Gospel Light Or Gospel-lite?

Only a crook or a clown offers what he cannot deliver. So which one is God when freewill preachers tell us He desires everyone to be saved and freely, sincerely and genuinely offers salvation to all men and women?

Can God deliver upon such a promise? Not if there is a definite number of individuals in the election of grace. Not if there is a limitation in the number of sinners for whom the Lord Jesus Christ died on the cross. Not if the quickening, regenerating, converting work of God the Holy Ghost is restricted only to those chosen in eternity and redeemed by the precious blood of Christ.

So which one is it? Is God a crook, deceiving men and women, pretending to hold out a genuine salvation fully knowing that provision for their atonement, forgiveness and reconciliation never was made and never was intended? Or is God a clown? Has He made a mistake, got the plan wrong, or perhaps just having a laugh at the sinners’ expense? Perish the thought!

If sovereign grace believers were contending with Arminians or Wesleyans of a previous age upon this subject we should be little surprised. But amazingly, today, it is people who like to call themselves Modern Calvinists after Reformation hero John Calvin who are dusting off old heresies and fobbing them off as Biblical Christianity.

They teach that all men are potentially saved by virtue of Christ’s atonement for sin. They speak of the unlimited value of Christ’s blood and its sufficiency to save a whole world of sinners. In turn, this allows them to preach the “gospel” to all men that since God loves sinners, and Christ died for sinners all that is required of them is to love God in return and let Him save them, which is, of course, what God has always wanted to do anyway. They talk-up human responsibility, impose a universal duty to believe, and appeal to the will of the sinner to “choose” Christ.

This is gospel-lite. It is a stripped down, patched-up, hobbled together version of Bible teaching, using Bible language, but bereft of all meaningful content and truth. It is presented as adequate to save sinners in evangelism and sold widely as an introduction to grace, beyond which the deeper, secret truths of the Bible can be taught later. Consequently, the true gospel, the full gospel, the gospel which alone is the power of God unto salvation is never actually preached to the unsaved.

What these modern Calvinists conceal by this message is the whole counsel of God, the revealed purpose of God in time and eternity, to save His people from their sins according to His own power and will. Sovereign grace is skimmed over, substitution watered down, effectual calling generalised and eternal security, logically, left swinging on the hinge of the sinner’s own doubts and fears.

The Lord Jesus Christ, who is the true Light of the world, and His work of efficacious atonement on the cross, is hidden from view. So, too, the teaching of Holy Scripture concerning the Father’s eternal electing love for His people, His everlasting covenant, total depravity, the effectual calling of the Holy Spirit and eternal union with Christ.

We believe when the true gospel, Paul’s gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, of which he and we are not ashamed, is preached to all men everywhere as the Spirit leads, sinners will truly be converted. We know that the gospel comes as a savour of life unto life to some but as a savour of death unto death to others. We know a few will be converted, many will not. We know that not one sinner more or less will be in heaven for us preaching Christ, the Gospel Light, in all of His glorious accomplishments. And we know that we will not have to misspeak our Almighty God, as a crook or a clown, to offer what He never purposed to bestow.
Amos 8:11 Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD.

What a terrible condition for a land, a nation, a church or an individual to be in. Starving souls and a famine of hearing God’s word, that is, the preaching of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, “faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God”, says Paul. Then what else can this famine mean, what else can this famine produce, but a scarcity of faith? A deprivation of true spirituality imposed by God Himself.

Men imagine they can exercise faith as they please, by their own free will, but if God will not give it, nor the hearing of the gospel produce it, then not only is the gift withheld but, so too, is the means of revealing that gift. Men have neither faith in their hearts nor Jesus Christ, the object of faith, set before them in the gospel.

If God sends this famine it will not be broken by an evangelism committee or church-growth programme. Not all the plowing, sowing or watering, suppose we wet the ground with our tears, will cause such a famine to lift. Salvation is of the Lord!

“How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent?”

Lord, remember mercy. Send us preachers. Create in us a hunger and thirst after righteousness, and feed Thy people with the Bread of Life.
The gospel of God’s free and sovereign grace in Christ is a mystery hidden from the unregenerate man, hidden from every unbeliever, but revealed by His Spirit to His saints “To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.” There are three things revealed in this text.

The Riches Of Glory
First, all the riches promised, proclaimed, and presented to sinners in the gospel are in Christ. The riches of the gospel are spiritual riches. They are called, “The riches of the glory of this mystery” because the glory of the gospel is, in great measure, to be seen in the riches of grace it holds in store for sinners who trust Christ.

What are these riches? They are the rich truths of grace, compared to gold, silver, and precious stones, by which God builds His holy temple (1 Corinthians 3:11-16). They are the rich truths of the gospel; sovereign election, substitutionary redemption, almighty, irresistible, saving grace, and the infallible preservation of God’s saints in grace. The riches Paul speaks of are the rich treasures of grace laid up for sinners in Christ. In Christ there are immense and infinite treasures of grace laid up in store for God’s elect (John 1:16; Ephesians 1:3; Colossians 2:9, 10). All the promises of God, relating to this life and to the life to come, are in Christ yea and amen, sure and infallible. In Christ we have free justification (Romans 3:24-26), absolute pardon (Ephesians 1:7), complete reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:17), eternal adoption (1 John 3:1, 2), and eternal life (Romans 3:23).

The Glory Of The Gospel
Second, Christ is also the glory of the gospel. Read Colossians 1:27 again; “To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ …” The gospel is the revelation of the glory of God; and the glory of God is Christ. We see the glory of God in the face of the Lord.
Jesus Christ. That is to say, by faith in Christ every believer sees that which was revealed to Moses in Exodus 34: God’s glorious, sovereign goodness and inflexible justice in the exercise of His saving grace in Christ (Isaiah 45:20). God’s glory is known and revealed only in Christ, the incarnate God, the sinner’s Substitute (John 1:18; 17:3; 2 Corinthians 4:6).

**The Hope Of Glory**

Third, the believer’s hope of glory is Christ. “Christ in you, the hope of glory.” We live in hope of immortality and eternal life in heavenly glory. The basis, foundation, and ground of our hope is “Christ in you, the hope of glory.” That is the subject of this article. The glory which the saints will have with Christ will be the enjoyment of Him forever in heaven. This hope of glory in which we live is brought to light by the gospel.

Christ is our hope of glory. John Gill said, “Glory itself is in His hands. The gift of it is with Him and through Him. He has made way by His sufferings and death for the enjoyment of it, and is now preparing it for us by His presence and intercession. His grace makes us worthy of it. His righteousness gives us title to it. And His Spirit is the earnest of it.”

The hope of glory which we have in Christ is built upon Christ Himself alone. It is a hope founded upon His blood, righteousness, intercession, and grace. Here are ten facts revealed in the Scriptures which assure us that our hope of glory is a good, well-grounded, and sure hope. We hope to go to heaven when we die. But more, we hope for immortality and eternal life in glory with Christ because ...

1. **God Promises Glory To His Elect**

   It is written, “The Lord will give grace and glory” (Psalm 84:11). God promises to godly men and women not only spiritual life that now is, but also eternal life which is to come (1 Timothy 4:8). This promise of eternal life, life with Christ forever in glory, is the principle, all-encompassing promise of the gospel. It is the centre of all the promises of God. Indeed, all other blessings of grace terminate in this, “This is the promise that he promised us, even eternal life” (1 John 2:25). It is a promise made by God, who cannot lie, before the world began (Titus 1:2). This is a promise that can be depended upon. It is sure and certain. When this life is over God’s saints shall enter into eternal life in glory. “Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried,” when he has been proved by the trials and afflictions of life in this world, “he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him” (James 1:12). And the crown of life is the “crown of glory that fadeth not away” (1 Peter 5:4).

2. **God Prepared This Glory For His Elect**

   It is a glory unseen, unheard of, and inconceivable to the minds of men and women in this world. But it is a glory prepared by God for them that love Him (1 Corinthians 1:29). This preparation of eternal happiness was made for us before the world began.

   Heaven is a kingdom prepared for God’s elect from the foundation of the world (Matthew 25:34). It was prepared in the counsels and purposes of God, which cannot be defeated, frustrated, or made void by any means. And this kingdom of glory shall, most assuredly, be given to those men and women for whom it was prepared by God (Matthew 20:23). It will not be given to any but those for whom it was prepared. It cannot be purchased, earned, won, or in any way merited by the works of men. But it shall be given freely to those for whom God prepared it.

3. **God Prepared His Elect For Glory**

   Not only has God promised and prepared a kingdom of glory for His elect, but His elect are “vessels of mercy which he had afore prepared unto glory” (Romans 9:23). Every work of God’s grace is a preparatory work by which He prepares His people to enter into and enjoy everlasting glory.

   God prepared us unto glory in sovereign predestination, having ordained us unto eternal life. At God’s appointed “time of love” (Ezekiel 16:8), those who were ordained unto eternal life are given grace to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and effectually caused to come to Him in faith by the Spirit of grace (Acts 13:48; Psalm 65:4).

   Those whom God has ordained to eternal life and caused to believe on Christ shall most assuredly enjoy that life in eternity to which they were ordained from eternity. The means of bringing God’s elect into eternal life in glory as well as eternal life itself has been infallibly fixed by God’s decree (2 Thessalonians 2:13, 14).

   “God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation,” not from the beginning of your repentance, faith, and conversion, but from the beginning of time, from eternity. All who now believe, and all who ever shall believe were chosen by God to salvation before the world began.
The means by which God determined to save us is plainly revealed. “Through sanctification of the Spirit” that is regeneration. “And belief of the truth” that is faith in Christ. “Whereunto he called you by our gospel” that is the preaching of the gospel. The salvation and eternal life to which we have been elected, predestinated, and called is eternal glory “To the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.” We shall obtain that very same glory which Christ has entered into and now possesses. He has it in His hands to give to God’s elect (John 17:2). He declares that it is ours (John 17:5, 20). We have been predestinated to it (Romans 8:29). And we shall have it (Romans 8:28-31).

Here is a marvellous, golden chain of grace which cannot be broken. It begins in predestination and ends in glorification. “Whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified!”

4. The Hope Of Glory Is A Sure Hope
The hope of glory arises from the covenant of grace ordered in all things and sure (2 Samuel 23:5). The covenant of grace includes among its many blessings an everlasting inheritance of happiness and glory, and assures every believer of its possession (Ephesians 1:10-14). It is called a covenant of grace, because it arises from and is founded upon the pure, free grace of God in Christ and is filled with all the blessings of grace. In the Scriptures it is called the covenant of peace (Ezekiel 37:26), because it has for its end the restoration of sinners to God in peace and reconciliation by Christ (Malachi 2:5). And it is called the covenant of life for the same reason. It finds its full accomplishment in eternal life in glory.

It is a covenant ordered in all things and sure. Everything necessary for our spiritual and eternal welfare was provided and secured by our God in this covenant before the world was made (Ephesians 1:3-9). The blessings of the covenant are all that is involved in our salvation. It comprehends and secures everything respecting our spiritual happiness in this world and in the world to come.

This covenant of grace is all our desire. There is nothing good, nothing desirable for our souls’ everlasting happiness and glory, that is not provided and secured in the covenant. The hope of glory in which we now live arises from the covenant of grace made between God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit before the world began.

5. Our Hope Of Glory Is Not Vain
The suretyship engagements and performances of Christ as our Covenant Head and Representative assure us that our hope of glory is not vain. All that God promised and pledged to His elect in the covenant was made sure to us by Christ, the Surety of the covenant (Hebrews 7:22-25). Christ became a Surety for His people in the covenant of grace. As such, He pledged Himself not only to bring the blessings of grace to us in time, but also to bring us to glory in eternity. He pledged not only that He would bring us to Himself in faith and into the fold of His church upon earth, but also to set us before His Father’s face in heaven (John 10:16).

As Judah became surety for Benjamin (Genesis 43:9), promising to bring Him and set Him before the face of His father, Jacob, or bear the blame forever, so Christ, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, became Surety for God’s elect and promised to bring them, every one, to glory at last.

As our great Surety, Christ looked upon Himself as being under obligation to do everything required by the law, and justice, and mercy, and grace of God to bring us home to God in heaven. He became responsible to God for our everlasting salvation. Therefore, in the fulness of time, He came into the world to remove our sins, establish righteousness for us, and open the way before us unto God. He came that we might have life and that we might have it more abundantly (John 10:10). He came to give us a more excellent and abundant life than Adam had in innocence, or the angels have in heaven. He came to give us a life of glory with Himself.

Christ our Surety is “the hope of glory”. He is the Captain of our salvation. As such, He will bring many sons to glory and present them to the Father, saying, “Behold, I and the children whom God hath given me” (Hebrews 2:10-13). This is what the Apostle means when he says, “Wherefore he is able to save them to the uttermost that come to God by him”!

6. Our Hope Of Glory Is His Achievements
We are further assured of the hope of glory by Christ’s entrance into glory as our Forerunner (Hebrews 6:20). After His resurrection from the dead, the Lord Jesus Christ ascended up into heaven and entered into glory, not for Himself, but for us, as the Head and Representative of God’s elect, for whom He suffered, bled, and died upon the cursed tree. He entered into heaven as our Forerunner, took possession
of it in our name, and now appears in the presence of God for us (Hebrews 9:24). Our Redeemer’s representation of us in glory is so real a representation and so absolutely secures our entrance into glory with Him that we are said to be already seated together with Him in heavenly places (Ephesians 2:6).

7. Our Hope Of Glory Is Christ’s Intercession

The prayers and preparations of Christ for the future glory of His people assure us of the hope of glory. Our Saviour has gone to heaven to prepare a place for us (John 14:2). He says, “In my Father’s house are many mansions” that is, abiding houses of wealth, places filled with peace, joy, and happiness. “If it were not so, I would have told you.” If heavenly glory were nothing but a dream and vain delusion, I would have told you. I would not deceive you with a false hope. “I go to prepare a place for you.” Our all-glorious Saviour has gone to heaven, the Father’s house, to prepare a place for us, His beloved friends. Yes, heavenly glory is a kingdom prepared for us from the foundation of the world by the purpose and decree of God. Yet, it required another, fresh preparation by the bodily presence, blood atonement, and gracious intercession of Christ. Christ is in heaven preparing a place for chosen sinners. This is His particular business in heaven. He is preparing a place for us!

One great part of that preparation is our Saviour’s intercession to God on our behalf. Christ, our great High Priest, is making intercession to God on behalf of His elect, redeemed people. He is praying for the salvation of those who yet believe not (Hebrews 7:25), the non-imputation of sin to His erring people (1 John 2:1, 2), the spiritual unity of His church (John 17:21), the preservation of His elect (John 17:15), and the eternal happiness of His saints in heaven (John 17:24).

When our place in heaven is perfectly prepared for us and we for it, Christ will come to take us home to glory (John 14:3). “If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.” Sickness is but the voice of our Beloved calling us home. Death is the carriage He sends to take us home. Our departed brothers and sisters in Christ, our friends and companions in the kingdom of God are already there, at home with Christ in the Father’s house.

8. The Hope Of Glory Is Holy Ghost Inspired

The believer’s hope of glory is born in our souls by the effectual call of God the Holy Spirit. The apostle Paul admonished Timothy to “lay hold on eternal life”, to look for it, expect it, anticipate it, and believe that he would enter into it at last. The basis for his admonition was, “whereunto thou art also called” (1 Timothy 6:12).

Like Timothy, every believer has been called to eternal life and glory in Christ. Therefore, we are exhorted to “walk worthy of God, who hath called (us) unto his kingdom and glory” (1 Thessalonians 2:12). And we are assured that “the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus” (1 Peter 5:10) will bring us safely home to glory at last. Those whom He has called, He will also glorify. We are called to glory. And we shall enter glory by the grace of God.

9. The Hope Of Glory Has A Deposit

The hope of glory which we have in Christ is a good and lively hope because we have the earnest of the Spirit (2 Corinthians 5:5; Ephesians 1:14). The Holy Spirit has been given to us in regeneration as the earnest, the down-payment, the first instalment, of our inheritance in glory. We are sealed by Him until the day of our full redemption and entrance into everlasting glory. As surely as God has given us His Spirit, the earnest of our inheritance, in regeneration, He will also give us the fulness of our inheritance in Christ in glorification. The
Holy Spirit, and eternal life by His grace and power, is living water from a well, in the hearts of God’s saints, springing up into everlasting life in glory (John 4:14).

10. The Hope Of Glory Thrills God’s People
The hope of glory which we have in Christ fills the believer’s heart with desires for glory with Christ (Psalm 27:4). In this tabernacle of flesh we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with the perfection of everlasting glory in the presence of Christ, that mortality might be swallowed up of life (2 Corinthians 5:1-4). As we begin to apprehend the glory that awaits us, we desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better than anything we can experience in this world (Philippians 1:23). We choose rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord than to go on in this weak and sinful frame of flesh (2 Corinthians 5:8).

Those who die in faith die in happiness knowing they are going to a city whose Builder and Maker is God (Hebrews 11:3). They are confident, with David, that as God has guided them in life with His counsel, He will at the end of life receive them up to glory (Psalm 73:24). “For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens” (2 Corinthians 5:1).

How many saints have cried, as they were about to leave this world, “Glory! Glory! Glory!” as if seeing it and leaving this world to go to it. The infidels of this world think such men and women to be enthusiastic dreamers. But the believer looks with envy upon His departing friends, because we have within us the hope of glory to which they are gone.

The believer’s “hope of glory” is a matter of fact revealed in Holy Scripture. Believers, as soon as they depart from this world, are with Christ in glory. Those who die in Christ are truly blessed of God, from the moment of their death and forever. John Gill again says, “The angels stand around their dying beds waiting to do their office; and as soon as the soul is separated from the body, escort it through the regions of the air to heavenly bliss”. Lazarus, as soon as he died, was carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom (Luke 16:22). The penitent thief, on the day that he died by Christ’s side, was carried with Christ into Paradise (Luke 23:43). Every believer who has died in faith is now in heaven. And you and I, if we are born of God, if we live by faith in Christ, as soon as we die, shall be with Christ in glory!

The Welcome Approach of Death

1 WHEN Death his commission from God shall unfold
To a soul, to salvation made wise,
How sweet in the vision of faith to behold
A mansion prepared in the skies.

2 From Pisgah beholding that land of delight
Where joys everlasting flow,
He chides the dull moments, to hasten their flight,
For to glory he’s longing to go.

3 The rays of thy face cheer the valley so dark,
I come, O my Father, he cried,
While hither, and thither, the soul-cheering ark
Did the waters of Jordan divide.

4 Like Moses of old who to glory was kiss’d,
Without e’er a sob or a sigh,
His soul from the confines of flesh was dismiss’d,
’Twas his gain everlasting to die.

5 With a smile on his cheek, thus he yielded his breath,
And ascended the regions above,
Where sorrow ne’er enters, nor pain, sin, or death,
Swallow’d up in the ocean of love.

6 O Jesus! Thy presence in death let me have,
When my heart and my flesh shall give way;
Thou hast death overcome, thou hast hallow’d the grave,
And the summons I’ll gladly obey.

John Kent
There are and have been believers blessed with great assurance and confidence of their interest in Christ.

In the Scriptures we read about Job who said; “For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet I myself, in the flesh, will see the Lord.” Job had a strong assurance of his interest in God’s saving grace. “I know that my redeemer liveth.”

Then, the last words that king David spoke were these: “Although my house be not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he make it not to grow.” Again he said: “The Lord is my shepherd.” So, David had that kind of assurance. He had that confidence of a saving interest in God’s grace through Jesus Christ.

Then John, the apostle John, said: “We know, we know.” This is one of the key words of the first epistle of John; “we know; that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren.”

So, you can go through the Scriptures and you will find many people who have a strong confidence and a strong assurance of their personal interest in the Lord Jesus Christ. You will meet people today and you’ve met people in the past who said, “I know that my redeemer liveth. The Lord is my shepherd. God has redeemed me; I’m His child.”

But, there are some sincere believers, some people who love Christ who may at times have a strong assurance of their interest in Christ and yet, at other times are filled with many doubts and many fears concerning their relationship with the Son of God.

One of the best examples of that is John Newton, the great preacher and hymn writer. John Newton wrote the hymn Amazing Grace. It is full of great confidence in Christ. Listen:

Amazing grace
How sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me.
I once was lost,
But now am found,
Was blind, but now I see.

That’s assurance; that is confidence. But yet, Newton wrote another hymn that is not nearly so popular, not nearly so famous but an expression of his own inner feelings, just as much as his Amazing Grace. He also wrote the lines:

‘Tis a point I long to know
And often it gives me anxious thought,
Do I love the Lord or no?
Am I his or am I not?

So, here is a man who had at times great and strong confidence of his interest, his saving interest, in the Lord Jesus Christ, then at other times he struggled with this matter of assurance. He struggled with this matter of confidence.

I want to direct your thoughts to those who like Newton, have, at times, good confidence of their interest in Christ and yet, at other times are not quite so sure. People, perhaps you are one, who at times find their hearts full of fears and doubts about their relationship with the Lord.

I think our trouble is caused by one of four things. I think these cause our doubts and fear.

**We compare ourselves to the wrong people**

First, we compare ourselves with giants in the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. For example, we will study the life of a man like Abraham and we say: “Well, I can’t duplicate his feats. I can’t replicate his feats of faith so I must not be a son of God.”

Or, we look at the lives of such men as the apostle Peter or Paul or James, John, Samuel,
Isaiah, Jeremiah or Elijah, any of those great giants in the church of the Lord Jesus Christ and we say;

“Well, I just can’t measure up to those fellows; I certainly can’t come up to their great feats and works of faith, so I must not be a child of God.” So, that is one of our problems, we compare ourselves with the giants in the Word of God and we just don’t measure up.

Second, I will tell you another problem! Many of you read biographies. You have read the biography of George Whitfield. You read the biography of men like Luther, John Knox, David Brainerd, not realizing that the authors of these books are not going to show all the weaknesses of their heroes.

They are not going to show you the doubts and fears of these great men; they are going to show you their strong points so that when you read these biographies you get the opinion these fellows prayed all the time or preached all the time, or were in some kind of great spiritual revival all the time.

You rarely see their weak points, their low points. You rarely see them when they are not praying or preaching or witnessing, because those who write the biographies don’t want to emphasise these low points.

And so, we feel “Well, I’m not like that. I don’t get up every morning at 4:00am and pray.

I don’t preach somewhere five and six times a day and I don’t walk with God constantly in a frame of mind that’s always rejoicing, so I must not be saved.”

Well, it’s wrong to look at it that way. Unlike the biographies of men, the Word of God points out the weaknesses of God’s children. We see the weaknesses of Moses, of David, of Abraham. But, your biographies don’t do that; they make great heroes of all of these believers till you think they never had a doubt, never a fear, never a failure, never a low point and never did commit a sin.

Third, then, another problem we have is this, we look for a full harvest of fruit on a very young tree! Now, when a person comes to know the Lord Jesus Christ, he’s just a babe. He’s just a young tree; he’s just a young branch. You don’t expect to find a full harvest of fruit on a brand new tree or even one that is several years old. That person must grow. Give it a little time by God’s grace and the presence of God’s Spirit and you will see some fruit. You will see a manifestation of good fruit for the glory of God.

Perhaps there are times when we have great assurance. We are in the worship service and we are reading our Bibles, we are singing, we are witnessing, we are praying and we are fellowshipping with other believers and we just feel on the mountain top, we feel that God is good and God is near, and God is gracious, and we can say, “I know that my redeemer liveth” and then the next day we are down in the valley, in despondency and despair and doubts and fears, what has happened?

Fourth, we are looking at ourselves and comparing our own feelings. Perhaps our greatest fault is that we look for assurance and confidence somewhere other than the Word of God, somewhere other or besides the Word of Truth. Note this, the Word of God is our only infallible and certain foundation of assurance. Now, I know that feeling has a place. Somebody says: “Well, I feel saved.” Well, tomorrow you may not feel saved.

Or experience! We have a great experience; we experience the closeness of our Lord and the closeness of His spirit and the closeness of ourselves and the nearness of ourselves to Him, but tomorrow that experience may not be there. But, the Word of God is the same, like Christ, “the same yesterday, today, and forever.”

God said: “Heaven and earth shall pass away but not one jot or one tittle shall pass
from my Word until every bit of it is fulfilled." His Word never changes. His Word is actually the only true, infallible, certain, undeniable foundation or rock of assurance. Experience will fail you, feelings will fail you, and even works will fail, although they all have a place. But, true assurance and true confidence are born from a knowledge of and a confidence in the Word of God. God said it therefore I believe it. God cannot lie!

So, my assurance, my confidence of my salvation is in Christ. I’m redeemed because “he loved me and gave himself for me.” I’m redeemed because He went to the cross and bore my sins in His body on the tree and died that I may live. And at this moment, He is my High Priest and Mediator, interceding on my behalf in the presence of God, pleading not my works, but His wounds, not my deeds but His.

**Trusting God’s Promises**

How do I know that God will forgive sin? He says so in His Word. That is my confidence. How do I know that Jesus Christ is the only Saviour? How do I know that “there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby, we must be saved?” How do I know that? Because somebody said it? Well, they may be lying. No, I know it because God’s Word declares it: “he that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life.” Now, that’s my confidence and that’s my assurance; that’s the foundation of my faith.

I know that all who believe on Jesus Christ are saved because God told me that fact in His Word. I know that “if we confess our sins he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” How do I know that? There is just one source of information, God’s holy Word.

My friend; I know that the dead shall rise and I know that there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus. I know that “we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” And I know all of these things because God has declared it in His Word. That’s the foundation of faith, not the fruit; that’s the foundation, that’s the root of faith, the Word of God.

**Assurance of faith**

Let us put first things first. There’s the root and then there’s the fruit! The root of grace is God’s goodness to His people, and this is revealed in the Bible, His Word. He gives faith in Jesus Christ and confidence in His Word. That is the root of grace. The fruit of grace is works, healing, assurance and confident hope.

Look again at our text in Ephesians 1:13. “In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise.”

The Apostle Paul points out four things. He says: “You heard the word of truth.” He says: “You believed the gospel of your salvation.” He says: “You trusted the Lord Jesus.” Then he says: “You were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise.” Let us take these one at a time.

1. **You heard!**

First of all: Paul said: “You heard the word of truth”. And what is that truth? It is “The gospel of your salvation”. Preaching the Gospel of Christ is not just preaching about the Gospel it is preaching the Lord Jesus Christ who has saved His people from their sins. Paul said in Romans 1:16: “the gospel is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth.”

Listen to this: “God hath chosen by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe,” not the foolishness of singing, not the foolishness of visual aids, not the foolishness of chalk artists, not the foolishness of music. “God hath chosen by the foolishness of preaching,” not the preaching of foolishness, but the foolishness of preaching. “It’s foolishness to them that perish. It’s the wisdom of God to those who believe.”

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Preaching the Gospel is a soul-saving ordinance. Our Lord sent His disciples out and He said: “You go preach the gospel to every creature.” “He that believeth (that gospel) and is baptized shall be saved and he that believeth not shall be damned.” Do you hear what I am saying: “faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God?”

James said: “Of his own will begat he us with the Word of truth.” Paul said, “Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved but how shall they call on him in whom they have not believed and how shall they believe in him of whom they haven’t heard and how shall they hear without a preacher? How shall they preach unless they be sent?”

Today preaching has been relegated to the scrapheap. Preaching has been turned into a time of entertainment. It’s been turned over to a group of comedians. It’s been turned over to the healers and to all of these other things. Let me tell you this: the true prophet of God is still preaching the Gospel. He’s still lifting up the Lord Jesus Christ who said: “If I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.”

In every age God has had His preachers. In every age God has men who are faithful to the preaching of the Gospel. Elijah may ascend but his mantle falls on Elisha. Paul may die but Timothy preaches the Gospel. The true preacher of the Gospel of the Word of God has a claim on your attention for by the preaching of the Gospel men are saved. Without the preaching of the Gospel men are not going to be saved. They may be religious; they may enjoy religion and they may have a zeal for God but without the preaching of the Gospel and a revelation of the Holy Spirit in the heart, man will not be saved.

What is this Word of truth that you heard? Paul said: “You heard the Word of truth.” It is the Word of God! It is not human logic. I hear a lot of human logic today. “This is what tradition says or the philosopher said this.” I’m not interested in what the philosophers say or what tradition says or what human logic says; I’m interested in the Word of God.

Paul said: “Timothy; preach the word.” I’m not interested in speculation or men’s ideas; I’m interested in the Word of God. “It is the word of truth you heard, the Gospel of Christ.”

He said: “Brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached to you, that you received, which you believed, wherein you stand, by which you are saved: How that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures: And that he rose again and ascended to the right hand of God according to the scriptures.”

Our Gospel is Christ incarnate. The angel said to Joseph: “Mary will bring forth a son. Thou shalt call his name Jesus for he shall save his people from their sins.”

Our Gospel is Christ crucified: “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so, must the Son of man be lifted up that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life.”

Our Gospel is Christ risen: Paul said: “if he be not raised you are yet in your sins.” If He be not raised, I am a false witness of God. If He be not raised, those who are asleep in Christ will perish. If He be not risen: “we are yet in our sins and we are of all men most miserable.”

But, Christ has risen and then Christ ascended and Christ is interceding. He says: “Who can condemn me? Christ died, yea rather, is risen again who is ascended and seated at the right hand of God who ever liveth to make intercession for us.”

My friend, you heard! You can only give a reason for the hope that’s in you, if it’s a sure and certain reason, because it is what the word of God says. You heard the Word of truth.

2. You believed!

Secondly, the second word is believe! Paul said: “You heard the word, the gospel of your salvation.” He said: “Then you believed it.” Now, hearing is no good except it be received by faith. Hebrews 4:2 says this: “unto us was the gospel preached as well as unto them but the gospel preached unto them did not profit them.” They heard the Gospel too, just as you heard it, but “it didn’t profit them.” Why? “Not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.”

So, hearing is no good if you don’t have faith. Hearing won’t accomplish a thing if you don’t believe. Hearing will profit nothing if it’s not mixed with faith. Paul said in Hebrews 11:6: “without faith it’s impossible to please God.”

Faith embraces all of the Word of God. Faith says: “All scripture is given by inspiration of God and all scripture is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and instruction in righteousness.”

Faith says, “Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God.” I take all the Word of God by faith. Faith is not sight. We walk not by sight; we walk by faith.

We walk by a heart confident in God’s Word, not part of it, not the part of which we
approve or the part we understand, but we believe all the Word of God, “knowing that we see in part, we know in part, we prophesy in part: But when that which is perfect is come, we shall know as we have been known.” Faith is not judged by its quantity but by its quality. That's the reason the Centurion said: “Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.”

So, there you have two words, “you heard the Word of truth” and “you believed Jesus Christ, the gospel of your salvation”. Some of you have never heard it. Some of you have been going to church all of your lives, you have been programmed to death, you've never, really never, heard any teaching. You really don’t know anything about the word of God but some of you have heard the Gospel and you believe Him.

3. You trusted!
Now, watch the third word “and you trust him.”

Well, you say, trust is just another word for faith. You are right, it is. Trust is just another word for belief. You are right, it is. But trust implies more than belief and more than faith; it implies a commitment. Trust is a commitment, a surrender. Paul said: “I know whom I have believed and I'm persuaded he is able to keep that which I’ve committed unto him.” Paul said; “I heard and I believed and I believed he was able, but then I committed it to him.”

Abraham believed God but he still had to go out of his father’s house. Noah believed God but he still had to build an ark. Do you see what I am saying? Moses believed God but he still had to put the blood on the door.

So, you heard the Word, you believed the Word and then by God’s grace, you trusted, you committed it to Christ. It is faith that justifies the soul before God. It's obedience that justifies your faith before men. “Show me your faith without your works and I will show you my faith by my works.” So, we heard the Gospel and we believed the Gospel and we intelligently, willingly, and consciously, committed, trusted, and surrendered to the Lord Jesus Christ. We receive Him!

4. You were sealed!
Now, the fourth word: “And you were sealed, with the Holy Spirit of promise.”

In hearing and believing, our minds and hearts are active. “With the heart man believeth unto righteousness.” In trusting the Lord Jesus Christ my mind is active. He said: “If thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus to be Lord and believe in thine heart that God has raised him from the dead thou shalt be saved.”

“For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” I'm active in all those things. I heard, I believed, and I trusted by God’s grace. But notice, in this sealing it does not say that you sealed yourself, Paul says: “you were sealed, you heard, you believed, and you trusted.” But watch the difference in the expression: you were sealed by whom? “The Holy Spirit of promise.”

In this sealing I am passive; it’s the work of God's Spirit. In faith I do something; I believe. In faith, I will commit myself to Christ; I trust Him. In sealing, I receive something. God sealed me, God Almighty sealed me.

“Salvation is of the Lord.” It was God who gave us life. It was God who convicted us by His Spirit. It was God who baptized us into the body of Christ. It was God who sealed us by His Spirit.

It was God who taught us by His Spirit and produced the fruit of the Spirit and it is God who keeps us by His power through faith.

He said this: “I will make a covenant with them, an everlasting covenant. I will not turn away from them to do them good. I will put my fear in their hearts and they won’t turn away from me.” That's what our Lord said; “I won’t turn away from thee and they won’t turn away from me.”

We persevere in faith and we are preserved by the power of God, sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise! This is our confidence and all our assurance.

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“The Law of Christ”

Galatians 6:2

The Liberty Of
The Children Of God

Law, in Holy Scripture, often signifies doctrine, or teaching. The Law of Moses represented the teaching which God required Moses to enforce. “The Law of CHRIST” comprises the doctrine or teaching which was inculcated by CHRIST. Law enacted and promulgated by due authority, is designed to afford safe direction, and to minister to the well-being of those subjects. “The Law of CHRIST” contrasts favourably with the Law of Moses, in its nature and intention, even as CHRIST is every way superior to Moses. The Ten Commandments given at Sinai were in themselves holy, and just, and good; but, for fallen, rebel men, they were too holy, just, and good. They demanded that apostate Adam’s race should love the LORD GOD with all the heart, and strength, and soul, and mind, yet they conferred no grace for the fulfilment of these reasonable obligations. They thundered in his ears, “Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things which are written in the Book of the Law to do them.” Thus the moral law is accurately termed in Holy Scripture “the ministration of death” (2 Corinthians 3:7). That law being Divine, was “glorious”, but its glory was destined—to be done away” (3:7). “He taketh away the first that He may establish the second” (Hebrews 10:9).

Another law was to be revealed, whose nature, scope, and beneficent results should “exceed in glory”. The “Law of CHRIST” is that whose glory “excelleth all the glory of the Law of Works, because it is the Law of Love. The Law of Sinai exacted love, as a right, while it failed to beget love towards GOD in the heart. But the Law of CHRIST is conceived in a spirit of love, every ordinance of it constrains love in those who are the blessed subjects of its jurisdiction. It was in covenanted obedience to this law of heavenly love that CHRIST undertook the glorious work of our salvation. It was ineffable love that enabled Him to leave His FATHER’S bosom. It was redeeming love that constrained Him to lie down in the humble manger at Bethlehem, to spend nearly thirty years at Nazareth in meek subjection to MARY and JOSEPH, patiently to endure “such” contradiction of sinners against Himself” for upwards of three years more, to drink off the bitter curse-cup in Gethsemane, and to meritoriously die the accursed death of the cross on Calvary. “Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end”—or, as the place signifies, utterly. Oh, beloved, what think ye of CHRIST? Does His marvellously free, overflowing love quicken the affection of your souls, in adoring response? Is not the law of His love a yoke of ease and freedom? Truly, “His commandments are not grievous.” It is in reference to this Evangelical Law that we can spiritually adopt the exclamation of the devout Psalmist, “O how love I Thy law!”

And now let us trace the perfect exposition of this “Law of CHRIST” as it is—

1. The Law of His example.
2. The Law of His precept.
3. The Law of His Spirit.

Let not any believing reader take offence at hearing that he is in some sense “under law!” For, while it is blessedly true that, for justification before God he is in CHRIST righteous even as the vicarious Fulfiller of the moral law is Himself righteous, yet is he (together with the Apostle Paul) “not without law to God, but under (the) law to CHRIST” (1 Corinthians 9:21). The love of JESUS, is displayed in the work of redemption, is an all-ruling authority over the person, conduct, and character of a true-hearted believer with which no other conceivable law is comparable. This love-law of CHRIST may, as has been already observed, be discovered in—
1. **His Example.** The law of love dominated every action, word, and thought of the LORD JESUS. The four Gospels are the records of His perfect conformity to this heaven-born law. Whether we consider His service or His suffering, we are confronted by the same result. He was always the faultless model of JEHOVAH’S love.

What a touching example of love in service we have set down for our study and imitation, dear brethren, in John 13:15, where, after He stooped down to the menial ministry of washing the soiled feet of His disciples, He plaintively appeals to them, “I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.” Did love constrain the KING of kings thus to demean Himself? Surely, love for the brethren may well move us to take the lowest and last place in ministering to their needs. While the Law of Moses bids us love our neighbour as ourselves, it fails to inspire any such motive of love as does this exquisite example of JESUS.

Brethren, we ought to give ourselves more habitually to this work of washing one another’s feet! Love covers a multitude of sins—the sins of the brethren. Our own goings daily are very much defiled, and we do well, when we see a child of GOD “overtaken in a fault”, to restore such an one by ministering the cleansing Word to his burdened conscience. And then the solemn caution, “Considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted” (Galatians 6:1). Oh, let us seek to learn of CHRIST the secret of this blessed law of His!

From His suffering, however, as well as from His service, we may learn something of this delightful law. Thus the Apostle Peter enforces the lesson of our beloved LORD’S example in the furnace, “For even hereunto were ye called; because CHRIST also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow in His steps” (1 Peter 2:21). The disciple must, in some sense, drink of the same gall-cup as His Master. Paul refers to this very practical truth and fact when, writing to the Colossian believers, he speaks of filling up “that which is behind of the afflictions of CHRIST” in the flesh “for His Body’s sake, which is the Church” (Colossians 1:24). Here is the real test of the true believer’s obedience to the “Law of CHRIST.” Love to the LORD JESUS will powerfully actuate His whole-hearted brethren to suffer any amount of “hardness” for His dear sake. The legacy He has left His redeemed ones in this world is “tribulation” (John 16:33). Brethren, for us it is written, and Divine love penned every word of the sentence, “Unto you it is given in the behalf of CHRIST, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake” (Philippians 1:29). Ah, it was an experimental acquaintance with this selfsame law of love that prompted and enabled GOD’S servant of old graciously to affirm, “Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.” The Spirit-taught subject of the Law of CHRIST can look the blackest and most malignant of his soul’s enemies in the face, and, taking his GOD to witness, can conscientiously affirm “Princes have persecuted me without a cause; but my heart standeth in awe of Thy Word.” The example of CHRIST’S perfect patience, and filial submission to the FATHER’S afflictive will, stimulates endurance in His humble followers.

The experience of the tried apostles, as recorded in the Acts, was no mere, apostolic portion when they rejoiced “that they were counted worthy to suffer shame” for the adorable name of their SAVIOUR. The love of GOD shed abroad in the heart by the HOLY GHOST is strong as death—ah, stronger than “the second death”, for that was the love that was nailed to the tree, and refused to come down from the cross. The example of EMMANUEL, crucified, shows us above all things else, the wondrous nature of “the Law of CHRIST.

Yet, more, we learn the character of that blessed Law as CHRIST has revealed it by—

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*NEW FOCUS PRINTABLE EDITION DECEMBER 2014*
2. **His Precept.** His recorded words, as well as His personal example, proclaim His sweet law of liberty. Again and again, we hear His voice witnessing to the New Commandment. One of His sweet rebukes was addressed to cold-hearted professors, “Why call ye Me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things that I say?” (Luke 6:46). The things that He taught concerned an obedience which owed its spring and inspiration to loving devotion to Himself and His Divine will. His commandments are the test of our love. “He that hath My commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me” (John 14:21). And again, “He that loveth Me not, keepeth not My sayings” (v. 23). Compliance with His words, prompted by any other motive than spiritual love toward Himself is nothing better than “dead works” and a powerless “form of godliness”. On the other hand, the humblest, meanest service rendered in loving obedience to His will is accepted of Him as “of great price”, while he who thus keeps His commandments becomes the happy partaker of fuller manifestations of the Divine favour. “He that keepeth My commandments dwelleth in Him, and He in him. And hereby we know that He abideth in us, by the Spirit which He hath given us” (1 John 3:24). Yes, even so:—“This is the love of GOD, that we keep His commandments: and His commandments are not grievous” (1 John 5:3). Truly, truly, “in keeping” His commandments “there is a great reward” (Psalm 19:11).

But, there remains for us to spend a few moments on the last of the three proposed aspects of the “Law of CHRIST,” namely, as it is the Law of—

3. **His Spirit.** This presentation of the subject deeply concerns the experience of the man of GOD. It brings home to our hearts the all-constraining influence of the truth of CHRIST’S loving law. The Apostle Paul speaks of “The law of the Spirit of life in CHRIST JESUS” (Romans 8:2). It is the opposite of “the law of sin and death”—of the law which convicts of sin and passes a sentence of death. It is the law of the glorious liberty of the children of GOD. It is the law under which CHRIST fulfilled His blessed mission on earth. It fully breathes His mind. Fellowship of life and habit on our part, beloved brethren—fellowship with the LORD JESUS in regard to this Law of the SPIRIT—is the will of GOD concerning us, for He has predestinated us to be “conformed to the image of His SON” (Romans 8:29). Hence the exhortation, “Let this mind be in you, which was also in CHRIST JESUS” (Philippians 2:5). The HOLY SPIRIT can alone beget in our poor hearts a ready response to the behests of this law of true liberty, which is holy in all its requirements, and sanctifying in its practical results upon us. If we would walk in the light, “as He is in the light”, it must needs be that we honour the Law of the SPIRIT of LIFE in CHRIST JESUS. According to that Evangelical Law, the will of the FATHER concerning us must be our supreme delight. It was the knowledge that in all things He pleased His FATHER in heaven that JESUS, as SON of Man on earth, enjoyed absolute freedom in His spirit. Oh, brethren, let us seek all-sufficient grace to learn of our LORD JESUS CHRIST how to walk and to please GOD in all things. We shall, of course, often fall far, far short of the standard of our GREAT EXEMPLAR; yet there is still available the fountain opened for sin and separation in which to wash our feet day by day; and however faint, and weary, and disappointed we may be in following the LAMB, let us still pursue the blessed footsteps of His most holy life. We may be but babes in grace, only weak lambs in the blood-ransomed flock, nevertheless it is often true that the weak come off more than conquerors, and that “the lame take the prey”. The SPIRIT of LIFE administers a law which knows no failure in its execution, so that, while we frail ones come short in ourselves, we need not fear any evil, nor dread confusion of face at the last.

As surely as He overcame
And triumphed once for you,
So surely you that trust His Name
Shall triumph in Him too.

And then, finally, this “Law of CHRIST”, unlike all other laws, is an abiding authority. Its provisions and sanctions are destined to run coevally with the blissful days of eternity. The Law of LOVE Divine is not subject to be repealed or to become effete. The glorified people of GOD will not outlive their interest in this paternal, inexhaustible, Covenant Law. Thus, then, beloved in CHRIST JESUS, let us be very diligent in meditating in this perfect law, in desiring personal conformity to its blessed requirements, and in reaping a full measure of its all-satisfying benefits. Ah, yes, our constant, fervent, one petition may well be, “Let Thy tender mercies come unto me, that I may live; for Thy law is my delight.”
While visiting Germany, Frances Ridley Havergal once viewed a painting of Christ wearing His crown of thorns in the study of a German minister. Under the painting were the words: “This have I done for thee; what hast thou done for Me?” Frances was deeply moved, and wrote the words to the hymn, “I Gave My Life For Thee.” Thinking her poem was not good enough, she threw it into a fireplace, but instead of burning it rolled out of the fire unharmed. She kept it, and later showed it to her father, who encouraged her to use it and wrote the first music for it.

“I Did This for Thee; What Hast Thou Done for Me?”

I gave My life for thee,  
My precious blood I shed,  
That thou might’st ransomed be,  
And quickened from the dead.  
I gave My life for thee;  
What hast thou given for Me?  

I spent long years for thee  
In weariness and woe,  
That an eternity  
Of joy thou mightest know.  
I spent long years for thee;  
Hast thou spent one for Me?  

My Father’s home of light,  
My rainbow-circled throne,  
I left, for earthly night,  
That an eternity of joy thou mightest know.  
I left it all for thee;  
Hast thou left aught for Me?  

I suffered much for thee,  
More than thy tongue may tell,  
Of bitterest agony,  
To rescue thee from hell.  
I suffered much for thee;  
What canst thou bear for Me?  

And I have brought to thee,  
Down from My home above,  
Salvation full and free,  
My pardon and My love.  
Great gifts I brought to thee;  
What hast thou brought to Me?  

Oh, let thy life be given,  
Thy years for Him be spent,  
World-fetters all be riven,  
And joy with suffering blent;  
I gave Myself for thee:  
Give thou thyself to Me!

Galatians 2:20  
1 Peter 1:19  
Ephesians 1:7  
Ephesians 2:1  
Titus 2:14  
John 21:15-17  
1 Timothy 1:15  
Isaiah 53:3  
John 17:24  
John 16:22  
John 1:10, 11  
1 Peter 4:2  
John 17:5  
Revelation 4:3  
Philippians 2:7  
Matthew 8:20  
2 Corinthians 8:9  
Luke 10:29  
Isaiah 53:5  
Matthew 26:39  
Luke 22:44  
Romans 5:9  
1 Peter 2:21-24  
Romans 8:17, 18  
John 4:10,14  
John 3:13  
Revelation 21:6  
Acts 5:31  
Psalm 68:18  
Romans 12:1  
Romans 6:13  
2 Corinthians 5:15  
Philippians 3:8  
1 Peter 4:13-16  
Ephesians 5:2  
Proverbs 23:26

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Establishing priorities
Way up on John Gill’s list of priorities for establishing himself as pastor and putting the church in his charge on a sound basis was the clear need for a confession of faith anchored in the Scriptures. Good as the Particular Baptists declarations of faith of the previous century were, they had ceased to mark off the Particulars from the Generals and were now given little attention. Furthermore, in an effort to establish themselves as a respectable branch of the ecclesiastical establishment, the Baptists had adorned themselves with Presbyterian and Congregational colours in basically adopting the Westminster and Savoy Confessions. It was now time for them to stand on their own feet. Besides, Presbyterianism was on the wane and was rapidly turning into Unitarianism. The Particular Baptists could only spoil their testimony and outreach if they remained under the Presbyterian shadow. Thomas Crosby, an avowed opponent of what he called ‘explicit creeds’, is typical of the anti-credal thinking that was opening the doors to Arianism and Arminianism before Gill’s reforms. Baptist historian Ivimey, commenting on Crosby’s anti-credalism, says, “This is one of many instances of his attempting to amalgamate all the Baptists into one denomination, and therefore he has endeavoured to prevent the General and the Particular Baptists from being...
distinguished!" Indeed, a general scorn of creeds was manifested in the Baptist churches at this time because of a fear that they would prevent spiritual renewal and liberalisation. Gill knew what this would mean. He had been called to the pastorate of Goat Yard in 1719, the year of the Salters' Hall Trinitarian controversy and it was all too evident that heretics such as John Gale, James Foster, Matthew Caffyn and William Whiston had taken advantage of this apathy to statements of faith in spreading their Arianism in the Baptist churches, whether General or Particular. The Lorimers' Hall Association meeting, with Stinton playing a major role had rejected the doctrine of imputation and ushered in Neonomian thinking. Gill knew it was little use his preaching sound doctrine when his hearers had no compendium of standards or background of Biblical teaching by which they could speedily test the validity of his message.

Rippon stresses that Gill's members were 'cordially one' with their pastor in drawing up a statement of faith, indeed, it seems most likely that the idea of such a declaration came from within the membership as seven weeks before the confession was agreed upon, an entry in the Church Book states:

"yt (that) a Declaration of ye faith & practice of the Church be drawn up by Bro. Gill to be read & assented to by members at their admission, instead of yt which was formerly called ye Church Covenant."

It must also be born in mind that the old church covenant under Keach, contained elements such as the reception of the Spirit through the laying on of hands which could not now be accepted by the members.

The Goat Yard Declaration
The confession, as written in the church book, reads:

A Declaration of the Faith and Practice of the Church of Christ at Horsely-down, under the Pastoral Care of Mr. John Gill, &c..
Having been enabled, through divine grace, to give up ourselves to the Lord, and likewise to one another by the will of God; we account it a duty incumbent upon us to make a declaration of our faith and practice, to the honour of Christ, and the glory of his name: knowing, that as with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, so with the mouth confession is made unto salvation - our declaration is as follows:-

I. We believe that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament are the word of God, and the only rule of faith and practice.

II. We believe that there is but one only living and true God; that there are three Persons in the Godhead, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, who are equal in nature, power, and glory; and that the Son and the Holy Ghost are as truly and as properly God as the Father.

III. We believe that, before the world began, God did elect a certain number of men unto everlasting salvation, whom he did predestinate to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ, of his own free grace, and according to the good pleasure of his will:1 and that, in pursuance of this gracious design, he did contrive and make a covenant of grace and peace with his Son Jesus Christ, on the behalf of those persons, wherein a Saviour was appointed, and all spiritual blessings provided for them; as also that their persons, with all their grace and glory, were put into the hands of Christ, and made his care and charge.

IV. We believe that God created the first man, Adam, after his own image, and in his likeness; an upright, holy, and innocent creature, capable of serving and glorifying him; but, he sinning, all his posterity sinned in him, and came short of the glory of God: the guilt of whose sin is imputed, and a corrupt nature derived, to all his offspring, descending from him by ordinary and natural generation: that they are by their first birth carnal and unclean, averse to all that is good, uncapable of doing any, and prone to every sin; and are also by nature children of wrath, and under a sentence of condemnation, and so are subject not only to a corporal death, and involved in a moral one, commonly called spiritual, but are also liable to an eternal death, as considered in the first Adam, fallen and sinners; from all which there is no deliverance but by Christ, the second Adam.

1 The words in italics were added on later occasions as the church was confronted with errors such as those of the Sabellians and Socinians. During Gill's pastorate the churches were plagued with those who taught Christ's pre-incarnate human nature.
V. We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ, being set up from everlasting as the Mediator of the new covenant, and he, having engaged to be the surety of his people, did, in the fulness of time, really assume human nature, and not before, neither in whole nor in part; his human soul, being a creature, existed not from eternity, but was created and formed in his body by him that forms the spirit of man within him, when that was conceived in the womb of the virgin; and so his human nature consists of a true body and a reasonable soul, both which, together, and at once, the Son of God assumed into union with his divine Person, when made of a woman, and not before; in which nature he really suffered and died as their substitute, in their room and stead, whereby he made all that satisfaction for their sins, which the law and justice of God could require, as well as made way for all those blessings, which are needful for them both for time and eternity.

VI. We believe that that eternal redemption which Christ has obtained, by the shedding of his blood, is special and particular, that is to say, that it was only intentionally designed for the elect of God, and sheep of Christ, who only share the special and peculiar blessings of it.

VII. We believe that the justification of God's elect is only by the righteousness of Christ imputed to them, without the consideration of any works of righteousness done by them; and that the full and free pardon of all their sins and transgressions, past, present, and to come, is only through the blood of Christ, according to the riches of his grace.

VIII. We believe that the work of regeneration, conversion, sanctification, and faith, is not an act of man's free will and power, but of the mighty, efficacious, and irresistible grace of God.

IX. We believe that all those who are chosen by the Father, redeemed by the Son, and sanctified by the Spirit, shall certainly and finally persevere, so that not one of them shall ever perish, but shall have everlasting life.

X. We believe that there will be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust; and that Christ will come a second time to judge both quick and dead, when he will take vengeance on the wicked, and introduce his own people into his kingdom and glory, where they shall be for ever with him.

XI. We believe that Baptism and the Lord's Supper are ordinances of Christ, to be continued until his second coming; and that the former is absolutely requisite to the latter; that is to say, that those only are to be admitted into the communion of the church, and to participate of all ordinances in it, who upon profession of their faith, have been baptized by immersion, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

XII. We also believe that singing of psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, vocally, is an ordinance of the Gospel to be performed by believers; but that as to time, place, and manner, every one ought to be left to their liberty in using it.

Now all, and each of these doctrines and ordinances, we look upon ourselves under the greatest obligations to embrace, maintain, and defend; believing it to be our duty to stand fast, in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the Gospel.

And whereas we are very sensible, that our conversation, both in the world and in the church, ought to be as becometh the Gospel of Christ, we judge it our incumbent duty to walk in wisdom towards them that are without, to exercise a conscience void of offence towards God and men, by living soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.

And as to our regards to each other, in our church-communion, we esteem it our duty to walk with each other in all humility and brotherly love: to watch over each other's conversation; to stir up one another to love and good works; not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as we have opportunity, to worship God according to his revealed will; and, when the case requires, to warn, rebuke, and admonish one another, according to the rules of the Gospel.

Moreover, we think ourselves obliged to sympathize with each other, in all conditions, both inward and outward, which God, in his providence, may bring us into; as also to bear with one another's weaknesses, failings, and infirmities, and particularly to pray for one another, and that the Gospel and the ordinances thereof might be blessed to the edification and comfort of each other's souls, and for the gathering in of others to Christ, besides those who are already gathered - all which duties we desire to be found in the performance of, through the gracious assistance of the Holy Spirit, whilst we both admire and adore the grace which has given us a place and a name in God's house, better than that of sons and daughters.
The importance of the Goat Yard Declaration

This statement of faith obviously serves three functions, it gives a comprehensive survey of the faith every Baptist ought to have within him, it warns against re-occurring dangers in the Baptist churches especially regarding the Word of God, the Persons of the Trinity, the Work of Christ imputed to His Bride and the design of God in atonement. It also stresses the duties and obligations of the Christian in service and prayer to take care not only of his own soul but watch lovingly over those of his fellow-believers and those of the still unsaved.

The declaration was thus not merely a ‘statement of faith’ but a course of Christian action, outlining what the churches ministry was to the outside world. Former creeds had spoken much of ‘faith and order’. Gill’s church spoke of ‘faith and practice’ or ‘faith and works’, so that Rippon could add to his 1800 reprint of the 1729 Declaration:

... few are the formulas which have at any time been more closely united with duty. The term and the thing are remarkable, in this confession - and no man was more fond of either in their proper place, and fairly understood.

The 1729 declaration has had a success which surpasses that of most if not all former Baptist confessions. Though the Second London Confession is receiving renewed interest today, it is not a confession that has been integrated into private church statements of faith for any long period of time. Almost a hundred years after its compilation, however, the Goat Yard Declaration was still given to new members for careful study and they were accepted only upon agreement with the statement of faith contained in its articles. Numerous other Particular Baptist churches have kept a strict allegiance to these articles over the centuries and even today those churches affiliated to the Gospel Standard have a statement of faith which is still almost verbatim to that of the Goat Yard confession, being extended as new doctrinal problems arose.

3 See John R. Broome’s booklet entitled Dr. John Gill for a most positive appraisal of Gill’s faith and teaching. Also What Gospel Standard Baptists Believe, Gospel Standard Trust Publications.
The Bible Teaches

We invite you to read carefully the following Scriptures and consider their meaning. It is our prayer that the Holy Spirit will open your eyes to see the purpose of our Sovereign Lord as the moving power in the glorious gospel of God’s free grace in Christ.

Divine Calling
To call is to assume authority over that which is named as when Adam named every beast, God changed Jacob’s name to Israel and Simon was renamed Peter by the Lord Jesus. Calling designates or characterizes what is. It is to affirm to be, or in God’s case Divinely summon and is the state of being divinely called (Webster).

Romans 1:6 “Among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ” (vv 5,7).
Romans 8:28 “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose” (v 30).
1 Corinthians 1:24 “But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God” (vv. 9, 26, 27; Colossians 3:15).
1 Timothy 6:12 “Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called.”
Galatians 1:15,16 “But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb, and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me.” (Not until it pleases God are any awakened and saved—Acts 13:2).
1 Peter 5:10 “But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus.”
Acts 2:39 “For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.”

Divine Appointment
Appoint is to fix, to settle, to establish or fix by decree or decision (Webster).
1 Peter 2:8 “And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.”
1 Thessalonians 5:9 “For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ” (3:3; Acts 22:10; Psalm 79:11).
Job 14:5 “Seeing his days are determined, the number of his months are with thee, thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass” (23:14).

adapted from God’s Indisputable Sovereignty (Chapel Library)
THE BIBLE TEACHES DIVINE CALLING

Acts 17:26 “And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation.”

Proverbs 31:8 “Open thy mouth for the dumb in the cause of all such as are appointed to destruction.”

1 Kings 20:42 “Thus saith the LORD, Because thou hast let go out of thy hand a man whom I appointed to utter destruction.”

**Divine Ordination**

To ordain is to decree, to appoint, to arrange, to prepare (Webster).

Jude 4 “For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation.”

Acts 13:48 “And as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.”

Ephesians 2:10 “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them” (1:4).

Habakkuk 1:12 “Art thou not from everlasting ... we shall not die. O LORD, thou hast ordained them for judgment; and, O mighty God, thou has established them for correction” (Romans 13:1; 1 Corinthians 2:7).

**Divine Predestination**

The decree of God by which He has, from eternity unchangeably, appointed or determined whatever comes to pass. It is used particularly to denote the preordination of men to everlasting happiness or misery and is a part of the unchangeable plan of the Divine government; in other words, the unchangeable purpose of an unchangeable God (Webster).

Romans 8:29, 30 “For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate ... Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called.”

Ephesians 1:5 “Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.”

Ephesians 1:11 “In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will” (Isaiah 46:9, 10).

John 6:37 “All that the Father giveth me shall come to me” (v. 39).

John 6:44 “No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him” (vv. 64, 65).
December 1

“He hath made him to be sin for us”

2 Corinthians 5:21

In order to save me, the Lord Jesus Christ was made to be sin for me. The Son of God voluntarily took upon Himself that horrible, ugly, ignominious thing which He most hates: sin. O my soul, be forever astonished! The God-man became sin for me, that I might be made the righteousness of God in Him!

A Door Opened For Sinners

When He was made to be sin for me, my sins were imputed to Him; He was treated as the obnoxious thing itself, and suffered all the wrath of God due to me for my sin. The Father forsook Him. Justice was executed upon Him. And when the infinite justice of God had spent itself upon the sinners’ Substitute, a door was opened in heaven for sinners, whereby we may draw near to God (Hebrews 10:19-23).

“For Us”

Christ was made to be sin “for us”. That little word “us” is very important. Every time the Bible sets forth the glorious, gospel doctrine of substitutionary redemption, every time the Word of God explains the meaning of Christ’s death and the atonement He made for sinners at Calvary, it speaks of His work as something done for a specific people, by which He accomplished the eternal redemption and secured the everlasting salvation of a specific people called “us”. The Son of God was made to be sin for, and redeemed, “us”. “Us” whom He came to save (Matthew 1:21). “Us” His church and espoused bride (Ephesians 5:25-27). “Us” for whom He prays (John 17:9, 20). “Us” who are the elect of God (Ephesians 1:3-6). “Us” who come to God by Him (Hebrews 7:25). “Us” who, walking in the light of the gospel, believe on Him (1 John 1:7, 9).

Like all the other blessings of grace, redemption is for God’s elect alone. If Christ were Surety and Substitute for all men, then all men must be saved. Had He paid the debt of all men, then none could ever suffer the wrath of God for sin. Justice would not allow it. But that He did not do. Jesus Christ died for us. He died for me and paid my debt in full. How I rejoice to know that I shall, therefore, never be called to account for myself.

Security In Christ

I know that Christ died for me because I trust Him. My faith in Him which is the gift of His Spirit, is the result of His death for me (Galatians 3:13, 14). Oh, how the Son of God must love me (1 John 4:9, 10). Oh, how I ought to love Him! Now, in Him I am absolutely safe and secure. Christ has magnified the law and made it honourable for me. He has put away my sin. This sinner, for whom the Son of God was made to be sin, can never be charged with sin again (Romans 4:8; 8:34).

He bore that I might never bear His Father’s righteous ire!

In Him, God is both just and the justifier of this sinner, who believes on his Son (Romans 3:24-26).

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