

# FAITH

## II.

### Trust in the Inviolable Word of God

Our first meditation on the meaning of "faith" was concerned with justifying or saving faith, which can be expressed, as we found, by such statements as these: "I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the virgin Mary, is my Lord, who has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature, purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil." This simple exposition of the Second Article, as given by Martin Luther, is still the very innermost heart of his teaching, and it certainly points the way of salvation. At the same time it shows the irreducible minimum in the matter of faith, for this much every believer must confess and cling to in life and in death, in order to be sure of salvation: I, a sinner, saved by grace!

However, with this justifying or saving faith is connected another activity of the true believer, to which the designations "belief" or "faith" are also applied. For in this sense it refers to a certainty of mind and heart, a trust in the inviolable Word of God, specifically in the Gospel as the inspired message of salvation. Such faith is not a matter of opinion or of guess-work, but of knowing that "we have a more sure Word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place." II Pet. 1:19. When Christians accept the Holy Scriptures, they are not standing upon an uncertain foundation of surmisings and opinions, but on a foundation "which unmoved shall stay, when earth and heaven (shall) have passed away."

There is a word of Luther to which we must call attention in this connection, in his exposition of the Second Article (St. Louis Ed., 10, 1094). He writes: "Therefore we must insist upon this: He who would fare well must say, I believe, not, I conclude or judge that it is correct or not correct. For if you are to be the judge of it, what need is there of faith? He who

believes does not judge, but permits himself to be judged and to be taken captive by the judgment of another, and he says in deed and truth: In this matter I am a fool and do not understand it, since I have not seen nor heard or experienced it; but because God says it, therefore I shall believe it, and I shall follow the Word, while I let my thoughts and reason be nothing. Thus the judgment is rendered by the Word to which one must hold, not by one's reason or intellect. He who does not do so has nothing of faith, nor of God and the things that are of God; but goes his way like a blind man who presumes to judge of color and of the light of the sun, of which he has never had a glimpse nor experienced it."

Holy Writ deals with these facts in various connections, always with the purpose of making men realize that they must cling to the objective certainty of the inspired Word. Of those who would follow the Antichrist the judgment of God, through His apostle, is that they believe a lie, and thus have no basis of true faith. II Thess. 2:11.

On the other hand, the Lord calls upon the people of the Old Testament to believe His prophets, since they were sent out to preach His Word. II Chron. 20:20. At the very beginning of His ministry Jesus proclaimed as His message: "Repent ye, and believe the Gospel." Mark 1:15. In speaking to the unbelieving Jews, the Lord frankly and emphatically tells them: "Had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of Me." John 5:47. Again and again we are told that, when the Lord did His preaching, much of which was connected with, and based upon, the Old Testament Scripture, His hearers came to faith in Him. The apostle Paul declared, in writing to the congregation at Rome: "The Word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart; that is, the Word of faith, which we preach." Rom. 10:8. In the opening paragraphs of the fifteenth chapter of the First letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians (15:1-11), where Paul speaks so emphatically of the

Gospel which he had preached, referring to the fulfillment of Scriptures, the apostle makes the declaration: "So we preach, and so ye believed." The faith of the Corinthian Christians was based upon the objective certainty of the Word of God, upon its inviolable truth. The same certainty is presupposed in II Thess. 1:10 and especially in I Thess. 1:13: "When ye received the Word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the Word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe." The Thessalonian Christians trusted the Word of God, knowing that it was the inviolable truth, which carried with it the objective certainty of the message of God Himself.

Among the many instances where we are told of such an acceptance of God's Word by individuals we have the story of the incident in Jerusalem at the first Passover which Jesus attended after the beginning of His public ministry. In connection with the Lord's prophecy concerning His resurrection it is expressly stated that His disciples "believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had said." John 2:22. Even in the case of Herod Agrippa the apostle Paul stated that he undoubtedly believed the prophets, that is, he accepted the writings of the prophets as the truth given by God. For that reason, also, we find the reference, in the story of the rich man and Lazarus, to the fact that every person is supposed to turn to Moses and the prophets, which would mean, for us, the entire body of Holy Writ, for we are to hear them. And if any person will not hear the Word of God and accept not its everlasting truth, he cannot gain the certainty of his salvation either, for this depends on the acceptance of the message which is its chief content, namely that of Jesus Christ as the Savior of the world. We dare not permit one jot or one tittle to be taken from the Sacred Record, for every word of God, as given to men in Holy Writ, is pure, and the Scripture must remain inviolable. Let no man, therefore, lay unholy hands on this message from God, lest he jeop-

ardize the very word of salvation. Every Christian must pray for a greater measure of the faith which will always say, in all humility: "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth."

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