

The Faith Of God's Elect

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Faith is precious. The Bible tells us so. Yet, not the bare existence of faith. In that sense, faith, in and of itself, is meaningless. I doubt there is a person on the face of this earth who does not claim to have faith in something or other, even if it is simply their own opinion.

Similarly, the term 'people of faith' has become an all-purpose description to gather together every flavour of religion and all manner of weird and wonderful notions. Christians, Jews, Muslims and flat-earthers are part of the 'faith community' but they are not all going to heaven.

The Bible says the just shall live by faith and the faith by which the just live is called by Paul the faith of God's elect. There is natural faith and there is the faith of Christ. There is faith borne of human wisdom and faith from above that is spiritual and created by God the Holy Spirit. Thus when the Lord Jesus Christ says, "Thy faith hath saved thee, go in peace", it is the faith of Christ graciously gifted, the faith of God's elect that is in view, exercised in humble worship and reliance upon the Saviour.

James Wells, a London preacher of the nineteenth century, once said, "For myself, I believe that the substituting of mere mental and moral conversion—this mere natural faith for the faith of God's elect—I believe that there are more souls deceived by this doctrine than by any other found in all Protestant Christendom".

Wells is speaking of the great error of manmade religion. Hell will be populated by damned souls who earnestly followed their creed or confession, obeyed their preacher's teachings and with his (or her) connivance imagined themselves fit for heaven. In their heads they believed, by their conduct they observed all the norms of custom and practice their church required, and yet they are not saved. What confusion will follow those words of Christ in that day, "Depart from me, I never knew you."

The faith of God's elect is belief in the being of God, and trust in His promises as revealed to the church in the person and redemptive work of the Lord Jesus Christ. JEHOVAH, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, has revealed Himself as "forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin" and giving eternal life to the church in Christ Jesus. Faith is giving credit to this Divine testimony, and relying upon God's faithfulness for the fulfilment of it.

Not the glory and wonder of the promise; but the glory, wonder, and faithfulness of the Promiser is the proper object of faith. To believe, and rest in the almighty Promiser and His assurances in Christ, the Godman, is faith. "Acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness" is faith.

The possession of the faith of God's elect and the exercise of it in this world is the gift of God. "Unto you," says Paul, "it is given to believe" (Philippians 1:29). And every truly awakened and regenerated believer finds reason, to cry out, as the apostle did to Christ, "Lord, increase our faith" (Luke 17:5).

{James Wells (1803-1872). A number of James Wells' sermons and tracts can be found at www.surreytabernaclepulpit.com}

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