

“Of Saving Faith” part 4, WCF 14.2.1, What Faith Believes

2021.04.04 Sabbath School Lesson

Hopewell ARPC, Culleoka, TN

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WCF 14.2 (TPH p927)

II. By this faith, a Christian believeth to be true whatsoever is revealed in the Word, for the authority of God Himself speaking therein;(e) and acteth differently upon that which each particular passage thereof containeth; yielding obedience to the commands,(f) trembling at the threatenings,(g) and embracing the promises of God for this life, and that which is to come.(h) But the principal acts of saving faith are accepting, receiving, and resting upon Christ alone for justification, sanctification, and eternal life, by virtue of the covenant of grace.(i)

(e) John 4:42; I Thess. 2:13; I John 5:10; Acts 24:14.

(f) Rom. 16:26.

(g) Isa. 66:2.

(h) Heb. 11:13; I Tim. 4:8.

(i) John 1:12; Acts 16:31; Gal. 2:20; Acts 15:11.

John 4:21–42

²¹ Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father. ²² You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. ²³ But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for **the Father is seeking such to worship Him.** ²⁴ God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”

²⁵ The woman said to Him, “**I know that Messiah is coming” (who is called Christ). “When He comes, He will tell us all things.”**

²⁶ **Jesus said to her, “I who speak to you am He.”**

²⁷ And at this point His disciples came, and they marveled that He talked with a woman; yet no one said, “What do You seek?” or, “Why are You talking with her?”

²⁸ The woman then left her waterpot, went her way into the city, and said to the men, ²⁹ “Come, see a Man who told me all things that I ever did. Could this be the Christ?” ³⁰ Then they went out of the city and came to Him.

³¹ In the meantime His disciples urged Him, saying, “Rabbi, eat.”

³² But He said to them, “I have food to eat of which you do not know.”

³³ Therefore the disciples said to one another, “Has anyone brought Him anything to eat?”

³⁴ Jesus said to them, “**My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work.** ³⁵ Do you not say, ‘There are still four months and then comes the harvest’? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest! ³⁶ And he who reaps receives wages, and gathers fruit for eternal life, that both he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together. ³⁷ For in this the saying is true: ‘One sows and another reaps.’ ³⁸ **I sent you to reap that for which you have not labored; others have labored, and you have entered into their labors.**”

³⁹ And many of the Samaritans of that city believed in Him because of the word of the woman who testified, “He told me all that I ever did.” ⁴⁰ So when the Samaritans had come to Him, they urged Him to stay with them; and He stayed there two days. ⁴¹ And many more believed because of His own word.

⁴² Then they said to the woman, “**Now we believe, not because of what you said, for we ourselves have heard Him and we know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world.**”

1Thessalonians 2:13

¹³ **For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe.**

1John 5:9–13

⁹ **If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater; for this is the witness of God which He has testified of His Son.** ¹⁰ **He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself; he who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed the testimony that God has given of His Son.** ¹¹ And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. ¹² He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. ¹³ **These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.**

Acts 24:14–16

¹⁴ But this I confess to you, that according to the Way which they call a sect, so **I worship the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the Law and in the Prophets.** ¹⁵ **I have hope in God, which they themselves also accept, that there will be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust.** ¹⁶ This being so, **I myself always strive to have a conscience without offense toward God and men.**

(The following is a machine-generated transcription. Please be aware of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are welcome to listen to the audio recording, which you may find via tinysa.com/hopewellarp)

Our father in heaven how he thank you for your great mercy to us. That you have granted to us not only to have your word. But the ministry of your Holy Spirit. By which you have granted to us to receive and recognize and respond to it as your very own works.

As we pray for his ongoing ministry, now we thank you for the gift of faith. We thank you that the word itself is means not only by which we received that gift by but also about which faith is built up and strengthened. Build ours up. O Lord strengthen ours.

Grant unto us to interact with you. We ask it in Jesus name. Amen.

So we're laying brick by brick theological foundation, hopefully for generations to come line by line understanding the system of doctrine that the Lord teaches and his word were in the middle of the chapter of the Westminster confession on saving faith and what we've been doing is we've been taking the proof texts in their context to see and understand and be able to come back to where the script.

Teaches these things. So that we may be sure of them and not easily shaken. In the first paragraph of the chapter on saving faith, we learned about faith as a gift by God's grace something that he works in us by his power because of his pleasure. And some of how he does that the ministry of the word particularly as the primary means by which he is pleased to give that gift in the first place and then also the word and the ministry of the word but also the sacraments and prayer as means by which he builds up our faith.

And strengthens our faith so that it is God himself who does that by his means? So come to that second chapter a second paragraph of the chapter on saving faith and we're having this paragraph is basically what saving faith is that it's a receiving and responding to the word of God as his very own word.

And so we recognize the scriptures as God's own word and we respond to the scriptures as God's own word, which means whatever he teaches we believe whatever he commands we obey whatever he threatens we fear whenever he promises we designed. Our. But as I had the majority of us have discovered the main thing in the word is God giving himself to us and saving us in his son and glorifying himself in that.

And so all of the receiving the word of God is his very own words and responding to him in his word. Is focused especially on responding to the Lord Jesus and receiving him resting upon him alone for every part of our salvation, not just our justification. So the the paragraph is hold on, we're just gonna take that first line up through E if you've got a handout.

I tried to bold at the top the parts that. That we're going to cover and then you have for the proof text for e as you have them contextually seated a little bit contextually seated on the bottom unthirid, you have Bible open as well. So second paragraph on of saving faith by this faith a Christian believeth to be true whatsoever is revealed in the word for the authority of God himself speaking therein.

And active differently upon that which each particular passage thereof containeth yielding obedience to the commands trembling of the threatenings. An embroidering the promises of God for this life and that which has come but the principle acts of saving faith are accepting receiving and resting upon Christ alone for justification sanctification and eternal life by virtue of the covenant of great.

Of grace. So the first step proof text they give us is John 4:42, it's way at the end of the section of John 4 that I've given you on the page John 4:42, then they said to the woman now we believe not because of what you said for we are sales have heard him and we know that this is indeed the Christ the Savior of the world.

And that's a conclusion of a section in which Jesus has said that the Father is the one who has. Spent the Son because the Father is seeking worshipers and then he tells his disciples that he is on a mission from the Father that his bread even more than the food that they were offering him for physical nourishment.

It was to do what the Father had sent him to do which of course we understand and the context is especially to produce worshipers to produce those who believe and who are reconciled to God through Christ and come near him and worship him. Through faith in Christ. And then Jesus tells the disciples that they are given the privilege of being used of God in the bringing in the harvesting of such worshipers and there's an example of of different ones doing different parts and yet that which is most important at the end that they would hear him that they themselves would hear and know that this is indeed.

The Christ the Savior of the world which we know from the context comes by the work of God himself and also we've seen a lot of that that it's a divine work of grace and the heart that faith is neither mechanical nor magical but God himself gives it and he does so by the use of means.

So now that we have summarized it here. John 4:21 to 42. Jesus said to her woman, believe me, the IRS coming when you will neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem worship the father. You worship what you do not know. We know what we worship for salvation is

of the Jews.

But the hour is coming and now is when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth. For the Father is seeking such to worship. God is spirit and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth. The woman said to him. I know that Messiah is coming who is called Christ.

When he comes he will tell us all things. Jesus said to her. I who speak to you and then He is supplied in English. I who speak to you and he. And at this point his disciples came in and they marvelled that he talked with a woman.

Yet no one said, what do you see? Or why are you talking with her? The woman then left her water pot went her way into the city and said to the men come see a man who told me all things that I ever did. Could this be the Christ?

Then they went out of the city and came to him and the meantime his disciples urged him saying Rabbi eat. But he said to them I have food to eat of which you do not know. Therefore the disciples said to one another has anyone brought him anything to eat Jesus said to them my food is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work.

Do you not say there are still four months and then comes the harvest bowl? I say to you lift up your eyes and look at the fields. For their already white for harvest. And he who reaps receives wages and gathers fruit for eternal life that both he who says and he who reaps may rejoice together.

And for in this the saying is true one says and another reaps I sent you to reap that for which you have not labored. Others have labored and you have entered into their labors. In many of this Americans of that city believed in him because of the word of the woman who testified he told me all that I ever did.

Since Americans had come to him they urged him to stay with them and he stayed there two days. And many more believed because of his own word. Then they said to the woman now we believe not because of what you said for we ourselves have heard have heard him the him.

I believe is also supplied there and we know that this is indeed the Christ the Savior of the world. So I should have also putting bold the bold typing is is mine verse 41 and many more believed because of his own word, this is what we hope for our dear children when we are.

Putting God's sign upon them as Stephen will have done Lord willing not many minutes from now that God who is the one who seeks for himself worshipers. God is the one who has decided to whom you would be born or into whose family you would be adopted the one who in his prominence has arranged the particular circumstances of your life that you would be added to his church.

He's the one who seeks worshippers. He's the one who gives faith and he. Gives that faith especially by his word and when he's giving that faith to you one of the primary things that he does is he makes you recognize that his word is not just something that a bunch of men wrote with very different kinds of pen than paper than we have a very long time ago in places far away, but that his word are his very own words to you that just as the apostle said that the words of Scripture that had been.

Scraped onto the page or inscribed upon the page are the just as much god's word as if he was sitting in front of you breathing them out to you. And so one of the things that we pray for you one of the things that you should pray for yourself, if you do not know yet is that you would receive God's words as his very own words to you that you would be like these Samaritans who at first you heard somebody else tell you about.

Jesus. But by the work of God the Holy Spirit in your own heart as you read Jesus's words and as you heard Jesus's words announced to you you realized in yourself that the living Christ is is God himself who has become flesh and that God himself has spoken these words to you by his Holy Spirit and you start to interact not just with mom and dad not just with a preacher or an elder or a teacher, but you start to interact with God himself.

Who is speaking to you the words of the Bible and you believe because God himself has given you faith in himself in in his son by his spirit so by this faith the Christian believeth to be true whatsoever is revealed in the word for the authority of God himself speaking therein another example of that in scripture.

Find in first Thessalonians 2:13 first Thessalonians chapter 2, one of the things that Paul models for us is frequently telling other believers how grateful to God we are for them which of course he's not modeling lying so you do also have to actually be grateful for other believers because of the work of God in them and this fostering of the recognition of God's gracious work and thankfulness to God for his.

Gracious work as the fostering of that is an important Christian discipline for us, so he's writing to the Thessalonians and he says first Thessalonians 2:13 for this reason we also thank God without ceasing. Because when you received the word of God, which you heard from us you welcomed it not as the word of men but as it is in truth the word of God, which also effectually works in you who believe.

So he says when you receive the word of God, which you heard from us, so how had the Thessalonians come to hear the word of God. Did a voice come from the heavens. No did they hear a voice in their head? I've run into a lot of people who call themselves Christians,

but the primary thing that they mean when they say God said to me is that they heard a voice in their head.

How did they hear the word of God, what did this voice sound like?

Men. Sound like however Paul sounded. I don't know how Paul sent it, you know, he probably had Celiac accents since he grew up in Tarsus whatever that whatever that means. When I first started preaching in Mississippi many years ago, I had to adapt adapt a southern accent that was very affected meaning, you know, it was you know, faking it trying to make it sound like theirs and it worked they understood me but my family was very worried about me.

But it sounded like whatever Paul's voice sounded like and yet God did something for them and we know that it was God does he say whom is he sorry, whom is he thanking in verse 13.

He thanks God doesn't he now he's thanking God because God is the one who has done this, isn't he? It wasn't that the Thessalonians yeah by their wisdom or or spiritual goodness, we're able to recognize the that even the sounded like whatever Paul's voice sounds like it was God himself addressing addressing them, it was God who had given us so for this reason we think God without season.

Because when you received the word of God, which you heard from us. Now you all know me a lot of you know me, you know a little bit better than some others do we have guests today for glorious occasion and the Providence of God it can be hard when you know someone to receive their words as or the words that they are speaking when they read out of the Bible and tell you those words as a very words of God.

This is one of the things kids that sometimes your dad might find challenging of that family worship is because you know him really well as daddy and when he's reading the Bible it's it's very kind of ingrained, you know that voice it belongs to the voice of someone who loves you it belongs to the voice of someone who is taking care of you and doing a wall for you usually when people you know, say it sounds like the voice of your dad, they really emphasize what a center dads are and now.

They're dads or sinners and now that's a hard for them that's actually a really wonderful voice for for most of you here he is a sinner but sometimes it can be even the affection that you have for that voice you love your dad and you love your dad's voice and you love the wisdom that he is giving you all the time in your life, but there's something infinitely better than that going on.

When you're sitting there and family worship and dad is reading you the Bible and dad is explaining you to you the Bible. When God gives you saving faith when His Holy Spirit is working in your heart to make you receive the words of Scripture as the words of your God the words of your God and Savior Suddenly when you are in that family worship in your dad is reading you those words you and your dad and your mom the whole family together is now worshipping God by receiving and recognizing the words that are in the Bible as the words of the one who.

Created everything by speaking the words of the one who added to himself a human nature became a man so that he could live and obey and suffer and die in our place and then rise again and we rising with him. So when you receive you hear words that sound like words of men, but your heart responds to it as the very words of God and so say you are worshipping by recognizing God himself as the one who's speaking to you.

That is the that is what it looks like when God is giving faith when God is giving saving faith and this is something that only God can do Paul was not taking credit for it he was not proud of it he didn't give them credit for it he gave God credit for it for this reason we thank God without ceasing and says, it wasn't we who worked in you it was the word of God which is working effectively working in you who believe.

Also John writes, something similar a wonderful passage first. John 5 9 through 13. I don't know if if you get to interact much of people trying to convince them or show them that the Bible is the very words of God and that the Bible teaches that it is the very words of God, but there's actually a pretty powerful proof of that in these five verses first.

John 5 verses 9 through 13. It says if we receive the witness of men the witness of God is greater. For this is the witness of God, which he has testified of his son. He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself, okay, so when you believe in the Son of God, the the the way that that happens is that God testifies within you he witnesses within you that the words that you hear about Christ are true and when you believe in him it's because God the Holy Spirit has testified to the truth of it in your hearts, it's one of the reasons why no matter how much evidence you.

Can give. One that the Bible is the words of God The only way they ever come to recognize that evidence to accept the argument is by God doing a work in their heart. That humbles us when we're trying to evangelize when we're doing up apologetics because you can come up with all of these marvelous proofs and you know that they're true.

And you may even know that the person you're talking to knows at least an intellectual level that they're true. But apart from the work of God in them, what are they going to do with all the truth that they see about God? Those Romans one say, They're gonna they're gonna hold that truth down like.

No I'm not commending this to you but I have experienced it. Two boys trying to donkey each other in a swimming pool and exerting at that moment of the force of their being in holding and holding their opponent down under the water. That. Pushing down on. You

know, we hear a lot about suppressing things in our culture.

Everyone's suppressing all kinds of things and you know, the psychologists are ruling the world like tyrants now. But when you see the word suppressing the truth and unrighteousness in Romans 1, it is talking about the exertion the the use of great effort to hold something down so that it can't breathe so that you don't have to see it so that you don't have to deal with it.

But. When God works in someone to undo by his almighty power what they apart from grace are spending all of their human power to do and he stops them from pushing down on that truth that is when they come to faith. And so he says he who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself.

Now, you might be a kid growing up in church and you're hearing day by day from your dad and week by week from the elders of the church the, Truth of God and you might know that the only way for you to be saved because you're going to stand before the living God and you're either going to stand before the living God with your sin and guilt still on you or you're going to stand before the living God with Jesus Christ's righteousness on you instead and that the way you go from the one to the other is by believing that you could know all those things but you can still have and it should bother you don't let it stop bothering you if, As bothering you you could still have that this nagging sense inside you that you don't hear Jesus as the one who is who is giving you the words of Scripture, you don't hear God the Father having given his son and given his spirit.

You don't hear God the Spirit who carried them in a long so that the words on the page are God's own words and you're not interacting with him. He's an idea to you but you don't recognize him himself as talking to you and, Words don't have the force of your creator and your redeemer telling you the things on the page you and you say I hear other people at church.

I hear the pastor saying things about this, but I I don't have that experience myself what do I do? Well what does the Bible tell you it tells you that God himself is the one who does the work in you so rather than trying real hard to believe that it's God's words and hear God you can do that and you ought to believe it because you're commanded to but the solution is in God, he is the one who gives life to you, his spirit is the one who testifies with you in your testifies to you in your heart and, So you ask him.

You look to him and you keep doing so because he is the one who must do it he who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself he who does not believe God has made him a liar because he is not believed the testimony that God has given of his son and this is the testimony that God has given us eternal life and this life is in his son, he who has the son has life he who does not have the son of God does not have life and then the apostle writes this amazing.

Thing he's just been saying what he's just been saying that the testimony that matters is the testimony of God the the the thing that convinces you is God himself speaking to you and making you recognize that it's his own words and then he says these things I have written to you.

Who believe in the name of the son of God that you may know that you have eternal life and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God don't ever let anyone tell you that that the idea that the Bible and especially the New Testament are the words of God and the the idea that specific books of the New Testament are the words of God was something that the church decided 300 years later.

The apostle John knew when he was writing first John that only the words of God can convince and only God himself can convince you that that those are the words of God and he said I am writing to you who believe so that you may know that you have eternal life.

You have to draw the conclusion don't you that he knew he was writing the words of God that yes it was his pen on the paper but it was God the Holy Spirit who was giving his words to those to whom he was writing because he said I'm writing to accomplish a purpose that God himself is the only one who can accomplish and he has appointed his own words as the way that it is accomplished.

So the apostle is very self-consciously writing the words of God. Yes, he's writing his his words with his pen on his paper and somebody's going to carry it to believers but he understands the inspiration of scripture. He understands that it has God who is writing and he understands that God has to testify in them also that these are God's words.

You have similar from the Apostle Paul for instance. In 1st Corinthians when they're talking about spiritual gifts and he says if anyone's a prophet let him recognize that I too have the spirit of God that that someone who has a gift of prophecy one of their duties was to recognize that that first Corinthians was scripture when it arrived in Corinth not after it had been copied and passed around for a few hundred years and there was a church council and then it was recognized as Scripture later, no.

Scripture was recognized as Scripture as it was being written and received in the churches. So by this faith the Christian believeth to be true whatsoever is revealed in the word for the authority of God himself speaking therein. And last one very quickly running out of time. Acts 24 verses 14 through 16.

Paul talking about his end. His own faith, he's on trial. You remember there trying to bring him up on charges of insurrection at the temple. But this I confess to you that according to the way which they call a sac, so I worship the God of my fathers. Well, how does he worship the God of his father's?

Believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets I have hope in God. And so God has given that which is written in

the law and the prophets and he believes about Christ and he believes about the resurrection. If you want to look at Acts 24 in a little broader context, you see what he's talking about there.

I have hope in God which they themselves also accept that there will be a resurrection of the dead both of the just and, The unjust. This being so I myself always strive to have a conscience without a fence toward God and men. That is he is interacting with God himself.

First of all, as he as he responds to the Word of God. And that's what saving faith does. It interacts with God himself, first of all. Do we want to learn more do we want to believe and understand more yes absolutely but at its core what we want is God to work in us by his power so that we interact with him as we read and hear and respond to his word, that's what saving faith does.

It interacts with God himself and will think more about that interaction as we continue to study with the scripture says about the nature of saving faith, let's pray. We thank you Lord for this portion of your word, we thank you Lord for these portions of your word, we thank you that you are the one who works by your word we pray that you would use the weakness of this teaching the weakness of our hearing and that your Holy Spirit would exert his Almighty power to convince us of the things that your word says so that we will not only hear you and recognize you and your voice in your word.

But that you would make us also to recognize ourselves as your children to call upon you as our Abba we praise you father that you have not only sent your son into the world and the fullness of time but that you have also sent into our hearts the spirit of your son we pray that that might be the case for each of us in this room and we thank you for the many testimonies that you give in your word and in your second.

To the truth and reality of your doing this work, so we pray that you would go with us and the rest of this day by your spirit which we ask in the name of your son our Lord Jesus amen.