

On True Faith

by William Huntington

The life of faith, joy and peace, and an heartfelt union with the dear Redeemer, as the blessed effect of eternal love; and the doctrine of eternal election in Christ, the Rock of Ages; from whence these soul satisfying streams perpetually flow, are my favourite themes.

This life of faith is a familiarity and a divine correspondence, carried on between the Most High God and a redeemed soul, by which the mind is ennobled, the understanding enriched with the knowledge of heavenly treasures, and the affections enflamed with a fervent love to the Father of all Mercies. Faith is a fruit of God's Spirit, begotten on the mind by the Holy Ghost; "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." It is called the faith of God's elect, because it is peculiar to them; "As many as were ordained to eternal life believed." It is called the faith of the operation of the Holy Ghost, because it is brought forth under his prolific operations. It is a divine and unshaken persuasion of the reality of a divine report, deeply impressed on the mind of man; and is the result of an eternal union which subsisted between Christ and the elect from everlasting; the bond of which union is God's everlasting love to Christ and to his elect in him. Thus faith firmly credits a divine testimony, and makes the happy possessor most assuredly know that he is an heir of all the blessings testified of.

Faith is an eye, and sees the wonderful works of God both in grace and in providence; yea, she pries into his eternal council, and at times sees him who is invisible. All the ancient saints saw the promised seed at a distance, and spake of him as present; and the blessed effects of every vision justified the prediction. This proves their life to be a life of dependence on God; they conversed with him in his promises; their expectations were employed in looking out for the fulfilment of them, and patience waited for the issue; and after they had endured awhile, they inherited the promises. Faith is an undoubted persuasion that fetches in the blessings couched in the promises, and applies them to the renewed and heavenly mind. Faith doth the same kind offices to the soul that the hand doth to the body; for it lays hold on eternal life, and realizes the promises with such a firm assurance of their full and final accomplishment, so as to quicken and enliven every power of the elect soul, and make it joyful, in hope of the glory of God.

Faith eyes the obedience of the Saviour, and applies it to the disquieted conscience; and is attended with the internal witness of the Holy Ghost, assuring the conscience of the sinner that Jesus is his eternal righteousness before the throne of God; while peace, from the atonement made by the great Mediator, sweetly flows in, as a proof that the Most High God is appeased, and the sword of justice sheathed in the Son of God. O mysterious scabbard! Thus, this long and dreadful war between God and sensible sinners is ended, and eternal peace proclaimed to all believers.

Faith eyes the atoning blood of the surety, and a multiplication of pardons are produced therefrom, which faith applies; and thus she purifies the heart from all the filth or guilt daily contracted through our manifold infirmities. And to maintain life in her beloved habitation, she leads her possessor to a throne of grace, and there begs the bread of heaven, and does her office in attending every good petition: she claims her privileges in her own country, and her freedom in her own city; she will take no denial at a throne of grace, nor will her Father deny her suit.

Faith in us is of high extraction; God ordained her; Christ possesses her; and the Holy Ghost produces her. God has greatly honoured faith, and it is certain she will never dishonour him. By her allowed fortitude and importunity she glorifies her Father, and her Father will ever honour her. She keeps house at the expense of the Saviour, and fetches all her food from far.

She being of a divine origin, will exist for ever. In the church militant faith is both the eye and the hand

of the soul; but in the church triumphant she will be only an eye: divine light can never be extinguished.

Faith despises all human inventions and human assistances; and ceases to act when carnal wisdom is invited to take the reins of government; but always accomplishes the decreed and the desired end, after fleshly sufficiency has left us exposed to ridicule.

Faith, if she is let alone, will make her despicable habitation stand firm against all assaults; for she establishes her house on a rock. She will lead her armies on through the most formidable hosts of opposers; for none overcome the world but believers. In short, that man is eternally rich who has her, for God is his portion; and this she freely declares before every adversary, as it is written, "Rich in faith." He stands firm indeed whom she establishes; and he is sure to hold on his way, if she leads him in the path. Every fallen countenance that appears in a persecutor, is an indication of a conquest made on that adversary, either to reduce him to the sceptre of Christ, or leave him to the judgment of God. Faith can blunt the edge of a sword, disarm a flame of its force, stop the mouth of a voracious lion, and make a devil fly to his cave. God himself is her shield, and she is the honourable and victorious hand that wields it. Our wealth, honour, success, victory, safety, and eternal security, lay in the possession of her.

Faith is not only an eye, by which our forefathers saw the promised seed at a distance, but the encircling arm, by which they embraced the promise; and that soul-emptying, God-honouring, and victorious grace, by which they went from one nation to another, without suffering harm.

Faith led their hearts and affections from the vanities of time and sense, so that they had no desire to return to that country from whence they came, though they had an opportunity.

Faith led them to trust in God, and to walk before him as in his immediate presence; and to place their confidence in him as their shield, and their exceeding great reward. Faith thus purifying their hearts, and overcoming the world in them, led them to seek a better country, that is, an heavenly; and often reminding them, that this was not their rest; sweetly led them to look for a continuing city which hath foundations, whose maker and builder is God.

Thus faith led them to credit omnipotence for protection, strength, and safety; and to look out for a glorious accomplishment of the promises; persuading them that he was faithful who had promised.

Under faith's influence, they confessed themselves strangers and pilgrims upon earth; strangers, because none knew their birth or nativity; pilgrims, because they viewed not themselves at home on this side the grave; foreigners, because their birth was from heaven, and heaven was their journey's end.

God's irrevocable decree brought them forth into this world as into a refining pot; and when they were tried, purified, and polished, they went back again. After faith had done its last office for them, which was to make their dying bed easy, and their views of heaven clear, these all died in faith; and now they burn in love, shine in glory, and bathe in pleasure; in love that knows no bounds; in glory that knows no period; and in pleasure that never can be fathomed. Oh, happy souls! happy state! and happy place!

Faith is a viewing of Christ, Heb. 11:27; a longing for Christ, Psalm 63:1; a coming to Christ, Heb. 11:6; a laying hold of Christ, 1 Tim. 6:12; a closing in with Christ, Psalm 27:13; a dwelling in Christ, Psalm 90:1; a receiving of Christ, John 1:12; and is attended with a cordial love to Christ, Gal. 5:6. Faith puts on Christ, Rom. 13:14; stands fast in Christ, 1 Thess. 3:8; and is a walking in Christ, Col. 2:6; and the end of faith is the salvation of the soul, 1 Peter 1:9. This soul-establishing grace leads us to see the glorious end of all real religion. Faith feeds upon Christ in the promises; mixes her influence with the promises; and kills the soul to all but Christ Jesus the Lord revealed in the promises.

Beware of that faith that boasts in temporal prosperity, but is dashed out of countenance in adversity; "He that believeth shall not be confounded." Fiery trials discover Gospel faith from daring presumption; hence the trial of faith is more precious than gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire.

I never could trust an untried faith; when faith hath been once tried, her language is, God hath delivered, and we trust that he will yet deliver us.

Real faith will find her way to God in a storm, and bring help from him too. "This is the confidence that we have in him, that if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him."

That is a precious faith, that will never give up prayer till it gets relief; then faith appears in character, as

it is written, "Oh, woman, great is thy faith!" Her faith had stood three discouraging rebuffs, and yet it overcame by importunity.

That is a precious faith that persuades the mind it shall surely obtain its request, even when there is no visible signs of it. It was this faith that set Habakkuk the prophet upon his watch-tower, and kept him waiting till the vision revealed the way of life; "The just shall live by faith." Thus faith appears the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen.

Faith, as an eye, keeps looking to Jesus; and as a hand, she will keep her hold. "I held him and would not let him go." Who can lose their way with such an eye? And who can drop into hell with such a hand? "He that believeth is passed from death unto life, and shall never come into condemnation."

Faith is like a salamander, she can exist in the flames; by faith they quenched the violence of fire, Heb. 11:34. Or, she is like the ark, she can swim in the floods. "By faith Noah being warned of God, prepared an ark to the saving of his house, by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith." Faith is like an eel, she can dive in the mud; she dived with Jonah into the whale's belly, and made him look toward the holy temple, and directed a petition to enter the ears of the Almighty, even from the depth of the sea: and in answer to faith's petitions, the living house of prayer vomited up the prophet. "My prayer came in unto thee, into thine holy temple. And the Lord spake unto the fish, and it vomited up Jonah upon dry land."

The grace of faith is better felt and enjoyed than described; but it may be discerned by the fruit of the lips; by her fruits in our life, and by her spiritual effects on our souls. When we hear nothing come out of a man's mouth but pure, unmixed truth, directed to the honour of God, without being tinged by human worth, or savouring of fleshly confidence, we are informed that that springs from a good treasure in the heart. When we hear a man's delivering, in an experimental manner, the mysteries of God; and can find that God gives his approbation of it, by the preacher's lively frame, by his cheerful countenance, and by the irresistible spirit of truth, so that scoffers are astonished, the mouths of fools stopped, the judgments of saints informed, and their bowels refreshed, we may conclude that that man holds the mystery of faith in a pure conscience, 1 Tim. 3:9.

And when we see a person wholly unsupported by friends, and furiously opposed by enemies, who use both fraud and force against him; and yet this man perseveres in the path of holiness, we may say he walks by faith, and not by sight: for here is nothing before his eyes but discouragements.

And when we see such a person sorely thrust at, that he may fall; and others setting traps in his way; others watching for his halting; others laying things to his charge that he knows not of; and others crediting false reports, begin to triumph, and say, ah, ah, so would we have it! and yet that man stands firm in the testimony both of God and saints; we may conclude, that he is strong in the Lord; for by faith he stands, 2 Cor. 1:24.

Justifying faith is known by the internal blessings that attend it; faith works by love, and is a companion of peace; "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God."

A divine faith is known by her leading the soul to live on divine food; "I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." A living faith is known by the living object she applies; "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith." The faith of God's elect is known, because it submits to, and rejoices in the doctrine of God's election. "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?"

The doctrine of eternal election is known by faith; "As many as were ordained to eternal life believed." An active faith is known by her choice foundation and her spiritual industry. "Building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost."

False faith is known both by her confessions and fruits: by her confessions; as they are never consistent with the Spirit's work, if they are with the outlines of Scripture. "And none of the wicked shall understand," Dan. 12:10. Secondly, by her fruit. False faith pleases the world, unites with the world, and is of the world. But true faith displeases the world, comes out from the world, fights against the world, and overcomes the world.

As for the faith of arminianism, I believe it to be worse than the faith of devils; for I have heard

arminians mention the awful decrees of God, and wantonly laugh at them; but devils believe and tremble. True faith holds every revealed truth of the Bible, but opposes none. If you live by faith, Christ, the bread of heaven, will be the food of thy faith. If you walk by faith, Christ, the living way, will be the path of faith. If you stand by faith, Christ will be faith's foundation; faith will stand no where, but on Christ; and Christ will always bear every weight that faith lays on him. Christ will never suffer faith to fail, nor will faith ever suffer Christ to have a co-partner: Christ will never suffer faith to be confounded; nor will faith ever suffer Christ to be dishonoured.

False faith makes her boast of what she never had; but true faith does what she never can relate.

False faith furnishes the head with notions; but true faith fixes the heart in love. False faith has always much to say, but little to do; her business is to boast, not to work; but true faith does her business in silence first, and talks afterwards: "I believed, therefore have I spoken;" "We believe, and therefore speak."

False faith often relates what she has done for God; but true faith delights to tell what Christ has done for her: Christ loved me, and gave himself for me; and again, "I am persuaded that neither death nor life shall separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

False faith is full of good words; but true faith of good fruits.

False faith unites with an erroneous and loose community; but true faith delights in the excellent of the earth, and in such as excel in virtue. False faith flies from a heart-searching, experimental ministry; but true faith roots the deeper under it: "Rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in faith."

False faith triumphs in the testimony of men; but true faith stands in the testimony of God: "He that believes, hath the witness in himself."

False faith credits every word; but true faith looks well to her way.

False faith makes a prating fool; but true faith makes a humble soul.

False faith exalts the creature; but true faith exalts the Saviour.

False faith makes lies her refuge; but true faith makes God's word her shield and buckler.

False faith leads the sinner to be proud of himself; but true faith leads the soul to make her boast of God.

False faith is pleased with words on the tongue; but true faith applies the promises to the heart.

False faith floats in the imagination; but true faith is a root in the heart.

False faith says, Roll yourself on the written word; but true faith says, "Let the word of God dwell richly in your hearts."

False faith is attended with no change of soul; but true faith is attended with regeneration.

False faith rejects the greatest part of the Bible; but true faith credits the whole word.

False faith denies sound experience; but true faith owns herself a fruit of the Spirit.

False faith defends herself by cunning, and a noise of words; but true faith will have no defence but the Saviour: "But above all, taking the shield of faith."

False faith triumphs in temporal prosperity, and gives up the ghost in adversity; but true faith is lowly in prosperity, and in adversity considers.

In short, false faith can talk, but not work; boast, but not fight; brag, but bring nothing from God; but true faith will work, but not trust in it; fight, but not beat the air; and beg, but not in vain.

William Huntington (1745-1813) was a London minister and author, much maligned in his day and ever since by men far inferior to him in the knowledge of the Scriptures, a man who was greatly used of God. This article was excerpted from *Epistles of Faith*, Part 1, Letters 3, 5 and 9, by William Huntington, published by T. Bensley, London, in the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century. As what Huntington wrote on faith here was written in the form of letters to an individual, these have been slightly edited.

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