

“Precious Faith”

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Texts: 2 Peter 1:1-2; Ruth 1:16-18; Romans 4

This morning I intend to pin point what is meant by **precious faith**. To do that we will look first at 2 Peter 1:1; then we will explore James 1:1-12 and especially vv. 5 & 6; after that we will dive into Romans 4 where Psalm 32:1 & 2 are central (32:1 **How blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, Whose sin is covered! 2 How blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity, And in whose spirit there is no deceit!**); and we will connect that to Ruth 1:13: **Your God will be my God**. When we move from Ruth 1 and from the reference to Psalm 32, we will, of necessity have to bridge the gap between the promises of God and the types foreshadowed in the Old Testament to their fulfillment in the Lord Jesus Christ! Because **the like precious faith** of 2 Peter 1:1 is the **gospel of Jesus Christ**, we now state the apostolic faith here:

God was in Jesus Christ reconciling the world and lost sinners to himself— overcoming the separation brought about between them by the presence, power and reality of sin. Not counting their responses against misdirected sinners, God offered forgiveness of sins through faith in the blood sacrifice of Jesus. To forgiveness of sins was added resurrection life in the glorified bodies (thoroughly sanctified bodies) of the saints by the power of the resurrection and the workings of the Holy Spirit.

Note: the work and life of Jesus remains central to this entirely new covenant that supplanted both the promises and the law which came before in salvation history! The types and foreshadowings of the Old Testament were anticipatory of this historical intervention. Jesus’ righteousness became ours and so we may, and shall stand in the presence of God forever. **Amen**.

The world is full of many other gospels, which is why we must hold tightly to the one true, precious faith which, if placed in this message, saves those all who believe. **His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness**

Let’s refresh our hearing of Peter’s salutation:

[a] Simon Peter, a bond-servant and apostle of Jesus Christ,

To those who have received a faith of the same [b] kind as ours, [c] by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ: 2 Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; 3 seeing that, His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness through the true knowledge of Him who called us [d] by His own glory and [e] excellence¹.

¹ **Footnotes**

- a. 2 Peter 1:1 Two early mss read *Simeon*
- b. 2 Peter 1:1 Or *value*
- c. 2 Peter 1:1 Or *in*
- d. 2 Peter 1:3 Or *to*
- e. 2 Peter 1:3 Or *virtue*

In James, faith is mentioned in v. 6, **But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering—that is, not doubting.** The faith in mind here is the apostolic faith just defined.

Romans 4 is an enormously important exposition of faith—of the saving power of Abraham’s belief in God, in the promises of God. 430 years prior to the giving of the law and before the sign of circumcision had been introduced, Abraham believed (had faith) and it was **reckoned to him as righteousness**. The same kind of righteousness that we come into through faith in the finished work of Christ! Psalm 32:1-2 affirm that such an outcome, personal salvation, **blessedness**, did occur in the age of promise.

Our second consideration this morning is the benefits of our precious faith. Why is **the faith** precious? Benefits.

Because it saves.

Because of its truth, transforming power and benefits!

Because faith justifies. Faith helps me know that I stand guiltless before God . . . my conscience clear and clean, unaware of any outstanding offense before God!

God has forgiven me. Fear of death, dread of the grave are abolished . . . by faith.

Should anyone accuse me, I can point to Jesus . . . faith vindicates me!

Because faith grants me a peace of mind that money, influence, knowledge and experience—all that the world could ever afford me—can never grant me ***I have by virtue of the cross and the gospel of Christ!*** There are six chief benefits of our precious faith.

Because faith obtains sanctification for me which means that through it I am made guiltless from the moment of belief, I have the promise of the Holy Spirit (also by faith) and that same Holy Spirit purifies me, makes me holy. Every spot and blemish is, along with all filth and pollution, eradicated from me over time. Yes, I receive a new nature there and then, but that new nature grows within me until it takes my interior over, my inner being, and pushes everything from before out (my old self) and everything unclean out the door. That glorious transformation proceeds until I arrive at the point of entire glorification—made utterly fit to dwell with Him forever. ***It does not now appear to us what we shall ultimately be when we are perfected. . . we shall be like him.***

It is **the faith, faith of the same kind (same value, same saving virtue) as ours—the apostolic faith** that grants all of this to me. And what faith do I mean? I mean the faith of the apostles—declared to them and passed down faithfully to those who came after, to me and you. In this apostolic faith, Jesus is central. This is basic, elemental. Jesus is **central** to the point where there is no gospel apart from Him! It is exclusive, it is the only gospel—just as Jesus is **the only name under heaven** by which a soul can be saved.

Our third consideration. We affirm that God was in Jesus reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses, of offenses against them but offering through the faith forgiveness of sin and life eternal. It is critical that people be brought back to God and faith is the means by which that return transpires. It is brought about by the calling of God—an operation of grace! It is not our call . . .

it is not our decision. We do not choose God unless God moves us to choose. I know, it’s humbling to be told that truth but salvation is not by will of man but of God: **John 1:12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, 13 who**

were [a]born, not of [b]blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

We are different because: 1. The Holy Spirit has done something to us; 2. He apprehended us; 3. he dealt with us; 4. He has shown an interest in us; he knows us; 6. He is concerned about us and 7. He has laid his hand upon us. Saving faith has declared all of that to me—I am thus a child of God, I am a son of God, I am regenerated, I am adopted into His family! With God it is all very personal. If I believe what the Spirit has done, and if I endorse the benefits of this **precious faith**, I am assured that I am saved!

Now, let's consider the case of Ruth. Here is her "precious faith" declared:

16 But Ruth said, "Do not urge me to leave you or turn back from following you; for where you go, I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God, my God. 17 Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. Thus may the Lord do to me, and worse, if anything but death parts you and me." 18 When she saw that she was determined to go with her, she [a]said no more to her.

Okay. But where's Jesus in this? We come to our fourth consideration: **Your God will be my God** isn't that same as the apostolic faith! And that would be correct, Jesus had not yet been sent on his apostolic mission. The promised seed of the Messiah would be Ruth's to carry—but she would not know Jesus as we know Jesus. She knew the Promise, but not the Promised One. She was "saved." God did something to her, he called her out of Moab, he apprehended her, he dealt with her (and Naomi and Boaz), he showed an interest in her, he knew her and was concerned for her and, laying his hand on her, he led her out of Moab and into Judea. There is a sense in which Boaz, in foreshadowing Christ as our Kinsman—Redeemer suffers from the same historical contrast. As good as he was, he was not Jesus—not even close—and yet he was a type of redeemer. His manly pursuit of Ruth, his protection, provision, his guidance (**he will tell you what to do**) have their parallels in Christ's pursuit of the his bride, the church but they are not of the same order. The redemption of Boaz was not Messianic, and not apostolic as revealed in this ministry of Jesus. Boaz, if indeed he was a judge of Israel, had a lot in common with other spiritual leaders but all of them were pointing in the anticipatory direction of fuller disclosure and greater revelation . . . and of greater perfection.

This **precious faith** of ours, it is the foundation. The faith, we find it all in Christ. Without Him we are lost and have nothing but that is not our circumstance—in Him we are complete, we have everything we need, and everything we truly want. He **of God is made wisdom, redemption, righteousness and sanctification—he is our all in all. Everything.**

O my soul consider what he has done, what he is doing, and what he has yet to do and be glad. If you stand in the faith, you stand free before God, purified, wanting nothing—and that, too, is very precious.

Amen