

# KINGTON BAPTIST CHURCH

## ONLINE NOTICE BOARD – 72

**W**hy does it all depend on *faith*? Why does salvation and new life depend on *faith*? Why can it not be some other way? Why can we not connect with God through some arduous task or achievement? Why can't Christianity be more like other religions? Why does *faith* have such a crucial place? – so we're told, '*God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who **believes** in him may not perish but may have eternal life*'.

The simple and straightforward answer is that salvation *depends on God, and is for his glory* – my *faith* depends on God, it is his gift, for his glory – not mine. *For by grace you have been saved through faith, this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God—not the result of works, so that no one may boast.* (Ephesians 2.8-9) As I am not able to achieve salvation, nor am I able to 'dis-achieve' it! God who gave me *faith*, keeps me in *faith*!

God's promises and the sense we have of his presence with us are accessible only to *faith*: '*faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen*'. (Hebrews 11.1) The vital words here are 'hoped for' and 'not seen'. We're told that, '*we walk by faith, and not by sight*'.

We're given, '*exceedingly great and precious promises*'. We are promised the Lord will never '*leave or forsake us*'. But how do these promises become ours? We can't see him with us. Often we do not feel him with us. Does that mean he's not with us? That he really doesn't care or keep his promises? Of course not! What it means is that we cannot know that he is with us other than by *faith*. *Faith*, not sight, is the faculty by which we know he is with us.

*Faith* makes these promises and his presence real to '*me*'. God's Word is utterly dependable. But it is *faith*, and *faith* alone, that connects and joins '*me*' with spiritual truths and realities – *faith* makes them my experience, my life – so I can rely on them, grasp them and 'bank' on them. *Faith* carries us into the presence of God. *Faith* allows us to walk with Jesus – to walk where he walked, to listen to his Word addressed to *me*. *Faith* carries me into the glory of heaven, and *faith* brings the glory of heaven to me.

*Faith* makes me alive to the things of God; *faith* gives me the sight to know the truth that sets me free. Not only is it true that '*without faith it is impossible to please God*' – but without faith I have no awareness of God, no heart for God, no appetite for God, no sense of my need for God, no inclination to think of God. Of course without *faith* a person may think about 'god', about some religious subject or another – that's hard-wired into being human. But without *faith* I can't think of God as *my* Father or as he is: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Without *faith* the true, living God is a blank to me – a space unfilled, unexplored.

*Faith* has a unique place because *faith* is personal. I can't have *faith*, not in this sense, for another person; and another person cannot have *faith* for me. *Faith* is personal, my personal response to Jesus, who calls me by name.

Then again *faith* has this unique place because *faith* is the right answer to the right question. What I mean is this: we may come to Jesus with all sorts of questions – people did when he was on earth. A man asked, '*Are they few that will be saved?*' The Samaritan woman, in John 4, asked a load of questions: '*Who does this well belong to; who is right, our people or those people; where should we worship, here or there?*' *Faith* isn't concerned with questions like that, speculative questions, questions you may ask in a group discussion, from an armchair, over coffee. The question *faith* is concerned with is, '*What must I do to be saved?*' The plea of *faith* is '*Lord save me!*' '*God be merciful to me the sinner!*' That's the urgent approach to Jesus *faith* is concerned with – matters of life and death – eternal life and death.

With the *faith* God gives me by his Holy Spirit – for *faith* is the 'gift of God' – I'm able, no matter how humdrum my life, to 'prove the truth of God anew' each day, each moment of the day, whenever, wherever, however I am. I may '*set my mind on the things that are above*' where Christ is seated. *Faith* may put me, like Mary, at the feet of Jesus; *faith* may move me, like it moved the other Mary, to say: '*be it unto me according to your Word*'; *faith* may persuade me, with the Apostle Paul, to say '*the Son of God who loved me, and gave himself for me*'; *faith* may lift me, as it did the Apostle John, to a place where I say '*I behold his glory, full of grace and truth*'; and *faith* may open my heart to hear Jesus saying to me, '*My peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you*'. *Faith* may even raise my vision so high that I too, with angels and saints in heaven, behold the Lamb upon his throne!

*Faith* is able to do these things; but only *faith* is able to do these things. And *faith* is able to do these things only because *faith* joins me to Christ. *Faith* is 'the vehicle by which we are enabled to receive the grace of God' – and the grace God gives through *faith* is every drop of grace God is able to generate, create, invent and imagine! Through *faith*, grace '*abounds towards us*!' *Faith* is 'the uniting grace' – *faith* joins me to Christ, so that what is *mine* becomes his (that's my sin) and what is *his* becomes mine (that's his grace and mercy); my future is *his* future (that's glory), his past is *my* past (that's his death and cross). So I become a '*fellow heir*' with Christ (that's an equal heir, where his inheritance isn't divided up, with a bit for each, but the *entire* inheritance is inherited by each one united to Christ by *faith*).

The *faith* that connects me with the 'unsearchable', 'unspeakable' blessing of God is '*faith that works by love*'; saving *faith* not only says, 'that's true' but, '*He's true, in him I trust, on him I rely, for him I live, with him I die*'.

*Surrounded by a huge crowd of witnesses to **faith**, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily hinders our progress. Let us run with endurance the race set before us, looking to Jesus, the author and finisher of the **faith**, who was willing to endure the cross for the joy he knew would be his afterward. Now he is seated in the place of highest honour beside God's throne in heaven. (Hebrews 12.1-2)*