

“Of Saving Faith” part 7, WCF 14.2.4, Faith Embraces God’s Promises

2021.04.18 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.

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. ⁴ By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and through it he being dead still speaks. ⁵ By faith Enoch was taken away so that he did not see death, “and was not found, because God had taken him”; for before he was taken he had this testimony, that he pleased God.

⁶ But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

⁷ By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith. ⁸ By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. ⁹ By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; ¹⁰ for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. ¹¹ By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she was past the age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised. ¹² Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born as many as the stars of the sky in multitude—innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore.

¹³ These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. ¹⁴ For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. ¹⁵ And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. ¹⁶ But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.

Where does faith find out about the things in v1?

To Whom does v6 say that faith brings us?

What two things does such faith believe about God?

What did the list of people in this passage know about but not receive (v13, cf. v39–40)?

What did they confess (v13)?

What do we say when we confess this (v14)?

How does God respond to such believing and such confessing (v16)?

¹ Timothy 4:6 **If you instruct the brethren in these things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished in the words of faith and of the good doctrine which you have carefully followed.** ⁷ But reject profane and old wives’ fables, and exercise yourself toward godliness. ⁸ For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come. ⁹ This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance. ¹⁰ For to this end we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe. ¹¹ These things command and teach.

In what must Timothy be nourished (v6b)? And what is he to do with these unto others (v6a, 11)?

What is he to do with this nourishment (v7b)? Why (v8)? Whom specifically is God saving in this way (end of v10)?

(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)

All right, so last week we covered that faith because it believes that God is who he says he is and it believes that his word is his word actually does things like obey commands and trembles threatenings and hopefully that sounds very obvious to you but there are a lot of places in the church where people set faith over against obedience as if the two were in competition and faith over against trembling as if the presence of one means you don't do the other.

So they'll say well, if you believe you're not really gonna tremble at God's threatenings or they say if you're trembling it God's threatens you don't really believe ironically giving people a guilt trip over having biblical faith. But towards the essence of. Not realize I don't have a confession up here in grabbing him a minute towards the essence of believing that God is who he says he is and.

Recognizing his word as his word and responding to it as his very words is especially embracing the promises of God for this life and that which is to come as we go into the the end of the paragraph there, but the principle acts of saving faith are accepting receiving resting upon Christ alone for justification sanctification and eternal life by virtue of the covenant of grace and actually won't take the time just.

Now to look at chapter one with you but if you remember if you can all the way back to when we're studying chapter one on the word of God, this is reflecting what that chapter said about scripture that it especially discovers to us the way that way of salvation that God has provided in his son.

So this is responding to the nature of Scripture. So for this morning, The end. What does saving faith do it believes God's word as God's word the scriptures as God's word in embracing the promises of God for this life and that which is to come. So won't be surprising to you that if you're going to be studying faith you might at some point end up in Hebrews chapter 11, he was chapter 11 and they just give us the one verse for the proof text verse 13 these old died in faith not having received the promises or so not having received the thing promised but having seen them a far off were assured of them embraced them and confessed.

That they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. So going back up to verse 1. Now faith is the substance of things hoped for the evidence of things not seen. So if it's something that is still hoped for and not seen where does faith find out about it, where does faith get this substance or this evidence?

God's word the scriptures so faith is the substance of things hoped for the evidence of things not seen so faith is responding to what we get from the Bible. And go on in verse two for by it the elders obtained a good testimony. By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God now that has to be by faith, why who is there when God created the heavens in the earth?

God has a very huge hole in all of the theories of men about oranges origins, none of them were there you should listen to him who was there so even Adam for instance would have to have learned by God's words what happened for the first five and a half days of creation, so by faith we understand that the world reframed by the word of God.

The things which are seen were not made of things which are visible. By faith able offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than king. Through which he obtained witness that he was righteous okay, so what are we saying that faith is? Faith is a response to God's. God's words right so what Hebrews 11 is saying is that God had given able a confidence in the words of God.

Now Mary have something to do with fruit and not and not lamb but may have something to do with the. The sacrifice that Abel made being more related to God having to cover Adam and Eve with with skins and blood sacrifice being made at that time. But the scripture tells us the spirit in which able did it that he gave of the first and the best and here the scripture is making plain that people is especially responding to the words of God, especially we would know right from Genesis 3 God.

's words about the seed of the woman who had crushed the serpent's head. She's saying the big thing here the what this is saying about the big difference between canes sacrifice and able sacrifice is that able was responding to the words of God with faith when he offered his sacrifice.

God testifying of his gifts and through it, he being dead still speaks. By faith enough was taken away so that he did not see death and was not found because God had taken him. For before he was taken he had this testimony that he pleased God. Indeed. Scripture says that after he became the father of Methuselah he knocked at what?

Walked with God. He walked with God. But without faith verse 6, it is impossible to please him. For He who comes to God must believe that. He is and that. He is a rewarder of those who doesn't seek Him. So without faith, it's impossible to please Him because faith does what?

It comes to Him and what two things does it believe about? Him. First of all to whom does faith come.

Okay, without faith it is impossible to please him for. He who comes to God? So what does faith do?

Comes to God and what do things does faith believe? Okay. And he is urgently secant. Okay, so you're taking it on his way not on your way against God has made promises concerning salvation and salvation of sinners and you are believing about him that what he says about himself is true.

Okay so without faith that is impossible to please him faith comes to him well pleases him is our coming to him believing that he is and believing that he is as he says and he will do as he says, Okay, so think about what the scriptures principally teach.

What the scriptures principally teach children. That's half of it the scriptures principally teach. John. The scriptures.

Right well mercy believe concerning God isn't that what Hebrews 11 verse 6 is saying is the essence of faith believing about God that he is as he says he is and he will do as he has said he will do and that because you believe those things it's not just an intellectual exercise what do you do?

The one who believes those things does what?

Responds in faith and the language of the verse that responses he comes to God he comes to him. Okay so when we're praying for each children to have faith that the spirit would give you this faith we're not just praying we are praying these things we're not just praying these things we're not just praying that you will believe in intellectually you'll agree in your mind that God is who he says he is in the Bible and that you agree in your mind that God will do as he has said he will do in the Bible what we are praying for when we pray for ourselves that the spirit would give us faith when we pray for you that the spirit will give you faith is that we would come to God because He is who he has says he is that we would come to him because he will do as he has said he will do.

So so when when it picks up from verse 13, as we had there embracing the promises of God for this life laying hold of grabbing now. Some of you perhaps have wrestled. At some point in your life and you are doing your best to get as good a hold as you can as you wrestle and you think of actual little wrestling by which Jacob got his new name as a believer.

Okay, so there's more than just intellectual agreement you have to have the intellectual agreement. To hold of God because you can only lay hold of the God who has described himself here letting hold of a figment of your imagination may be wrestling and it may be faith but it is not biblical faith.

You mostly hold of him who has described himself and him who has made these promises and come to him because he is that God and come to him because he is made those promises. So,

Lest we get bugged down not that it would be a terrible thing to do but unless we get bogged down and exposition of verses 7 through 12 will just skip down to verse 13 to reinforce that point. These all died in faith not having received the promises the promised things but having seen them fall off were assured of them.

Okay, so they didn't receive them they didn't see them in front of them, but it's talking about hearing as if seeing right? Having seen them fall off were assured of them. So yes, it's a faith is to hear about things that you don't see and to be what about them?

Sure. To be assured of them now, this is this will help you hopefully. Settle. 400 year old or so argument is certainty part of the essence of faith. This is things that theologians who. You know argue about things argue about the idea is that the idea that some of them will say is that in the reformation in the 1500s they said certainty is of the essence of faith and then they realize that there are believers who struggle with assurance and so they said certainty is something that you grow into as a believer.

Does anybody know the solution? Let me put it by way of a question of what or whom is faith certain. Faith is certain about Christ. If you are not certain that Christ is the savior that Christ is God who became man to save you do not have biblical faith.

But faith is not always certain about itself. Or even that it is in Christ. It is clinging to him because it is certain about him desperately. But sometimes faith can be shaken about its own clinging. And so you might be clinging and not sure that you're hanging on. And if you had biblical faith your response is going to be to cling more tightly, right?

So is certainty of the essence of faith? Yes it is. But it's not a certainty about yourself and it's not even a certainty about your faith. It's a certainty about him to whom you cling. Now, there is such a thing as assurance of faith that God gives us and that is the reason that the Apostle gives for having written first.

John, yes Jeremiah.

So,

Faith clings to Christ, it doesn't cling in a perfect way. Sometimes we cling more strongly sometimes less. But it actually is sure of who he is. Right? So, This the littlest faith. Gets the whole Christ the littlest faith is sure that Christ is who he says he is. We are going to be increasing in our understanding of Christ.

For an ending ages. So yeah enter glory and yes, you'll be sinless at that time. But you'll still have room to grow in faith. Jesus was

sinless as entire humanity. And yet he grew and wisdom and he grew in stature and he grew in favor with God, which is you know, that's one of those explode your mind kind of phrases, but when you start to think about it in terms of.

Increasing in his human experience of and response to you know, he's not in his divine nature growing in favor with God. That's part of his humanity. So one of the things that frustrates us is that we are not yet what we will be but another thing that frustrates us as our ignorance of.

That we will still be finite and growing. Yeah, so even when we are what we will be. It will not then be what we kind of already wish we had now. Because our desires are not conformed to the scripture. Now as they will be then it's a good question Assurance, however that confidence that we are clinging to him since it's something that the Bible says that God has given to us because he wants to give it to us John says that in his letter we looked at that a couple of weeks ago.

It's something that we should desire and pursue. And not despise another's one of the one of the things because of our remaining sinfulness when we are unsure about ourselves and the whether or not we are clinging to him is we'll do like some theologians have formally done which is say well then nobody can have assurance.

It is one of the core principles for instance of our minionism or Roman Catholicism that no one can have assurance of faith no one can know that they are clinging to Christ which is a dreadful thing they are minions are afraid that that will that that will produce spiritual complacency the Romanists are afraid that that will produce less dependence upon the Roman church, which you know hits them in the budget, so.

But God wants you to be sure faith is sure of Christ but God wants you not only to be sure of Christ himself who wants you to be sure that you are Christ's. That you belong to him. That you love him that you love his people that he has started a good work in you and that he will complete that good work in you.

So these all died in faith not having received the promises but having seen them fall off were sure of them and employs them. And confess that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth so faith is sure all and embraces what? The Christ and in this particular case Christ as he is promised the promises, what is a stranger or a pilgrim not embracing.

Which is one of the problems when you let them do things like vote. They're not embracing the land where they are okay, so you see here that there is this mutual exclusivity between clinging to this world and clinging to what God has promised in his word. And one of the things you will do if you confess that the God is God and he is a reward of those who seek him and he has provided promises of something better in Jesus if you are a short of that and embracing that you are not going to be doing something else which is embracing this world and the present pleasures of it.

So what did the list of this the people in this passage know about but not receive oh we referred to verses that aren't here, so if you have an open Bible you can turn to chapter 11 verses 39 and 40. And all these having obtained a good testimony through faith did not receive the promise so he's kind of referring us back to verse 13 there.

God having provided something better for us that they should not be made perfect. And that's a more complete literally that's the word idea than we usually mean when we say perfect that they should not be made perfect apart from us. So what do they know about? But not receive.

What have they not received? Okay what particularly have they not received where they're now what have they received let's start with that. What have they received? The list of people Hebrews chapter 11 real people that you're gonna meet. And in God's gracious work and their lives and giving them faith is an example to us of what faith looks like.

What have they received now?

They've obtained a good reporter where they know. With Christ well their souls are right some of their bodies all their bodies are decayed now some of them got swam in two some of them, you know torn apart by bees some of them were stunned but they have bodies here their souls are with Christ okay, so they have the presence of Jesus what else do they have?

It's not from from the text now from the whole Bible what do you know that they have?

A lot of these guys were sinners. Okay, well they do have a perfected faith right growing but sinless faith.

Righteousness godliness, they've been made perfect and holiness. There's a lot that they have received Phil.

Are absent from the body and they're present with Christ, they're home and him. Okay, so those are some of the things that they have received but there are other things that they still haven't received had having thought of those things what are some of the things that they haven't received.

It's not super long list at this point glorified bodies what else? What are you gonna be of your glorified body? A new heavens in the new earth. Okay, so there are things that they looked forward to in their lives that they still have not received that we are still to be looking forward to and be sure of and embrace okay, so it's not just first Corinthians 15 that says be sure of the the resurrected body and the

new earth and the this blessed complete state that we will that we will enter into in the last day.

Hebrews 11 is saying that. Hebrews 11 is saying trusting in Jesus Christ for salvation has had those things the the resurrected glorified body with your resurrect with your glorified soul in the new heavens in the new earth with God and a heavenly country and a homeland that is a world of which you are a world which is worthy of you.

So you see how if if we were to back up a little bit in the verse 30 with 38 of whom the world the cosmos was not worthy, so there's a new cosmos coming this one isn't good enough to be a fulfillment of the promises that God has made to us in Christ that have their yes and amen in him okay, so these are things that biblical faith ought to be embracing not just for this life you hear the, Coming back up into our catechism question embracing the promises of God for this life and that which is to come.

So back up now into verse 14, which is on your page for those who say such things to clear plainly that they seek a homeland so what are you declaring when you confess that you're a stranger and pilgrim this and feel already told us that you that we seek a homeland and truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out they would have had opportunity to return but now they desire a better that is a heavenly country.

Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God for he has prepared a city for them, so God responds to our faith by not being ashamed to be called our God, okay? One more passage real quickly first Timothy 4 verses 6 through 11 if you instruct the brethren in these things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ nourished in the words of faith and of the good doctrine which you have carefully followed okay, so.

To be a good minister of Jesus Christ in what did Timothy need to be noticed?

In words of faith. That and good doctrine which is carefully fault and what is he to do with these unto others? If you do what to the brethren.

If you instruct the brethren so he is to be noticed with words and then he is to give those words to others he used to be nourished with doctrine and he is to give that doctrine to others that they also might be nourished notice. Notice again that language not just that you would be able to sit down and write your shorter catechism exam we actually had in my particular seminary shorter catechism catechism exam you could not graduate if you could not sit down and write the questions and answers of the shorter catechism word perfect, don't ask me to do it now.

I'm not up for graduation currently. But it's more than that. Right, it's to be nourished by those words and he's going to say in verse 11 these things command and to teach. But reject back up to verse 7 then but reject profane and old wise fables and exercise yourselves.

You're sorry exercise yourself toward godliness, so he turns from the word nourishment what is nourishment maybe that's something that the.

Kids have you ever at supper told mom and if the answer is no you better start tonight and repeat it as often as providence allows you to truthfully said that was good mom and what you're saying is not just you enjoyed it but you don't feel hungry anymore there's satisfaction and pleasure and you've gotten from it all that you were hoping for so your mom provided nourishment and you were nourished.

God's word is to be nourishing but we're also he changes the picture now exercise yourself toward godliness forward bodily exercise profits a little but godliness is profitable for all things okay, so when you exercise. What are some of the things or what are you doing with your body when you exercise?

Your strengthening it and your strengthening it by actually using it. If sitting in a chair and agreeing with the fact that exercise is good for your body would make us fit. We would all be much more fit. You actually have to do the thing. To get the benefit. Agreeing that God's Word is true.

Does not by itself get you the benefit. Embracing and then responding to his word in whatever it says gives you the benefit and for what does it gives you benefit having promise of what two things? And verse 8. Of having the promise having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come.

So God has given you not just to get eternal and everlasting life in the last day by believing his promises and and exercising yourself in his word, but also he gives you blessings in this life now by your believing his promises and exercising yourself and his or this is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance for to this and we both labor and suffer approach because we trust in the living God, who is the savior of all?

Men, especially of those who believe so whom especially as it says here or particularly. May be better there. Who has God's saving in the way at the end whom is God saving through their embracing his promises and it's at the end of verse 10 there especially of those who believe so believing is being nourished by his word believing is exercising in his word, yes Phil.

There are teaching the same thing but he's not using workout the way we use the word workout. I mean, it's it's a useful way of remembering that they teach the same thing. I think. Yes. Absolutely. We are to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling. We

are to be nourished we are to be exercised in what God's word says, let's pray our father in heaven we thank you that you have given us your word not just to agree with not just to.

Wrestle with the ideas of but to come to you in and to be nourished by to feed upon and to be exercised in clinging and embracing we pray that your spirit would produce in us the life that we need that he would give us of Christ himself, not just to embrace him through the word but through our embracing him in the word.

Thank you for teaching us about faith, please keep giving it to us and growing us in it we ask in Christ's name amen.