

Heidelberg Catechism 20-21 – Faith: Necessity and Nature

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: The only one who could save mankind had to be truly man (man sinned, man had to die) and truly God (great enough to save the world). Jesus was. But more than that: Jesus was the only one with those qualifications.

The questions then arise: Since Christ's death was enough to save the world, could all men get this salvation? And what is the apparatus 仪器 for receiving this salvation? You will get these answers today.

Our headings are:

The Necessity of Faith for Salvation

The Nature of Faith for Salvation

Our goals are: That you will thank God for the gift of faith, that you will work to strengthen your faith by receiving God's Word, and that you will adjust your evangelism to make the hearer properly understands what true faith is.

The Necessity of Faith for Salvation

20 Q. ARE ALL MEN SAVED THROUGH CHRIST JUST AS ALL WERE LOST THROUGH ADAM?

A. No. Only those are saved who by true faith are grafted into Christ and accept all his blessings.

1. God saves no one unless he has true faith in the works of Jesus Christ: that he lived for him, that he

died for him, and that he lives for him. That strong belief with confident hope in Christ and his work is a must... (To believe in Christ means to believe in who he is and what he has done!)

John 3:16 "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish 消亡 but have everlasting life. 18 "He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. 36 "He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."

2. Further, you must continually show this faith in your life. Faith is not a one time event. Faith is not a ceremonial thing. Faith is not an abstract idea. It is real. And this faith must continue. You are bound to have true, living, active, continuous faith in God.

3. Consider how God judged Israel because they thought that faith was inherited... passed on naturally from father to son... instead of being individually required.

Romans 11: 16 ...and if the root is holy, so are the branches. 17 And if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them, and with them became a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree, 18 do not boast against the branches. But if you do boast, remember that you do not support the root, but the root supports you. 19 You will say then, "Branches were broken off that I might be grafted in." 20 Well said. Because of unbelief they were broken off, and you stand by faith. Do not be haughty, but fear. 21 For if God did not spare 备用 the natural branches, He may not spare you either.

God did not spare those who did not remain in the faith. They could not plead for salvation based on who their earthly father was... or who their ancestors were... or by the fact that they were circumcised. They had to have faith for themselves – faith in Christ and his work... a continuous active faith.

4. This means the noblest man, or the most charitable woman, or the boy who helps his parents, or the girl who babysits her siblings, or that nice father-in-law who fixes your dishwasher- cannot enter into heaven on account of those good actions. Do you realize that all, every single one of your non-Christian friends and acquaintances, even those born in a Christian home, will go to hell... that is... unless they have faith in Jesus Christ? That nice old lady in the next cubicle at work... that neighbor, who seems kind and friendly and picks up your garbage can when the garbage men throw it on the road, will go to hell... and stay in the eternal fires of hell... There are no shortcuts out of that condemnation. There is no other way to please the true God but by faith in Jesus Christ.

The Nature of Faith for Salvation

21 Q. WHAT IS TRUE FAITH?

A. True faith is not only a knowledge and conviction that everything God reveals in his Word is true; it is also a deep-rooted assurance, created in me by the Holy Spirit through the gospel, that, out of sheer绝对 grace earned for us by Christ, not only others, but I too, have had my sins forgiven, have been made forever right with God, and have been granted salvation.

1. First, what is this true faith that you must have in order to receive salvation? True faith is knowledge, and conviction that God's Word is true.

John 17: 3 "And this is eternal life, **that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.**

The word "know" here means to love or to experience. It means "to know in the heart" – to have "intimate knowledge." This results in a **firm conviction that Christ died for sins**. We can say then that **faith believes to be true what you may not be able to see...like your salvation...and like how God created the world**... You believe with all your heart that God created man and recreated man though you did not physically see any of it. Consider Hebrews 11.

Hebrews 11:1 Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. 2 For by it the elders obtained a good testimony. 3 By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible.

It means you have absolute belief in Christ – that he saved you.

2. Second, true faith is deep-rooted assurance (you are convinced – the conviction continues) that your sins are forgiven and you have been made forever right with God. This is why we say that "faith" is the hand that receives. And faith continues. It is nothing you have done but what you have received... just like father Abraham. **He was firmly convinced by God's promises and waited for God's blessings**. Look at how Paul describes Abraham's faith!

Romans 4: 18 who, contrary to hope, **in hope believed**, so that he became the father of many nations, according to what was spoken, "So shall your descendants be." 19 **And not being weak in faith**, he did not consider his own body, already dead (since he was about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah's womb. 20 **He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief**, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, 21 and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform.

And now look at how this faith is expressed in your personal assurance!

Hebrew 4: 14 Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. 15 For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. 16 Let us **therefore come boldly to the throne of grace**, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

3. Third, that true faith is worked in you by God through his Holy Spirit and none else. The Holy Spirit moves you to know, be convinced of, and be assured that Christ died for your sins. This further testifies作证 that faith is a gift...that the Holy Spirit works...as man naturally would not want to believe in God, nor is man able to believe in God. No one is able to even call God "Father" unless the Holy Spirit works in him.

Matthew 16: 16 Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." 17 Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, **for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven**."

Jesus further explained this in light of his conversation with Nicodemus that a man is passive in his birth, just as you were in your new birth. He opens men's hearts as he did to Lydia. Acts 16:14.

John 3: 5 Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God."

4. Fourth, true faith is worked by the Holy Spirit in you through the Word of God. No other book contains the way of salvation. The Holy Spirit does not use any other book. Where do you think this leaves a Muslim? If someone does not believe the Word of God, he bound for hell. So tell him of Jesus.

Romans 1: 16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, **for it is the power of God to salvation** for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. 17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith."

Romans 10: 17 So then **faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.**

1Corinthians 1: 21 For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God **through the foolishness of the message preached to save** those who believe.

a. This is why it is essential that you not say: If God is going to save anyone he will do it without the use of means. God is pleased to **use you to bring his Word** to the hearer and the Holy Spirit is then pleased to use that word to bring new life to the lost. God uses his Word to kindle 点燃 the fire that results in salvation. And this is why he trained men to do the job. He sent out 12, then 70, then 500, then all his disciples throughout the world to preach – preach the full Gospel, from Genesis to Revelation! (Luke 24)

b. The teaching of God's Word takes time. It is often a long process. You have to work to see men engrafted into the kingdom. Don't be confused by what you saw at Pentecost. That was exceptional. Those 3000 who believe that day were already knowledgeable of much of the Bible... from their youth. They traveled long distances to go to Jerusalem to worship! They knew much of the true God already.

c. The Gospel must be pointedly preached to achieve the effect. It must never be watered down as it would result in weak faith.

5. True faith is the common characteristics of all who believe. And that true faith comes from Jesus alone.

To further prove the object of your faith, read Romans 3:21-26 and Ephesians 2:10. Also:

Galatians 2: 16 "knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.

God would not have given you faith if Christ had not perfectly obeyed and suffered for you. It is because of your restoration to favor with God that he is pleased to give you faith so you can receive the precious work of Jesus Christ. When you are grafted into the vine you will be nourished.

Romans 1: 17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith."

6. This faith that you have as a gift of God is effective forever. It saves you and it sanctifies you.

Conclusion:

Everyone needs faith to be saved. Faith comes from hearing the Word and the working of God's Holy Spirit. Faith receives the work of Christ. There is no other way of salvation.

Brothers and Sisters:

1. Thank God for what you have – true faith that makes you grab hold of Christ's work and makes you spiritually rich... faith which gives you heaven as your home with treasures that not even the Canada Revenue Agency can take!

2. Continue to listen to the Word of God read and explained and pray that the Holy Spirit will strengthen your faith.

3. Let the Gospel go out and pray that the Holy Spirit will work through the Word as you speak it. Of course, if someone will not listen, don't use force. Matthew 7: 6 "Do not give what is holy to the dogs; nor cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you in pieces." But you must make every effort to let the Gospel go out so nice and nasty 讨厌 people will be saved through faith.

Finally, if you are not a Christian you can have one definite expectation: You will die in your sins and go to hell. If you want to be a Christian and have hope, receive what Christ has done for sinners—receive his life and his death.