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VOL. X.

“And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting Gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people.”—Rev. 14 : 6.

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MARKS OF SAVING FAITH.

BY REV. JONATHAN DICKINSON,

FIRST PRESIDENT OF PRINCETON COLLEGE.

That men may doctrinally believe the truth of the Gospel without a saving faith in Christ, and without an interest in him, is a truth clearly taught in the Scriptures, and abundantly evident from our own experience and observation.

“What then,” you ask, “is the *plain distinction between a SAVING and a DEAD faith?*” I answer:

1. A *true and saving faith* involves a *realizing and sensible impression* of the truth of the Gospel; whereas a *dead faith* is but a mere *speculative belief* of it. Faith is by the apostle described, “the *substance* of things hoped for, and the *evidence* of things not seen:” that which brings eternal things into a near view, and presents them to the soul as *realities*. Hence the true believer, when he is wearied out of all his false refuges, emptied of all hope in himself, and brought to see and feel the danger and misery of his state by nature, is then brought in earnest to *look to Jesus*, as the only refuge and safety to his soul. He then sees the incomparable excellency of a precious Savior, breathes with ardent desire after him, repairs to him as the only fountain of hope, and “rejoices in Christ Jesus, having no confidence in the flesh.” Now, the blessed Savior and his glorious salvation is the subject of his serious, frequent, and delightful contemplation. Now, an interest in Christ is valued by him above all the world, and he is in earnest to obtain and preserve good evidence that his hope in Christ is well founded. Now, the favor of God and the concerns of the eternal world appear of greater importance than every thing else. He now mourns under a sense of his former sins, groans under the burden of remaining corruption and

imperfection, and with earnest diligence follows after holiness. In a word, he has such an impression of these invisible realities, that whatever temptations, desertions, or prevailing corruptions he may conflict with, nothing can so banish the great concern from his mind as to make him slothful and indifferent about it: nothing can quiet him short of having his heart and affections engaged in the things of God, and his appetites and passions under the governing influence of "the law of the spirit of life."

On the other hand, a *dead faith* often leaves the man secure and careless, trifling and indifferent in the concerns of the eternal world. These appear to him but distant futurities, which do not engage his solemn attention, nor give any effectual check to his inordinate appetites and passions. Or if (as it sometimes happens) any awakening dispensation alarms the conscience of such a person, drives him to external reformation, and makes him more careful and watchful in his conduct, he has yet no sensible impressive view of the way of salvation by Jesus Christ. He either endeavors to pacify the justice of God and his own conscience by his religious performances, and so lulls himself asleep again in his former security, or else continues to agonize under most dark, dreadful, and unworthy apprehensions of the glorious God, as if he were implacable and irreconcilable to such sinners as himself. Such a person would readily acknowledge, but he cannot feel this blessed truth, that Christ Jesus is a sufficient Savior. He allows it to be truth, but it is to him such a truth as has no effectual influence upon his heart and life. Though he owns this to be true, yet he does not humbly and joyfully venture his soul and his eternal interest upon it.

Thus a true faith realizes the great truths of the Gospel by a lively and feeling discovery of them, giving the "light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." A false faith gives but a lifeless and inactive assent to these important truths. The one influences the heart and affections, and "by beholding with open face, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, changes the soul into the same image, from glory to glory." The other only swims in the head, and leaves the heart in a state either of security or despondency. The one is an abiding principle of divine life, from which flow rivers of living water: the other is

transient and unsteady, and leaves the soul short of any spiritual principle of life and activity.

2. A *saving faith cordially embraces the terms of the Gospel*, while a *dead faith is but a cold assent to its truth*. Accordingly, a true faith is in the Gospel described to be a receiving of the Lord Jesus Christ. "To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God." Our blessed Redeemer is freely offering himself and his saving benefits to poor perishing sinners. Our compliance with and acceptance of the Gospel offer are the terms of our interest in him. They, therefore, and they only, are the true believers in Christ, who heartily acquiesce in the glorious method of a sinner's recovery from ruin by Jesus Christ, and heartily accept an offered Savior, in all his offices and benefits. A true believer, convinced of his natural blindness and ignorance, repairs to the Lord Jesus to enlighten his mind, to make his way plain, and to give him a clear and spiritual acquaintance with the great things of his eternal peace. The true believer has found, by experience, his utter incapacity to procure the divine favor by any reformations or moral performances, and that he has cause to be ashamed and confounded in his own sight for the great defects of his highest attainments in religion; and therefore welcomes Christ to his soul, as the "Lord his righteousness;" repairs to him, and to him only, "for wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption;" and builds all his hope of acceptance with God upon what Christ has done and suffered for him. The true believer is heavy laden with the sinfulness of his nature, and longs for entire victory over his corrupt affections, appetites and passions, for pure spirituality in his duties, and for perfection in holiness; and therefore heartily desires and accepts the Lord Jesus as his *Sanctifier* as well as *Savior*, and earnestly seeks the renewing, strengthening and quickening influences of his Spirit. The true believer feels the necessity of this blessed Savior in all his offices, relations, and characters. He sees him to be just such a Savior as his soul wants, and therefore cheerfully accepts a whole Christ with his whole heart, without any desire of other terms of acceptance with God. He may entertain dark apprehensions of himself, and complain heavily of the great defects of his

faith and holiness, but he can never entertain hard thoughts of the *gospel scheme*, nor complain of the terms of salvation: these appear to him "the wisdom of God and the power of God," and every way suited to the exigencies of his state and the desires of his soul.

But a *dead faith* never brings the soul to consent to the terms of the Gospel without some exception and reserve. The unsound believer may imagine that he accepts the Lord Jesus as his Savior; but what is the foundation and encouraging motive of his imaginary compliance with the gospel offer? Upon an impartial inquiry it will always be found to be something *in himself*: his good affections, duties, moralities, reformations, promises, or purposes. He endeavors by these to recommend himself to God; and on account of these he hopes to find acceptance through Christ. Or if he feels ever so strong a desire of salvation by Christ, yet he is driven to it only by *fear* and *self-love*, and will renew his affections to his *other lords* as soon as his awakening apprehensions are worn off. He does not feel his want of Christ's enlightening and enlivening influences; for he knows not what they mean. He "submits not to the righteousness of Christ;" for he is still endeavoring to procure acceptance with God by some good qualifications of his own, some duties which he performs, or some progress which he makes, or designs to make, in his religious course. He cannot submit to Christ as his *Lord*, for there is some slothful indulgence which he cannot forego, some darling lust which he cannot part with, some worldly idol which his heart is set upon, or some difficult duty from which he must excuse himself.

There is nothing more apparent than the *distinction* between these two sorts of believers. The one comes to Christ destitute of all hope and help in himself, but sees enough in Christ to answer all his wants: the other is full in himself. The one looks to Christ to be his light: the other leans to his own understanding. The one makes mention of Christ's righteousness, and that only: the other hopes for an interest in Christ and his salvation on account of his own attainments; and, in effect, expects justification by his own righteousness, for Christ's sake. The one brings a guilty, polluted, unworthy soul to the blessed Redeemer, without any qualification to recommend it, expecting from him alone all the

supplies he wants—repairing to him for “gold tried in the fire, that he may be rich; for eye-salve, that he may see; and for white raiment, that he may be clothed:” the other ordinarily raises his expectations from Christ in proportion to his own imaginary qualifications and good disposition. The one desires salvation by Christ from pollution as well as from guilt: the other has a reserve of some deceitful lust, and hugs some Delilah in his bosom which he cannot be willing to part with. In fine, the one is willing to accept of the Lord Jesus Christ upon any terms: the other will not come to Christ but upon terms of his own stating.

3. A *saving* faith is an humble trust in Christ, as the author of our salvation; but a *dead* faith always builds upon some *false* foundation, or upon none at all. A *saving* faith is often described in Scripture by a “trusting in the Lord, committing our way to him, resting on him,” and such like expressions, which suppose an humble confidence in the abundant sufficiency of the Redeemer’s merits, and the boundless riches of God’s mercy in him. Accordingly the true believer, in his greatest darkness and discouragement, ventures his soul and eternal interests in the hands of Christ. His past sins may appear in most frightful forms, vastly numerous, dreadfully aggravated; still he humbly trusts that “the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin.” He may be oppressed with the sense of the defects of his duties and religious attainments, but he yet sees *righteousness* enough in Christ for a safe foundation of confidence. This, and this alone, keeps his soul from sinking, answers the clamors of conscience, and disposes him to rely upon the free grace and mercy of God. He may be distressed with the prevalence of his inward corruptions; he may, in an unguarded hour, be surprised and foiled by the power of his sinful appetites or passions, or by some unexpected temptation; but, even in this case, his refuge is in that blessed “Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” And though, from sad experience of his own dreadful imperfections, he may be ready to question his state, and to fear lest he be deceived, he ventures that also in the hands of Christ, and depends upon him, that he will not leave him to a soul-ruining deceit, but will “guide him by his counsel, and afterward receive him to glory.” Such a dependance upon Christ

the believer ordinarily exercises in his darkest hours. But when he is in the more lively exercise of grace, he "knows whom he has believed, and that he is able to keep that which he has committed to him against that day." With this confidence, he can even "glory in tribulation;" he can cheerfully look death itself in the face, and triumph over the king of terrors.

On the contrary, the *false believer* ordinarily raises his expectations and encouragements from something *in himself*. His good frames, his joys and comforts, his endeavors or designs to serve God, are what he has to depend upon; and upon these he does and will depend, and perhaps will never see his mistake until it be too late. Some of these, indeed, do not find even this false foundation to build upon, but quiet their souls with a loose and general hope. They believe that God is merciful, and that Jesus Christ came to save sinners; or they hope they shall some time or other obtain grace, though they find none at present. Thus many go on quietly in their sins, dwell *at ease*, and cry *peace* to their souls, until the flood of God's displeasure sweeps away their refuges of lies. Others there are who, by means of a better education, or from some awakening sense of guilt and danger, cannot but see that these beds are too short to stretch themselves upon, and therefore their faith is their torment. They believe in Christ as their Judge, but not as their Savior. They are harassed with fear and anxiety whenever conscience is awake to any serious apprehension of a future world. Thus they live under a "spirit of bondage," never venturing their souls upon the pardoning mercy of God and the infinite merit of the Redeemer's blood.

Nothing can be more apparent than the difference between these two sorts of believers. The *one*, in all his straits, fears, difficulties, and dangers, looks to Christ as to a sure foundation of safety, confidence, and hope; and though he may at some times doubt his interest in him, he can at no time deliberately place his confidence or expect safety for his soul any where else. The *other* leaves the soul asleep, or else seeks rest only from the righteousness of the law, from desires and endeavors of his own, and must either find comfort there, or no where. The *one* ventures all his interests, and all his hopes of grace and glory, upon the faithful-

ness of the gospel promises and the infinite mercy of God in Christ. The *other* sees not how to quiet the accusations of his conscience, and obtain qualifications for salvation, by depending upon a naked promise. In a word, the *one* can see safety and security in leaving all the concerns, both of time and eternity, in the hands of Christ. The *other*, being ignorant of the righteousness of Christ, must make the righteousness of the law his refuge, or else live without hope.

4. A *saving* faith subjects the soul to Christ, but a *dead* faith leaves the soul *unrenewed, and disobedient*. A true "faith purifies the heart" and "overcomes the world;" and "he that hath this hope" in Christ "purifieth himself, even as he is pure." A true faith unites the soul to Christ, as the branch is united to the vine, and thereby enables the man to bring forth much fruit. The true believer hates every false way; he mourns over, and watches, strives and prays against all the corruptions of his nature, and all the imperfections of his heart and life. There is no known sin which he indulges himself in; no known duty which he willingly neglects; no difficulty which can deter him from following Christ; no temptation which can allure him from endeavoring a conformity to the whole will of God. "Not as though he had already attained, or were already perfect." He has daily cause to lament his defects, but yet he can truly say that "he delights in the law of the Lord after the inward man;" and accordingly endeavors, in every station and relation, in all his conduct both to God and man, as well in secret as openly, to live a life of conformity to God in all the duties he requires of him.

But, on the other hand, the seeming obedience of a *false believer* is very partial, defective, temporary, and but a matter of force and constraint upon the appetites and affections. If, with Herod, he reforms, and "does many things," yet he retains some darling corruption unmortified, or leaves some duty neglected. Or if by the lashes of an awakened conscience he is driven for a time to a more general reformation from all known sin, and to outward attendance upon all known duty, he finds no inward complacency in it, and therefore is like a dull horse that will be kept on his way no longer than he feels a spur in his side.

Here then is a conspicuous difference between a true and false believer. The *one* has a principle of holiness, a delight in it, and an earnest and continuing desire after further proficiency in the divine life. The *other* aims only at so much holiness as he thinks will save him from hell, but cares for nothing more; and what he has, is excited by fear or constrained by force, contrary to the real tendency and bias of his soul. In fine, the *one* makes it the endeavor of his life to approve himself to a pure, holy, and omniscient God. The *other* rests in endeavors to quiet conscience and silence its clamors.

5. A *saving* faith works by *love to God and man*; but a *dead* faith always falls short of both. The apostle assures us, that "if we have all faith, so that we could remove mountains, and have not charity, (or love,) we are nothing. Faith worketh by love;" and the true believer "keeps himself in the love of God, looking to the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ for eternal life." He delights in contemplating the perfections of the divine nature. His meditations upon God are sweet, and the thoughts of him precious to his soul. If he can have the glorious God for his portion, and live in the light of his countenance, he can be content with straits and difficulties, trials and afflictions. He takes peculiar pleasure in the ordinances of God, and all the appointed means of a near approach into his special presence; and often enjoys sensible communion with him. He heavily complains of his own deadness or worldliness, which separates between God and his soul, and can find no true rest or satisfaction till he returns to him. This is the ordinary course and tenor of the believer's life; and if at any time he grow forgetful of God, and have the prevalence of a dead, carnal, worldly frame in his soul, this darkens the evidence of his state, robs him of comfort and peace, and will at length put him upon vigorous and active endeavors for obtaining a revival of his languishing graces, by a fresh supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. Thus the true believer has the love of God dwelling in him.

And from the same principle he likewise loves his *neighbor* as himself. He maintains a life of justice, meekness, kindness, and beneficence toward all men, bears injuries, is ready to forgive, entertains the best opinion of men's states

and actions that the case will allow, and endeavors to live in the exercise of "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness." And as he thus maintains a love of *benevolence* to all men, he has, in a special manner, a love of *complacence* toward those who bear marks of the divine image. These he delights in, because the children of God. He loves them for their heavenly Father's sake, as well as for those gracious qualifications which make "the righteous more excellent than his neighbor." He loves the company of the saints: these are "the excellent in whom is all his delight." He loves their piety, and studies an imitation of them wherein they follow Christ; and studies to equal, if not excel them in their highest improvements in religion. He loves their persons, and hopes to join in concert with them in the eternal praises of God.

The highest attainments of a *dead faith* fall short of every part of this description. The false believer may imagine that he has something of *love to God* in him; but, upon a just view, it will appear that it is only to an *idol*, the creature of his own imagination. If he seems to love God under an apprehension of his goodness and mercy, he yet dreads him on account of his justice, and has an inward aversion to his purity and holiness; so that the object of his love is an imaginary being of infinite mercy, without either justice or holiness. If, from the alarms of conscience or the emotions of his natural affections, he takes some pleasure in religious exercises, this pleasure is short and transient, like the principle whence it flows; he soon sinks into carelessness and forgetfulness of God, and has his affections quickly engaged in worldly and sensual pursuits. And however he may deceive himself in any supposed progress in religion, he can never satisfy his soul with having God for his portion. He can never, of course, keep up a life of spiritual-mindedness and delight in God.

The same defects are likewise found in the unsound believer with respect to his love to his *neighbor*. If he be not (as is too commonly found) unjust and deceitful, wrathful and contentious, hard hearted and unkind, bitter and censorious, revengeful and implacable, yet he never loves the children of God as such. Whatever love he may have to any such from intimate acquaintance, or from their being in the same cause, party, or persuasion with himself, (which

is indeed no more than the exercise of selfishness,) he never loves the image of Christ in every sect or party in whom he finds it, nor can he love a conformity to the children of God in the holiness of their hearts and lives.

Here then you see a difference in these two kinds of believers. The *one* loves God above all things; and, indeed, he that does not love him with a supreme love, does not love him as God, and consequently does not love him at all. But the *other* seeks the favor of God from no other motive but fear of his displeasure, or some desire of happiness, and not from a sense of the excellency of his glorious perfections. The *one* loves what God loves, hates what he hates, and is satisfied with himself only in proportion to his conformity to God. The *other* retains his delight in his lusts and idols, and repairs to God because he dare not do otherwise. The *one*, like God himself, takes pleasure in doing good to all men; and takes special delight in all, without distinction, who are partakers of the divine nature. The *other*, at the best, has his love to man influenced by selfish principles.

6. A *saving faith humbles the soul*, and makes it *low and vile in its own eyes*; whereas a *dead faith tends to exalt the mind with vain apprehensions of some sufficiency or excellence of its own*. The *true believer* has a deep sense of the greatness and aggravations of his sins, *loathes himself on account of them*, and adores the long-suffering of God toward him, that has kept him out of hell. He is so sensible of the great defects of his duties, of the sinfulness of his heart, the imperfections of his life, and his utter unworthiness of any favor from God, that he cannot but entertain a most deep and sensible impression that it must be a wonderful display of mere sovereign grace if he obtains salvation. It is always true, that the greater manifestation of God's love is made to his soul, the greater sense he has of his own nothingness and unworthiness, and the more he admires and adores the astonishing riches of free distinguishing *grace* to such a guilty, polluted creature as he is. Though the *true believer* lives in the exercise of that *charity* toward others which "thinketh no evil, but believeth all things, and hopeth all things;" he yet always finds occasion to condemn himself, and to censure his own inward affections and outward performances, religious duties and moral conduct,

and therefore cannot but esteem *others better than himself*. He finds occasion of renewed repentance every day: he every day finds new cause to complain of himself, and new cause to commit a sinful and unworthy soul to the mere mercy of God in Christ.

On the contrary, a *dead faith* always either *puffs up the mind* with a haughty, pleasing apprehension of its own attainments, makes it censorious and uncharitable, and inspires it with that proud pharisaical language, "I thank God, I am not as other men:" or else, from the same haughty principle, either leaves the soul *secure and easy* in its good designs and purposes of future repentance, or *impatient and desponding*, through want of those good qualifications which it supposes necessary.

And now to sum up the whole in a short and easy view. If you have good evidence of a *saving faith* in Christ, you must have such a *sensible impression* of the truth of the Gospel as makes you feel the importance of your eternal concerns, and your necessity of an interest in Christ, and puts your soul upon earnest and active desires after him, as your only hope and safety. You must heartily *approve the way of salvation* which the Gospel reveals, and heartily consent to the terms on which it is offered. You must *accept of Christ as a free gift*, bringing nothing with you of your own to recommend you to his acceptance. You must accept him as your only righteousness to justify you before God, and as your Prince as well as Savior, consenting as well to be governed as to be saved, to be sanctified as to be justified by him. And as you must receive him, so you must confidently trust in him alone, as a sure foundation of safety and hope, and as a continuing fountain of all supplies of grace to your soul, whatever difficulties and discouragements you may meet with. And you must have this standing evidence of the sincerity of your faith, that it *purifies your heart*, and brings you to an earnest endeavor after habitual holiness of heart and life; that it works by *love to God and man*, and keeps up in your soul at the same time *an abasing sense of your own vileness* and utter unworthiness. This is that precious faith to which alone the promises of the Gospel are made.

To conclude with a still shorter view. When a realizing

belief of the Gospel, and a despair of all help in yourself, brings you to repair to Christ as your only safety, and to venture your soul, guilty as it is, upon the merit of his obedience, the sufficiency of his grace and strength, and the faithfulness of his promises, and heartily to submit to his rule and government, you cannot fail of the sanctifying influences of his Spirit to qualify you for the eternal inheritance; for "the Amen, the faithful and true Witness," has given you his word for it, that if you thus "come to him, he will in no wise cast you out."

I might sum up this important point in a yet shorter view. If you so heartily approve of and delight in the gospel way of salvation by Christ alone, that you can cheerfully venture your soul and your eternal interests upon it, as the sure and only foundation of hope and safety, you have then true faith. And in this case, he that has bestowed such grace upon you, will carry on his own work in your soul, and will at last present you faultless before his throne, with exceeding joy.

CONFIDENCE IN GOD.

Although the vine its fruit deny,
 Although the olive yield no oil,
 The withering fig-tree droop and die,
 The field delude the tiller's toil:

Although the stall no herd afford,
 And perish all the bleating race;
 Yet will I triumph in the Lord,
 The God of my salvation praise.

Though comfortless my soul remain,
 And not a gleam of light appear;
 Though joys be sought, and sought in vain,
 And though despair itself be near:

Although assurance all be lost,
 And blooming hopes cut off I see;
 Yet will I in my Savior trust,
 And glory that he died for me.

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END.