



REFLECTIONS

Grace OPC

Trusting in the Lord

By Pastor Brian De Jong

There are certain words that float around the Christian world like oxygen in the atmosphere. One of these terms is “faith.” In modern usage, Christians are sometimes called “people of faith.” This concept of faith is crucially important for our whole concept of Christianity, and deserves closer examination.

First of all, we notice that in the Scriptures there are different types of faith described. In some places we find a historical faith. This is purely intellectual. It involves a recognition of the truth, but without any moral or spiritual aspects. This is a cold and sterile version of faith.

There are also instances of miraculous faith – people see an amazing miracle, and are persuaded that the miracle worker has power. Simon exhibited this kind of faith in Acts 8:13. Miracle faith is typically short-lived.

Then there is also temporary faith, such as Jesus describes in the parable of the four soils. Some seed sprang up quickly, but soon withered away because it had no root.

The best sort of faith is true and saving faith, which involves receiving and resting upon Jesus Christ as he is offered in the gospel. This is the sort of faith that saves a man from eternal damnation – the faith by which justification comes about.

Leaving those other “counterfeit” faiths aside, let’s look more closely at true and saving faith. The Westminster Larger Catechism describe saving faith in Q&A 72: **What is justifying faith?**

A. Justifying faith is a saving grace, wrought in the heart of a sinner by the

Spirit and Word of God, whereby he, being convinced of his sin and misery, and of the disability in himself and all other creatures to recover him out of his lost condition, not only assenteth to the truth of the promise of the gospel, but receiveth and resteth upon Christ and his righteousness, therein held forth, for pardon of sin, and for the accepting and accounting of his person righteous in the sight of God for salvation.



Such a faith has several elements. There is an intellectual element (*notitia*) that involves knowledge of the truth. There is an emotional element (*assensus*) which includes a deep conviction of the truthfulness of the gospel, and an absorbing interest in this good news. Then finally there is a volitional element (*fiducia*) sometimes called trust.

Louis Berkhof writes that “Faith is not merely a matter of the intellect, nor of the intellect and the emotions combined; it is also a matter of the will, determining the direction of the soul, an act of the soul going out towards its object and appropriating this.”

He goes on to add, “This third element consists in a personal trust in Christ as Savior and Lord, including a surrender of the soul as guilty and defiled to Christ, and a reception and appropriation of Christ as the source of pardon and of spiritual life.”

Without trust, faith is a mere

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Mnemonics...

- 4/1 40 Days for Life Campaign
- 4/10 Fellowship Lunch
- 4/12 Session Meeting
- 4/30 Men and Boy’s Breakfast



www.merf.org

MERF News

Middle East Reformed Fellowship—“Declaring the Whole Counsel of God”

March 2022



Hope Amid Challenges in Ethiopia



Wonji Church members



Ethiopia lies across the Red Sea from Yemen. One of the most populous African nations, it is landlocked on the semi-arid Horn of Africa by Eritrea, Djibouti and Somalia. In the west, the Blue Nile flows from its mountain peaks to Sudan. South Sudan and Kenya border the south.

After his election in 2018, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, a confessing Christian of the largely Muslim Oromo tribe, successfully brought peace to extended internal tribal conflicts and with neighboring Eritrea. Yet, over the past year these resurfaced when forces of the small northern Tigray tribe waged a civil war. (It previously held power

in Ethiopia for over 30 years.) Armed conflict has displaced millions and destroyed crops and herds, resulting in hunger and instability. Also, the south is suffering food shortages from severe drought.

The good news is that, in the west, after 10 years of construction, last month the first electrical turbines of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam were switched on. When the dam reaches full capacity, 60% of Ethiopia's population will have access to electrical power.

In the past year, Ethiopian churches in Muslim majority areas have suffered from a rise in persecution. More than a dozen church meet-

ing places were burnt down and members scattered to other villages. In addition, the economic collapse from COVID measures rendered many other churches unable to support their pastors and evangelists.

3 Language Teams

Ethiopian's MERF ministry teams prayerfully meet these challenges with the gospel message of hope. They carry out MERF's fourfold ministry encouraging local churches in *evangelism, church extension, biblical training and diaconal aid*. MERF has three gospel radio ministries and literature projects in three main Ethiopian Languages:

Oromo, Amharic and Somali. Each also has its own online ministry and website. Recent literature production projects, in each of these languages include: *Reading the Bible* by Geoffrey Thomas, *Stand Firm (A Young Christian's guide to the Amour of God)* by Peter Jeffery, *Healthy Christian Growth* by Sinclair Ferguson and *Living the Christian Life* by Albert Martin.

New Churches

Praise God for many new requests for local language Bibles in Muslim dominated regions. The teams are

Continued on next page...



New book distribution

glad to be able to put God's Word in the hands of the spiritually hungry. They also organize biblical training programs and distribute Christian literature to newly-planted churches in those areas.

When church fellowships in these areas are forced to flee their homes and are scattered to other communities due to persecution, support is provided to meet their physical and spiritual needs. Diaconal aid is always accompanied by the ministry of the Word. Although God's people suffer greatly in such traumatic circumstances, the Lord preserves His own and new churches are being planted in the new locations. Please keep this vital witness in your prayers.

MERF also partners with different local fellowships to support local workers. They include over 50 missionary evangelists, 22 of whom are working in Muslim dominated areas. The others serve in mixed areas.

Biblical Training

Despite COVID limitations, biblical training events and

efforts to follow-up the trainees continued. There is a great longing for learning God's Word. Pastors in the greater area of Addis Ababa, the capital city, are enrolled in discipleship



Healthy Christian Growth by Sinclair Ferguson Amharic, Somali, and Oromo languages

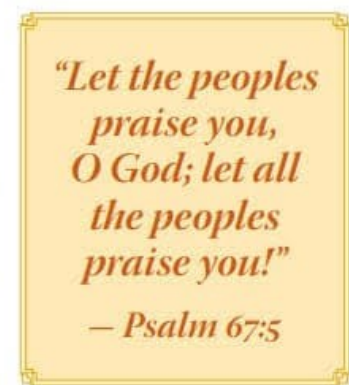
training programs. Also church fellowships in far-flung places often ask for biblical training visits.

Trips to other regions build up and encourage churches and give opportunity to distribute literature. For youth training courses, translations of *Reading the Bible* by Geoffrey Thomas, *Walking Worthy (Guidelines for the Christian Life)* by Peter Jeffery and the *Westminster Shorter Catechism* are taught.

Diaconal Aid

When COVID lockdowns and other measures were put in place, businesses closed and many church members lost employment, so pastors and evangelists struggled to provide for their families' needs.

Thanks to the generosity of MERF supporters, diaconal aid of food and school supplies have enabled them to weather these difficult days and continue to share the gospel message. MERF support has also been provided



nity to share the gospel with others who speak their language.

Ethiopia Teams Praise & Prayer

- We thank God for all His protection in this time of difficulty in Ethiopia.
- We thank God for His provision through MERF to support persecuted believers as well as pastors and evangelists affected by COVID measures. Please pray for their witness.
- We ask prayer for peace and stability, the end of tribal conflicts and widespread hunger, so that churches can be grounded in God's Word and share the wonderful gospel with the many who need to receive it.

to help an Eritrean refugee congregation. Fleeing armed conflict in the north, they were enabled to get reestablished in the capital, where they have opportu-



Walate Youth Training

DO not be all sugar, or the world will suck you down; but do not be all vinegar or the world will spit you out. There is a medium in all things, only blockheads go to extremes. We need not be all rock or all sand, all iron or all wax. We should neither fawn upon everybody like silly lapdogs, nor fly at all persons like surly mastiffs. Blacks and whites go together to make up a world. Hence on the point of temper, we have all sorts of people to deal with. Some are as easy as an old shoe, but they are hardly ever worth more than the other one of the pair; others take fire as fast as tinder at the smallest offense and are as dangerous as gunpowder. To have a fellow going about the farm as cross with everybody as a bear with a sore head, with a temper as sour as spoiled milk and as sharp as a razor, looking as surly as a butcher's dog, is a great nuisance; yet there may be some good points about the man, so that he may be a man for all that. But poor soft Tommy, as green as grass, and as ready to bend as a willow, is nobody's money and everybody's scorn. A man must have a backbone, or how is he to hold his head up? But that backbone must bend, or he will knock his brow against the beam.

There is a time to do as others wish, and a time to refuse. If we make ourselves asses, then everybody will ride us, but if we would be respected, we must be our own masters and not let others saddle us as they think fit. If we try to please everybody, we shall be like a toad under a harrow and never have peace; and if we play lackey to all our neighbors, whether good or bad, we shall be thanked by no one, for we shall soon do as much harm as good. He that makes himself a sheep will find that the wolves are not all dead. He who lies on the ground must expect to be trodden on. He who makes himself a mouse the eats will eat. If you let your neighbors put the calf on your shoulder, they will, they will soon clap on the cow. We are to please our neighbor for his good to edification, but this is quite another matter. There are old foxes about whose mouths are always watering for young geese, and if they can coax them to do just what they wish, they soon make their market out of them. What a Jolly good fellow you will be called if you will make yourself a hack for your friends, and what a mess will they soon bring you into!

Out of that mess you will have to get all alone, for your friends will be sure to say to you, Good-bye, basket, I've carried all my apples or they will give you their good wishes and nothing more, and you will find out that fair words won't feed a cat, nor butter your bread, nor fill your pocket. Those who make so very much of you either mean to cheat you, or else are in need of you: when they have sucked the orange they will throw the peel away. Be wise, then, and look before you leap, lest a friend's advice should do you more mischief than an enemy's slander. "The simple believeth every word; but the prudent man looketh well to his going." Go with your neighbor as far as good conscience will go with you, but part company where the shoe of conscience begins to pinch your foot. Begin with your friend as you mean to go on, and let him know very early that you are not a man made of putty, but one who has a judgment of his own and means to use it. Pull up the moment you find you are out of the road, and take the nearest way back at once. The way to avoid great faults is to beware of small ones. Therefore, pull up in time if you would not be dragged into the ditch by your friend. Better offend your acquaintance than lose your character and hazard your soul. Don't be ashamed to walk down Turnagain Lane. Never mind being called a turncoat when you turn from bad courses: better to turn in time than to burn in eternity. Do not be persuaded to ruin yourself—it is buying gold too dear to throw oneself away to please our company. Put your foot down where you mean to stand, and let no man move you from the right. Learn to say, "No," and it will be of more use to you than to be able to read Latin.

A friend to everybody is often a friend to nobody; or else in his simplicity, he robs his family to help strangers and becomes brother to a beggar. There is wisdom in generosity as in everything else, and some had need go to school to learn it. A kind-hearted soul may be very cruel to his own children, while he takes the bread out of their mouths to give to those who call him a generous fellow but laugh at his folly. Very often he that lends his money loses both his gold and his friends, and he who is surety is never sure. Take John Ploughman's advice, and never be security for more than you are quite willing to lose. Remember the word of God says, "He that is surety for a stranger shall smart for it: and he that hateth suretyship is sure."

When we are injured, we are bound as Christians to bear it without malice; but we are not to pretend that we do not feel it, for this will but encourage our enemies to kick us again. He who is cheated twice by the same man is half as bad as the rogue; and it is very much so in other injuries. Unless we claim our rights, we are ourselves to blame if we do not get them. Paul was willing to bear stripes for his Master's sake, but he did not forget to tell the magistrates that he was a Roman; and when those gentlemen wished to put him out of prison privately, he said, "Nay, verily, let them come themselves and fetch us out".

A Christian is the gentlest of men, but then he is a man. A good many people don't need to be told this, for they are up in a moment if they think anybody is likely to ill treat them. Long before they know whether it is a thief in the farmyard or the old mare got loose, they are up with the window and firing off the old blunderbuss. Dangerous neighbors these; a man might as well make a seat out of a bull's forehead, as expect to find comfort in their neighborhood.

Make no friendship with an angry man, and with a furious man thou shalt not go. "He that is slow to wrath is of great understanding; but he that is hasty of spirit exalteth folly." Seest thou a man that is hasty in his words? There is more hope of a fool than of him."

In my day I have seen a few downright obstinate men, whom neither sense nor reason could alter. There's a queer chap in our village who keeps a bulldog, and he tells me that when the creature once gives a bite at anything, he never lets go again, and if yon want to get it out of his mouth, you must cut his head off. That's the sort of man that has fretted me many a time and almost made me mad. You might sooner argue a pitchfork into a threshing machine, or persuade a brickbat to turn into marble, than to get the fellow to hear common sense. Getting spots out of leopards is nothing at all compared with trying to lead a downright obstinate man. Right or wrong, you might as easily make a hill walk to London as turn him when his mind is made up. When a man is right, this sticking to his text is a grand thing (our minister says, "it is the stuff that martyrs are made of"), but when an ignorant, wrong-headed fellow gets this hard grit into him, he makes martyrs of those who have to put up with him. old Master Pighead swore he would drive a nail into an oak board with his fist and so lamed his hand for life; he could not sell his corn at his own price, and so he let the rats eat up the ricks. You cannot ride by his fields without noticing his obstinacy, for he vows, "He won't have none of these ever newfangled notions," and so he grows the worst crops in the parish. Worst of all, his daughter went among the Methodists, and in a towering rage, he turned her out of doors. Though I believe he is very sorry for it, he will not yield an inch, but stands to it that he will never speak to her so long as he lives. Meanwhile, the dear girl is dying through his unkindness. Rash vows are much better broken than kept. He who never changes, never mends; he who never yields, never conquers.

With children, you must mix gentleness with firmness; they must not always have their own way, but they must not always be thwarted. Give to a pig when it grunts, and to a child when it cries, and you will have a fine pig and a spoiled child. A man who is learning to play on a trumpet and a petted child are two very disagreeable companions even as next-door neighbors; but unless we look well to it, our children will be a nuisance to others and a torment to ourselves. "The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame." If we never have headaches through rebuking our little children, we shall have plenty of heartaches when they grow up. Strict truthfulness must rule all our dealings with the young; our yea must be yea, and our nay be nay," and that always. Never promise a child and then fail to perform whether you promise him a bun or a beating. Be obeyed at all costs—disobedient children are unhappy children; for their own sakes, make them mind you. If you yield up your authority once, you will hardly ever get it again, for he who says A must say B. and so on. We must not provoke our children to anger, lest they be discouraged; but we must rule our household in the fear of the Lord, and in so doing we may expect a blessing.

Since John Ploughman has taken to writing, he has had a fine chance of showing his firmness and his gentleness too, for he has received bushels of advice for which he begs to present his compliments, as the squire's lady says. He does not mind either returning the advice or some of his own instead, by way of showing his gratitude; for he is sure it is very kind of so many people to tell him so many different ways in which he might make an idiot of himself. He means to glean as many good hints as he can from the acres of his friends' stubble; and while sticking to his own style, because it suits his hand, he will touch himself up a bit if he can. Perhaps if the minister will lend him Cowper or Milton, he may even stick a sprig of poetry into his nosegay, and come out as fine as the flowers in May. But he cannot promise, for the harvest is just on and reaping leaves no time for rhyming. The worst of it is, the kind friends who are setting John to rights contradict one another: one says it is very poor stuff and all in an assumed name, for the style is not rough enough for a plowman; another says the matter is very well, but the expressions are so coarse that he is amazed the editor put it in the magazine. John means to pay his advisers all the attention which they deserve, and as some of the mice have been bold enough to make a nest in the cats ear, he means to be after them and write a paper upon giving advice gratis, in which they will be likely to get a flea in their ear in return for their instructions.



You are hereby invited to attend this year's Spring Women's Conference at New Hope Presbyterian Church.

This year's conference "Never Alone" will feature speaker and author Lydia Brownback and will be held on April 29th - 30th. Doors will open at 5:30 PM for registration and all attendees are welcome to come and mingle before the program starts.

As a former attendee of previous Women's Conferences we have extended a special invitation to you offering our early bird registration price that will last until April 1st. Please visit the women's ministry page of nhopc.org for more details. Both online and paper registration is available and all questions can be directed to the church office.

“All our actions, as well as our thoughts and words, should praise Him who always blesses us.”

- Charles Spurgeon



APRIL BIRTHDAYS

Jay Buyze	1st	Sue Gross	20th
Warren Gillmer	4th	Sara TenPas	21st
Pastor Brian De Jong	5 th	Toni Barthels	22nd
Nancy Harmelink	7th	De Lou De Jong	22nd
Randy Jensema	10 th	Jeff Froh	22nd
Mary Gillmer	12th	Chris Kaeiser	24th
Audrey Voskuil	17th	Christian De Jong	28 th
Gail Moody	18th	Rodney Nyhof	28 th



April Anniversaries

Jason & Emily Will
April 8th 6 Years

Joe & Heidi Mamazza
April 20th 10 Years

Josh & Stephanie Arndt
April 13th 9 Years



April 2022

Showing forth the excellencies of Jesus Christ



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1 40 Days for Life Campaign	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10 Fellowship Lunch	11	12 Session Meeting	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24 Lord's Supper	25	26	27	28	29	30 Men and Boy's Breakfast

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From Heero Hacquebord

A quick overview of Ukraine's history reveals an often neglected but central aspect of the current war

In the narrative of the Russian propaganda machine Ukraine is a passive region (not a country, not a nation), caught between the grand powers of Russia and the West. According to this version of history Ukraine has always been a part of the Russian world, and therefore the EU and especially the U.S. and NATO have no business pulling Ukraine into its sphere. As with all Russian propaganda, this couldn't be farther from the truth.

The country called "Russia" today has its spiritual and political origins in Kyiv, which was the capital of Kievan Rus' long before Moscow had come into existence. Yet through the persistent efforts of the Muscovite ruler Ivan the Terrible and his later successor Peter the Great, among others, the Grand Duchy of Moscow redefined itself as "Rus-sia", the supposedly sole political and cultural heir of Rus' and the spiritual "Third Rome" of the world. Every nation needs a unifying narrative, and this is the one around which modern "Russia" has been built. So, contra the facts of history, Russia sees itself today as the "big, older brother" among the three "Russian brothers" of Ukraine, Belarus, and Russia. Most Ukrainians strongly reject this concocted narrative, remarking with wry irony in the light of the current war that "It's a good thing we have only two "brothers"...."

The truth is that Ukraine has had a complex history associated with many more countries than just that which today is called "Russia." [Check the update in the plastic sleeve by the missions bulletin board for the rest of the story!]

Meanwhile here are prayer requests from Heero to "sink your prayer teeth" into:

- We thank the Lord for the faithful pastors of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ukraine who are standing with their flocks and still holding services — even if only online. Pray for their continued protection.
- We thank the Lord that the Belarusian army has not joined in the invasion of Ukraine.
- We thank God for the Ukrainian army's continued ability to resist the invaders who want to destroy this free, democratic country.
- Pray for our family, our team and our church to be wise in outreach with word and deed!
- For men associated with our church who are now serving in the Ukrainian army -- Serhiy, Volodymyr, Mykola, Taras. Pray for their safety and witness to God's truth, love and protection.
- The families of probably thousands of civilians who have died in cities being bombed by Putin's forces.
- The deep repentance of Vladimir Putin or -- if not -- his removal from office. Yet we trust God to accomplish His ends in His way!

For God to open the eyes of the Russian nation to realize what is truly happening in Ukraine and to them!

The continued safety of Ukraine's freely elected President Zelensky and other key leaders and their ability to stay in touch with the military and the nation.

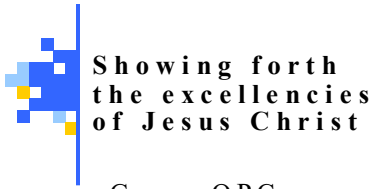
More military and humanitarian help for Ukraine, so that this country can survive the invasion by an oppressive country that severely limits people's freedom to live out their faith.

The emotional, spiritual and physical health of our family (including Juliette in NYC).

Pray for the war to end, but also that God would use it to build His church in Ukraine, Russia and Belarus! What does peace mean if people still do not have eternal hope?

Thank you for standing with us as we serve the Great King, Jesus Christ, in L'viv!

Heero, Anya, Christian... and Juliette!



Showing forth
the excellencies
of Jesus Christ

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Spurgeon Corner

“I will fear no evil: for thou art with me.”

Psalm 23:4

Behold, how independent of outward circumstances the Holy Ghost can make the Christian! What a bright light may shine within us when it is all dark without! How firm, how happy, how calm, how peaceful we may be, when the world shakes to and fro, and the pillars of the earth are removed! Even death itself, with all its terrible influences, has no power to suspend the music of a Christian's heart, but rather makes that music become more sweet, more clear, more heavenly, till the last kind act which death can do is to let the earthly strain melt into the heavenly chorus, the temporal joy into the eternal bliss! Let us have confidence, then, in the blessed Spirit's power to comfort us. Dear reader, are you looking forward to poverty? Fear not; the divine Spirit can give you, in your want, a greater plenty than the rich have in their abundance. You know not what joys may be stored up for you in the cottage around which grace will plant the roses of content. Are you conscious of a growing failure of your bodily powers? Do you expect to suffer long nights of languishing and days of pain? O be not sad! That bed may become a throne to you. You little know how every pang that shoots through your body may be a refining fire to consume your dross—a beam of glory to light up the secret parts of your soul. Are the eyes growing dim? Jesus will be your light. Do the ears fail you? Jesus' name will be your soul's best music, and his person your dear delight. Socrates used to say, “Philosophers can be happy without music;” and Christians can be happier than philosophers when all outward causes of rejoicing are withdrawn. In thee, my God, my heart shall triumph, come what may of ills without! By thy power, O blessed Spirit, my heart shall be exceeding glad, though all things should fail me here below.

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CHECK OUT THE WEBSITE:

GRACEOPCSHEBOYGAN.COM



Evening, April 8th, C. H. Spurgeon

appreciation of certain truths. That recognition of truth may be combined with emotional conviction, but it remains at a distance. A faith that is mere knowledge and emotion, without trust, is not true and saving faith. It is incomplete at best, and a clever counterfeit at worst.

So let me ask you this: are you **trusting** in the Lord? Have you gone beyond knowledge and emotion, to actually “embrace Jesus Christ as he is offered in the gospel?” Have you received and rested upon Him as your only hope for eternal life? Have you surrendered yourself wholly and completely to Him, do you bow your knee before Him and confess “Jesus is Lord”?

Many people know information about Jesus –

that is not uncommon in our circles. And of those who know him, a goodly percentage will feel emotionally convinced that Jesus is who and what He claimed to be. This is all well and good, but it is not enough. You must go the next step to put your trust in Him. Surrender yourself to His care, and yield yourself to His authority. Have you done so? If not, now is the perfect time to draw near to Him in faith and to put your trust in Him. Be assured that He will not cast out any who come to Him in this way.

Proverbs 3:5 Trust in the Lord with all your heart And do not lean on your own understanding. 6 In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He will make your paths straight.