FAITH—WHAT IS IT? HOW CAN IT BE OBTAINED?

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A SERMON
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BY C. H. SPURGEON
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"By grace are ye saved through faith."
Ephesians 2:8

I MEAN to dwell mainly upon that expression, "Through faith." I call attention, however, first of all, to the fountainhead of our salvation, which is the grace of God. "By grace are ye saved." Because God is gracious, therefore sinful men are forgiven, converted, purified, and saved. It is not because of anything in them, or that ever can be in them, that they are saved, but because of the boundless love, goodness, pity, compassion, mercy, and grace of God.

Tarry a moment, then, at the wellhead. Behold the pure river of water of life as it proceeds out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. What an abyss is the grace of God! Who can fathom it? Like all the rest of the divine attributes, it is infinite. God is full of love, for "God is love." God is full of goodness—the very name "God" is but short for "good."

Unbounded goodness and love enter into the very essence of the Godhead. It is because, "His mercy endureth for ever" that men are not destroyed. Because, "His compassions fail not" that sinners are brought to Himself and forgiven. Right well remember this, for else you may fall into error by fixing your minds so much upon the faith which is the channel of salvation as to forget the grace which is the fountain and source of faith itself.

Faith is the work of God's grace in us. No man can say that Jesus is the Christ but by the Holy Ghost. "No man cometh unto me," says Christ, "except the Father which hath sent me draw him." So that faith, which is coming to Christ, is the result of divine drawing.

Grace is the first and last moving cause of salvation, and faith, important as it is, is only an important part of the machinery which grace employs. We are saved "through faith," but it is "by grace." Sound forth those words as with the archangel's trumpet—"By grace are ye saved."

Faith occupies the position of a channel or conduit-pipe. Grace is the fountain and the stream—faith is the aqueduct along which the flood of mercy flows down to refresh the thirsty sons of men. It is a great pity when the aqueduct is broken. It is a sad sight to see around Rome the many noble aqueducts which no longer convey water into the city, because the arches are broken and the marvelous structures are in ruins.

The aqueduct must be kept entire to convey the current, and even so, faith must be true and sound, leading right up to God, and coming right down to ourselves, that it may become a serviceable channel of mercy to our souls. Still, I again remind you that faith is the channel or aqueduct, and not the fountainhead. And we must not look so much to it as to exalt it above the divine source of all blessing which lies in the grace of God.

Never make a Christ out of your faith, nor think of it as if it were the independent source of your salvation. Our life is found in "looking unto Jesus," not in looking to our own faith. By faith all things become possible to us, yet the power is not in the faith, but in the God upon whom faith relies.

Grace is the locomotive, and faith is the chain by which the carriage of the soul is attached to the great motive power. The righteousness of faith is not the moral excellence of faith, but the righteousness of Jesus Christ which faith grasps and appropriates. The peace within the soul is not derived from the contemplation of our own faith, but it comes to us from Him who is our peace, the hem of whose garment faith touches, and virtue comes out of Him into the soul.

However, it is a very important thing that we look well to the channel, and therefore at this time we will consider it, as God, the Holy Ghost, shall enable us. Faith, *what is it*? Faith, *why is it selected as the channel of blessing*? Faith, *how can it be obtained and increased*?

I. FAITH, WHAT IS IT?

What is this faith concerning which it is said, "By grace are ye saved *through faith*"? There are many descriptions of faith, but almost all the definitions I have met with have made me understand it less than I did before I saw them.

The Negro said, when he read the chapter, that he would confound it, and it is very likely that he did so, though he meant to expound it. So, brethren, we may explain faith till nobody understands it. I hope I shall not be guilty of that fault. Faith is the simplest of all things, and perhaps, because of its simplicity it is the more difficult to explain.

What is faith? *It is made up of three things—knowledge, belief, and trust. Knowledge* comes first. Romanist divines hold that a man can believe what he does not know. Perhaps a Romanist can, but I cannot. "How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?" I need to be informed of a fact before I can possibly believe it.

I believe this, I believe that—but I cannot say that I believe a great many things of which I have never heard. "Faith comes by hearing." We must first hear, in order that we may know what is to be believed. "They that know thy name will put their trust in thee." A measure of knowledge is essential to faith, hence the importance of getting knowledge. "Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live"—such was the word of the ancient prophet, and it is the Word of the Gospel still.

Search the Scriptures and learn what the Holy Spirit teaches concerning Christ and His salvation. Seek to know God—"that God is, and is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him." May He give you "the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord."

Know the Gospel. Know what the Good News is, how it talks of free forgiveness, and of change of heart, of adoption into the family of God, and of countless other blessings. Know God, know His Gospel, and know especially Christ Jesus the Son of God, the Savior of men, united to us by His human nature, and united to God, seeing He is divine, and thus able to act as Mediator between God and man, able to lay His hand upon both, and to be the connecting link between the sinner and the Judge of all the earth.

Endeavor to know more and more of Christ. After Paul had been converted more than twenty years, he tells the Philippians that he desired to know Christ. And depend upon it, the more we know of Jesus, the more we shall wish to know of Him, that so our faith in Him may increase.

Endeavor especially to know the doctrine of the sacrifice of Christ, for that is the center of the target at which faith aims. That is the point upon which saving faith mainly fixes itself, that, "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." Know that He was made a curse for us, as it is written, "Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree."

Drink deep into the doctrine of the substitutionary work of Christ, for therein lies the sweetest possible comfort to the guilty sons of men, since the Lord, "made him to be sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." Faith begins with knowledge, hence the value of being taught in divine truth, for to know Christ is life eternal.

Then the mind goes on to *believe* that these things are true. The soul believes that God is, and that He hears the cries of sincere hearts; that the Gospel is from God; that justification by faith is the grand truth that God has revealed in these last days by His Spirit more clearly than before. Then the heart believes that Jesus is, verily and in truth, our God and Savior, the Redeemer of men, the Prophet, Priest, and King unto His people.

Dear hearers, I pray that you may at once come to this. Get firmly to believe that "the blood of Jesus Christ, God's dear Son, cleanseth us from all sin," that His sacrifice is complete and fully accepted of God on man's behalf, so that He that believes on Jesus is not condemned.

So far you have made an advance towards faith, and one more ingredient is needed to complete it, which is *trust*. Commit yourself to the merciful God, rest your hope on the gracious Gospel, trust your soul on the dying and living Savior, wash away your sins in the atoning blood, accept His perfect righteousness, and all is well.

Trust is the lifeblood of faith—there is no saving faith without it. The Puritans were accustomed to explain faith by the word "recumbency." You know what it means. You see me leaning upon this rail, leaning with all my weight upon it—even thus lean upon Christ.

It would be a better illustration still if I were to stretch myself at full length and rest my whole person upon a rock, lying flat upon it. Fall flat upon Christ. Cast yourself upon Him, rest in Him, commit yourself to Him. That done, you have exercised saving faith.

Faith is not a blind thing, for faith begins with knowledge. It is not a speculative thing, for faith believes facts of which it is sure. It is not an unpractical, dreamy thing, for faith trusts and stakes its destiny upon the truth of revelation. Faith *ventures* its all upon the truth of God. It is not a pleasant word to use, but the poet employed it, and it suggests my meaning—

"Venture on Him, venture wholly;
Let no other trust intrude."

That is one way of describing what faith is—I wonder whether I have "confounded" it already.

Let me try again. *Faith is believing that Christ is what He is said to be, that He will do what He has promised to do, and expecting this of Him*. The Scriptures speak of Jesus Christ as being God, God in human flesh—as being perfect in His character, as being made a sin offering on our behalf—as bearing sin in His own body on the tree. The Scripture speaks of Him as having finished transgression, made an end of sin, and brought in everlasting righteousness.

The Scriptures further tell us that He "rose again," that He "ever liveth to make intercession for us," that He has gone up into glory, and has taken possession of heaven on the behalf of His people, and that He will shortly come again "to judge the world in righteousness and his people with equity." We are most firmly to believe that it is even so, for this is the testimony of God the Father when He said, "This is my beloved Son; hear ye him."

This also is testified by God the Holy Spirit, for the Spirit has borne witness to Christ, both by the Word and by divers miracles, and by His working in the hearts of men. We are to believe this testimony to be true.

Faith also believes that Christ will do what He has promised—that if He has promised to cast out none that come to Him, it is certain that He will not cast us out if we come to Him. Faith believes that if Jesus said, "The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life," it must be true.

And if we get this living water from Christ, it will abide in us, and will well up within us in streams of holy life. Whatever Christ has promised to do He will do, and we must believe this so as to look for pardon, justification, preservation, and eternal glory from His hands, according as He has promised.

Then comes the next necessary step. Jesus is what He is said to be, Jesus will do what He says He will do. Therefore we must each one *trust Him*, saying, "He will be to me what He says He is, and He will do to me what He has promised to do. I leave myself in the hands of Him who is appointed to save, that He may save me. I rest upon His promise that He will do even as He has said."

This is a saving faith, and he that has it has everlasting life. Whatever his dangers and difficulties, whatever his darkness and depression, whatever his infirmities and sins, he that believes thus on Christ Jesus is not condemned, and shall never come into condemnation. May that explanation be of some service. I trust it may be used by the Spirit of God.

But now I thought, as it is a very hot and heavy morning, that I had better give you a number of illustrations, lest anybody should be inclined to go to sleep. If anybody should be drowsy, will his

neighbor just nudge him a little by accident, for it may be as well while we are here to be awake—especially with such a subject on hand as this.

The illustrations will be such as have been commonly used, and perhaps I may be able to give one or two of my own. Faith exists in various degrees, according to the amount of knowledge, or other cause. Sometimes faith is little more than a simple *clinging* to Christ—a sense of dependence, and a willingness so to depend.

When you are down at the seaside, as we might all of us wish to be, you will see the limpet sticking to the rock. You walk with a soft tread up to the rock with your walking stick and strike the limpet with a rapid blow, and off he comes. Try the next limpet in that way. You have given him warning—he heard the blow with which you struck his neighbor, and he clings with all his might. You will never get him off, not you! Strike and strike again, but you may as soon break the rock.

Our little friend, the limpet, does not know much, but he clings. He cannot tell us much about what he is clinging to—he is not acquainted with the geological formation of the rock—but he clings. He has found something to cling to—that is his little bit of knowledge—and he uses it by clinging to the rock of his salvation. It is the limpet's life to cling.

Thousands of God's people have no more faith than this. They know enough to cling to Jesus with all their heart and soul—and this suffices. Jesus Christ is to them a Savior strong and mighty, and like a rock, immovable and immutable. They cleave to Him for dear life, and this clinging saves them.

God gives to His people the propensity to cling. Look at the sweet pea which grows in your garden. Perhaps it has fallen down upon the gravel walk. Lift it up against the laurel or the trellis, or put a stick near it, and it catches hold directly, because there are little hooks ready prepared with which it grasps anything which comes in its way—it was meant to grow upwards, and so it is provided with tendrils. Every child of God has his tendrils about him—thoughts, and desires, and hopes with which he hooks on to Christ and the promise.

Though this is a very simple sort of faith, it is a very complete and effectual form of it, and in fact, it is the heart of all faith, and that to which we are often driven when we are in deep trouble, or when our mind is somewhat befuddled by our being sickly or depressed in spirit. We can cling when we can do nothing else, and that is the very soul of faith.

O poor heart, if you do not yet know as much about the Gospel as we could wish you to know, cling to what you do know. If as yet you are only like a lamb that wades a little into the river of life, and not like leviathan who stirs the mighty deep to the bottom, yet drink. For it is drinking, and not diving, that will save you. Cling, then! Cling to Jesus, for that is faith.

Another form of faith is this, in which a man depends upon another from a knowledge of the superiority of that other, and *follows* him. I do not think the limpet knows much about the rock, but in this next phase of faith there is more knowledge.

A blind man trusts himself with his guide because he knows that his friend can see, and trusting, he walks where his guide conducts him. If the poor man is born blind, he does not know what sight is, but he knows that there is such a thing as sight, and that it is possessed by his friend, and therefore he freely puts his hand into the hand of the seeing one, and follows his leadership.

This is as good an image of faith as well can be—we know that Jesus has about Him merit, and power, and blessing which we do not possess, and therefore we gladly trust ourselves to Him, and He never betrays our confidence.

Every boy that goes to school has to exert faith while *learning*. His schoolmaster teaches him geography, and instructs him as to the form of the earth, and the existence of certain great cities and empires. The boy does not himself know that these things are true, except that he believes his teacher, and the books put into his hands.

That is what you will have to do with Christ if you are to be saved—you must just know because He tells you, and believe because He assures you it is even so, and trust yourself with Him because He promises you that salvation will be the result. Almost all that you and I know has come to us by faith.

A scientific discovery has been made, and we are sure of it. On what ground do we believe it? On the authority of certain well-known men of learning, whose repute is established. We have never made or seen their experiments, but we believe their witness.

Just so you are to do with regard to Christ. Because He teaches you certain truths you are to be His disciple, believe His words, and trust yourself with Him. He is infinitely superior to you, and presents Himself to your confidence as your Master and Lord. If you will receive Him and His words, you shall be saved.

Another and a higher form of faith is that faith which *grows out of love*. Why does a boy trust his father? You and I know a little more about his father than he does, and we do not rely upon him quite so implicitly. But the reason why the child trusts his father is because he loves him.

Blessed and happy are they who have a sweet faith in Jesus, intertwined with deep affection for Him. They are charmed with His character and delighted with His mission. They are carried away by the loving-kindness that He has manifested, and now they cannot help trusting Him because they so much admire, revere, and love Him.

It is hard to make you doubt a person whom you love. If you are at last driven to it, then comes the awful passion of jealousy, which is strong as death and cruel as the grave—but till such a crushing of the heart shall come, love is all trustfulness and confidence.

The way of loving trust in the Savior may thus be illustrated. A lady is the wife of the most eminent physician of the day. She is seized with a dangerous illness, and is smitten down by its power. Yet she is wonderfully calm and quiet, for her husband has made this disease his special study, and has healed thousands similarly afflicted. She is not in the least troubled, for she feels perfectly safe in the hands of one so dear to her, in whom skill and love are blended in their highest forms. Her faith is reasonable and natural—her husband from every point of view deserves it of her.

This is the kind of faith which the happiest of believers exercise towards Christ. There is no physician like Him, none can save as He can. We love Him, and He loves us, and therefore we put ourselves into His hands, accept whatever He prescribes, and do whatever He bids. We feel that nothing can be wrongly ordered while He is the director of our affairs, for He loves us too much to let us perish, or suffer a single needless pang.

Faith also *realizes* the presence of the living God and Savior, and thus it breeds in the soul a beautiful calm and quiet like that which was seen in a little child in the time of tempest. Her mother was alarmed, but the sweet girl was pleased. She clapped her hands with delight. Standing at the window when the flashes came most vividly, she cried in childish accents, "Look, mamma! How beautiful! How beautiful!"

Her mother said, "My dear, come away, the lightning is terrible." But she begged to be allowed to look out and see the lovely light which God was making all over the sky, for she was sure God would not do His little child any harm. "But listen to the terrible thunder," said her mother. "Did you not say, mamma, that God was speaking in the thunder?" "Yes," said her trembling parent. "O," said the darling, "how nice it is to hear Him. He talks very loud, but I think it is because He wants the deaf people to hear Him. Is it not so, mamma?"

Thus she went talking on, as merry as a bird was she, for God was real to her, and she trusted Him. To her the lightning was God's beautiful light, and the thunder was God's wonderful voice, and she was happy. I dare say her mother knew a good deal about the laws of nature and the energy of electricity—and little was the comfort which her knowledge brought her. The child's knowledge was less showy, but it was far more certain and precious.

We are so conceited nowadays that we are too proud to be comforted by self-evident truth, and prefer to make ourselves wretched with questionable theories. Hood sang a deep spiritual truth when he merrily said,

"I remember, I remember,
The fir trees dark and high;

I used to think their slender tops
Were close against the sky;
It was a childish ignorance,
But now 'tis little joy
To know I'm further off from heav'n
Than when I was a boy."

For my own part I would rather be a child, again, than grow perversely wise. Faith is to be a child towards Christ—believing in Him as a real and present person—at this very moment near us and ready to bless us. This may seem to be a childish fancy, but it is such childishness we must all come to if we would be happy in the Lord.

"Except you be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." Faith takes Christ at His word, as a child believes his father, and trusts Him in all simplicity with past, present, and future. God give us such faith!

A firm form of *faith arises out of assured knowledge*. This comes of growth in grace, and is the faith which believes Christ because it knows Him, trusts Him because it has proven Him to be infallibly faithful. This faith asks not for signs and tokens, but bravely believes.

Look at the faith of the master mariner—I have often wondered at it. He looses his cable, he steams away from the shore. For days, weeks, or even months, he never sees sail or shore, yet on he goes day and night without fear, till one morning he finds himself just opposite the desired haven towards which he has been steering.

How has he found his way over the trackless deep? He has trusted in his compass, his nautical almanac, his glass, and the heavenly bodies, and obeying their guidance, without sighting shore, he has steered so accurately that he has not to change a point to get into port. It is a wonderful thing that sailing without sight.

Spiritually it is a blessed thing to leave the shores of sight, and say, "Good-bye to inward feelings, cheering providences, signs, tokens, and so forth. I believe in God, and I steer for heaven straight away." "Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed"—to them shall be administered an abundant entrance at the last, and a safe voyage on the way.

This is the faith which makes it easy *to commit our soul and all its eternal interests into the Savior's keeping*. One man goes to the bank and puts his money into it with a measure of confidence, but another has looked into the bank's accounts, and has been behind the scenes, and made sure of its having a large reserve of well-invested capital—he puts in his money with the utmost assurance. He knows and is established in his faith, and so he cheerfully commits his all to the bank.

Even so, we who know Christ are glad to place our whole being in His hands, knowing that He is able to keep us even unto the end. God give us more and more an assured confidence in Jesus until it comes to be an unwavering faith, so that we never doubt, but unquestioningly believe.

Look at the ploughman—he labors with his plough in the wintry months, when there is not a bough on the tree nor a bird that sings to cheer him, and after he has ploughed, he takes the precious corn from the granary, of which perhaps he has little enough, and he buries it in the furrows, assured that it will come up again. Because he has seen a harvest fifty times already, he looks for another, and in faith he scatters the precious grain.

To all appearance, the most absurd thing that ever was done by mortal man is to throw away good corn, burying it in the ground. If you had never seen or heard of its results, it would seem the way of waste and not the work of husbandry. Yet the farmer has no doubt—he longs to be allowed to cast away his seed, in faith he even covets fair weather that he may bury his corn. And if you tell him that he is doing an absurd thing, he smiles at your ignorance, and tells you that thus harvests come.

This is a fair picture of the faith which grows of experience—it helps us to act in a manner contrary to appearances—it leads us to commit our all to the keeping of Christ, burying our hopes and our very lives with Him in joyful confidence that if we be dead with Him, we shall also live with Him. Jesus

Christ who rose from the dead will raise us up through His death unto newness of life, and give us a harvest of joy and peace.

Give up everything into the hands of Christ, and you shall have it back with an abundant increase. May we get strong faith, so that as we have no doubt of the rising and setting of the sun, so we may never doubt the Savior's working for us in every hour of need. We have already trusted in our Lord, and have never been confounded, therefore let us go on to rely upon Him more and more implicitly—for never shall our faith in Him surpass the bounds of His deservings. Have faith in God, and then hear Jesus say, "Ye believe in God, believe also in me."

II. Thus far I have done my best to answer what faith is. We shall now inquire, WHY FAITH IS SELECTED AS THE CHANNEL OF SALVATION.

"By grace are ye saved *through faith*." It becomes us to be modest in answering such a question, for God's ways are not always to be understood. But as far as we can tell, faith has been selected as the channel of grace because *there is a natural adaptation* in faith to be used as the receiver. Suppose that I am about to give a poor man an alms. I put it into his hand—why? Well, it would hardly be fitting to put it into his ear, or to lay it upon his foot—the hand seems made on purpose to receive.

So faith in the mental body is created on purpose to be a receiver—it is the hand of the man, and there is a fitness in bestowing grace by its means. Do let me put this very plainly. Faith which receives Christ is as simple an act as when your child receives an apple from you, because you hold it out and promise to give it the apple if it comes for it.

The belief and the receiving relate only to an apple, but they make up precisely the same act as the faith which deals with eternal salvation. And what the child's hand is to the apple, that your faith is to the perfect salvation of Christ. The child's hand does not make the apple, nor alter the apple—it only takes it. And faith is chosen by God to be the receiver of salvation, because it does not pretend to make salvation, nor to help in it, but it receives it.

Faith, again, is doubtless selected because *it gives all the glory to God*. It is of faith that it might be by grace, and it is of grace that there may be no boasting, for God cannot endure pride. Paul says, "Not of works, lest any man should boast." The hand which receives charity does not say, "I am to be thanked for accepting the gift"—that would be absurd.

When the hand conveys bread to the mouth, it does not say to the body, "Thank me, for I fed you." It is a very simple thing that the hand does, though a very necessary thing—but it never arrogates glory to itself for what it does. So God has selected faith to receive the unspeakable gift of His grace because it cannot take to itself any credit, but must adore the gracious God who is the giver of all good.

Next, God selects faith as the channel of salvation because *it is a sure method, linking man with God*. When man confides in God, there is a point of union between them, and that union guarantees blessing. Faith saves us because it makes us cling to God, and so brings us into connection with Him. I have used the following illustration before, but I must repeat it, because I cannot think of a better.

I am told that years ago above the Falls of Niagara a boat was upset, and two men were being carried down the current, when persons on the shore managed to float a rope out to them, which rope was seized by them both. One of them held fast to it and was safely drawn to the bank. But the other, seeing a great log come floating by, unwisely let go of the rope and clung to the log, for it was the bigger thing of the two, and apparently better to cling to.

Alas, the log with the man on it, went right over the vast abyss, because there was no union between the log and the shore. The size of the log was no benefit to him who grasped it—it needed a connection with the shore to produce safety.

So when a man trusts to his works, or to sacraments, or to anything of that sort, he will not be saved, because there is no junction between him and Christ. But faith, though it may seem to be like a slender cord, is in the hand of the great God on the shore side. Infinite power pulls in the connecting line, and thus draws the man from destruction. Oh, the blessedness of faith, because it unites us to God!

Faith is chosen, again, because *it touches the springs of action*. I wonder whether I shall be wrong if I say that we never do anything except through faith of some sort. If I walk across this platform it is because I believe my legs will carry me. A man eats because he believes in the necessity of food. Columbus discovered America because he believed that there was another continent beyond the ocean—many another grand deed has also been born of faith, for faith works wonders.

Common things are done on the same principle—faith in its natural form is an all-prevailing force. God gives salvation to our faith, because He has thus touched the secret spring of all our emotions and actions. He has, so to speak, taken possession of the battery, and now He can send the sacred current to every part of our nature. When we believe in Christ—and the heart has come into the possession of God—then are we saved from sin, and are moved towards repentance, holiness, zeal, prayer, consecration, and every other gracious thing.

Faith, again, *has the power of working by love*. It touches the secret spring of the affections, and draws the heart towards God. Faith is an act of the understanding, but it also proceeds from the heart. "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness," and hence God gives salvation to faith because it resides next door to the affections, and is near akin to love, and love, you know, is that which purifies the soul. Love to God is obedience. Love is holiness. To love God and to love man is to be conformed to the image of Christ—and this is salvation.

Moreover, *faith creates peace and joy*. He that has it rests, and is tranquil, is glad, and joyous—and this is a preparation for heaven. God gives all the heavenly gifts to faith, because faith works in us the very life and spirit which are to be eternally manifested in the upper and better world. I have hastened over these points that I might not weary you on a day when, however willing the spirit may be, the flesh is weak.

III. We close with the third point—HOW CAN WE OBTAIN AND INCREASE OUR FAITH?

A very earnest question this is to many. They say they want to believe but cannot. A great deal of nonsense is talked upon this subject. Let us be practical in our dealing with it. "What am I to do in order to believe?" The shortest way is to believe, and if the Holy Spirit has made you honest and candid, you will believe as soon as the truth is set before you.

Anyhow, the Gospel command is clear—"Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." But still, *if you have a difficulty, take it before God in prayer*. Tell the great Father exactly what it is that puzzles you, and beg Him by His Holy Spirit to solve the question. If I cannot believe a statement in a book, I am glad to inquire of the author what he meant, and if he is an true man, his explanation will satisfy me. Much more will the divine explanation satisfy the heart of the true seeker. The Lord is willing to make Himself known. Go to Him, and see if it be not so.

Furthermore, if faith seems difficult, it is possible that God the Holy Spirit will enable you to believe if you *hear very frequently and earnestly that which you are commanded to believe*. We believe many things because we have heard them so often. Do you not find it so in common life, that if you hear a thing fifty times a day, at last you come to believe it?

Some men have come to believe that which is false by this process. I should not wonder but what God often blesses this method in working faith concerning that which is true, for it is written, "Faith cometh by hearing." If I earnestly and attentively hear the Gospel, it may be that one of these days I shall find myself believing that which I hear, through the blessed operation of the Spirit upon my mind.

If that, however, should seem poor advice, I would add next, *consider the testimony of others.* The Samaritans believed because of what the woman told them concerning Jesus. Many of our beliefs arise out of the testimony of others. I believe that there is such a country as Japan—I never saw it, and yet I believe that there is such a place because others have been there.

I believe I shall die—I have never died, but a great many have done so whom I once knew—and I have a conviction that I shall die also. The testimony of many convinces me of this fact. Listen, then, to those who tell you how they were saved, how they were pardoned, how they have been changed in character—if you will but listen you will find that somebody just like yourself has been saved.

If you have been a thief, you will find that a thief rejoiced to wash away his sins in the fountain of Christ's blood. You that have been unchaste in life, you will find that men who have fallen that way have been cleansed and changed. If you are in despair, you have only to get among God's people, and inquire a little, and some who have been equally in despair with yourself will tell you how He saved them.

As you listen to one after another of those who have tried the Word of God, and proved it, the divine Spirit will lead you to believe. Have you not heard of the African who was told by the missionary that water sometimes became so hard that a man could walk on it? He declared that he believed a great many things the missionary had told him, but he would never believe that.

When the African came to England, it came to pass that one frosty day he saw the river frozen, but he would not venture on it. He knew that it was a river, and he was certain that he would be drowned if he ventured upon it. He could not be induced to walk the ice till his friend went upon it. Then he was persuaded and trusted himself where others had ventured.

So, mayhap, while you see others believe, and notice their joy and peace, you will yourself be gently led to believe. It is one of God's ways of helping us to faith.

A still better plan is this—*note the authority upon which you are commanded to believe*, and this will greatly help you. The authority is not mine, or you might well reject it. It is not even the pope's, or you might even reject that. But you are commanded to believe upon the authority of God Himself. *He* bids you believe in Jesus Christ, and you must not refuse to obey your Maker.

The foreman of a certain works in the north had often heard the Gospel, but he was troubled with the fear that he might not come to Christ. His good employer one day sent a card round to the works—"Come to my house immediately after work." The foreman appeared at his employer's door, and the man came out, and said somewhat roughly, "What do you want, John, troubling me at this time? Work is done, what right have you here?"

"Sir," said he, "I had a card from you saying that I was to come after work." "Do you mean to say that merely because you had a card from me you are to come up to my house and call me out after business hours?" "Well, sir," replied the foreman, "I do not understand you, but it seems to me that as you sent for me, I had a right to come."

"Come in, John," said his employer, "I have another message that I want to read to you." And he sat down and read these words—"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "Do you think after such a message from Christ that you can be wrong in going to Him?"

The poor man saw it all at once, and believed, because he saw that he had good warrant and authority for believing. So have you, poor soul. You have good authority for coming to Christ, for the Lord Himself bids you trust Him.

If that does not settle you, *think over what it is that you have to believe*—that the Lord Jesus Christ suffered in the room and place and stead of men, and is able to save all who trust Him. Why, this is the most blessed fact that ever men were told to believe. The most suitable, the most comforting, the most divine truth that ever was set before men.

I advise you to think much upon it, and search out the grace and love which it contains. Study the four evangelists. Study Paul's epistles, and then see if the message is not such a credible one that you are forced to believe it.

If that does not do, then *think upon the person of Jesus Christ*—think of who He is and what He did—and where He is now, and what He is now. Think often and deeply. When He, even such a one as He, bids you trust Him, surely your heart will be persuaded. How can you doubt *Him*?

If none of these things avail, then there is something wrong about you altogether, and my last word is, *submit yourself to God*! May the Spirit of God take away your enmity and make you yield. You are a rebel, a proud rebel, and that is why you do not believe your God. Give up your rebellion. Throw down your weapons. Yield at discretion. Surrender to your King.

I believe that never did a soul throw up its hands in self-despair, and cry, "Lord, I yield," but what faith became easy to it before long. It is because you still have a quarrel with God, and intend to have your own will and your own way, that therefore you cannot believe. "How can ye believe," said Christ, "that have honour one of another?"

Proud self creates unbelief. Submit, O man. Yield to your God, and then shall you sweetly believe in your Savior. God bless you, for Christ's sake, and bring you at this very moment to believe in the Lord Jesus. Amen.

[NOTE—While revising this sermon I felt moved to ask my readers to circulate it. I tried to be very simple, and I think I succeeded. If you, dear reader, think the sermon likely to show the way of salvation to those around you, will you not get extra copies and give them away? The preacher of the sermon and the giver of it will rejoice together if, by their united effort, men are led to faith in Jesus.]

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—EPHESIANS 2

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—911, 554

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.