

FAITH AND REGENERATION**NO. 979**

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves Him who begot loves Him also who is begotten of Him.”
1 John 5:1.*

FOR the preacher of the Gospel to make full proof of his ministry will be a task requiring much Divine teaching. Besides much care in the manner and spirit, he will need guidance as to his matter. One point of difficulty will be to preach the whole Truth in fair proportion, never exaggerating one doctrine, never enforcing one point at the expense of another, never keeping back any part, nor allowing it undue prominence. For practical result much will depend upon an equal balance and a right dividing of the word.

In one case this matter assumes immense importance because it affects vital Truths of God, and may lead to very serious results unless rightly attended to. I refer to the elementary facts involved in the work of Christ for us, and the operations of the Holy Spirit in us. Justification by faith is a matter about which there must be no obscurity, much less equivocation. And at the same time we must distinctly and determinately insist upon it that regeneration is necessary to every soul that shall enter Heaven.

“You must be born again” is as much a Truth as that clear Gospel statement, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” It is to be feared that some zealous Brethren have preached the doctrine of justification by faith not only so boldly and so plainly, but also so badly and so out of all connection with other Truth, that they have led men into presumptuous confidences and have appeared to lend their countenance to a species of Antinomianism very much to be dreaded.

From a dead, fruitless, inoperative faith we may earnestly pray, “Good Lord, deliver us,” yet may we be unconsciously fostering it. Moreover, to stand up and cry, “Believe, believe, believe,” without explaining what is to be believed. To lay the whole stress of salvation upon faith without explaining what salvation is, and showing that it means deliverance from the *power* as well as from the *guilt* of sin—may seem to a fervent revivalist to be the proper thing for the occasion—but those who have watched the result of such teaching have had grave cause to question whether as much hurt may not be done by it as good.

On the other hand, it is our sincere conviction that there is equal danger in the other extreme. We are most certain that a man must be made a new creature in Christ Jesus, or he is not saved. But some have seen so clearly the importance of this Truth that they are forever and always dwelling upon the great *change* of conversion—its fruits, and its consequences—and they hardly appear to remember the glad tidings that whoever *believes* on Christ Jesus has everlasting life.

Such teachers are apt to set up so high a standard of *experience*, and to be so exacting as to the marks and signs of a true born child of God, that they greatly discourage sincere seekers and fall into a species of legality from which we may again say, “Good Lord, deliver us.” Never let us fail most plainly to testify to the undoubted Truth of God that true faith in Jesus Christ saves the soul! If we do not, we shall hold in legal bondage many who ought long ago to have enjoyed peace, and to have entered into the liberty of the children of God.

It may not be easy to keep these two things in their proper position, but we must aim at it if we would be wise builders. John did so in his teaching. If you turn to the third chapter of his Gospel it is very significant that while he records at length our Savior’s exposition of the new birth to Nicodemus, yet in that very same chapter he gives us what is perhaps the most plain piece of Gospel in all the Scriptures—“And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up: that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.”

So, too, in the chapter before us he insists upon a man's being born of God. He brings that up again and again, but evermore does he ascribe wondrous efficacy to faith. He mentions faith as the index of our being born again, faith as overcoming the world, faith as possessing the inward witness, faith as having eternal life—indeed, he seems as if he could not heap honor enough upon *believing*, while at the same time he insists upon the grave importance of the inward experience connected with the new birth.

Now, if such a difficulty occurs to the *preacher*, we need not wonder that it also arises with the hearer, and causes him much questioning. We have known many who, by hearing continually the most precious doctrine that belief in Christ Jesus is saving, have forgotten other Truths of God, and have concluded that they were saved when they were not. They have fancied they believed when as yet they were total strangers to the experience which always attends true faith. They have imagined faith to be the same thing as a presumptuous confidence of safety in Christ—not grounded upon the Divine Word when rightly understood—nor proved by any facts in their own souls.

Whenever self-examination has been proposed to them they have avoided it as an assault upon their assurance, and when they have been urged to try themselves by Gospel tests, they have defended their false peace by the notion that to raise a question about their certain salvation would be unbelief. Thus, I fear, the conceit of supposed faith in Christ has placed them in an almost hopeless position. To them the warnings and admonitions of the Gospel have been set aside by their fatal persuasion that it is needless to attend to them.

They think it only necessary to cling tenaciously to the belief that all has been done long ago for us by Christ Jesus, and that godly fear and careful walking are superfluities, if not actually an offense against the Gospel. On the other hand, we have known others who have received the doctrine of justification by faith as a part of their creed, and yet have not accepted it as a practical fact that the Believer is saved. They so much feel that they must be renewed in the spirit of their minds, that they are always looking within themselves for evidences, and are the subjects of perpetual doubts. Their natural and frequent song is—

*‘Tis a point I long to know,
Oft it causes anxious thought.
Do I love the Lord, or no?
Am I His, or am I not?’*

These are a class of people to be much more pitied than condemned. Though I would be the very last to spread unbelief, I would be the very first to inculcate holy anxiety. It is one thing for a person to be careful to know that he is really in Christ, and quite another thing for him to doubt the *promises of Christ*—supposing that they are not really made to him. There is a tendency in some hearts to look too much within, and spend more time in studying their outward evidences and their inward feelings, than in learning the fullness, freeness, and all sufficiency of the Grace of God in Christ Jesus.

They too much obscure the grand evangelical Truth that the Believer's acceptance with God is not in *himself*, but in Christ Jesus—that we are cleansed through the blood of Jesus, that we are clothed in the righteousness of Jesus—and are, in a word, “accepted in the Beloved.” I earnestly long that these two doctrines may be well balanced in your souls. Only the Holy Spirit can teach you this. This is a narrow path which the eagle's eye has not seen, and the lion's whelp has not trod. He whom the Holy Spirit shall instruct will not give way to presumption and despise the Spirit's work within, neither will he forget that salvation is of the Lord Jesus Christ, “who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.”

The text appears to me to blend these two truths in a very delightful harmony, and we will try to speak of them, God helping us. “He that believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.” We shall consider this morning, first of all, *the believing which is here intended*. And then, secondly, *how it is a sure proof of regeneration*. And then, thirdly, dwelling for awhile upon the closing part of the verse we shall *show how it becomes an argument for Christian love*—“Everyone that loves Him who begot loves Him also who is begotten of Him.”

I. WHAT IS THE BELIEVING intended IN THE TEXT? We are persuaded, first of all, that *the believing here intended is that which our Lord and His Apostles exhorted men to exercise*, and to which the promise of salvation is always appended in the Word of God. As, for instance that faith which Peter inculcated when he said to Cornelius, “To Him give all the Prophets witness, that through His name whoever believes in Him shall receive remission of sins.” And which our Lord commanded when He came into Galilee, saying to men, “Repent, and believe in the Gospel” (Mark 1:15).

Certain persons have been obliged to admit that the Apostles commanded, exhorted, and besought men to believe, but they tell us that the kind of believing which the Apostles bade men exercise was not a *saving* faith.

Now God forbid we should ever, in our zeal to defend a favorite position, be driven to an assertion so monstrous! Can we imagine for a moment Apostles with burning zeal and ardor, inspired by the Spirit of God within them, going about the world exhorting men to exercise a faith which, after all, would not save them? To what purpose did they run on so fruitless an errand, so tantalizing to human need, so barren of results?

When our Lord bade His disciples go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature, and added, “he that believes and is baptized shall be saved,” the faith which was to be preached was evidently none other than a saving faith, and it is frivolous to say otherwise. I must confess that I felt shocked the other day to read in a certain sermon the remark that the words of Paul to the jailor, “were spoken in a conversation held at midnight under peculiar circumstances, and the Evangelist who wrote them was not present at the interview.”

Why, had it been at high noon, and had the whole world been present, the Apostle could have given no fitter answer to the question, “What must I do to be saved?” than the one he did give, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved”! It is, I repeat, a mere frivolity, or worse, to say that the faith enjoined by the Apostles was a mere human faith which does not save, and that there is no certainty that such faith saves the soul. That cause must be desperate which calls for such a defense.

Furthermore, *the faith here intended is the duty of all men*. Read the text again—“Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.” It can never be less than man’s duty to believe the Truth of God. That Jesus is the Christ is the Truth, and it is the duty of every man to believe it. I understand here by “believing,” confidence in Christ, and it is surely the duty of men to confide in that which is worthy of confidence. That Jesus Christ is worthy of the confidence of all men is certain—it is therefore the duty of men to confide in Him. Inasmuch as the Gospel command, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved,” is addressed by Divine authority to every creature, it is the duty of every man to do so.

What says John—“This is His commandment, That we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and our Lord Himself assures us, He that believes on Him is not condemned: but he that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the Only-Begotten Son of God.” I know there are some who will deny this, and deny it upon the grounds that man has not the spiritual ability to believe in Jesus, to which I reply that it is altogether an error to imagine that the measure of the sinner’s moral *ability* is the measure of his *duty*.

There are many things which men ought to do which they have now lost the moral and spiritual—though not the physical power to do. A man ought to be chaste, but if he has been so long immoral that he cannot restrain his passions, he is not thereby free from the obligation! It is the duty of a debtor to pay his debts, but if he has been such a spendthrift that he has brought himself into hopeless poverty, he is not thereby exonerated from his debts! Every man ought to believe that which is true, but if his mind has become so depraved that he loves a lie and will not receive the Truth, is he thereby excused?

If the Law of God is to be lowered according to the moral condition of sinners, you would have a Law graduated upon a sliding-scale to suit the degrees of human sinfulness. In fact, the worst man would then be under the least Law, and become, consequently, the least guilty! God’s requirements would be a variable quantity, and, in truth, we should be under no rule at all. The command of Christ stands good however bad men may be, and when He commands all men everywhere to repent, they are *bound* to repent, whether their sinfulness renders it impossible for them to be willing to do so or not.

In every case it is man’s duty to do what God bids him. At the same time, *this faith, wherever it exists, is in every case, without exception, the gift of God and the work of the Holy Spirit*. Never yet did a man believe in Jesus with the faith here intended, except the Holy Spirit led him to do so. He has worked all our works in us, and our faith, too. Faith is too celestial a Grace to spring up in human nature till it is renewed—faith is in every Believer “the gift of God.” You will say to me, “Are these two things consistent?” I reply, “Certainly, for they are both true.” “How consistent?” you say. “How inconsistent?” say I, and you shall have as much difficulty to prove them inconsistent as I to prove them consistent.

Experience makes them consistent, if theory does not. Men are convicted of sin by the Holy Spirit. “Of sin,” says Christ, “because they believe not on Me.” Here is one of the Truths of God. But the selfsame hearts are taught by the

same Spirit that faith is of the operation of God (Col. 2:12). Brethren, be willing to see both sides of the shield of Truth. Rise above the babyhood which cannot believe two doctrines until it sees the connecting link. Have you not two eyes? Must you put one of them out in order to see clearly? Is it impossible to you to use a spiritual binocular, and look at two views of Truth until they melt into one, and that one becomes more real and actual because it is made up of two?

Many men refuse to see more than one side of a doctrine and persistently fight against anything which is not on its very surface consistent with their own ideas. In the present case I do not find it difficult to believe faith to be at the same time the duty of man and the gift of God. And if others cannot accept the two Truths, I am not responsible for their rejection of them. My duty is performed when I have honestly borne witness to them. Up to now we have only been clearing the way. Let us advance.

The faith intended in the text *evidently rests upon a Person*—upon Jesus. “Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.” It is not belief about a *doctrine*, nor an *opinion*, nor a *formula*, but belief concerning a *Person*. Translate the words, “Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ,” and they stand thus—“Whoever believes that the Savior is the Anointed, is born of God.” By which is assuredly not meant, whoever *professes* to believe that He is so—for many do that whose lives prove that they are not regenerate—but, whoever believes it to be the fact, as truly and in very deed to receive Jesus as God has set Him forth and anointed Him, is a regenerate man.

What is meant by, “Jesus is the Christ,” or, Jesus is the Anointed? First, that He is the Prophet. Secondly, that He is the Priest. Thirdly, that He is the King of the Church, for in all these three senses He is the Anointed. Now, I may ask myself this question—Do I this day believe that Jesus is the great Prophet anointed of God to reveal to me the way of salvation? Do I accept Him as my Teacher, and admit that He has the Words of eternal life? If I so believe, I shall obey His Gospel and possess eternal life.

Do I accept Him to be, from now, on the Revealer of God to my soul, the Messenger of the Covenant, the Anointed Prophet of the Most High? But He is also a Priest. Now a priest is ordained from among men to offer sacrifices—do I firmly believe that Jesus was ordained to offer His one Sacrifice for the sins of mankind, by the offering of which sacrifice, once and for all, He has finished atonement and made complete expiation? Do I accept His Atonement as an atonement for *me*, and receive His death as an expiation upon which I rest my hope for forgiveness of all my transgressions?

Do I, in fact, believe Jesus to be the one sole, only propitiating Priest, and accept Him to act as Priest for me? If so, then I have in part believed that Jesus is the Anointed. But He is also King, and if I desire to know whether I possess the right faith, I further must ask myself, “Is Jesus, who is now exalted in Heaven, who once bled on the Cross, is He King to me? Is His Law my Law? Do I desire entirely to submit myself to His government? Do I hate what He hates, and love what He loves? Do I live to praise Him? Do I, as a loyal subject, desire to see His kingdom come and His will done on earth as it is in Heaven?”

My dear Friend, if you can heartily and earnestly say, “I accept Jesus Christ of Nazareth to be Prophet, Priest, and King to me because God has anointed Him to exercise those three offices. And in each of these three Characters I unfeignedly trust Him,” then, dear Friend, you have the faith of God’s elect, for it is written, “He that believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.”

Now we will go a little further. *True faith is reliance*. Look at any Greek lexicon you like and you will find that the word *pisteuein* does not merely mean to believe, but to *trust*, to confide in, to commit to, entrust with, and so forth. And the marrow of the meaning of faith is confidence in, reliance upon. Let me ask, then, every Professor in Christ here who professes to have faith—is your faith the faith of reliance? You give credit to certain statements—do you also place trust in the one glorious Person who alone can redeem? Have you confidence as well as credence? A creed will not save you, but reliance upon the Anointed Savior is the way of salvation!

Remember, I beseech you, that if you could be taught an orthodoxy unadulterated with error, and could learn a creed written by the pen of the Eternal God Himself, yet a mere notional faith, such as men exercise when they believe in the existence of men in the moon, or nebulae in space, could not save your soul! Of this we are sure, because we see around us many who have such a faith, and yet evidently are not children of God. Moreover, true faith is not a flattering presumption, by which a man says, “I believe I am saved, for I have such delightful feelings. I have had a marvelous dream, I have felt very wonderful sensations.”

All such confidence may be nothing but sheer assumption. Presumption, instead of being *faith*, is the reverse of faith—instead of being the substance of things hoped for, it is a mere mirage. Faith is as correct as reason, and if her arguments are considered, she is as secure in her conclusions as though she drew them by mathematical rules. Beware, I pray you, of a faith which has no basis but your own fancy!

Faith, again, is not the assurance that Jesus died for me. I sometimes feel myself a little at variance with that verse—

*“Just as I am: without one plea
But that Your blood was shed for me.”*

It is eminently suitable for a child of God, but I am not so sure as to its being the precise way for putting the matter for a sinner. I do not believe in Jesus because I am persuaded that His blood was shed for me, but rather I discover that His blood was shed especially for me from the fact that I have been led to believe in HIM. I fear there are thousands of people who believe that Jesus died for them, who are not born of God, but rather are hardened in their sin by their groundless hopes of mercy. There is no particular efficacy in a man’s assuming that Christ has died for him. For it is a mere truism, if it is true, as some teach, that Jesus died for everybody.

On such a theory every believer in a universal atonement would necessarily be born of God, which is very far from being the case. When the Holy Spirit leads us to rely upon the Lord Jesus, then the Truth that God gave His Only-Begotten Son that whoever believes in Him might be saved, is opened up to our souls. And then we see that for us who are Believers Jesus died with the special intent that we should be saved. For the Holy Spirit to assure us that Jesus shed His blood for us in particular is one thing, but merely to conclude that Jesus died for us on the notion that He died for everybody is as far as the east is from the west from being real faith in Jesus Christ.

Neither is it faith for me to be confident that I am saved, for it may be the case that I am not saved, and it can never be faith to believe a lie. Many have concluded rashly that they were saved when they were still in the gall of bitterness. That was not the exhibition of confidence in Christ but the exhibition of a base presumption destructive to the last degree. To come back to where we started from, faith, in a word, is reliance upon Jesus Christ. Whether the Redeemer died in special and particular for me or not, is not the question to be raised in the first place. I find that He came into the world to save *sinners*—under that general character I come to Him.

I find that whoever trusts Him shall be saved, I therefore trust Him, and having done so, I learn from His Word that I am the object of His special love, and that I am born of God. In my first coming to Jesus I can have no knowledge of any personal and special interest in the blood of Jesus. But since it is written, “God has set Him forth to be a Propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world,” I come and trust myself to that Propitiation—sink or swim I cast myself on the Savior.

Great Son of God, You have lived and died! You have bled and suffered, and made atonement for sin for all such as trust You! And, by Your Grace, I trust you, I lean upon You, I cast myself upon You. Now, whoever has such faith as this is born of God. He has true faith which is proof positive of the new birth. Judge yourselves, therefore, whether you have this faith or not.

Let me tarry just one minute longer over this. The true faith is set forth in Scripture by figures, and one or two of these we will mention. It was an eminent type of faith when the Hebrew father in Egypt slew the lamb and caught the warm blood in the basin. He then took a bunch of hyssop and dipped it in the blood and marked the two posts of his door. Then he struck a red mark across the lintel. That smearing of the door represented *faith*. The deliverance was worked by the blood. And the blood availed through the householder’s own personally striking it upon his door.

Faith does that. It takes of the things of Christ, makes them its own, sprinkles the soul, as it were, with the precious blood, accepts the way of mercy by which the Lord passes over us and exempts His people from destruction. Faith was shown to the Jews in another way. When a beast was offered in sacrifice for sin, the priest, and sometimes the representatives of the tribes, or the individual laid their hands upon the victim in token that they desired their sins to be transferred to it, that it might suffer for them as a type of the Great Substitute. Faith lays her hands on Jesus, desiring to receive the benefit of His substitutionary death.

A still more remarkable representation of faith was that of the healing look of the serpent-bitten Israelites. On the great standard in the midst of the camp, Moses lifted up a serpent of brass! High overhead above all the tents this serpent gleamed in the sun, and whomever, of all the dying host, would but look to it was made to live. Looking was a very

simple act, but it indicated that the person was obedient to God's command. He looked as he was bid, and the virtue of healing came from the bronze serpent through a look.

Such is faith. It is the simplest thing in the world, but it indicates a great deal more than is seen upon its surface—

“There is life for a look at the Crucified One.”

To believe in Jesus is but to glance the eye of faith to Him, to trust Him with your soul. That poor woman who came behind our Savior in the crowd offers us another figure of what faith is. She said, “If I may but touch the hem of His garment I shall be made whole.” Taking no medicines, making no profession, and performing no ceremonies, she simply touched the hem of the Savior's robe, and she was healed at once!

O Soul, if you can get into contact with Christ by simply trusting Him, though that trust is ever so feeble you have the faith of God's elect! You have the faith which is in every case the token of the new birth.

II. We must now pass on to show that WHEREVER IT EXISTS IT IS THE PROOF OF REGENERATION. There never was a grain of such faith as this in this world, except in a *regenerate* soul, and there never will be while the world stands. It is so according to the text, and if we had no other testimony, this one passage would be quite enough to prove it. “Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.”

“Ah,” I hear you say, poor Soul, “the new birth is a great mystery. I do not understand it. I am afraid I am not a partaker in it.” You are born again if you believe that Jesus is the Christ, if you are relying upon a crucified Savior you are assuredly begotten again unto a lively hope. Mystery or no mystery, the new birth is yours if you are a Believer. Have you ever noticed that the greatest mysteries in the world reveal themselves by the simplest indications? The simplicity and apparent easiness of faith is no reason why I should not regard its existence as an infallible indication of the new birth within.

How do we know that the new-born child lives except by its cry? Yet a child's cry—what a simple sound it is! How readily could it be imitated! A clever workman could, with pipes and strings, easily deceive us. Yet was there ever a child's cry in the world but what it indicated the mysteries of breathing, heart-beating, blood-flowing, and all the other wonders which come with life itself? Do you see yonder person just drawn out of the river? Does she live? Yes, life is there. Why? Because the lungs still heave. But does it not seem an easy thing to make lungs heave? A pair of bellows blown into them—might not that produce the motion?

Ah, yes, the thing is easily imitated after a sort. But no lungs heave except where life is, no blood is pumped to and from the heart except where life is. Take another illustration. Go into a telegraph office at any time and you will see certain needles moving right and left with unceasing clicks. Electricity is a great mystery, and you cannot see or feel it. But the operator tells you that the electric current is moving along the wire. How does he know? “I know it by the needle.” How is that? I could move your needles easily. “Yes, but do you not see the needle has made two motions to the right, one to the left, and two to the right again? I am reading a message.”

“But,” you say, “I can see nothing in it. I could imitate that clicking and moving very easily.” Yet he who is taught the art sees before him in those needles not only electric action, but a deeper mystery still. He perceives that a mind is directing the invisible force, and speaking by means of it. Not to all, but to the initiated is it given to see the mystery hidden within the simplicity. The Believer sees in the faith, which is simple as the movements of the needle, an indication that God is operating on the human mind, and the spiritual man discerns that there is an inner secret intimated which the carnal eye cannot decipher.

To believe in Jesus is a better indicator of regeneration than anything else, and in no case did it ever mislead. Faith in the living God and His Son Jesus Christ is always the result of the new birth, and can never exist except in the regenerate. Whoever has faith is a saved man. I beg you to follow me a little in this argument. A certain Divine has lately said, “A man's act of believing is not the same as his being saved—it is only in the *direction* of being saved.” This is tantamount to a denial that every Believer in Christ is at once saved. And the inference is that a man may not conclude that he is saved because he believes in Jesus.

Now, observe how opposed this is to Scripture. It is certain from the Word of God that *the man who believes in Jesus is not condemned*. Read John 3:18, and many other passages. “He that believes on Him is not condemned.” Now is not every *unregenerate* man condemned? Is not a man who is *not* condemned a saved man? When you are sure, on Divine authority that the Believer is not condemned, how in the name of everything that is rational can you deny that the

Believer is saved? If he is not condemned, what has he to fear? Will he not rightly conclude that being justified by faith he has peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ?

Note, secondly, that faith in the fourth verse of the chapter before us is said to “*overcome the world.*” “This is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith.” What, then? Does faith overcome the world in persons who are not saved? How can this be possible when the Apostle says that that which overcomes the world is born of God? Read the fourth verse—“Whatever is born of God overcomes the world”—and FAITH overcomes the world. Therefore the man who has faith is regenerate. And what does that mean but that he is saved, and that his faith is the instrument by which he achieves victories?

Further, faith accepts the witness of God, and more—he that has faith *has the witness in himself* to the Truth of God. Read the tenth verse of the chapter—“He that believes on the Son of God has the witness in himself.” It is not said, “He that *does* this, or *feels* that,” but, “He that BELIEVES has the witness in himself.” His heart bears witness to the Truth of God. Has any unsaved man an experimental witness within? Will you tell me that a man’s inner experience bears witness to God’s Gospel and yet the man is in a lost state, or only hopeful of being saved ultimately? No, Sir, it is impossible!

He that believes has that chance worked in him which enables him by his own consciousness to confirm the witness of God, and such a man must be in a state of salvation. It is not possible to say of him that he is an unsaved man. Again, note in this chapter, at the thirteenth verse, that wherever there is faith there is eternal life. So run the words, “these things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life.” Our Lord Himself, and His Apostles, in several places have declared, “He that believes on Him has everlasting life.”

Do not tell me that a sinner who believes in Jesus is to make an advance before he can say he is saved. Do not tell me that a man who trusts Christ is only on the way to salvation, and must wait until he has used the ordinances, and has grown in Grace before he may know that he is saved. No! the moment that the sinner’s trust is placed on the finished work of Jesus he is saved. Heaven and earth may pass away, but that man shall never perish!

If only one second ago I trusted the Savior I am safe, just as safe as the man who has believed in Jesus fifty years and who has all that while walked uprightly. I do not say that the new-born convert is as happy, nor as useful, nor as holy, nor as ripe for Heaven. But I do say that the words, “he that believes on Him has everlasting life,” is a Truth of God with general bearings, and relates as much to the babe in faith as it does to the man who has attained to fullness of stature in Jesus Christ. As if this chapter were written on purpose to meet the gross error that faith does not bring immediate salvation, it extols faith again and again! Yes, and I may add our Lord Himself crowns faith, because faith never wears the crown, but brings all the glory to the dear Redeemer.

Now, let me say a word or two in reply to certain questions. But must not a man repent as well as believe? Reply—No man ever believed but what he repented at the same time. Faith and repentance go together. They must. If I trust Christ to save me from sin, I am at the same time repenting of sin, and my mind is changed in relation to sin, and everything else that has to do with its state. All the fruits meet for repentance are contained in faith itself. You shall never find that a man who trusts Christ remains an enemy to God, or a lover of sin. The fact that he accepts the Atonement provided is proof positive that he loathes sin, and that his mind is thoroughly changed in reference to God.

Moreover, as to all the Graces which are produced in the Christian afterwards, are they not all to be found in embryo in faith? “Only believe, and you shall be saved,” is the cry which many sneer at, and others misunderstand. But do you know what, “only believe,” means? Do you know what a world of meaning lies in those two words? Read that famous Chapter 11 in Hebrews and see what faith has done and is still able to do, and you will see that it is no trifle! Wherever there is faith in a man let it but develop itself and there will be a purging of himself from sin, a separating himself from the world, a conflict with evil, and a warring for the glory of Christ which nothing else could produce.

Faith is, in itself, one of the noblest of Graces. It is the compendium of all virtues. And as sometimes there will lie within one single ear enough seed to make a whole garden fertile, so, within that one word, “faith,” there lies enough of virtue to make earth blessed—enough of Grace, if the Spirit makes it grow—to turn the fallen into the perfect. Faith is not the easy and light thing men think.

Far are we from ascribing salvation to the profession of a mere creed—we loathe the idea! Neither do we ascribe salvation to a fond persuasion, but we do ascribe salvation to Jesus Christ, and the obtaining of it to that simple, child-

like confidence which lovingly casts itself into the arms of Him who gave both His hands to the nails and suffered to the death for the sins of His people. He who believes, then, is saved—rest assured of that. “Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.”

III. Now what flows out of this? Love is the legitimate issue! We must love, if we are begotten of God, all those who are also born of God. It would be an insult to you if I were to prove that a brother should love his brother. Does not Nature, herself, teach us that? Those, then, who are born of God ought to love all those of the same household. And who are they? Why, all those who have believed that Jesus is the Christ, and are resting their hopes where we rest ours, namely, on Christ the Anointed One of God. We are to love all such. We are to do this because we are of the family. We believe, and therefore we have been begotten of God.

Let us act as those who are of the Divine family. Let us count it our privilege that we are received into the household, and rejoice to perform the lovely obligations of our high position. We look around us and see many others who have believed in Jesus Christ. Let us love them because they are of the same kindred. “But they are some of them unsound in doctrine, they make gross mistakes as to the Master’s ordinances.” We are not to love their *faults*, neither ought we to expect them to love *ours*. But we are, nevertheless, to love their persons, for, “whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.”

And therefore he is one of the family, and as we love the Father who begot, we are to love all those that are begotten of Him. First, I love God, and therefore I desire to promote God’s Truth and to keep God’s Gospel free from taint. But then I am to love all those whom God has begotten, despite the infirmities and errors I see in them, being also, myself, compassed about with infirmities. Life is the reason for love. The common life which is indicated by the common faith in the dear Redeemer is to bind us to each other. I must confess, though I would pay every deference to every Brother’s conscientious judgment, I do not know how I could bring my soul, as a child of God, to refuse any man communion at my Master’s Table who believed that Jesus is the Christ.

I have proof in His doing so. If He is sincere (and I can only judge of that by his life), then he is born of God. And has not every child a right to come to the Father’s Table? I know in the olden times parents used to make children go without their meals as a punishment, but everybody tells us now that this is cruel and unwise, for it injures the child’s constitution to deprive it of necessary food. There are rods in the Lord’s House, and there is no need to keep disobedient children away from the Supper.

Let them come to the Lord’s Table, and eat and drink with the Lord Jesus and with all His saints in the hope that when their constitution bestows stronger they will throw out the disease which now they labor under, and come to be obedient to the whole Gospel, which says, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” Let me beg the members of this Church to exhibit mutual love to one another. Are there any feeble among you? Comfort them. Are there any who want instruction? Bring your knowledge to their help. Are there any in distress? Assist them. Are they backsliding? Restore them.

“Little children, love one another,” is the rule of Christ’s family—may we, by His Grace, observe it. May the love of God which has been steeped abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us, reveal itself by our love to all the saints. And, remember, other sheep He has which are not yet of His fold—they, also, He must bring in. Let us love those who are yet to be brought in, and lovingly go forth at once to seek them. In whatever other form of service God has given us, let us with loving eyes look after our prodigal Brothers, and who knows, we may bring into the family this very day some for whom there will be joy in the presence of the angels of God because the lost one has been found! God bless and comfort you, for Jesus Christ’s sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—1 JOHN 5.

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