

## Who is Jesus Christ

Last week we looked at Historical faith and Temporary faith. Today we will study the meaning of having faith in miracles and Justifying faith.

### 3. Faith in miracles.

Faith in miracles is a special gift producing some extraordinary work or to foretell some particular event by divine revelation. One may also say it is a firm persuasion, produced by divine revelation or a particular promise in regard to some future miraculous working. We cannot conclude that this type of faith appears in the Bible in general unless some special promise or revelation is connected with it.

In short, this type of faith gives the one upon whom this faith is bestowed the ability to change the nature of things, which, as one can appreciate, is an attribute that belongs to the Creator alone and goes forth from him alone.

An example of this type of faith is mentioned by the apostle Paul in **1Co 13:2 ...and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.**

One may include in this type of faith all the other types of faith, except justifying faith, but here the faith in miracles is specifically identified. We should, nevertheless, recognize this type of faith as a distinct type, which is proven by the following:

a) Jesus mentioned this type of faith in

**Luk 17:6 And the Lord said, "If you had faith like a mustard seed, you would say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and be planted in the sea'; and it would obey you."**

And again in

**Matt 17:20 And He said to them, "Because of the littleness of your faith; for truly I say to you, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you."**

Many holy men had strong faith, such as Abraham and David, and yet, they couldn't move mountains or even change the nature of things, but they all had justifying faith.

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Moses temporarily received this type of faith when he confronted Pharaoh, but God measured exactly the extent and magnitude of this faith for the specific purpose of confronting Pharaoh. After demonstrating to Moses exactly what he is supposed to do in the presence of Pharaoh, God said,

Exodus 4:17 You shall take in your hand this staff, with which you shall perform the signs.

And

Exodus 4:21 The LORD said to Moses, "When you go back to Egypt see that you perform before Pharaoh all the wonders which I have put in your power;"

That faith in miracles has nothing to do with justifying faith is proven by Pharaoh's magicians who could match Moses' miracles up to a point.

b) Faith in miracles cannot be faked. Exorcists such as the sons of Sceva have endeavored to cast out devils when they had not the gift or power of accomplishing it, and they were afterwards severely punished for it when the man in whom was the evil spirit fell upon them and wounded them.

c) Simon Magus is said to have believed and was even baptized but he was not able to work miracles proving that he didn't receive the gift which is why he wanted to purchase it.

d) The devil has historical faith and yet, he cannot work miracles.

e) Judas taught and worked miracles as did the other Apostles, therefore, he had historical faith, perhaps also temporary faith, as well as the faith of miracles, but he didn't have justifying faith, as we know, because Jesus called him a "devil." (John 6:70).

f) Many shall say to Christ on the day of judgment,

Mat 7:22 ...Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?

To whom Christ replied, 'I never knew you; depart from me you who practice lawlessness.'

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g) Finally, all the other kinds of faith extend to all things that the Word of God reveals and requires us to believe. The faith in miracles, however, refers merely to certain works and extraordinary events, which God gives in exact measure for specific purposes and times to particular individuals, regardless of belief, to accomplish his will, out of the ordinary means and order of nature. It is, therefore, a distinct kind of faith.

### 3. Justifying faith.

This is the type of faith that is bestowed upon those whose names have been recorded in the book of life before creation. They are the ones who receive this instrument by which they apply the merits of Christ to themselves and receive the garment of justification and regeneration. It is they who produce good fruit, fruit that shows forth their gratitude for having received this faith that changes their nature and disposition from evil all the time and death to that of saints and eternal life.

In the general nature of justifying faith there exists historical faith and an assured confidence, for there can be no faith in a doctrine that is wholly unknown.

We should, therefore, obtain a knowledge of that in which we are to believe before we can exercise faith, from which the implicit faith of the Roman Church can be seen for the absurdity it is.

The *formal character* of justifying faith is the confidence and application of the free remission of sins by and for the sake of Christ that every one applies to himself.

The *particular character* of this faith is trust and delight in God because of this great benefit.

The *efficient cause* of justifying faith is the Holy Spirit.

The *instrumental cause* is the gospel in which its preaching and the legal use of the sacraments are wrapped up.

The *subject* of this faith is the will and heart of man.

Justifying faith differs, therefore, from all other faiths because it is the only faith in which its subjects are assured that by the application of the merits of Christ, which is done by a firm belief

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that the righteousness of Christ is granted and imputed unto them, they are reckoned just and righteous in the sight of God.

The confidence or firm belief that we are talking about here is an exercise or motion of the will and heart, following something good, resting and rejoicing in it; especially when the believer realized that the motion of the will and heart was decreed before creation and put into effect while he was still caught up in the clutches of death.

Justifying faith differs from historical faith because it always includes the historical but the latter and the other faiths cannot lead to justification. If the Apostle says that we are justified by faith, and faith is imputed for righteousness, and by faith is the inheritance, then, this faith must be one of the four kinds we mentioned. But, it is not historical faith for then the devils would also be counted as just and be heirs of the promise, which is not the case. It is also not temporary faith for Christ rejects this. It is also not the faith in miracles, for if it were, Judas would also be an heir. So, it is by justifying faith alone that we obtain righteousness and an inheritance of eternal life with the other saints, even though the Scriptures simply call it 'faith'.

No man, however, truly knows what justifying faith is unless he possesses it. One who never saw or tasted honey cannot tell of its taste or quality even though one can say many things about its sweetness and taste. But the man who truly believes and experiences these things in himself is able, also, to explain them to others.

- a) The believer believes that every thing that the Scripture contains is true and from God.
- b) The believer feels himself constrained firmly to believe and embrace these things, for if we confess that they are true and from God, it is proper that we should embrace them.
- c) The believer sees, embraces, and applies particularly to himself, the promise of grace, which is the free remission of sins, righteousness and eternal life by and for the sake of Christ.

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John 3:36 He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.

d) Having this confidence, the believer trusts and rejoices in the present grace of God and from this he concludes that there is a future good in the life hereafter. "Since God now loves me and grants unto me such great blessings, He will also preserve me unto eternal life because He is unchangeable and His gifts are given in love."

e) Joy arises in the heart of the believer in view of such benefits, which is accompanied with a peace of conscience that passes all understanding.

f) Then the believer has a will and an earnest desire to obey all the commands of God without a single exception and is willing to endure patiently whatever God may send upon him. The believer, therefore, who possesses a justifying faith, does that which is required of him regardless of the opposition of the world and the devil. He who truly believes, experiences all these things in himself and he who experiences these things in himself, truly believes.

If justifying faith requires historical faith (as a knowledge of God is wisdom), how much historical faith is sufficient to work justifying faith, if we look at the historical faith of saints like Moses, Abraham, and the Apostles, who were tutored by the Holy Spirit as opposed to the thief on the cross?

There is an error of assumption in the question, namely, historical faith doesn't work justifying faith, but the Holy Spirit alone administers justifying faith to the elect from which a desire to obtain a knowledge of God naturally flows. So, one may say that historical faith in the believer is a consequence of justifying faith and not the other way around.

Those who have historical faith without justifying faith never apply the merits of Christ to them and therefore, remain in death.

If this question is asked in relation to those nations who never heard the Word of God, it can mostly be answered by the response given above. If the motive of the question is to cast doubt on the integrity of God, a response that the Scripture is clear that no one

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can snatch any of the elect out of His hand even though we cannot foresee the method by which it would be done, should suffice.

### IV. What are the causes of faith?

The first and chief efficient cause of historical, temporary, and faith of miracles, is the Holy Spirit who produces these different kinds of faith by His general influence and operation.

Justifying faith, however, is produced by the Holy Spirit's special working is never produced by the Holy Spirit's general operation.

Eph 2: 4 - 10 But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, <sup>5</sup>even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), <sup>6</sup>and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, <sup>7</sup>so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. <sup>8</sup>For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; <sup>9</sup>not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. <sup>10</sup>For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.

Objection: The devil has historical faith; therefore, it is worked in him by the Holy Spirit. Answer. It is true that the Holy Spirit produced historical faith in the devils but it is by his general working, his presence as omniscient and omni-present God, as we said. But, it is not by the Holy Spirit's effectual presence by which He works justifying faith in the elect and in them alone.

Whatever knowledge devils and hypocrites possess God produces in them by His Spirit, but not in such a manner that they are regenerated or justified as in the case of the elect; nor in such a manner that they may acknowledge and praise Him as the author of this gift.

Mat 13: 10 - 17 And the disciples came and said to Him, "Why do You speak to them in parables?" <sup>11</sup>Jesus answered them, "To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been granted. <sup>12</sup>For whoever has, to him

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more shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him.

<sup>13</sup>Therefore I speak to them in parables; because while seeing they do not see, and while hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. <sup>14</sup>In their case the prophecy of Isaiah is being fulfilled, which says, 'YOU WILL KEEP ON HEARING, BUT WILL NOT UNDERSTAND; YOU WILL KEEP ON SEEING, BUT WILL NOT PERCEIVE; <sup>15</sup>FOR THE HEART OF THIS PEOPLE HAS BECOME DULL, WITH THEIR EARS THEY SCARCELY HEAR, AND THEY HAVE CLOSED THEIR EYES, OTHERWISE THEY WOULD SEE WITH THEIR EYES, HEAR WITH THEIR EARS, AND UNDERSTAND WITH THEIR HEART AND RETURN, AND I WOULD HEAL THEM.' <sup>16</sup>But blessed are your eyes, because they see; and your ears, because they hear. <sup>17</sup>For truly I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.

Mat 19:20 The young man said to Him, "All these things I have kept; what am I still lacking?" <sup>21</sup>Jesus said to him, "If you wish to be complete, go and sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." <sup>22</sup>But when the young man heard this statement, he went away grieving; for he was one who owned much property.

It is evident that the young man in Matt 19:20 had a high degree of historical faith but he was without justifying faith.

The *instrumental* cause of faith in general is the Word of God as found in the books of the Old and New Testaments in which, beside the Word, there are also many divine works and miracles described. The chief and particular instrument of justifying faith is the preaching of the gospel.

Rom 1:16, 17 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. <sup>17</sup>For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "BUT THE RIGHTEOUS man SHALL LIVE BY FAITH.

Rom 10:17 ... faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.

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Justifying faith is, therefore, not ordinarily produced in people without the preaching of the gospel.

The cause of faith of miracles is not simply the Word of God but it requires a special promise or revelation.

The *formal cause* of justifying faith is certain knowledge of all that God has revealed and an assured confidence worked in the believer's heart.

The *object* of justifying faith is Christ and the promise of grace.

The subject of justifying faith is the believers will, understanding and heart.

The end or final cause is, in the first place, the glory of God or the manifestation of his righteousness, goodness and mercy; and in the second place, our salvation.

Next week we will conclude our study of the doctrine of faith by looking at the effects of faith, to whom faith is given, and then the articles of the Apostles Creed as they have been produced as a consequence of the doctrine that the Scriptures teach.