

Apostolic Faith

Joseph Trans

Apostolic Faith

Compliments of:

Agape Chapel Ministries

P.O. Box 59084

Norwalk, CA 90652 USA

www.geocities.com/Athens/Academy/4721

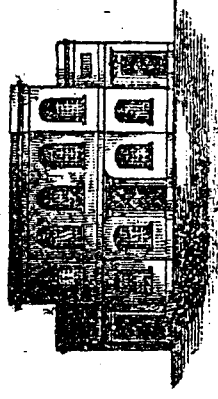
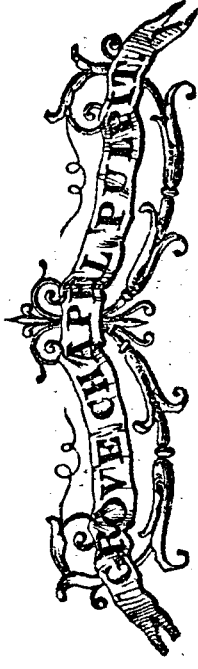
Joseph Trans

Compliments of:
Agape Chapel Ministries
P.O. Box 59084
Norwalk, CA 90650
USA

E-mail: acm@sounddoctrine.net
Web-site: www.sounddoctrine.net

these for the sake of thy wife. Therefore save thyself, and take all hazards" [Ah, unbelief likes the word hazard very much. I have turned it out of my vocabulary long ago]; and so Isaac, through unbelief, pursues just the same course as his father Abraham. So with David, a man after God's own heart; a man who knew that God had made a covenant with him, ordered in all things and sure; a man who could kill a lion and a bear, and glory in it, and then say, in the confidence of his faith, that the God who delivered him from the paw of the lion, and the paw of the bear, would deliver him from the hand of the Philistine; and so He did. And yet up starts his unbelief, and says, "I shall one day perish by the hand of Saul." There is nothing better for me, and I will go into the land of the Philistines, among enemies and strangers, rather than stay and be killed here. But he had to suffer for it; and be sure of this, beloved, God's rod will certainly be laid upon you, if you will go from the place that He has appointed for you into the land of the Philistines; if you will, like Jonah, go to Tarshish, when you are commanded to go to Nineveh. God will not allow your faith to be destroyed; it shall prove itself to be "like precious." But depend upon it He will make you feel the sharpness of the conflict in the war with unbelief.

Now I will take an instance from the New Testament Scriptures. It is right that we should have one from thence, as well as from the Old. Paul, no one doubts that, was a man of faith. "He loved me," he said, "and gave Himself for me." He knew whom he had believed. He was a man of faith; ay, and his faith was so strengthened and assured, that an angel was sent to him to say, "Paul, fear not;—throw that old fellow unbelief overboard. "Fear not; there shall be no loss of any man's life, but of the ship; for God hath given thee all them that sail in the ship,"—which I take to mean, that God gave them to him as converts, though I would not be quite sure of that; others are of a different opinion. The ship, however, was in danger; and the wares were cast overboard, and the sailors (no one need wonder at them, poor carnal men) were for letting down the boat and making their escape, and leaving all the rest to perish in the wreck. What does Paul say? There was no small amount of unbelief in it. "Except these men abide in the ship, we cannot be saved." Not be saved, Paul, when Jehovah sent an angel from heaven to thee, to say that there should not be the loss of any man's life? Yet he goes to consult the officers of the ship, and says, "Except these abide in the ship, we cannot be saved." Now we read of many more. We read of Peter's unbelief; he turned round and denied his Master. We hardly read of one of the apostles, except John, who had not some blemish brought upon them through unbelief. Believe me, beloved—I have proved it these forty years, and I believe it to be a prominent feature of Christian experience—that so sure as you are blessed with this like-precious faith, unbelief will endeavour to dispute everything in your experience in Providence, and in afflictions, as if God dealt hardly with you. There will be some hard fighting for faith to vanquish, and subdue, and keep under this evil principle that belongs to old Adam. "Lord, increase our faith." Amen!



Erected 1819. Enlarged 1839.

APOSTOLIC FAITH.

A DISCOURSE,

BY THE REV. JOSEPH IRONS.

Delivered in Grove Chapel, Camberwell, Sunday Morn., Jan. 11, 1852.

"Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us, through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ."—2 Peter i. 1.

There is something in the opening of this epistle peculiarly striking and interesting. It seems, at first, to contradict the heading which our translators have given it (you must bear in mind that the headings are generally given by the translators), for the heading says, "The second epistle of Peter." Well, now, taking that word "general," in its general sense, if you will forgive the tautology, taking the word in its general sense, it seems to favour the general notions of these days about universal redemption, and universal offers, and universal invitations. "General," to the rejecting of all distinctions of character, and all family relationship, and all marks and distinction between God's Church and the world, this would be a vague idea if the heading of the epistle only were to be looked at. And therefore the very first verse is mercifully inspired by the Holy Ghost to contradict such a notion. Simon Peter calls himself "a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ." Do look for a moment at the humble and yet assuming language which the apostle employs. A servant, though an apostle; an apostle, while a servant—such a servant, that he was willing to lay out his life, and then pour out his blood for the honour and the glorifying of Christ; and such an apostle, that if we will only just consult this second epistle to see what he was as an apostle, you will find that the signs of an apostle were wrought

in him truly, and that he was a faithful champion of the truth of God.

The point to which I want particularly to invite your attention this morning is the verse itself. It is not general—it is not universal—it is not to saint and sinner alike—it is not to carnal and spiritual too; but if I take this as the inspiration of the Holy Ghost—and I cannot do otherwise—it is “to them that have obtained like precious faith with us, through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.” Let it be remembered that the vain boast about that which is apostolic, in the day in which we live, is a downright cheat, a wilfully-contrived cheat to hoax the public into the belief of a lie; for nine-tenths of those who croak about their apostolic descent and line of succession, know, in their own consciences, that they have no more religion than horses and dogs; they even pretend to none, except so as to gull the people, and to pick their pockets. These are not partakers of like precious faith. Instead of being precious, their faith is nauseous—it is offensive, it is of man, it is carnal, it is mere assent to certain truths, and that only as a matter of course—only as a matter of form; for some of them have been even known to declare this before their ordination, when they have been questioned on the subject. “Well, but do you believe, and can you subscribe to such and such things?” “Oh, it is only a mere matter of form, which I must go through, in order to get ordination.” And so they subscribe to it, and say it is true, because it is there—because they must do so before they can be ordained. Is that faith? Is that like precious faith? Is it not horrible to think that the name of Christ can be so blasphemed, and Christianity so disgraced, by such beings? Yet, amidst all this, there is such a thing as precious faith; and this precious faith is like the apostle’s—“To them that have obtained like precious faith with us.” And I beg of you to bear in mind, that it only comes through one channel—only through one medium. It is not learned at schools, it is not obtained at colleges, it is not realized by dint of study, it does not grow in nature’s garden. Where does it come from, then? “Through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.” That is where it comes from; and there is no faith but that which is built upon that righteousness.

Now there are many sad frightful mistakes made about faith; and bear with me if I detain you a few moments in our exordium upon that point. There are some who have no other idea about faith than that of a mere creed to be admitted—certain truths which may be orthodox for what I know, or they may be heterodox; but they come from councils, from cardinals, from popes, from creatures; and to possess faith in the opinion of multitudes, is just to accredit things—to say, “I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth,” and so on, and so run through a certain vocabulary of articles of creed without ever knowing the preciousness of one of them in their soul. There is another view of faith, if the term may be allowed, which does not accord with my views and feelings. I mean that kind of faith which is a mere assent and consent to revealed facts, and has no warmth, no love, no unction, no savour, no power, no vigour, no life, no warfare, no hold of eternal life.

Now there are so many minglings of things together half-way

of God’s elect has embraced Christ as its peace, and is brought into a holy acquaintance with God, and is at peace with Him, seeing clearly how all the attributes and perfections of Deity are fully satisfied in the Person and work of Christ, and that there is no condemnation, not any fear of it (that is high attainment to get there); even after that, it is then that the habitual war begins—it is then that the enemies of our faith fight the most furiously. There is old Satan, with his roaring like a lion, walking about with his quiver full of fiery darts, and seeking whom he may devour. What is to be done with him? “Whom resist steadfast in the faith.” That is war, at any rate. “Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are perfected in your brethren which are in the flesh.” Well, then, there is the world ever hostile to the growth and prosperity of the people of God. “If any man would be a friend of the world he is an enemy of God.”—there is the statement—but “this is the victory which overcometh the world, even our faith.” Fight on, then, and vanquish and overcome the world. Oh, what a mercy, that thousands of God’s elect family have fought this good fight of faith, and finished their course, and entered into the joy of their Lord. Let us follow after them—let us cry aloud for more grace to strengthen us to pursue the same course, and keep in their track.

But there is another formidable foe which has given me, and I believe all the saints of God, more pain in the war than any other. I think with my own little attainment, I should not have much to fear from the devil nor yet from the world, if it were not for that fiendish foe, unbelief. It is war with unbelief that precious faith carries on habitually and victoriously. Now, if you will consult the whole history (for I have referred just now to the track of the Old Testament saints), if you will consult the whole history of the saints of God in every age, you will find that the strongest in faith were most fiercely assaulted by this enemy of souls. Now, go back as far as old Abraham, and you find him called “the father of the faithful,” and “the friend of God;” and it is said that “against hope he believed in hope.” He had no more doubt of his relationship with God according to the covenant revealed to him in Genesis xvii., than I have. Yet such was the unbelief of his heart, that he pretended that his wife was his sister—and because an unbelieving king would take liberties with her he said to her, “Do not say that you are my wife—say that you are my sister.” Abraham went among strangers—the king saw the beauty of the woman—and there was the victory of unbelief. I can conceive what a battle must have taken place between faith and unbelief here. Faith says, “Trust God with your wife as well as with your soul, and your body, and all that concerns you.” Unbelief says, “No; I must act the hypocrite; I must put on a disguise; and, instead of trusting God, trust to my own ingenuity to take care of her!” God forgave Abraham, and this did not destroy his faith after all; but he was dealt with a little sharply for it. His son Isaac did the same thing towards the King of Gerah. He knew his Rebecca was God’s gift to him, and yet he did the very same thing. Isaac could commune with God, and trust in Him; and he was declared to be a child of the free woman, and not of the bond woman; a child of promise. And yet up starts the vile old friend unbelief, and says, “They will kill

directly at the glorifying of Christ, without anything belonging to me—to glorify Christ as my covenant Head, and to honour and exalt Him?"

III.—Well, now, let us pass on just to glance at the very wonderful appellation given to this faith. It is "like precious faith." I want this to be distinctly and clearly understood, because one of the first features of its preciousness is, that it takes hold of all the stores of the covenant of grace, and appropriates them as its own. That is one feature of its preciousness. It does not like the ifs, and buts, and peradventures, the scruples and conditions, and proposals, and overtures; but when it comes across such a passage of Scripture as this, "I give unto them eternal life," faith says, "Then I will take it." Nothing could be more warrantable, if I were to give you a shilling, or a sovereign, than for you to take it. My Saviour says, "I give unto them eternal life." Then I say, "Lord, I will take it, and I will count eternal life mine." I will take hold of it. So the apostle enjoins his son Timothy, "Fight the good fight of faith, and lay hold on eternal life." It must be a precious faith that can take hold of every promise—that can take hold of every privilege—that can take hold of every precept—that can take hold of all the provisions of the covenant of grace in Christ Jesus, laid up by God the Father from everlasting—that can take hold of the horns of the altar, and so be saved from the avenger of blood—that can take hold of eternal life, and look within the veil having it already in possession by the Forerunner, whither He hath entered for us. Like precious faith takes hold of all the stores of the covenant.

Now it must appear, I think, to every child of God, that there is an absolute necessity for our crying out, "Lord, increase my faith," because we fall short (at least if one may speak for all), we fall short of putting forth all the preciousness of this faith, this principle which takes hold of eternal life. Now, in taking hold of all the treasures and stores of the covenant of grace, I think—and perhaps I am going a great length here in the esteem of some—that faith is the leading grace of all the graces of the Spirit, and stirs up all the rest. I think, in the first place, that hope would be nothing like sure and steadfast if it had not faith along with it. Moreover, I should not know what to make of love—it might be carnal, it might be natural—if it had not faith along with it. Our faith works by love, fans it into a flame, and calls it into exercise. So, again, of humility—I do not know that it is not a cringing meanness, if faith be not at the bottom of it. But if faith gets a clear view of the glory of Christ, and the sinfulness of man, faith will lay you low at the feet of Jesus, which is your proper place, and cover your mouth in the dust, and make you own that salvation is of the Lord. So of all the graces of the Spirit, as well as all the fulness of the covenant. I conceive that faith's province is to take hold of them, and therefore it is a very precious grace.

But there is one point in the preciousness of faith which appears to me more precious than all the others, and that is its habitual war. "Habitual war?" say you. "Why we thought that, being justified by faith, we have peace with God." So we have, and yet there is habitual war (I do not mean war with God, mind that); and even after more conspicuously than ever before—even after the faith

between one and the other—sometimes in the form of presumption, sometimes in that of sandy, muddy Arminianism, that it is requisite we should have some clear definition of it. Now the apostle, in my text, says it is precious, and it is like theirs. "To them that have obtained like precious faith with us."

I.—Well, let us first of all, to put our subject a little in order, glance at the family that is here addressed; and, be it remembered, that the whole of the epistle is addressed to such. It is quite ridiculous to snatch here and there a verse out of this epistle, and the others, as some do, to make them appear as if addressed to the whole world. The letter is directed clearly and plainly; and we never ought to lose sight of the fact, that to deal honestly with Scripture, and to deal honestly with souls, we must do as an honest postman would do. When he takes his budget of letters from the office, he does not take pains to tear off the envelopes and directions, and scatter them in the streets for any one to pick up; he would soon be dismissed from his office if he did—and I would to God that all such were dismissed from their office in God's ministry. He does not scatter them in the streets; no, he takes them and arranges them in order, and when he goes by the house at which he has to deliver a letter, he looks at the direction, and hands the letter in accordingly. This should be the case with regard to this epistle, the whole of which is a letter. It is not addressed to us individually—to the Rev. Joseph Irons, or to any of our names, as the letters are which the postman brings to our doors, but it is "to them that have obtained like precious faith with us." Then in order to ascertain if the letter belongs to me, I must ascertain if I have like precious faith with the author, and there is no getting at the answer without. Allow me to revert to the simile of the rogue of a postman. Suppose some rude boys and girls, playing about the streets, were to pick up the envelopes which he had torn from the letters, they would neither know the contents nor the name of the writer, and they would serve them for no other purpose than to put in the fire. Just so it is with this epistle to all those who have not like precious faith with the apostle's. It is like "a jewel of gold in a swine's snout." They know not the writing, they know not the subject, they have no interest in it, and consequently the postman might save himself the trouble of delivering it at all, if he does not deliver it according to the direction.

Now I mean to keep close to my direction this morning, and to insist on some clear understanding of the fraternity to whom all this epistle is addressed; and my text says, they have obtained like precious faith—apostolic faith. How is this? Obtained it? Did they buy it? Did they earn it? Did they trace it out by dint of study? Verily not. My Bible tells me that it is the faith of the operation of God; and therefore, whatever may be said (which we shall presently have to glance at) about the articles of faith, about the creed itself, which is sometimes meant by the word faith in New Testament language, I begin, first of all, with the grace of faith, because I have already hinted, that if the grace of faith be not possessed, your creed may be as clear as Paul's, as sound as Peter's, and apparently as affectionate as John's, and you perish after all. You must have something more. We want to look at that which comes as a grace of the Holy Spirit. One heresiarch

that I had to meet with in the west of England, actually leaned his arm on the cushion of the pulpit and said, "Now that is faith—I believe that my arm is on the cushion." It fell to my lot, a short time afterwards, to occupy the same pulpit myself, and I took the opportunity of remarking, in reference to that assertion, "That is the faith of the devil, then, and not the faith of God's elect." Another, not far from us, tells us that the faith of the devil and the faith of the Christian are the same thing, only exercised on different objects. I would as soon believe in Tom Payne's writings as I would believe that. That is not like precious faith—that is not like the faith of the apostles, which, as we have just been reading, is the faith of the operation of God. "Now," says the apostle, "all men have not faith." Those who really have it, have it inspired in their souls, implanted in their experience as a living grace, by the operation of the Holy Ghost, by the mighty power of the third Person of the glorious Trinity. Without this principle there is no such thing as having any intercourse or worship with God—no such thing as obtaining a single evidence of our being Christians. There must be a living principle—this holy, hallowed leading grace (if I may so call it) dwelling in the soul. It is Omnipotence alone that could put it there; it is Omnipotence alone that could send it there as its own vicegerent to occupy the soul for God. Now, if you will, allow me an illustration. I understand the Saviour's parable of the strong man armed to be thus set forth:—The strong man armed kept his palace and his goods in peace till the stronger than he came. Now I do not understand by that Jesus coming personally as He did in the days of His flesh, but coming by His vicegerent, His aid-de-camp, if I may so speak—this vital principal of faith, this glorious, sacred, real light of God, which comes into the soul to occupy the soul for God; and if you know anything of the reception of it—obtaining of it, as the language of my text is—you will be fully prepared to admit, that when faith first enters—or, as the apostle has it, when faith comes—you are no longer under the law, but being under faith, the faith of God's elect, there is no small stir within—all the corruptions of human nature hostile, the demands of the law urged, the tempter trying to prevail therewith, the spirituality of the law coming in, and little faith (ah, how little!) little faith saying, "Well, all that is said of this poor, depraved nature of mine is true; and as to the spirituality and extent of the law, I bow to it as perfectly correct, and own, with the apostle, that the law is holy, just, and good, and that I am carnal, and sold under sin." Well, but what has faith to do in this instance? I say he comes in to occupy the soul for God, and to employ those very powers and faculties which had been yielded servants to sin and uncleanness, as servants of God by Jesus Christ. The will, the affections, the desires, the judgment, the mind, all brought under the mighty influence of faith, that faith, Jehovah's vicegerent in the soul, may occupy all its powers for Him, and engage them with Him.

And this leads me to observe that this precious faith, apostolic faith, obtains and maintains a holy intimacy with God in all the persons and perfections of the Trinity. Now do not lose sight of this, for though we shall have, perhaps, something a little more severe by-and-by, this will form a sharp criterion, "Whatsoever

and bonds and afflictions awaited the apostle Paul, and yet he went up to Jerusalem in the face of them, and said, "None of these things moved me." "No, no," he said, "We have received a kingdom which cannot be moved." Now, very much that passes for faith, in our days, is a very moveable thing—it seems as if it hung upon a pivot or a swivel—a breath of air, an argument from carnal men, an heresiarch book may turn it round, east, west, north, or south. It is a moveable thing. The man who has it may be an Arminian to-day, a Pelagian to-morrow, a Baxterian the next day, and everything else that is presented to his view—there is no stability about it. I wonder not that the apostle said in his preaching, "Be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord." Now, I should ask whether this faith, that you profess, is so much like the apostle's, that it is unmoveable. Can you stand a cannonading from the enemy? Can you stand a good volley of reproach and insult from the world? Can you stand firm and unmoveable against the assaults of Satan and his quibblings and questionings, in almost every step of your experience? You will have these to contend with if you have like precious faith. We shall have a little to say about this presently; but to keep to our point for the present, this faith is invulnerable—there is no such thing as destroying it—it is of the operation of God, and the operation of God must cease before it can die, and we are confident that He that hath begun the good work in you will perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ.

Just pass on to mark, that this like precious faith, which thus appeals to the apostles, and thus stands immoveable and invulnerable, is necessarily fixing its attention upon the name and perfect work of Christ as its object to glorify Christ. Now, do not lose sight of this, if you forget all I say this morning besides. The precious faith of the apostles fixes on the name and work of the Lord Jesus Christ as its proper and exclusive object. "I determined," said one of them, "not to know anything among you, but Jesus Christ and Him crucified." It was the cross of Christ, the name of Christ, the glory of Christ, the exaltation of Christ, which called forth all its actings; and it could confide in His blood, and appropriate His righteousness, and cleave to His Person, and forsake all things for Him, and follow hard after Him. Nothing satisfied the faith of the apostles but as Christ was glorified. Now, I want to arrive at the standing myself, and I want it for you, that we should not be satisfied with any day of our life but that in which Christ is conspicuously honoured and glorified—that we should not be satisfied with any act of our life, but which keeps to this one object—that we should not be satisfied with any religious deportment which may have pride or self at the bottom, and which has not the glorifying of Christ solely at heart. Oh, how I long after the standing of Paul, which I have so often cited, "Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death! Whether, therefore, ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him." I beseech you, beloved, pause over this thought a moment, until you blush with shame before God. What have I done? What have I said? Where have I been? How have I been employed during the year that has gone by, or the week that has bygone, that has aimed

boasted intellectuality, attainment, and literature. And when, as in the case of their blessed Master, who set them the example, the Pharisees, who were men of attainment, said, "Are we blind also?" "What an insult to offer to us! As for these people that know not the law, they are accursed; but we educated and learned Pharisees, surely we cannot be blind." The apostles followed the same steps, and they admonished Simon Magus that he was in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity; they admonished Elymas the sorcerer that he was full of all subtlety, and a child of the devil. They did not scruple to say these things right out to them. Well, then, the style of apostolic preaching was such as to separate the precious from the vile; and hence, not only in their preaching, but in all their epistles, they went on to describe character and the work of grace in the sinner's heart, and address to the real followers of the Lamb the consolations, and comforts, and joys, and privileges, and promises which belong to the household of faith.

And this led on to their advising them to continue stedfast to the truth, to abide fast by the rock, to flee the very appearance of evil, to gird up the loins of their minds, and so on. You will find a multitude of such words of advice in apostolic preaching. I should like every preacher in London, and elsewhere, to try whether his is like precious faith—to try whether it is like the apostle's—whether he asserts and maintains the sacred truths of the gospel in their fulness, and whether he admonishes the hearers, pointing out that those who live and die without a precious Christ must everlastingly perish, and showing clearly that the first work of grace commences in the heart by the power of the Holy Ghost, under the immediate direction of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Moreover, I should like all such to ask the question, whether their practice is at all like the apostles'. This will bring us to close investigation. Like precious faith will produce like precious practice. And we find the apostles active in the cause of God. Paul tells us, that the word of God was proclaimed by him all through Judea, and Lesser Asia, and round about unto Illyricum, and he laboured more than all the rest. Why? Because his faith was stronger, because his faith grew exceedingly. So also we find that the apostles' practice was very affectionate—that they spoke in love to those who surrounded them, and listened to the word of God, and said that they were so desirous of them that they were willing to impart unto them, not only the gospel of God, but also their own souls, because they were dear unto them. I want more of this affectionate deportment, as well as activity, and zeal, and vigilance in the cause of God. And then, mark, their lives were of an aspiring nature. They did not content themselves with earth—they wanted not its gaudy toys, but they waited for that crown of righteousness which was laid up for them, and expected shortly to quit this earthly tabernacle and enter into a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens; and, therefore, with such aspirations they reckoned, and reckoned very correctly, that "the sufferings of this present time were not worthy to be compared with the glory which should be revealed."

Well, just go on to mark, that the apostle's faith (if you want to know whether yours is like precious faith, try it) the apostle's faith was immovable and invulnerable. I know it was exceedingly tried,

is not of faith is sin, and he that cometh to God must believe, and he cannot believe without faith—must believe that He is, and that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." The Saviour, speaking of coming to Him by prayer, says, "Whatsoever ye shall ask in faith, believing, ye shall receive." Oh, my hearer, I want for myself—I cannot create it, but I sigh after it—I want for myself faith enough to open and maintain a perpetual, a constant, an habitual fellowship with Jehovah on the ground of His own promises, believing they are all as secure as His throne, and as immutable as His nature, and looking for their fulfilment because God hath said it. Now, you know our beloved Lord has encouraged this, though some people count it presumption, for He has said, "Whatsoever ye ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." And then, again, "When ye pray, believe that ye have the things that ye ask for, and ye shall receive them." This is faith, precious faith, of the operation of God, as imparted and maintained, occupying the soul for God, so that it feels that it is no longer its own, but bought with a price; and it is constrained to glorify God, and open and maintain intercourse with God, and so living on high.

Well, now, from whence is this obtained? I conceive that it is bestowed as a free gift, and therefore the apostle says, "By grace ye are saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves"—the faith is not of yourselves—"it is the gift of God." Nothing can be more explicit—"it is the gift of God." Now that which is the gift of God cannot be the manufacture of Papists, cannot be purchased with money, cannot be obtained by human merit. There is nothing freer than a gift—the free gift of God. And therefore I learn, that when God the Father avows it as His own sovereign bestowment in covenant enactment, the Son, in His official character, takes upon Him to be both its author and its finisher, its beginning and its end, its first and its last, and then the possession of it, and the enjoyment of it, and the actings of it, are by the operation of the Holy Ghost. So that whoever has obtained this precious faith (I am speaking, you know, distinctly, of the grace itself, the grace of faith) in his soul has the witness of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, of the work which constitutes his Christianity being supernatural and Divine. I want to bring my hearers to this touchstone, this test, this trial, that they may simply ascertain for themselves whether their faith is such as will bear probing and examining according to the Scripture records and statements.

Well, there is another point which, before I quit this head of discourse, I must press upon you, and that is the basing of faith upon truth—truth as its solid bottom and base. I introduce this to bring forth the other idea about faith with regard to creed—that the faith of God's elect will not embrace, will not receive, will not confide in, will not own any heresy. It comes forth as umpire, if I may so speak, for God, and decides what each is to do. And how? Why it can taste, and handle, and look upon. Ah, this is the way to prove whether you have it or not. If the faith of God's elect has taken possession of your heart, I know that the testimony of Scripture with regard to all the doctrines of grace, will be received in your creed. I shall be very severe here, I dare say. Do not tell me about a mere difference of words, which some people evasively shuffle about, in order to palm upon us heresies. It is

not a mere difference of words. Look at the language of the apostle, and let us see whether the doctrine of election is not clearly pointed out, all through the word; let us see whether the doctrines of substitution and the responsibility of Christ are not the sum and substance of the gospel; let us see whether the ministry and operation of the Holy Ghost do not bid defiance to all man's rebellion, and pluck the poor sinner out of Satan's vassalage, and take the prey from the mighty, and the lawful captive from the terrible. Then if my faith can embrace such doctrines as give the 'Triune Jehovah all the glory, it is based upon truth, and is resting upon truth. And you may view this further by tracing out all the privileges, and prospects, and promises of the people of God—yea, and all the precepts that are binding upon them—and you will find that the faith of God's elect embraces the truth, and the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. It would be of no use to palm upon a man of faith the abominations of Socinianism, to wit. No, no, says the believer, in the exercise of his faith—

"So guilty and helpless am I,

I dare not confide in His blood;

Nor on His protection rely,

Unless I were sure He is God."

It would be just the same in the doctrines of Arminianism. I do not dispute that there are some of God's elect among the Arminians; but He will bring them out. The doctrines of Arminianism are no more like the gospel than Mahomet's Koran, and therefore I object to them altogether. Now just take this principle of faith—faith which works by love—faith wrought in the heart by the Holy Ghost, and see if it will accept of half-way provisions and promiscuous, uncertain salvation—one that faith knows would be a failure for time and for eternity. No, says faith, I must cling to God's "shalls" and "wills;" and when I hear Him say, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy; and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion," I will take Him at His word, and lie at His feet, waiting for that mercy.

Well, then, again you are to mark that this testimony of Scripture as received by faith, and forming its base upon which it rests, is the very rock of the saints of God in every age. I introduce this phrase because I once met with an individual who wanted to give, as he supposed, a very fine definition of orthodoxy, or what is termed the Universal Church, the Catholic Church. He said, "I take it in this view—that I believe all that every Church, in every place, and in every age, has consented to believe." "Well," I said, "so do I. Come, now, we are getting pretty close together, perhaps we shall step asunder presently. I believe that, too, and go in the full track right back to Abraham, and Noah, and Enoch, and keep in that track, and believe everything that the Church in every place and in every age has received as orthodoxy." But then there was one point I urged upon him—"What do you understand by the Church? for all centres there. I understand by it an assembly of regenerated souls, and none besides—without going into further particulars—and I rejoice to know that there never was a regenerated soul went to heaven, nor one upon earth in full growth, but believed everything that I believe, and must believe it ultimately before he gets to heaven." Now that is orthodoxy—

that is coming to the Catholic and Universal Church; but if I must take the devil's church into account, and am to believe what every description of heresiarchs have invented because they have assumed the name of the Church, then I shall go into the depths of superstition, and idolatry, and rebellion against God, as far as Antichrist does, and become a Papist at once. Certainly on that ground they have the argument on their side; but when we come to analyze the matter, and see what constitutes the Church, we find that there are very few, if any, individuals of God's Church among them. Therefore we reject the whole, and look out for the living Church of the living God, and the fundamentals, minutiae, and matters of discipline they may vary in, but the fundamentals for salvation which every child of God—that is, every living child, every converted soul, in every age, has got to heaven by, I firmly receive and believe, and therefore rejoice in being thoroughly Catholic on that point.

II.—Now let us just pass on; and I hope you will examine these things as we go on, to know whether you are in the track of the old Testament saints, and patriarchs, and prophets, and kings, and the Psalmist down to the New Testament. Let us pass on, in the second place, in order to ascertain this to the evidence of our affinity. "Like faith in us." "Like!" How am I to know it is "like the apostles"; and as there is so much dispute about what is apostolic, let us appeal to the apostles' preaching, and to their practice. We will not say anything about their morals—that will come in by-and-bye; but we will appeal to their preaching and to their practice.

Now I think their preaching consisted of three things chiefly—affirming, admonishing, and advising.

They were accustomed to affirm. "Opening and alleging"—says the apostle—"opening and alleging, that Jesus Christ must needs suffer and enter into His glory." Now I cannot find in apostolic preaching any of the winning and wooing, any of the cloaking of things in point of doctrine, in order to consult and complement human dignity, and human powers, and human free-will. Not one word about this in apostolic preaching. Well, then, if we mean to be apostolic in preaching, and to have like precious faith with them, we must attend to their pattern and example as preachers, and we shall discover clearly that they had to announce the truths of the gospel. "Opening and alleging," are the apostle's own words—"opening and alleging," the precious things of God—insisting upon the salvation of God being wholly of grace from first to last, originating with the Father, concentrated in the Son, revealed and applied by the Holy Ghost. That is apostolic preaching—to affirm these things in the face and front of all the cavils of Arminianism, and all the Pharisaism of the Jews around them, and all the persecutions to which they were exposed.

Well, then, they went on to admonish, and they could say to the rejectors of the gospel, "Behold, ye despisers, and wonder and perish." We find them again and again appealing to sinners' consciences in the most admirable language, in order that God would condescend to own them, to bring them to think seriously—to think and look well as rational beings—especially appealing to their