

SAVING FAITH.

Saving faith is not a mere conviction of the understanding—an assent of the mind; no mere inspiritive, lifeless belief, which residing only in the thought, has no root in the heart—no command of the will—no sanctifying influence on the life. We are speaking of a faith, while it essentially embraces the assent of the understanding, establishes its seat in the affections and will; a faith which receives Christ as a Saviour, to be delivered not only by his righteousness from the condemnation, but also by his Spirit from the indwelling unholiness of sin; a faith which embraces the will as well as the invitation and promises of Christ; which hungers after purity of heart as well as joyfulness of hope, finds its pleasure in obedience, its clothing in humility, its exercise in love and every good work, and proves that it is of God by its watching unto prayer—its diligence to overcome the world and glorify God. “*This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.*”

We are speaking of that faith. Again, “We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, because your faith *groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth.*”

We are speaking of a faith which grows, and should grow, to the end of life, in vigour, in hope, in consolation, in fruitfulness; a faith which just in proportion to its growing, is attended with a growing charity—so that if the former grows *exceedingly*, the latter will grow *abundantly*. Again, “The love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them, and rose again.” We are speaking of a faith which deliberately forming that judgment of the love of Christ in his death and of our infinite indebtedness thereto, rises from its believing contemplation of the cross and passion, and obliges us (faith working by love) to live henceforth, not unto ourselves, but unto that most loving and precious Saviour. By any other faith we have no idea that a sinner can obtain a part in Christ. All other is dead, and leaves us

dead in sin and under sin, without Christ and without hope.

But while we are thus careful to maintain the essential connection between faith and all good works as the fruit and evidence of its life, we must be equally careful to hold that it is not *because of these*, its works, that it justifies. These prove it to be what it is—these are the consequences of its being what it is; but these do not make it what it is—namely, efficacious to our taking hold of the righteousness of Christ. Without them it is not living, but by them it is not justifying. When a sinner goes by faith to Christ, it is not because his faith is accompanied with these virtues and works that it has power to receive the Saviour's grace, and merit to engage his favour. The sinner comes as a beggar. He stretches out his empty hand to Christ. That hand is his faith. It is not made acceptable by being filled with something to show that the suppliant is not entirely a beggar. Its emptiness is part of itself. The more price it brings, the less of faith it is. The more the sinner looks at what he fancies his faith takes with it to recommend to Christ, the less he looks to Christ as all his righteousness.

The efficacy of faith to justify is not in the least, as it is a virtue in us, a part of our personal holiness, one of the fruits of the Spirit, a work of grace in our hearts, and the parent grace of all others; but simply as it is the empty hand whereby the beggared sinner takes and relies on what Christ is, and has done for him in the salvation of his soul. It is not saving because it works by love, but it works by love because it is saving.

A patient goes in faith to a benevolent physician, who will take no price for his skill. In consequence of his going, the physician devotes his whole care and skill, to his cure. In consequence also of the faith that puts the case into the physician's hands, the patient cheerfully obeys all the physician prescribes. Now it is not this obedience that at first drew upon him all that the physician could do to heal him. It was his faith, his application only that did that. The obedience resulted from that faith. He obeyed because he trusted.—Thus faith takes us to Christ. Immediately that precious physician of souls is