

LD 7; Rom. 3:21-26; Heb. 11:1-7; Finding True Faith I. The Need for Faith II. The Parts of Faith
 Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, “have faith- or just believe”- is a common part of speech in our world today. Taking a “blind leap of faith” means that someone is going to do something without any external rational. Even the call to “just believe” is one that you hear from time to time or as you see it on TV ads. But what the world calls faith or belief is not the same as our Christian faith! In fact, it appears that the true and living faith handed down to us has fallen on hard time. Even as Jesus asks in Luke 18, when the Son of Man returns will He find faith on the earth? It appears that the faith of many has grown cold- or they have wandered away from the faith. So what is this thing called faith- and why is it so important? In our series we have just considered that there is a substitute and His name is Jesus. As we read the gospel, we learn about Jesus and His work. So it is possible for us to avoid the wrath and punishment that we deserve. But how are we to benefit from this Jesus and His work? The answer to that question is clear- the only way in which we can fully benefit from the work of Jesus Christ is by placing our faith in Him. So we consider this theme: Jesus Christ produces faith in our hearts by the Spirit so that we might be joined to Him and His blessings!

I. The Need for Faith

In our first point, we consider the necessity of this faith. As you will remember, all mankind has fallen into sin- in Adam we all fell and as sinners we all deserve punishment and death. So the question is raised in QA 20- are all people saved from this fallen lot? Does Jesus save everyone who fell in Adam? So although we know the name of Jesus- and His work is revealed in the gospel- we still have to determine who exactly benefits from this work. Now there are those who teach a universal redemption- that everyone will be saved by Jesus. This is seen in so-called liberal and progressive camps today- the same one that embrace every sin and reject any difference between the Christian and other religions. But there are also those of the Arminian camp that Jesus made salvation possible for all men- thus there is a hypothetical universalism depending on man’s work and actions. But what does the Bible say about the salvation of all

men? Will everyone be saved? The resounding answer given is this. No- not everyone will be saved. Some will be saved by Jesus and others not. Who will be saved? As QA 20 says- only those who are joined to Christ by faith will be saved. To prove this point, we need only remember the well-known words of John 3:16- that whosoever believes in Him would not perish but would have eternal life. So faith is necessary if you would avoid destruction and receive the gift of eternal life. Or our reading from Heb. 11:6- without faith, no one can see God nor will anyone be pleasing to God if they do not have faith. Without faith it is impossible to please God. Only those who have faith will be welcomed into God's presence. And again- as we read in Rom. 3:22- the righteousness of God is received through faith in Jesus by all who believe. In other words, if you do not believe you will not receive the righteousness of God. So to sum up this point so far, the Bible clearly teaches that faith is necessary- because it is only by faith that you can avoid punishment and receive life- by faith you are pleasing to God- by faith you receive righteousness. Without faith there is only the expectation of punishment and death. So faith is needed- and the reason that faith is so vital is because of what faith does. Faith is means by which we are joined to Jesus Christ. QA 20 says that we are grafted into Christ and accept all His benefits by faith. Faith grafts us- roots us- joins us to Christ as a branch is grafted unto a fruitful tree. Once grafted onto Christ- His life-giving sap flows through us! Faith is a conduit- by which the blessings of Christ flow to us. Faith is the open hand that receives the riches that Jesus gives. Faith- in and of itself- has no power or merit. That is why we do not talk about faith in the abstract- like simply believe- or having blind faith. No, true faith is always rooted in someone- grounded in someone's work. Even as Eph. 2 unfolds this truth. We were dead in our sins, but made alive together with Christ being saved by grace through faith! It is this clinging to Christ that moves us from death to life. From sin to righteousness. And this faith itself is a gift- being produced within by the Spirit as He opens our hearts to accept the truth of the gospel. So faith is a necessity if we would be saved. As the heroes of Heb. 11 teach us- each one had faith in God and His promises! They trusted God to keep His word- seeing them fulfilled from afar- walking by faith even

though they could not fully see then. These men and women of faith found eternal life as they believed the gospel- relying on God to keep His promises- and these all found out that Jesus is the yes and the Amen to every one of God's promises! So as you can see- knowing what this thing called true faith is extremely important! Your eternity hangs in the balance- do you have true faith? Have you been joined to Christ?

II. The Parts of Faith

Now that we have seen how faith is necessary- that only those who have faith will avoid destruction and receive life- what comes next are the parts of this faith. Just what exactly is faith? Since faith is so important- being saved by grace through faith- it is important to understand what this thing called faith is. Well, first of all, we consider that true, saving faith is a trust in Jesus alone. Jesus, the one promised in the OT as we saw last week, must remain the only object of our faith. The basis of our hope is found in Him alone. These gifts- as QA 21 concludes- are given to us only because of Christ's merits. So there is no room for Jesus "and" anything. No believing in yourself- or trusting in any angels or relics or others saints. It is all of Jesus and His works! As we read in Rom. 3:22, we have the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus for all who believe. So our faith is in Jesus. True faith also believes what Jesus said. True faith trusts His word. Jesus is reliable- dependable and worthy of our trust. So what then are the parts of this faith. QA 21 then gives us a definition of true faith. Along with QA 1, QA 21 on defining true faith is one of the most important QA in the catechism. Having faith means that we first of all know something about Jesus and His work. As QA 21 begins- true faith is a sure knowledge by which I hold as true all that God has revealed in His word. So true faith starts with a knowledge- I know something that is true. As we read in Heb. 11:3- by faith I know. I know something about God- I read His word and I believe it is a true and dependable source- a reliable witness that tells me about what God has done and promised. And the summary of the Bible will be given in QA 22 in the words of the Apostles Creed. But interestingly, in Heb. 11:3 we are told that true faith understands that God made everything- that the world was created by the

Word. So true faith starts with a knowledge of the beginning- God the Father creating all things out of nothing through His Son. So true faith is a content- a Scriptural faith is where we start. But true faith is more than just knowing a content. Unfortunately there are a lot of people in this world who have head knowledge about God- they know their Bible stories and they have read the Scriptures. Even the Devil knows that God exists. So true faith must be more than just knowing something- true faith also trusts- it is a wholehearted trust as QA 21 says. Heb. 11:1 puts it like this- faith is the assurance of things hoped for and the conviction of things not seen. So faith is an assurance- this is a trust, dependence, conviction and stance. This assurance is the concrete footing upon which the building stands. True faith leans upon and rests in Jesus fully. It is a firm and lasting trust. And, true faith is a conviction- a principle that is tested and tried. A reliance that is evidenced as you throw your weight upon Him. To illustrate what this faith is like, imagine that you are traveling and you come to a bridge. This bridge spans a deep chasm, and the only way for you to reach your destination is by crossing this bridge. Now in order for you to cross the bridge, you will look for evidence of its strength. Does it look stable? Have others crossed it before? Do you trust those who made this bridge? So far so good. But true faith is more than just looking at the bridge and judging its strength. True faith actually walks on that bridge. True faith is made evident when you put your full weight on that bridge. So as we consider Jesus- our faith moves from knowledge about Him to trust that depends on Him! So we have to move beyond knowing something about our God's work in general- to a specific trust in Jesus His Son to save. And this faith must be personal. As QA 21 continues- that God has freely granted me forgiveness, righteousness and salvation. There is a personal character to this true faith. Not only others, but I too have been forgiven and granted eternal life. It is not enough to judge the Bible as true- to think of Jesus as a great man who had some neat things to say. No, true faith is a personal, deep-seated, firmly rooted trust in this savior! It is the difference between knowing Jesus is a Savior to having Him as your own personal Savior and Lord. Now this is very pressing- and by way of application- we all need to answer this question. Do you simply know a lot of things about

Jesus? Are you a Bible Scholar without being a Bible Believer? Is Jesus simply someone that you talk about- or someone that you talk to? Only you can answer this question. Faith and unbelief are in constant battle. Faith says that God is faithful- He will keep His promises- while unbelief challenges this truth by pointing to visible event. True faith believes without seeing because it is based on promises not yet realized. Assurance of things hoped for- conviction of things not seen! If we already had what was promised, we would not need to hope for it! So we need to remember God's promises and believe that He will do it- because He is faithful!

And if you do- if you have this trust in Jesus and complete dependence upon Him- then you are the special recipient of God's grace. You see, faith is a gift that God gives to His people. It is worked within our hearts by the Spirit through the preaching. And faith is also a mark of those in whom God has taken great delight. Faith is pleasing to God. Not only is it true that without faith it is impossible to please God- the reverse is true. By faith we are able to please God and by faith we can approach God! So our works that are done with a heart of faith are pleasing to God! And our worship that comes from a heart of faith- is pleasing to God! And our standing in His presence one day is possible- because we live by faith in His Son Jesus! This is the good news of faith! We who walk by faith and not by sight have the blessings of true knowledge and righteousness given to us! And an audience with the King of Kings! Because we are now children of God by faith- grafted into Jesus- and fellow heirs with Him! There is no age limit to this need for faith. Jesus said, let the little children come to me. And in Psalm 71- I have leaned upon you from my birth. Even to my old age and gray hairs, I will proclaim your might! So may we all fully depend on Him- looking to Jesus alone for our salvation and deliverance!

As our theme stated: Jesus Christ produces faith in our hearts by the Spirit so that we might be joined to Him and His blessings! By grace you have been saved through faith- this is a gift of God! For we are made righteous through faith in Jesus- and the righteous shall live by faith! May our faith never grow cold or lukewarm- but rather may the fire of our faith and love of Christ burn ever bright!