for all supports and every supply; so the church is said to be "leaning on her beloved", while coming up out of the wilderness (Song of Sol. 8:5), which shows consciousness of her own weakness, a dependence on his mighty arm, and an expectation of all supplies of grace and strength from him.

But, 2b2c6. The grand and principal act of faith, or that by which it is more frequently expressed is, receiving Christ; "as many as received him, even that believe on his name" (John 1:12), where receiving Christ is interpreted of believing on him. Christ is received, not into the head; for not all that say Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but into the heart; for it is with the heart man believes in the Son of

God unto righteousness; and in it Christ dwells by faith.

A soul made sensible of its need of Christ and his righteousness, and of salvation by him, comes down from self-exaltation and self-confidence, and "receives Christ joyfully", as Zacchaeus did. 2b2d. Faith receives a whole Christ, not in part only, but in whole, he is "altogether", or "all of him lovely;"[7] the whole of him is, amiable in the sight of a believer, and acceptable to him. As the passover Lamb was to be eaten wholly by the Israelites, no part of it to be left, so faith feeds upon a whole Christ, Christ in his person, offices, grace, and righteousness.

"Is Christ divided?" He is not, not in his person; he is but one, God manifest in the flesh; nor in his doctrines; nor from his ministers: nor from his ordinances; where Christ is received all are received. 2b2d1. Christ in all his offices. Christ is received as the great Prophet in the church whom God promised to raise up, and has raised up, and sent to instruct his people; and by whom grace and truth, the doctrines of grace and truth, are come, and he is to be attended to; "hear ye him", not Moses, nor Elijah, but God's well beloved Son, by whom he has spoken his whole mind and will in these last days; and who himself says, "Receive my instruction, and not silver; and knowledge rather than fine gold"; that is, his gospel published by him; and such who are spiritually enlightened in the knowledge of him by the Spirit of God, these receive the love of the truth; truth, with a cordial affection for it; receive the word gladly, with all readiness and meekness; they receive the ministers of Christ, and the doctrines preached and messages sent by them; which is interpretatively receiving Christ himself; "he that receiveth you, receiveth me; and he that receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me" (Matthew 10:40), And faith receives Christ also as a Priest, and the atonement which he has made; it views him as a merciful, faithful, and suitable one, who has made reconciliation for sin, put it away by the sacrifice of himself, and made full satisfaction for it, and by his one offering has perfected for ever them that are sanctified.

Faith regards him and receives him as the advocate with the Father, as ever living to make intercession; as always at the golden altar, ready to offer up the prayers of all saints with his much incense; and by whom, as their great High Priest, saints offer their spiritual sacrifices of prayer and praise, which become acceptable to God through him. And faith also receives him as King in Zion; "as ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord" (Col. 2:6), there seems to be an emphasis on that clause *ton kurion*, "the Lord"; one that receives Christ, a true believer in him, acknowledges Christ as his Lord and Head, and gives homage to him as such, saying, as the Church did, "the Lord is our Judge, the Lord is our Lawgiver, the Lord is our King, he will save us" (Isa. 33:22).

Christ is received and owned by such, not only as a Priest, but as a Prince; not only as a Saviour, but as a Lawgiver; they take upon them his yoke, submit to his ordinances, and observe his commands; and walk as Zacharias and Elizabeth did, in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. 2b2d2. Christ, and all the blessings of grace along with him, are received by faith; such as adoption; as Christ gives a power to them that believe in him to become the children of God, they by faith receive this power, right, and privilege from him; and hence we read of "receiving the adoption of children", through the redemption that is by Christ (Gal. 4:5 and because faith receives it, believers in Christ become manifestatively the children of God.

They likewise receive the blessing from the Lord, even a justifying righteousness from the God of their salvation. They receive abundance of grace, and the gift of righteousness, by and from Christ, by which they are justified from all things, and put it on as their robe of righteousness, and glory in it. By faith they receive the pardon of their sins; as Christ is exalted as a Prince and a Saviour to "give" repentance to

Israel, and "forgiveness of sins", so whosoever believes in him shall "receive remission of sins" (Acts 5:31; 10:43), and that upon the foot of atonement made by him; hence they are said to "receive the atonement" (Rom. 5:11), by faith they "receive" out of the fulness of Christ "grace for grace", all supplies of grace needful for them; as they want more grace, and God has promised it to them, and provided it for them in Christ; so they apply to him for it, and receive it at his hands; and as he gives both grace and glory, they receive both; grace as a meetness for, and as the earnest of glory: not only do they "receive" the forgiveness of their sins, but also "an inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith" (Acts 26:18), they receive grace from God the Father to make them meet for it; and as the Spirit is given as an earnest of it, they receive him as the earnest of the inheritance until they are put into the full possession of it. 2b2d3.

Christ is received as a free gift; he is the gift of God; "if thou knewest the gift of God" (John 4:10), and an unspeakable gift of his love he is, a gift freely given and unmerited; "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son" (John 3:16), and he is received and owned as such; "to us a Son is given" (Isa. 9:6), and all blessings of grace are given, and freely given, along with him, and received as such (Rom. 8:32). 2b2d4. Faith receives Christ in preference to all others; it receives him, and him only, as the one Lord and Head, as the one Mediator between God and man, and as the one and only Saviour of sinners; it chooses Christ, the good part that shall never be taken away, above all others: faith works by love to Christ in a stronger manner than to any creature object whatever; than to the dearest and nearest relation and friend whatever; than to father, mother, brethren and sisters, houses and lands; yea, he that loves any of these more than Christ is not worthy of him.

Nay, faith prefers the worst things belonging to Christ to the best in creatures; the believer is willing to do and suffer any thing and everything for Christ; none of these things, as afflictions, bonds, and imprisonment for Christ's sake, move the believer from Christ, and its faith and hope in him; he esteems reproach for Christ's sake greater riches than all the treasures in Egypt, and takes pleasure in persecutions and distresses endured on his account; and even reckons his own best things, his highest attainments in knowledge and righteousness, but loss and dung in comparison of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord, and of his righteousness, in which, and in which only, he desires to be found. 2b3.

Thirdly, God the Holy Spirit is also the object of faith; though we read and hear but little of faith in him, yet as he is God equal with the Father and the Son, he is equally the object of faith as they are; not only his being, perfections, deity, and personality, his offices as a sanctifier and comforter, and his operations of grace on the souls of men, are to be believed; but there are particular acts of faith, trust, and confidence, to be exercised upon him; as he is truly God, he is the object of religious worship, and this cannot be performed aright without faith.

Baptism is administered in his name as in the name of the other two persons, and this is to be done and submitted to by faith in him; he is particularly to be prayed unto, and there is no praying to him nor in him without faith in him; yea a true believer trusts in him for his help and assistance in prayer, as indeed he does in the exercise of every religious duty, and of every grace; and besides all this there is a special act of faith put forth upon him, with respect to salvation, as upon the other two persons; for as we are to trust in God the Father to keep us by his power through faith unto salvation, and to trust in Christ for the salvation of our souls, so we are to trust in the Holy Spirit for carrying on and finishing the work of grace in us, who is equal to it; we are to trust the whole of it with him, and be "confident of this very thing", as we may, as of anyone thing in the world, "that he", the Spirit of God, "who hath begun a good work in us, will

perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1:6). 3.

The subjects of the grace of faith, on whom this grace is bestowed, and in whom it is, in some more in others less, in all like precious faith. 3a. First, the subjects of faith are not angels, neither good nor bad. Not the good angels; they live not by faith on God and Christ as believing men do, but by sight; they are possessed of the beatific vision of God, and are always beholding the face of our Father in heaven, and are continually in his presence, waiting upon him and worshipping him, and enjoy complete and inexpressible happiness in their access unto him, and communion with him, and in the service of him.

They are ministering spirits to Christ, always attend him, ever behold the glories of his person and the fulness of his grace; one part of the great mystery, of godliness respecting Christ is, that he is "seen of angels", and being "received up into glory", is the object of their vision continually (1 Tim. 3:16), much less are the evil angels the subjects of this grace. There is a kind of faith that is ascribed to them, the belief of a God, and that there is but one; "thou believest there is one God, thou dost well, the devils also believe and tremble" (Jam. 2:19), but then they have no faith on or towards God; no trust in him and dependence on him; they have cast off allegiance to him, and have rebelled against him; and much less have they any faith in Christ; for though they know him, and cannot but assent to the truth of things concerning him, yet can have no faith in him as their Redeemer and Saviour: and therefore they themselves very justly observed, "What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God?" they had nothing to do with him as Jesus a Saviour, and could wish they had nothing to do with him as the Son of God, to whom all judgment is committed, and theirs also, and therefore dread him; but faith in him as a Saviour they could not exercise, for he was not provided as such for them; he took not on him their nature; he was not sent, nor did he come, to seek and save them, nor to die for them; when they sinned God spared them not, made no provision of grace for them, nor promise of it to them, but cast them down from heaven to hell, and has reserved them in chains of darkness to the judgment of the great day, to everlasting wrath and damnation; so that there is not the least ground for faith and hope in Christ concerning their salvation. 3b.

Secondly, Men only are the subjects of the grace of faith; and, not all men; "for all men have not faith" (2 Thess. 3:2), that is, special faith in God and Christ; there are but few[8] who have it; there are many who never heard of Christ, of his gospel, and of the way of life and salvation by him; "and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?" And of those that have heard of him, and of the good news of salvation by him, "they have not all obeyed the gospel; for Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?" (Rom. 10:14,16).

There are some who do not belong to Christ, are none of his; and which is a reason why they do not believe in him; and is a reason which Christ himself gives, and a better cannot be given; "Ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep"; they that are the sheep of Christ hear his voice, by which faith comes; they know him spiritually and savingly; they follow him, and yield the obedience of faith unto him (John 10:26,27). There are some of whom it is said, "they could not believe", because they were left of God to the blindness and hardness of their hearts; and whose minds, by permission, the god of this world blinds, lest the gospel should shine into them, and so they believe not (John 12:39,40; 2 Cor. 4:4).

In short, none but the elect of God become true believers in Christ, and all these do, in God's due time, and through the efficacy of his grace; so it has been, and so it ever will be, until they are all brought to believe in Christ; "as many as were ordained unto eternal life believed" (Acts 13:48), for, the "belief of the truth", of Christ, who is the truth, and of the gospel of truth, that comes by him, is the means through which God has chosen men to salvation; and which is as certain to them thereby as the thing itself; for faith is

given in consequence of this choice, and is peculiar to the objects of it; hence called the "faith of God's elect" (2 Thess. 2:13; Titus 1:1), such only are the partakers and subjects of this grace, who are regenerated, called, and sanctified.

Such that receive Christ and believe in him are described as "born of God"; yea, it is asserted, that "whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God" (John 1:12,13; 1 John 5:1), whomsoever God calls by his grace with an holy calling, he bestows faith upon them; whoever are converted and turned to the Lord, believe in him; "faith" is one of the "fruits" of the Spirit in sanctification (Gal. 5:22), none but such who are made spiritually alive believe in Christ; while men are dead in trespasses and sins they are "in unbelief", in a state of unbelief, as the apostle was before conversion, shut up in it till mercy is displayed in quickening and relieving them; there must be first spiritual life before there can be faith; hence says Christ, "whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die" (John 11:26).

As well may a dead carcass fly, as a dead sinner believe in Christ, or have any will and desire to it.[9] Such only who are alive see and hear in a spiritual sense, and believe in Christ with a special faith, and shall never perish, but have everlasting life. 3c. Thirdly, those who are the subjects of this grace of faith, it is different in them as to the degree and exercise of it, though it is in all "alike precious faith" as to its nature, objects, and acts; and in such is the "common faith", common to all true believers, of which they have a mutual experience; hence the apostle calls his faith, and the faith of the believing Romans, "the mutual faith both of you and me"; yet as to the measure and degree of it, it is in some more, in others less; see (2 Pet. 1:1; Titus 1:4; Rom. 1:12). 3c1.

In some it is great faith; instances of which we have in the centurion, and in the woman of Canaan (Matthew 8:10; 15:28), and many great and heroic actions are ascribed unto it in (Heb. 11:1-40), though all its greatness, power, and efficacy, are to be ascribed to the Object of it. 3c2. In some it is but small or "little faith"; in God, and in his providence, for the supply of their temporal wants; in Christ, as to his presence with and powerful preservation and salvation of them (Matthew 6:30; 8:26; 14:31). 3c3.

In others it is very little, "least of all"; it is like a grain of mustard seed, which is the least of all seeds (Matthew 17:20; 13:32), and as the apostle Paul calls himself less than the least of all saints, these are the least of all believers; the little ones, as Christ calls them, who believe in him; the lambs he carries in his arms; the smoking flax and bruised reed, the day of small things he does not despise. 3c4. In these it seems to be next to none, and as if there was none at all; hence these words of Christ to his apostles, "How is it that you have no faith?" and again, "Where is your faith?" (Mark 4:40; Luke 8:25), that is, in act and exercise; otherwise they had faith as a principle of grace in them, though so little exercised by them as scarcely to be discerned; yet little faith, even that which is the least, differs from no faith.

Where there is no faith there is no desire after God, nor after Christ, nor after salvation by him, and communion with him; such neither desire him nor the knowledge of his ways; but where there is ever so small a degree of faith there is a panting after God, a desire to see Jesus, and to have fellowship with him, and a view of interest in him: where there is no faith there is no sense of the want of it, nor complaint of it, nor desire of it, and an increase; but where there is faith, though of the least degree, the soul is sensible of the deficiency of it, and complains of its unbelief, and prays for an increase of faith; as the poor man did, "Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief" (Mark 9:24). 3c5.

In some faith is weak; in others strong: of Abraham it is said, that he was "strong in faith", and staggered not at the promise through unbelief; but "believed in hope against hope"; these circumstances showed the

strength of his faith. But of others it is said, "him that is weak in the faith receive ye; but not to doubtful disputations" (Rom. 4:18,20; 14:1). See an instance of strong faith in (Hab. 3:17-19). 3c6. Faith, as to its exercise, differs in the same individuals at different times; as in Abraham, the father of all them that believe, and who was so eminent for his faith; and yet what unbelief and distrust of the power and providence of God did he discover, as to the preservation of him in Egypt and in Gerar, which put him on undue methods for his security? and in David, who sometimes in the strongest manner expresses his faith of interest in God, and in his favour, and at other times was strangely disquieted in his soul, and ready to imagine that he was cut off from the sight of God: and in Peter, who not only strongly asserted his faith in Christ as the Son of God, but so confident was he, that though all men forsook him he would not; and yet, that night denied him thrice, intimidated by a servant maid and others! 3c7.

In some it arises to a plerophory (confidence), a full assurance of faith; as it is expressed in Hebrews 10:22 which signifies going with a full sail, in allusion to ships when they sail with a prosperous gale; so souls, when they are full of faith, as Stephen was, move on towards God and Christ in the exercise of it with great spirit and rigor, bearing all before them that stand in the way; being fully persuaded of the love of God to them, and that nothing can separate them from it, and of their interest in Christ, as having loved them and given himself for them; and therefore can say with Thomas, "My Lord and my God!" and with the church, "My beloved is mine and I am his"; but this is not to be found in all believers; and where it is, it is not always in the same plerophory, without any doubt, hesitation, and mixture of unbelief. 3d.

Fourthly, The seat of this grace, in the subjects of it, is the whole soul of man; it is "with the heart" man believes in Christ for righteousness, life, and salvation; says Philip to the eunuch, "If thou believest with all thine heart", &c. It has been a dispute among divines, whether faith has its seat in the understanding, or in the will, or in the affections; it seems to possess the whole soul, or the whole soul is in the possession of it, and according to its various actings faith has a concern in each faculty; as it lies in the knowledge of divine things, and presents truth to the mind, and is the evidence of things unseen, it has to do with the understanding; and the apostle says of it as such, "by faith we understand", &c. (Heb. 11:1-40; 1:3), and sometimes the strongest acts of faith, even assurance of interest in Christ as the Redeemer and Saviour, is expressed by knowledge of him; "I know that my Redeemer liveth" (Job 19:25), as it is an act of choice, preferring Christ, as a Saviour, to all others; and of affiance, trust, and dependence on him, it is an act of the will; "though he slay me, yet will I trust in him:--he also shall be salvation" (Job 13:15,16), and neither of these acts can be without love to Christ, and a strong motion of the affections towards him, saying, "Whom have heaven but thee?" &c.

Faith works by love. 4. The causes of faith, from whence it springs, and how it comes to pass that any who are naturally in a state of unbelief, and shut up in it, should be possessed of this grace. 4a. First, the efficient cause is God; hence it is called the "work of God" (John 6:29), which he works by his power and grace in the hearts of men; it is expressly said to be of "the operation of God" (Col. 2:12), it is a very considerable part of the "good work" of grace, which is begun, carried on, and performed, by the Spirit of Christ; and from it the whole is denominated the "work of faith", which is wrought and finished with the "power" of God (2 Thess. 1:11), and it is also called "the gift of God", who deals forth to every man "the measure of faith" as he pleases (Eph. 2:8; Rom. 12:3).

All the three divine Persons, Father, Son, and Spirit, are concerned in it. 4a1. God the Father; as he is the "God of all grace", so of this: "No man", says Christ, "can come unto me", that is, believe on him, as it is explained (John 6:35), "except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him; and except it were given unto him of Father" (John 6:44,45,65; see Matthew 16:16,17). 4a2. The Lord Jesus Christ the Son of God, has

a concern in it, it is prayed and wished for, as from God the Father, so from the Lord Jesus Christ; and is obtained through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; nay, Christ is expressly called, "the Author and Finisher of faith" (Eph. 6:23; 2 Pet. 1:1; Heb. 12:2). 4a3.

The Holy Spirit is, with the Father and the Son, the co-efficient cause of faith; not only faith is given by the Spirit, as it intends the faith of miracles, but the special grace of faith is reckoned among the fruits of the Spirit; and from hence he is called "the Spirit of faith", because it is his gift, and of his operation (1 Cor. 12:9; Gal. 5:22; 2 Cor. 4:13). 4b. Secondly, the moving cause of faith is, the free grace of God; it is not of men themselves, the produce of their free will, and power; but it is "the gift of God"; a gift of his pure grace, unmerited, and unmoved to it by anything in the creature; hence those that believe are said to have "believed through grace"; it is a fruit of electing grace, and flows from that; the same grace that moved God to ordain any of the sons of men to eternal life, bestows the grace of faith upon them in consequence of it (Acts 18:27; 13:48), and this is owing to sovereign and distinguishing grace, according to which it is bestowed on some and not on others, as it seems good in the sight of God (Matthew 11:25,26). 4c.

Thirdly, the word and ministers of it are the usual means and instruments of faith in the hand of God, and are used by him; the end of the word being written is, that men "might believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God" (John 20:31), and the word preached is, the word of faith; and so called, with other reasons, because faith comes by it (Rom. 10:8,17), this has often been the effect and consequence of hearing the word preached (Acts 17:4; 18:8), and the ministers of it are the instruments by whom and through whose word, doctrine, and ministry, others believe (John 1:17,20; 1 Cor. 3:5), but this is only when it is attended with the power and Spirit of God (1 Cor. 2:4,5). 5.

The effects of it, or the various things which are ascribed unto it in some sense or another, which show the usefulness and importance of this grace. As, 5a. First, various blessings of grace are attributed to it; and with which it is, on some account or another, connected; by it access is had unto them, and an enjoyment of them, and comfort from them. 5a1. Justification; hence we read of being "justified by faith" (Rom. 3:30; 5:1; Gal. 2:16; 3:8), not by it, or through it, as a work of righteousness done by men, for then they would be justified and saved by works contrary to the Scriptures (Rom. 4:2,6; Titus 3:5).

Nor as a grace of the Spirit of God wrought in men; for that is a part and branch of sanctification; and would tend to confound justification and sanctification, which are two distinct things; the one an act of God's grace towards men, the other a work of his grace in them: nor as a cause of it; for it is "God", and not faith that "justifies" (Rom. 8:33), for though men are said to be justified by faith, yet faith is never said to justify them: nor as a condition of justification; for God "justifies the ungodly" (Rom. 4:5), nor as a motive; for that is the free grace of God; "being justified freely by his grace" (Rom. 3:24), nor as the matter of it; that is the righteousness of Christ: faith and righteousness are two different things, and are frequently distinguished; that by which men are justified are the obedience and blood of Christ (Rom. 5:9,19), but faith is neither of them; faith is a man's own, but justifying righteousness is another's; "not having on mine own righteousness" (Phil. 3:9), faith is imperfect; but the righteousness by which men are justified is perfect, or it cannot be reckoned righteousness (Deut. 6:25), it is not the to, "credere", or act of faith, but the object who, or what, is believed in, that is imputed for righteousness; it is Christ and his righteousness, the object of faith, by which men are justified; faith objectively, or the object of faith, Christ, who is sometimes called faith (Gal. 3:23), he is made righteousness unto them; faith only relatively considered, as it relates to Christ, receives the blessing of his justifying righteousness from him, being revealed from faith to faith, and given to it, and put into its hands; which faith puts on as a robe of righteousness, and rejoices

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