

Summary and Conclusion

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We have now surveyed in brief outline some of the great foundations of the faith of Christ. There has been nothing exhaustive about our treatment of them. Other foundation truths might have been added, and there are great depths that we have not touched in those that we have considered. Still, we have had before us the authoritative Word of God, and have considered our themes in the light of its statements. Let us finish by attempting to sum up our conclusions in a general way under four definite heads. *Firstly*, then, we would say that

The Faith is One.

We speak frequently enough of the truths of Scripture, yet we must always remember that each individual item which we may call a truth is but a part of one whole, which is *the* truth. A wheel may have many spokes, the arch of a bridge may contain many stones, and we may concentrate our thoughts for a given time upon one spoke or one stone, yet we always have in the back of our minds the fact that it is but a part of a greater whole. So it must be as we concentrate upon any of the foundation truths of our holy faith. They are not disconnected items which may be brought together in any fashion. They are intimately connected and organically ONE.

Secondly, as a consequence of this

No part of truth can be denied or weakened without injury to the whole.

If one spoke be broken the strength of the wheel is threatened. If one stone of the arch be dislodged the stability of the whole is destroyed. If one foundation truth of Scripture be denied the faith of Christ is imperilled, its consistency is broken up, and there is no knowing how far the mischief may spread. We gave an illustration of this at the end of the chapter on Eternal Punishment, for at this point above all others does the devil attempt to insert the thin edge of the wedge of unbelief. He knows full well that especially here are men tempted to be partial in their thoughts, and at the same time that the point appears to be one which can be left unguarded without any very serious consequences following. As we showed, however, very serious consequences do invariably follow, and sometimes those who begin by denying eternal punishment on humanitarian grounds end by denying the faith in its entirety.

We entreat our readers to lay hold of this fact very firmly, for the faith is that at which Satan, the god and prince of this world, is ever aiming. Scripture presents him to us, not so much as a monster who aims at the corrupting of the morals of mankind; as transforming himself into an angel of light, that he may aim at the faith of the saints and the corruption of the faith of Christianity.

For instance, in the parable of the sower the devil is mentioned: "Then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved" (Luke 8: 12). The aim of the devil here is to prevent faith in God's word. Again, when Peter was in great danger from Satan's wiles the Lord told him, saying, "Satan hath desired to have you that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not" (Luke 22: 31, 32). The real object of attack was Peter's *faith*. In 1 Timothy 4: 1 the Apostle Paul predicts that in the latter times some shall give heed to "seducing spirits and doctrines of devils," the result of which will be that they "depart from the faith." The aim of the spirits of evil in all the practices of spiritism is the seduction of souls from *the faith*. Hence in warning the saints of Satan's activities as a roaring lion, Peter enjoins upon them to resist him, "steadfast in the faith" (1 Peter 5: 8, 9), for if *the faith* be held his terror departs.

Let us, therefore, beware of anything which would weaken in our minds these great foundation truths or any part of them. There may be many points of detail about the superstructure, as to which believers may not see eye to eye, and as to these we have to exercise patience one with another, while seeking a clearer understanding, in the spirit of that word, "If in anything ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you" (Phil. 3: 15). But there must be absolutely no hesitation when the foundations are at stake. Then "no compromise" becomes the watchword, and faithfulness to our Lord and His truth demands a clear-cut separation from those who deny these foundations in any part, and from all their associates.

Thirdly, we observe that when we thus view the foundations of the faith as one whole we find that

While they are so great as to elude the grasp of our reason, there is nothing about them which is repugnant to reason.

We are far from exalting human reason as a standard or test. We rather affirm that man's reason, like every other part of him, has suffered as the result of his fall. His reason has become fallen reason, and hence is peculiarly unreliable, when dealing with the things of God. Even when, as the result of conversion, the Christian's reasoning powers are restored to something at least of their proper use, they are by no means infallible; yet there is absolutely nothing about the Christian faith that is unreasonable, or that puts a strain upon reasonable intelligence as do false religions or the corruptions of Christianity. If we view items of truth as isolated fragments we may perhaps find intellectual difficulties, but never when once we gain some conception of the truth in its entirety — in the wide sweep of its majestic circle.

On the other hand, any conception we may get of the faith as a whole is never complete and absolute. Being divine it lies beyond the embrace of our finite minds. We may apprehend it, yet can we never comprehend it. It transcends our highest thought just because it is OF GOD.

It is very important to remember this, because a spirit of mental arrogance peculiarly marks the present age. Men have made such wonderful discoveries, and solved such intricate problems, and formulated such complex and highly-imaginative philosophies, that they feel themselves entirely competent to install themselves as masters of the Christian faith, with liberty to criticise and alter it as they please. In result they do but furnish an excellent modern illustration of the truth of the inspired words, "If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness. And again, The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain" (1 Cor. 3: 18-20).

As Christians, we are mercifully delivered from that particular form of learned folly, but we may,

nevertheless, get somewhat infected with its spirit and allow our minds far too much freedom in dealing with the things of God. It is an unquestionable fact that the errors and heresies which all through the centuries have-distracted and injured the Church have had their origin not amongst the lowly and simple, the sheep and lambs of the flock of God, but amongst the gifted and the leaders, as indicated by the Apostle Paul in his farewell address to the elders of Ephesus (see Acts 20: 28-30). Whilst therefore it is very right for us to follow the example of prophets of old and enquire and search diligently into what God has revealed, we must do so in that humility of mind which flows from a wholesome sense of our own mental littleness and consequent need of strengthening and enlightenment by the Spirit of God. This alone will keep us right and enable us to avoid the pitfalls which lie at either extreme.

It is harmful if we fail to catch a glimpse of the faith in its oneness and entirety. Viewing items of truth as isolated fragments we lay ourselves open to being easily deceived by the plausible apostles of error. We have not the power of testing what is preached to us as truth by seeing whether it fits in with the other parts of the truth — whether that which is presented to us as a spoke of the wheel is really so or not. If we have some idea of the wheel as a whole, we can soon see if the spoke offered to us is of the right size, and length, and shape, or whether it is not.

It is even more harmful if, seeing the faith in its entirety, we assume that we know all about it. A spirit of self-confidence thus engendered lays us open quickly to the wiles of a foe who is far too clever for us, and we are in danger of falling into "the snare of the devil" (see 2 Tim. 2: 25, 26). In such a condition we not merely get damaged ourselves, but inflict damage upon others by our false and erroneous notions; and only divine grace and power can deliver us.

Fourthly, and lastly, we emphasize that which was alluded to in the foreword — the exhortation of the inspired writer Jude. In his short epistle he begins by calling upon all the believers of his day to "earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (v. 3); he ends by instructing them to build "up yourselves on your most holy faith" (v. 20). In this twofold exhortation the first evidently is dependent upon the second. We therefore affirm that it is the business of all Christians to

Build themselves up upon, and earnestly contend for, the faith once delivered to the saints.

It stands to reason, of course, that we cannot build up ourselves upon that of which we are largely ignorant. Hence the great importance of making the Scriptures, wherein the faith is permanently enshrined, our daily meditation and food. We need not only to know them, but also to have them built into our minds and hearts, and our souls thus built up and established upon the solid basis which the faith supplies.

Then we are to contend for the faith. It has been delivered, not to apostles merely, nor to prophets, teachers, evangelists, or other gifted and prominent men, but "TO THE SAINTS."

The majority of those who read our simple lines will be young Christians, young in the faith at least, and probably young in years also. Well, as you close this little volume you must remember that as one of "the saints" — i.e. those who have been separated to God, by divine call, by Christ's work and by the action of the Spirit of God — you have a responsibility as regards the faith; it has been delivered to you. How immense the privilege! How elevating the thought, if once it lays hold of you!

In a battalion there may be a thousand men, and but one carries the standard. In the Church of God there are thousands of thousands, yet the feeblest amongst them has his hand upon the flag! In

some degree, therefore, *the faith and its integrity are in your keeping*. Can you regard yourself as a kind of private individual having no vital concern in the battles of the Lord, in the light of this?

No, the very reverse! You *are* concerned, you *are* interested in this great matter. To *you* comes the exhortation, "That good thing which was committed unto thee keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us" (2 Tim. 1: 14). *You* are to contend EARNESTLY for this precious faith.

God will preserve His own truth. We need have no fear as to that. Yet how great the privilege of being used in its maintenance. How happy for us if at the end of the earthly race we too can truthfully say with Paul, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have KEPT THE FAITH" (2 Tim. 4: 7).