

"FAITH ALONE"
Bloesch, *Essentials*, Vol. I: chapt. ix

(THE MEANING OF FAITH)

"Faith alone" always presupposes grace. See Eph. 2:8. Recall the difference between *dia pistin* (on account of faith) and *dia pisteos* (through faith).

Faith *is always* essential to salvation. Scripture upholds this consistently. E.g., Heb. 11: 6 & 4:2.

Note where this truth is undervalued today: E.g.,

1] "Barthianism" or orthodoxy: the collapse of the ontic into the noetic.

2] a sacramentalism that approaches magic.

3] a program of social transmutation.

4] a program of religio-political-social conservatism.

Bl speaks of faith as "a radical commitment of the whole man to the living Christ." p224. Note that this is the whole of my person surrendered to the *Person* (not truths) of JC. It entails knowledge, trust, obedience and love.

p224. Note the precise meanings and relationships of *notitia*, *assensus*, *fiducia*.

p224. Calvin's definition of faith is priceless: "a firm and certain knowledge of God's benevolence toward us, founded upon the truth of the freely given promise in Christ, both revealed to our minds and sealed upon our hearts through the Holy Spirit." (*Inst.* 3.2.11 Ford Battles transl.)

p225. Note the difference between consecration or commitment and *adoring* surrender, and the difference between faith as "lived experience of the heart" and furniture in the head (only).

p226. Faith as venture: an obvious feature of apostolic witness, but rarely heard in the church today.

p227. Faith as struggle. Military/conflict/fighting metaphors are common in NT, disliked in the ch.

(JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH)

'Tis gloriously true, but don't turn it into a formula or an incantation. It is rooted in the ministry of JC and before that in the OT.

p229. Note the reasons for the Reform'n era dispute as to whether or not faith is *formed* by love.

p232. Justification is a declaration, a pronouncement, a verdict only; at the same time it is never found apart from sanctification (since "Christ cannot be divided".) Imputed *vs.* imparted righteousness.

p233. Wesley's opposition to *solifidianism*:

1] cavalier attitude toward godliness

2] reduction of faith to doctrinal apprehension

3] a jettisoning of the rigours of discipleship

p234. Bloesch is correct: just'n, as God's declaration or pronouncement, is passive and complete; sanc'n is God's gift and our gift-wrought grit, and is therefore active and ongoing.

(THE CERTAINTY OF FAITH)

(see class readings on the Council of Trent)

Calvin: "faith consists more in assurance than in comprehension." Despite the "more", C. maintained that assurance is an aspect of faith: where there is no assurance (of faith) there is no faith. Doubt can and does assail believers, but such doubt is never determinative; it never "holds sway" with them but always attacks them "from without"; i.e., doubt molests believers but never overturns their faith.

p237. For Prot. Reformers the ground of assurance is never anything about believers themselves but rather JC who "comes clothed with his gospel" (i.e., promises) according to Calvin. We must look *away* from ourselves to Christ -- who is himself never *away*! If we can contemplate Christ without contemplating ourselves *in* him, then we aren't contemplating *him*.

In post-Ref. scholasticism the place of the living Christ gave way (in part) to a rational apologetic that articulated philosophically the "truth" of God's existence and nature ("attributes"), the incarnation and atonement, and faith -- and then conclude that *I* am a believer; i.e., assurance is the last line of a rational process.

In Pietism assurance was gained through introspection. (Calvin: fatal!)

Jonathan Edwards: Ass'ce is an effect of faith, not an aspect of faith.

Wesley: early and late.

p238. Kierkegaard: his "Truth is subjectivity" has nothing to do with subjectivism.

p239. Emil Brunner: *Truth as Encounter*. Note the inappropriateness of "state of grace" as opposed to a dynamic.

p240. Eternal Security. If we don't accept T.U.L.I.P., what then? JC himself is our security:

- (i) our security rests in his grip on us, not ours on him;
- (ii) his grip on us will always be stronger than ours on him;
- (iii) scrip. indicates, however, that we can count on his strong grip but can't presume upon it or trade on it;
- (iv) in other words, we can "make shipwreck" of our faith. (1 Tim. 1:19)

p242. Because our ass'ce is born of the Spirit of God, not of rational or evidential considerations, we can "work out our salvation" anxiety-free.

(MODERN MISCONCEPTIONS)

[a] intellectualism:

- it is preoccupied with apologetics;
- it attempts to authenticate God's rev. by demonstrating the inferiority of non-Xy;
- it attempts to ground faith in historical proof.

[b] doctrinal indifference:

- it has no understanding of Truth (=reality);
- it has no " " of how Truth is related to truths;
- it forfeits the specific nature of God'
- it renders impossible any calling on God, knowing God, delighting in God.

In all of this remember:

- (i) faith isn't a matter of und'g doctrine, but *some* und'g is essential;
- (ii) faith isn't assent, but the will must say "yes";
- (iii) faith is trust in the God whose nature we understand and whose way with us we've gladly embraced;
- (iv) such trust is never sub-rational, even as it's the Spirit, not our reason, that renders JC credible;
- (v) faith has to be renewed constantly. "Keep your heart with all vigilance." (Prov. 4:23)
- (vi) faith in Jesus Christ is also always love for him. (Eph. 6:24; John 21:15)

Justification is the “main hinge on which religion turns.” (Calvin, *Institutes* 3.11.1.)

Valentius Loescher, a 17th century Lutheran, insisted, *Iustificatio est articulus stantis et cadentis ecclesiae*. (*articulus*: article, point, crisis, division, hinge {thumb})

Most religions repudiate this *articulus* formally (e.g., Mormons, Jehovah’s Witnesses); most church folk repudiate it informally – i.e., operatively.

Those who would never repudiate it formally are often found repudiating it subtly and thereby fall into one or another form of self-justification insofar as

we are justified by our grasp of the doctrine of justification,
 by our ability to articulate the doctrine in private or public,
 by faith as the substance of our justification,
 by “grace” and “works” in that grace by provides an outer framework
 whose inner content is our achievement,
 by (in modernity with its psychological preoccupation and its emphasis on
 ego- strength, etc.) our awareness that “we need do nothing to be accepted.”

In other words, modernity tends to abstract justification from its
 rootage in Christ and turn it into an abstract truth, acknowledgement
 of which is deemed meritorious.

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