Faith - Charles Spurgeon

If any man pleases God, he does that which helps contribute most to his own temporal and eternal welfare. Man cannot please God without bringing to himself a great amount of happiness; for if any man pleases God, it is because God accepts him as His son, gives him the blessings of adoption, pours upon him the bounties of His grace, makes him a blessed man in this life, and insures him a crown of everlasting life, which he shall wear, and which shall shine with unfading luster when the wreaths of earth's glory have all been melted away; while, on the other hand, if a man does not please God, he inevitably brings upon himself sorrow and suffering in this life; he puts a worm and a rottenness in the core of all his joys; he fills his death-pillow with thorns, and he supplies the eternal fire with a burning, smoldering bundle of sticks tied together, a flame which shall forever consume him. He that pleases God, is, through Divine grace, journeying onward to the ultimate reward of all those that love and fear God; but he who is ill-pleasing to God, must, for Scripture has declared it, be banished from the presence of God, and consequently from the enjoyment of happiness. If then, we be right in saying that to please God is to be happy, the one important question is, how can I please God? And there is something very solemn in the utterance of our text: "Without faith it is impossible to please God." That is to say, do what you may, strive as earnestly as you can, live as excellently as you please, make what sacrifices you choose, be as eminent as you can for everything that is lovely and of good repute, yet none of these things can be pleasing to God unless they be mixed with faith.

Let us begin, then, at the beginning. The first thing in faith is *knowledge*. A man cannot believe what he does not know. That is a clear, self-evident axiom. If I have never heard of a thing in all my life, and do not know it, I cannot believe it. *How can they believe on him of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without a preacher? And how can they preach except they be sent?"* It is necessary, then, to true faith, that a man should know something of the Bible. There must be some degree of knowledge before there can be faith. "Search the Scriptures," then, "for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of Christ;" and by searching and reading cometh knowledge, and by knowledge cometh faith, and through faith cometh salvation. But a man may know a thing, and yet not have faith. I may know a thing, and yet not believe it. Therefore ***assent*** (approval) must go with faith: that is to say, what we know we must also agree unto, as being most certainly the verity (truth and reality) of God. Now, in order to have faith, it is necessary that I should not only read the Scriptures and understand them, but that I should receive them in my soul as being the very truth of the living God, and I should devoutly with my whole heart receive the whole of the Scripture as being inspired of the Most High, and the whole of the doctrine which He requires me to believe to my salvation. You are not allowed to halve the Scriptures, and to believe what you please; you are not allowed to believe the Scripture with a half-heartedness, for if you do this willfully, you have not the faith which looks alone to Christ. True faith gives its full assent to the Scriptures; it takes a page and says, "No matter what is in the page, I believe it;" it turns over the next chapter and says, "Herein are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable do wrest, as they do also the other Scriptures, to their destruction; but hard though it be, I believe it." It sees the Trinity; it cannot understand the Trinity in Unity, but it believes it. It sees an atoning sacrifice; there is something difficult in the thought, but it believes it; and whatever it be which it sees in revelation, it devoutly puts its lips to the book, and says, "I love it all; I give my full, free and hearty assent to every word of it, whether it be the threatening or the promise, the proverb, the precept, or the blessing. I believe that since it is all the Word of God it is all most assuredly true." Whosoever would be saved must know the Scriptures, and must give full assent unto them.

But a man may have all this, and yet not possess true faith; for the chief part of faith lies in the last head, namely, in an ***affiance*** to the truth; (commitment, to solemnly promise) not the believing it merely, but the taking hold of it as being ours, and in the resting on it for salvation. Recumbency on the truth was the word which the old preachers used. You will understand that word. Leaning on it; saying, "This is truth, I trust my salvation on it." Now, true faith, in its very essence rests in this - a leaning upon Christ. It will not save me to know that Christ is a Savior; but it will save me *to trust* Him to be ***my Savior***. I shall not be delivered from the wrath to come by believing that His atonement is sufficient, but I shall be saved by making that atonement my trust, my refuge, and my all. The pith, the essence of faith lies in this - a casting one-self on the promise. So, sinner, thou art to know that Christ died for sin; thou art also to understand that Christ is able to save, and thou art to believe that; but thou art not saved, unless in addition to that, you put your trust in Him to be thy Savior, and to be thine forever. As Hart says in his hymn, which really expresses the gospel:

This is the faith which saves; and however unholy may have been your lives up to this hour, this faith, if given to you at this moment, will blot out all your sins, will change your nature, make you a new man in Christ Jesus, lead you to live a holy life, and make your eternal salvation as secure as if an angel should take you on his bright wings this morning, and carry you immediately to heaven. Have you that faith? That is the one all-important question; for while with faith men are saved, without it men are damned. As Brooks hath said in one of his admirable works, "He that believeth on the Lord Jesus Christ, shall be saved, be his sins never so many; but he that believeth not in the Lord Jesus must be damned, be his sins never so few." Hast thou faith? For the text declares, "*Without faith it is impossible to please God."* Others mentioned in Scripture, have done something; but God did not accept them. Men have humbled themselves, and yet God has not saved them. Ahab did, and yet his sins were never forgiven. Men have repented, and yet have not been saved, because theirs was the wrong repentance. Judas repented, and went and hanged himself, and was not saved. Men have confessed their sins, and have not been saved. Saul did it. He said to David, “I have sinned against thee, my son David;" and yet he went on as he did before. Multitudes have confessed the name of Christ, and have done many marvelous things, and yet they have never been pleasing to God, from this simple reason, that they had not faith.

But the next argument is***, faith is the stooping grace***, and nothing can make a man stoop without faith. Now, unless man does stoop, his sacrifice cannot be accepted. The angels know this. When they praise God, they do it veiling their faces with their wings. The redeemed know it. When they praise God, they cast their crowns before His feet. Now, a man who has not faith proves that he cannot stoop; for he has not faith for this reason, ***because he is too proud to believe***. He declares he will not yield his intellect, he will not become a child and believe meekly what God tells him to believe. He is too proud, and he cannot enter heaven, because the door of heaven is so low that no one can enter in by it unless they will bow their heads. There never was a man who could walk into salvation erect. We must go to Christ on our bended knees; for though He is a door big enough for the greatest sinner to come in, He is a door so low that men must stoop if they would be saved. Therefore it is that faith is necessary, ***because a want of faith is certain evidence of absence of humility.***

But now for other reasons. Faith is necessary to salvation, because we are told in Scripture that ***works cannot save.*** To tell a very familiar story, and even the poorest may not misunderstand what I say: a minister was one day going to preach. He climbed a hill on his road. Beneath him lay the villages,

sleeping in their beauty, with the corn-fields motionless in the sunshine; but he did not look at them, for his attention was arrested by a woman standing at her door, and who, upon seeing him, came up to him with the greatest anxiety, and said, "O sir, have you any keys about you? I have broken the key of my drawers, and there are some things I must get directly." Said he, "I have no keys." She was disappointed, expecting that everyone would have some keys. "But suppose," he said, "I had some keys, they might not fit your lock, and therefore you could not get the articles you want. But do not distress yourself, wait till someone else comes up. But," said he, wishing to improve the occasion, "have you ever heard of the key of heaven?" "Ah! yes," she said, "I have lived long enough, and I have gone to Church long enough, to know that if we work hard and get our bread by the sweat of our brow, and act well towards our neighbors, and behave, as the catechism says, lowly and reverently to all our betters, and if we do our duty in that station of life in which it has pleased God to place us, and say our prayers regularly, we shall be saved." "Ah!" said he, "my good woman, that is a broken key, for you have broken the commandments, you have not fulfilled all your duties. It is a good key, but you have broken it." "Pray, sir," said she, believing that he understood the matter, and looking frightened, "What have I left out?" "Why," said he, "the key of heaven is at His girdle; He openeth, and no man shutteth; He shutteth, and no man openeth?" And explaining it more fully to her, he said, "It is Christ, and Christ alone, that can open heaven to you, and not your good works." "What, minister," said she, "are our good works useless then?" "No," said he, "not after faith. If you believe first, you may have as many good works as you please; but if you believe, you will never trust in them, for if you trust in them you have spoilt them, and they are not good works any longer. Have as many good works as you please, still put your trust wholly in the Lord Jesus Christ, for if you do not, your key will never unlock heaven's gate." So then, my hearers, we must have true faith, because the old key of works is so broken by us all, that we never shall enter Paradise by it. If any of you pretend that you have no sins, to be very plain with you, you deceive yourselves, and the truth is not in you. If you conceive that by your good works you shall enter heaven, never was there a more fell delusion, and you shall find at the last great day, that your hopes were worthless, and that, like sear leaves from the autumn trees, your noblest doings shall be blown away, or kindled into a flame within you yourselves must suffer forever. Take heed of your good works; get them after faith, but remember, the way to be saved is simply to believe in Jesus Christ. Again: without faith it is impossible to be saved, and to please God, because without faith there is *no union to Christ*. Now, ***union to Christ, is indispensable to our salvation***. If I come before God's throne with my prayers, I shall never get them answered, unless I bring Christ with me. Faith, then, is a union with Christ. Take care you have it; for if not, cling to your works, and there you go floating down the stream! *"Without faith it is impossible to please God,"* because it *is impossible to persevere in holiness without faith*. I do like a man to be thoroughly what he is - a downright man; and if a man does not love God, do not let him say he does; but if he be a true Christian, a follower of Jesus, let him say it and stand up for it; there is nothing to be ashamed of in it; the only thing to be ashamed of is to be hypocritical. ***THE QUESTION, the vital question. Dear hearer, have you faith? Do you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ with all thy heart? If so, you may hope to be saved. Ay, you may conclude with absolute certainty that you shall never see perdition.*** Have you faith? Shall I help you to answer that question? I will give you three tests, as briefly as ever I can, not to weary you, and then farewell this morning. He that has faith has renounced his own righteousness. If you put one atom of trust in yourself you have no faith; if you place even a particle of reliance upon anything else but what Christ did, you have no faith. If you trust in your works, then your works are anti-Christ, and Christ and anti-Christ can never go together. Christ will have all or nothing; He must be a whole Savior, or none at all. The true faith may be known by this, that it begets a great esteem, for the person of Christ. Do you love Christ? Could you die for Him?

Do you seek to serve Him? Do you love His people? Oh! if you do not love Christ you do not believe in Him; for to believe in Christ begets love. And yet more: he that has true faith will have true obedience. If a man says he has faith, and has no works, he lies; if any man declares that he believes on Christ, and yet does not lead a holy life, he makes a mistake; for while we do not trust in good works, we know that faith always begets good works. Faith is the father of holiness, and he has not the parent who loves not the child. God's blessings are blessings with both His hands. In the one hand He gives pardon; but in the other hand He always gives holiness; and no man can have the one unless he has the other. Have you faith? Oh! answer it, Yes, or No. Leave off saying, "I do not know," or "I do not care." Ah! you *will* care, one day, when the earth is reeling, and the world is tossing to and fro; ye will care when God shall summon you to judgment, and when He shall condemn the faithless and the unbelieving. Oh! that ye were wise - that ye would care now, and if any of you feel your need of Christ, let me beg of you, for Christ's sake, now to seek faith in Him who is exalted on high to give repentance and remission, and who, if He has given you repentance, will give you remission too. Oh sinners, who know your sins! "*Believe on the Lord Jesus, and ye shall be saved."* Cast yourselves upon His love and blood, His doing and His dying, His miseries and His merits; and if you do this you shall never fall, but you shall be saved now, and saved in that great day when not to be saved will be horrible indeed. ----

Faith & Regeneration

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, and its fruits, and its consequences, and they hardly appear to remember the glad tidings that whosoever believeth on Christ Jesus hath 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 that true faith in Jesus Christ saves the soul, for 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 plainest 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 whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting 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 difficulty occurs to the preacher, we need not wonder that it also arises with the hearer, and causes him questioning. We have known many who, by hearing continually the most precious doctrine that belief in Jesus Christ is saving, have forgotten other truths, and have concluded that they were saved when they were not, 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, since the warnings and admonitions of the gospel have been set aside by their fatal persuasion that it is needless to attend to them, and 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 offence against the gospel. 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 really made to him. There is a tendency in some hearts to look too much within, and spend more time 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 lions whelp has not trodden. He whom the Holy Ghost 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. Inasmuch as the gospel command, *"Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved,"* is addressed by divine authority to every creature, it is the duty of every man so to do. What saith 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 believeth on Him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath 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 ground 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 exonerated from his debts thereby. 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 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 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 wrought 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?"

say you. "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 convinced by the Holy Spirit of sin—"*of sin,"* saith Christ, *"because they believe not on Me;"* here is one of the truths; but the selfsame hearts are taught by the same Spirit that faith is of the operation of God. 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, man? Must you need to put one of them out in order to see clearly? Is it impossible to you to use a spiritual stereoscope, 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? 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 idea. 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. 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 wrought 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. 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. 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 thy blood was shed for me."

It is eminently suitable for a child of God, but I am not 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 me 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 (value) in a man's assuming that Christ has died for me; for it is a mere truism, if it 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 Ghost leads us to rely upon the Lord Jesus, then the truth that God gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him might be saved, is opened up to our souls, and 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 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 whosoever trusts in 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 hath 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, thou hast lived and died, thou hast bled and suffered, and made atonement for sin for all such as trust thee, and I trust thee, I lean upon thee, I cast myself upon thee. Now, whoever has such faith as this is born of God, he has true faith which is proof positive of the new birth. Judge ye, therefore, whether ye have this faith or no. 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 believeth 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 *(2 John Chapter 5*) 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 said that that which overcomes the world is born of God? Read the fourth verse: "*Whatsoever is born of God overcomes the world:"* but faith overcomes the world. Therefore the man who has faith is regenerate; and what means that but that he is saved, and that his faith is the instrument by which he achieves victories. 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 ye may know that ye have eternal life."* Our Lord Himself, and His apostles, in several places have declared, "*He that believeth on Him hath 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, that a man who trusts Christ is only on his 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 in 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 the 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 believeth on Him hath everlasting life,"* is a truth with general bearings, and relates as much to the babe in faith as 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, yea, and I may add, our Lord Himself crowns faith, because faith never wears the crown, but brings all the glory to the dear Redeemer.