

3

PERSONAL FAITH IN JESUS

There is a wretched tendency among men to leave Christ Himself out of the gospel. They might as well leave flour out of bread. Men hear the way of salvation explained, and consent to it as being Scriptural, and in every way such as suits their case; but they forget that a plan is of no service unless it is carried out; and that in the matter of salvation their own personal faith in the Lord Jesus is essential. A road to York will not take me there, I must travel along it for myself. All the sound doctrine that ever was believed will never save a man unless he puts his trust in the Lord Jesus for himself.

Mr Macdonald asked the inhabitants of the island of St Kilda how a man must be saved. An old man replied, 'We shall be saved if we repent, and forsake our sins, and turn to God.' 'Yes,' said a middle-aged female, 'and with a true heart too.' 'Ay,' rejoined a third, 'and with prayer'; and, added a fourth, 'It must be the prayer of the heart.' 'And we must be diligent too,' said a fifth, 'in keeping the commandments.' Thus, each having contributed his mite, feeling that a very decent creed had been made up, they all looked and listened for the preacher's approbation; but they had aroused his deepest pity: he had to begin at the beginning, and preach Christ to them. The carnal mind always maps out for itself a way in which self can work

and become great; but the Lord's way is quite the reverse. The Lord Jesus puts it very compactly in Mark 16:16: 'He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved.' Believing and being baptised are no matters of merit to be gloried in; they are so simple that boasting is excluded, and free grace bears the palm. This way of salvation is chosen that it might be seen to be of grace alone. It may be that the reader is unsaved: what is the reason? Do you think the way of salvation, as laid down in the text we have quoted, to be dubious? Do you fear that you would not be saved if you followed it? How can that be, when God has pledged His own word for its certainty? How can that fail which God prescribes, and concerning which He gives a promise? Do you think it very easy? Why, then, do you not attend to it? Its ease leaves those without excuse who neglect it. If you would have done some great thing, be not so foolish as to neglect the little thing. To believe is to trust, or lean upon Christ Jesus; in other words, to give up self-reliance, and to rely upon the Lord Jesus. To be baptised is to submit to the ordinance which our Lord fulfilled at Jordan, to which the converted ones submitted at Pentecost, to which the jailer yielded obedience on the very night of his conversion. It is the outward confession which should always go with inward faith. The outward sign saves not; but it sets forth to us our death, burial, and resurrection with Jesus, and, like the Lord's Supper, it is not to be neglected.

The great point is to believe in Jesus, and confess your faith. Do you believe in Jesus? Then, dear friend, dismiss your fears; you shall be saved. Are you still an unbeliever?

Then remember, there is but one door, and if you will not enter by it, you must perish in your sins. The door is there; but unless you enter by it, what is the use of it to you? It is of necessity that you obey the command of the gospel. Nothing can save you if you do not hear the voice of Jesus, and do His bidding indeed and of a truth. Thinking and resolving will not answer the purpose; you must come to real business; for only as you actually believe will you truly live unto God.

I heard of a friend who deeply desired to be the means of the conversion of a young man, and one said to him, 'You may go to him, and talk to him, but you will get him no further; for he is exceedingly well acquainted with the plan of salvation'. It was eminently so; and therefore, when our friend began to speak with the young man, he received for an answer, 'I am much obliged to you, but I do not know that you can tell me much, for I have long known and admired the plan of salvation by the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ'. Alas! he was resting in



the plan, but he had not believed in *the Person*. The plan of salvation is most blessed, but it can avail us nothing unless we personally believe in the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. What is the comfort of a plan of a house if you do not enter the house itself? The man in our cut, who is sitting out in the rain, is not deriving much comfort from the plans that are spread out before him. What is the comfort of a plan of clothing if you have not a rag to cover you? Have you never heard of the Arab chief at Cairo, who was very ill, and went to the missionary, and the missionary said he could give him a prescription? He did so; and a week after he found the Arab none the better. 'Did you take my prescription?' he asked. 'Yes, I ate every morsel of the paper.' He dreamed that he was going to be cured by devouring the physician's writing, which I may call the plan of the medicine. He should have had the prescription made up, and then it might have wrought him good, if he had taken the draught: it could do him no good to swallow the recipe. So is it with salvation: it is not the plan of salvation which can save, it is the carrying out of that plan by the Lord Jesus in His death on our behalf, and our acceptance of the same. Under the Jewish law, the offerer brought a bullock, and laid his hands upon it: it was no dream, or theory, or plan. In the victim for sacrifice he found something substantial, which he could handle and touch: even so do we lean upon the real and true work of Jesus, the most substantial thing under heaven. We come to the Lord Jesus by faith, and say, 'God has provided an atonement here, and I accept it. I believe in the fact accomplished on the cross; I am confident that sin

was put away by Christ, and I rest on Him'. If you would be saved, you must get beyond the acceptance of plans and doctrines to a resting in the divine person and finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Dear reader, will you have Christ now?

Jesus invites all those who labour and are heavy laden to come to Him, and He will give them rest. He does not promise this to their merely dreaming about Him. They must *come*; and they must come *to Him*, and not merely to the Church, to baptism, or to the orthodox faith, or to anything short of His divine person. When the brazen serpent was lifted up in the wilderness, the people were not to look to Moses, nor to the Tabernacle, nor to the pillar of cloud, but to the brazen serpent itself. Looking was not enough unless they looked to the right object: and the right object was not enough unless they looked. It was not enough for them to know about the serpent of brass; they must each one look to it for himself. When a man is ill, he may have a good knowledge of medicine, and yet he may die if he does not actually take the healing draught. We must receive Jesus; for 'to as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God' (John 1:12). Lay the emphasis on two words: *We must receive HIM*, and *we must RECEIVE Him*. We must open wide the door, and take Christ Jesus in; for 'Christ in you' is 'the hope of glory' (see Col. 1:27). Christ must be no myth, no dream, no phantom to us, but a real man, and truly God; and our reception of Him must be no forced and feigned acceptance, but the hearty and happy assent and consent of the soul that He shall be the all in all of our salvation.