

CHAPTER 14

OF SAVING FAITH

The origin of saving faith

“1. The grace of faith, whereby the elect are enabled to believe to the saving of their souls, is the work of the Spirit of Christ in their hearts; and is ordinarily wrought by the ministry of the Word: by which also, and by the administration of the Sacraments, and prayer, it is increased and strengthened.”

This saving faith is not just mental awareness of the facts of the gospel (Jas 2:19), but it is a genuine acceptance of their truth, and results in the saving of the soul. This faith is given by God only to those whom he has chosen already (Eph 1:17-19; 2:8-9). It is the work of the Holy Spirit in the heart (Acts 16:14).

The ordinary means of bringing faith into the heart is the preaching of the Word of God (Rom 10:14, 17). It is this same preaching of the Word, along with the sacraments and prayer, which strengthens faith in the Christian (1 Pet 2:2; as seen in WCF 13:1).

The content of saving faith

“2. By this faith, a Christian believeth to be true, whatsoever is revealed in the Word, for the authority of God himself speaking therein: and acteth differently, upon that which each particular passage thereof containeth; yielding obedience to the commands, trembling at the threatenings, and embracing the promises of God for this life, and that which is to come. But the principal acts of saving faith are, accepting, receiving and resting upon Christ alone for justification, sanctification, and eternal life, by virtue of the covenant of grace.”

The last sentence of this section describes the main act of saving faith—receiving Jesus Christ for salvation and trusting in him alone. We can have this faith because of the covenant of grace, which offers salvation to the sinner upon condition of faith (John 1:12).

A true Christian will show saving faith as he reads the Bible. He will believe all that it says, not just the parts he likes (Acts 24:14). Someone who rejects the virgin birth of Christ, or his bodily resurrection, knowing that the Bible teaches it, does not show evidence of saving faith.

Saving faith shows itself in what we gain from the Bible:

Action	Example
We “act differently” when we read the Bible	Eph 4:28
We obey its commands	Rom 16:26
We tremble at its threatenings	Heb 10:29
We embrace its promises for this life	2 Cor 9:8
We embrace its promises for the life to come	Heb 11:13

The growth of saving faith

“3. This faith is different in degrees, weak or strong; may be often and many ways assailed and weakened, but gets the victory; growing up in many to the attainment of a full assurance through Christ, who is both the author and finisher of our faith.”

Some Christians have strong faith, while others have weak faith (Heb 5:12-14). But in a true Christian, faith eventually overcomes and becomes stronger (1 John 5:4-5). Some reach the stage of full assurance of the truths of God and of their own salvation (Col 2:2; see WCF 18, “Of the Assurance of Grace and Salvation”). Let each of us, through Bible reading, prayer, and obedience to God’s commands, strengthen our faith, and reach and maintain that wonderful assurance.