

# The King's Highway.

An Advocate of Scriptural Business

And an Highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The Way of Holiness.—Isa. 35-8

VOL. XXXVIII.

MONCTON, N. B., SEPT. 30, 1931

NO. 4

## THE IMPORTANCE OF SELF-EXAMINATION

(Rev. R. Heber Wightman)

Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith. 2 Cor. 13:5.

Jesus Christ is presented in the gospel as the supreme object of our faith. (Rom. 5:1) "Repentance toward God." The gospel is properly called the word of truth, because Christ, the incarnate Son of God, in all his offices as Prophet, Priest and King is the living embodiment of truth, to be embraced by the rational and intelligent mind. He said—"I am the truth." Nowhere but in the gospel can we find truth; pure, unmixed, divine, reliable truth, and Christ Jesus himself is that truth. And it is the embracement of that truth that is to make us free from error, superstition and sin. Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is the instrumentality.

This faith is not simply the assent of the enlightenment of the great historic idea of the gospel, that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and the Saviour of the world; multiplied thousands in Christendom can be found who have this faith assent, but continue in perverse and wilful transgression. Their intellectual and historic faith produces no change in their affections, nor reformation in their outward conduct. The faith that apprehends and embraces Christ as a personal Saviour, is the faith of the heart, and is called by the Apostle in one place trust. We are taught that "with the heart man believeth unto righteousness." "To believe with the heart is to believe in such manner as to engage the affections and influence the actions." (Dr. McKnight).

The seat of faith, in the sense of trust, is in the heart and not in the head. A man may believe with the head and be a practical worker of iniquity, thus proving that his faith is dead and inoperative. But let him believe with the heart, and his trust involving the affections will receive and embrace Christ, to love and serve him. What is it to trust but to confide and rely upon one who is both able and willing to do us good. How beautiful is the philosophy of faith in the sense of trust. The child in the simplicity of trusting innocence depends upon the promise of father, and confides in him for the fulfillment of the promise. The husband in the fervor of unsuspecting love, confides in the integrity and virtue of his wife, and is happy in the conjugal estate. And thus it is through all the varied relations of social life. Now Christ challenges our trust and reliance for salvation for he is not a "man that he should lie nor the son of man that he should repent." "Trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, for in him is not only everlasting strength, but eternal, unchanging truth."

By a simple act of faith in Christ we are justified, and spiritually renewed in our moral nature. With this trust is inseparably connected peace with God and the hope of heaven. Says St. Peter, "Unto you therefore which

believe he is precious. Whom having not seen ye love, in whom though ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

A bare intellectual faith generates an intellectual religion as cold and cheerless as an iceberg in the polar seas. There are those who opposed to all joyous emotion in religion. They deny the direct witness of the Holy Spirit. They would have religion consist in a scriptural and exact observance of the church ritualism, imposing and gorgeous in the outwardness and sacraments of the church in a zealous advocacy of form, while they deny the power of godliness. But is there not a spiritual faste to the soul as there is a natural one? "Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good." If you can taste that which is natural, and your taste be a source of real enjoyment to the palate, may you not taste that which is spiritual and the taste be the source of emotional delight to the mind? If Christ be precious to the soul of the believer, must he not be intellectually conscious of the preciousness of it?

There may be water baptism without the remission of sins, because that baptism may be unaccompanied by evangelical repentance and justifying faith in Christ. He that believeth not with the heart unto righteousness, though he may have been baptized, shall be damned. Does water baptism necessitate the act of faith? May not the ordinance be administered while in the heart of the subject there may be no faith unto righteousness, justification, forgiveness of sins. Says Paul, "Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by him all that believe are justified."

Here the apostle's language, justification or the forgiveness of sins, is suspended on the condition of faith in Jesus Christ; all that believe in him are pardoned or justified. It is a lamentable truth that there are many in the churches who profess to have faith in the Saviour of sinners, who do not experience the blessed influence and gracious results of that faith. Faith in Christ produces peace with God.

But again, the faith of the Bible gives to the genuine believer victory over sin, in bringing every thought of his mind into captivity to the obedience of Christ. The faith spoken of in the text is not a speculative belief in the doctrines of the Bible. It is not the faith of any particular denominational creed. The religion of too many professors consists in the faith of their particular church creed and ritual. They conclude with great self complacency, that if they believe all the articles of religion which their church imposes, and if they go through the performance of its religious ceremony on the Sabbath, that they are true followers of Jesus Christ and are in the possession of the New Testament religion.

But the faith of the Bible is not the faith of church forms, creeds and ceremonies. The faith of the text is not a bare historical faith in Christianity. How many men there are out of the church making no profession of religion, who have as strong historical faith in Jesus Christ, as the sincere and evangelical believer. But these persons are not religious. They are children of wrath and the servants of sin, living without God and without hope in the world. We may believe in mind every doctrine of the Scripture, and at the same time may be in heart and conduct practical infidels. The faith of the heart and the faith of the head are two distinct exercises. The faith of the head that only thinks may exist independent of the heart, that feels and trusts, but it is dead and cannot save. The faith of the heart includes the exercise of intellectual assent, and saves the soul in time and in eternity. The faith which all genuine Christians possess is toward Christ, and consequently is called "the faith."

There is but one faith recognized in all the teachings of the Bible, and that is the faith that believes in Christ with the heart unto righteousness, and justifies the sinner and qualifies him for the company and enjoyment of God in heaven. The Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ is the only proper object of this faith. "For as there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved, but this name" so there is no other principle that can possibly apprehend and appropriate the great salvation but the principle of faith. "He that believeth on the Son hath life, (that is the life of God in the soul) but he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." The essence of justifying faith is trust in Christ, trust in the infinite atonement which Jesus Christ has made for all sinners. "Our fathers trusted thee," says David. "They trusted thee and thou didst help them."

But it is the heart which is to trust; the affections of the heart must embrace Jesus as able and willing to save. They must repose with confidence upon the promises of God's word, believing in his willingness and ability to grant the great salvation through Jesus Christ without which we are ruined and undone. In the exercise of this faith that trusts God and takes him at his word, the chief of penitent sinners can so please God, as to be received into his spiritual kingdom and constituted a son and heir.

We have remarked that the faith of the gospel is saving faith. From what does it save the penitent believer? It saves (1) from the guilt of sin. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." (Rom. 8:1). Faith saves (2) from the dominion of sin. "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we that are

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