

Easy Believism

Principal William Macleod

Nothing you could do is easier than to believe in Jesus — once you have been born again. Many Christians testify to their regret that they did not believe sooner. It is so easy to believe, and wonderful peace and joy flows into the heart of the one who believes. But there is nothing more impossible for the unregenerate man than to believe savingly in Christ. True, in the folly of his self-righteous and self-confident heart, he thinks he can believe at any time. He will become a Christian when he is older, and has had his bellyful of pleasure. There are today many Christians who think that by being very kind and friendly, explaining things very clearly and simply, avoiding mentioning the cost of discipleship and by being tactful and persuasive, they will succeed in converting the sinner. Although they would not admit it, the implication of their attitude is that they do not need the Holy Spirit. They have an inoffensive, unobtrusive, user-friendly gospel which can be chosen just as you would choose a hobby or even a type of breakfast cereal! But the Bible makes plain that it is by sovereign grace rather than man's efforts that we are saved, and it is through faith which is itself the gift of God and not the mere decision of man (Eph.2:8).

Historical Faith

Not all faith is saving faith. There is for example historical faith. This is simply believing the facts related in Scripture. It involves believing that God is Creator, that we are all sinners and deserve His wrath, that the Son of God died for sinners, that He completed the work of salvation and rose again, that He reigns in heaven and is coming to judge the world at the last day and that salvation can only be found through Him. Many think that because they believe these truths they are saved. But Scripture says that faith without works is dead and that even the devils believe and tremble (Jas.2:19). There are millions who believe the things taught in the Bible but that makes no difference to their lives. There are ministers who encourage those who merely have historical faith to think that they are saved. These ministers are deluding men and women to hell.

Temporary Faith

It is clearly taught in Scripture that there is such a thing as temporary faith which stops short of saving faith. In the parable of the Sower, some of the seed fell on rocky ground where it grew for a time till the trials came. They received the Word with joy but later fell away. Elsewhere we are told that many believed in the name of Jesus “when they saw the miracles which he did. But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man” (Jn.2:25). Scripture says of Simon that he “himself believed also: and when he was baptised, he continued with Philip” (Acts 8:13). Later Peter warned Simon that he and his money were going to perish because he was “in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity” (8:23). From this we see that there is a temporary faith which is not saving. People can have a religious experience and something like conversion without being truly saved.

Miracle Faith

It would seem that Judas Iscariot preached, performed miracles and cast out devils just like the other disciples. The ten lepers all had faith to be healed but only one returned giving glory to God (Lk.17:17). It is possible to have faith to remove mountains and yet not have the love of God in our hearts (1Cor.13:2). Some people have wonderful answers to their prayers yet were never born-again.

Trust

This is a vital element in saving faith. It is good to believe the facts of the Bible but we must go further and depend upon the One whom the facts reveal. Saving faith involves receiving and embracing the Lord Jesus Christ freely offered to us in the Gospel. It is natural for man to trust in his own righteousness and good works. If we are to be saved we must rely upon Christ alone. The atoning work was completed on Calvary. The one who is born-again has been convinced of his sin and lostness, and depends on Christ as his only hope.

New Life

Where someone believes and is saved there will be an obvious difference to their life. “If any man be in Christ, he is a new

creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (2Cor.5:17). It is not just a few things that change but “all things are become new”. “Faith without works is dead” (Jas.2:20). True saving faith will always show itself in a person’s life. If an individual still receives his greatest pleasure from material possessions or worldly amusements it is obvious that a saving change has never taken place. The true Christian is recognised by his life. “By their fruits ye shall know them” (Mt.7:20). Love is one of the clearest marks for the watching world: “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another” (Jn.13:35).

Growing Faith

We are to grow in grace and in knowledge (2Pet.3:18). Similarly we are to grow in faith. The disciples prayed “Lord increase our faith” (Lk.17:5). As our personal intimate knowledge of Christ grows so should our faith in Him. As we experience various trials our faith is tested. Emerging from these tests we are stronger in our faith. The God who has promised never to leave us nor to forsake us, has proved true to His Word. “We may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me” (Heb.13:6). Receiving answers to our prayers we can say, “I love the Lord, because he hath heard my voice and my supplications” (Ps.116:1). A faith which does not grow is dead and useless. Do you have saving faith? Is your faith in Christ growing?