

The Life of Faith

Lesson 15: Comforts Belonging to a Strong Faith, Part 2

- The strong believer rests upon Christ for 3 areas of spiritual concern: 1) all things relative to his estate of grace, 2) all things relative to his comfortable walk in that estate, and 3) all things relative to his happy finish of the Christian course.
- I. All things relative to our estate of grace
 - A. A strong faith begins here: with the confidence and assurance that Christ has effectively reconciled us to God and brought us into the present enjoyment of the fellowship with and sonship to God which He purchased for us by His life, death, resurrection, and unceasing intercession, Rom 4.25; 1Cor 1.30; Gal 4.3-7; Eph 1.5-7; Col 1.13-14, 19-22; Heb 7.25.
 - 1. A strong faith draws great comfort from knowing that Christ has effectively and independently managed: our natural separation from God, our natural estate under divine wrath, our enmity toward God and God's toward us, the penalty due our sins, and our need for an acceptable personal, perfect, and perpetual righteousness.
 - 2. Practically speaking...a strong faith rests so securely in Christ's work here that we don't try to make peace with God, but learn to live and walk in it. We don't try to earn God's favor and love, but learn to live in light of it, grateful for it, and to make a hearty return of love to it. We don't try to make up for our sins as if we owed penance to God, but to sincerely repent of them and mortify them. We don't strive to obey God in order to earn heaven, but in order to show how much we love that Law which reflects His loveliness and how grateful we are for the gift of eternity with Him. We don't try to make up and provide our own self-righteousness, but to rest our hope and faith on the gift of Christ's righteousness. We don't try to keep ourselves saved, but to live as a saved, reconciled, adopted, beloved people.
 - 3. In short, a strong faith draws great comfort from the confidence and assurance that Christ has effectively and irreversibly put us into the place of impenetrable safety with God.
- II. All things relative to our comfortable walk in that estate
 - A. Being confident that we're in a safe state, a strong faith now looks up to the Lord to enable us to walk comfortably within it. A strong faith knows that all things are well ordered in the covenant of grace for every step we need to take, that all things are treasured up in the fullness of Christ and by faith received from Christ, Col 2.6-10; Lk 11.9-13; Jn 14.14, 16; Jn 14.13; 15.7; 16.23-24
 - B. Of all the enemies opposing a comfortable walk with God, the worst and greatest is *our own indwelling sin*, which, like the troubled sea, is never at rest, and, like a best friend turned traitor, does us the greatest hurt. It distracts us during prayer; it soils all our good works; and it often deceives us into sin. Over this enemy there is no victory at all but by faith. For a strong faith not only looks to Christ's victory on the cross but to Christ's strength for that victory to be brought more and more to bear on our daily lives, Gal 5.16-17, 24-25; Rom 8.37-39. A strong faith finds comfort and peace in the grace to continue to battle sin as much as in the grace which overcomes it. Finding Christ at work in us against sin is a blessed earnest

that we will one day be completely free of sin. By faith, we know that His victorious grace will never leave us or cease to fight in us until He's put us in full possession of His victory over our sin, Rom 7.21-25

- c. Moreover, a strong faith not only looks to Christ to bring His death to sin to bear on our old man, but His resurrection to life to bear on our new man, Rom 6.5-11; Gal 2.20. A strong faith learns to live by faith (Rom 1.17) as a member of Christ's Body, being led by Him; as a branch on Christ the Vine, drawing life from Him; as a stone in His Living Temple, being built upon Him as the Foundation of our faith and indwelt by His presence as the temple of the living God; as His Bride, being united to Him, cared for by Him, and a beneficiary of all that is His; and as His people, having in Him and receiving from Him, eternal life.
- D. This, then, is the happy and comfortable condition of all who have a strong faith in Jesus Christ as He's presented in the gospel. By His death we are dead to sin. By His life we are alive to God. We live because He lives for us and in us. And as our faith in these facts increases, so does our fellowship with Christ and our share in the efficacy of who He is to us and of all He's done for us.
1. And as these realities increase, so the strength of the old man decreases, and the more that decreases, the less power our other enemies have over us. For what is it that Satan and the world dally with but the old man of sin, with all its lusts, still within us?
 2. But where faith grows strong, the old man grows weak, and this can only happen as we plant and cultivate all our confidence in the testimony of God's Word to the person and work of the Saviour in whom we believe, the Lord Jesus Christ.
 3. And having done that, He enables us to grow up into Him, into the fullness of His mature stature (Eph 4.13-15; 31-24), carrying us on from strength to strength, and grace to grace, until sin and death are at last swallowed up in victory.
- E. And until His victory over our sin comes upon us in full force on the day of His return, He's appointed the means through which we're to continually receive grace from Him to deaden the old man and grow the new. And we receive grace from these means, not because we use them, but because we use them *in faith*, expecting His presence in them and His blessing upon them. In this way these "legal duties" become Christian privileges and means of grace.
- F. What, then are these appointed means of receiving Christ and His grace for a comfortable walk with God?
1. *Public worship*, with an eye to the promise of His presence and blessing.
 2. *Prayer*, with an utter dependence upon His provision and a sincere desire for His will.
 3. *Hearing the Word*, looking to be instructed, corrected, and made wise unto salvation.
 4. *Observing the Sabbath*, expressing our belief that we have entered into His rest and victory over sin, death, Satan, and hell.
 5. *The Lord's Supper*, looking to commune with our risen Lord and partake of the pardon He gives, the righteousness He provides, and the reconciliation He has secured.
- G. We give ourselves to these appointed means because they are the living means by which our communion with Christ is enjoyed and increased, for what is

communion with Christ through the means of grace but heaven begun.

- H. And knowing that nothing disturbs that communion but sin, we strive to walk in the way of all our Lord's Commandments, with all our heart, all the time. We don't look for life by the Law. Instead, having life in God already by grace through faith, we look to nurture that living communion with God by walking in the light as He is in the light. Thus, rather than finding His Commandments to be burdensome or grievous, our heart delights in them because we delight in God Himself.
- I. What a blessed life this is! There's nothing like it, for the life of faith is glory begun. The privileges and happiness of it are greater than can be described. No wonder the charge of Scripture is simply, "Come and see," "taste and see that the Lord is good," "take My yoke upon you and you will know my rest."
- III. All things relative to our happy finish of the Christian course
 - A. A strong faith rests confidently in the promise of God to complete the work He's begun in us, Phil 1.6; Jn 6.37-40; 10.27-30; Rom 8.37-39
 - B. What a strengthening this is to our faith! And what a glory it puts on the life of faith in Christ! That it is a life which cannot perish! Believers have in them the immortal seed of eternal life!
 - C. Just consider what a support it is under heartbreaking trials, in the face of grievous losses, in the ongoing battle with Satan's temptations, a seductive world, and indwelling sin, and in the approach of a painful death—that none of these things shall ever pluck us out of His keeping hands.
 - D. Just consider what a heart-lifting joy it is to know that our confidence isn't to be had from our own strength, or even from the strength of grace in our lives, but solely from the faithfulness and power of Jesus, who's given us abundant evidence that He'll water us with grace every moment of our lives and uphold us with His strength until the day we die, through death itself itself, and beyond it into eternity.
 - E. What a joy to the heart and a vitality to our walk to know that ourselves to be so secure in Christ and so sure of a happy finish to our Christian course that neither the gates of hell nor every demon in it can separate us from Christ. They can sooner get into heaven and cut off Christ's right hand as cut off even the weakest and most struggling believer who's joined to Christ's Body by saving faith, Jn 10.28