

The Nature of Faith

John R Gavazzoni

Specifically, I'd like to share a thought or two about the nature of faith as it pertains to salvation. In one form or another, I think "saving faith" is perceived by many as something you need to have, and need to exercise in order to "get saved." The most common view seems to be that, on one hand there is salvation, and on the other hand there is faith, that salvation is one spiritual "thing" and faith is another, when actually one is integral to the other.

We put our own spin on scripture this misperception, e.g. when the the writer of the Book of Hebrews speaks of the problem of the promises of God not being mixed with faith, that can be very misleading if one thinks of the promises of God as having mere potential and being functionally inoperative until someone's faith comes along and makes the promises work. Instead, it's the promises of God that make faith work.

St. Paul's statement that "the just shall live by faith"--- the affirmation which ignited Martin Luther's heart and fanned the flames of the Reformation--- undergoes an unconscious revision due to an underlying misperception of the nature faith, so that what they hear is not, "the just shall live by faith," but rather, "the just are those that got saved by faith".

This leads one away, in a wrong direction, from the realization that faith is an integral quality of life, that, when not actively present, leaves one unsaved, that is, un-whole, fragmented, broken, perishing, destroyed, lost, dying. Faith is a quality within salvation, not something added to it. Yeshua (Jesus) is salvation. His name means, Yahweh, our salvation, and when He comes, He comes with His faith, the faith of a completely whole life.

To be without faith does not mean that you lack a qualification for "getting saved," it means that you're lacking a quality of life's wholeness. When faith comes, and by faith I mean knowing and believing the love God has for us, everything inside us starts to come together, starts to bond into a unity of wholeness. Christ becomes the glue, the cohesiveness of living, as He, who is our life, lives in us.

Faith is the tip of the iceberg of a wholesomely functioning life. When faith appears you know life, real life, is present, and if you look carefully and discerningly at faith, you'll see it aglow, from the inside out, with love. Please understand; faith is a quality of the life of Christ, most essentially it (faith), energized by love, is the way He relates to His Father.

When the Christ resident in every man and woman, reveals Himself to them as their Life, faith raises its head in that life, and our Heavenly Father looks and says, "I reckon that to be right(eous). Salvation is essentially a matter of being made whole, not a matter of "going to heaven." Wholeness is the "heaven" we all need. Wholeness for the whole world was the goal of Christ's passion and He "shall see the travail of His soul and be satisfied," seeing all things living in a harmonious, mutually beneficial whole, all gathered together and summed up in Him.

Faith is the first indicator that love is at work in a life. When God sees faith, He reckons that person right(eous) for He's seeing the evidence of His love at work in them. "Faith which worketh by love", that is, faith energized by love. More than being an indicator, it consists of the very fibre of wholeness and is traceable back to the unity within God. God is whole, He is Perfect Relational Being. The family which God is, is held together in perfect wholeness by perfect love expressed in mutual trust.

Conventional theology has made of salvation a legal deal between God and man i.e., God says, "Here's how it works, sinner, you give me faith and I'll give you salvation." Real salvation is self-contained, the batteries are included, God even pushes the power button and we come alive, we, the just, living by faith. We are then enjoying that essential quality of the life of Christ, which is complete dependence on the Father, so that, when we, with Christ, living by His life, are drawing our all from the Father, we function out of His wholeness.