

## Studies on Saving Faith

### Part 4 – DIALOGUE 1

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## Part 4

### Chapter 19 – DIALOGUE 1

Mr. Carnal Confidence: "Good morning, Mr. Editor, I wish to have a talk with you about those articles on 'Assurance' which you published in last year's Studies."

The Writer: "Be seated, please. First of all, may we courteously but frankly inform you that our time is already fully occupied in seeking to minister unto God's dear children, yet we are never too busy to do all in our power to help a needy soul."

Mr. Carnal Confidence: "O, I am not seeking help; my purpose in calling is to point out some things in your articles where I am quite sure you erred."

The Writer: "It is written, dear friend, 'If any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know' (1 Corinthians 8:2), therefore I trust that God will ever give me grace to willingly consider and weigh the views of others, and receive through them anything He may have for me. Yet, on the other hand, I am not prepared to debate with any man upon Divine things."

Mr. Carnal Confidence: "Well, I am quite sure that I am right, and you are wrong, and I feel it my duty to tell you so."

The Writer: "Very good, I am ready to listen unto what you have to say, only reminding you again that I cannot enter into a debate with you, for the things of God are too holy to argue about; though a friendly discussion, in the right spirit, may prove mutually helpful. Before beginning, shall we seek the help of the Holy Spirit, that He may graciously subdue the flesh in each of us, guide our conversation so that the words of our mouths and the meditations of our hearts may be 'acceptable' in God's sight (Psalm 19:14); remembering that for every idle word each of us will yet have to give an account."

Mr. Carnal Confidence: "I consider that in your articles you have made a very difficult and complicated matter out of what is really very simple. According to your ideas a person has to go to a lot of trouble in order to discover whether or not he is saved, whereas if a man believes God's Word he may be sure in a moment."

The Writer: "But are all those who believe God's Word really saved? Did not the Jews of Christ's day believe implicitly in the Divine authorship of the O.T.? Do not Russelites ('Jehovah's Witnesses' - Ed.) and others today insist loudly upon their faith in the Divine inspiration of the Bible? Does not the Devil himself believe the same?"

Mr. Carnal Confidence: "That is not what I meant; my meaning is that, if I rest upon some verse of Holy writ as God's promise to me, then I know He cannot disappoint me."

The Writer: "That is just the same in principle: does not the Romanist rest with full confidence upon that declaration of Christ's 'this is my body'? Saving faith is not faith in the authenticity of any verse of Scripture, but rather faith in the Person of Him who gave us the Scriptures, faith in the Christ who is made known in the Scriptures."

Mr. Carnal Confidence: "Yes, I know that, and I do believe in God and in His Son, and I know that I am saved because He says so."

The Writer: "Where in Scripture does God say that you are saved?"

Mr. Carnal Confidence: "In John 5:24, in Acts 16:31, and many other places."

The Writer: "Let us turn to these passages, please. In John 5:24 the Lord Jesus describes one who has 'passed from death unto life.' He tells us two things about that individual, which serve to identify him. First, 'he that heareth my word.' That is definite enough. But of course it means far more than simply listening to His Word with the outward ear."

Mr. Carnal Confidence: "Ah, right there you want to mystify what is simple, and perplex souls with what is quite clear."

The Writer: "Pardon me, you are mistaken. I only wish to rightly understand the words God has used, and to do this it is necessary to carefully compare Scripture with Scripture and discover how each word is used by the Spirit."

Mr. Carnal Confidence: "I object; that may be all right for you, but common people do not have the leisure for deep study: God knew this, and has written His word in plain language that ordinary folk can understand: 'Hear' means 'hear,' and that is all there is to it."

The Writer: "I believe you are quite sincere in what you have said, and you have expressed the view which a great many hold today; but, if you will allow me to say so, it is a very defective one. God places no premium upon laziness. God has so ordered things that nothing is obtained without diligence and industry. Much work and care has to be devoted to a garden if anything is obtained from it. The same holds good every where else: what time and trouble is required to keep our bodies in working order! Can, then, the eternal concerns of our souls be more lightly dismissed, or more easily secured? Has not God bidden us 'Buy the truth' (Proverbs 23:23)? Has He not plainly told us 'If thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and

searchest for her as for hid treasures; then thou shalt understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God' (Proverbs 2:3-5)?"

The Writer: "Mark how the Israelites were fed of old in the wilderness: Exodus 16. God did not provide them with baken loaves of bread ready to eat. No, instead, He gave the manna from heaven, which was 'a small round thing' (v. 14). Work and patience were called for in order to 'gather' (v. 17) it. Note too 'when the sun waxed hot, it melted'(v. 21), so that they had to get up early to secure it! Moreover, the manna would not keep: 'let no man leave of it till the morning': it 'bred worms and stank' (vv. 19, 20) if they tried to preserve it for another day. Then, after it had been gathered, the manna had to be 'ground in mills or beaten in a mortar' and baked in pans and made into cakes (Numbers 11:8). All of this typified the fact that if a soul is to eat the Bread of life, he must devote himself in earnest, and, as Christ says, 'Labour... for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life'" (John 6:27).

The Writer: "Thus it is in connection with the obtaining of a right understanding of any verse of Scripture: pains have to be taken with it, patience has to be exercised, and prayerful study engaged in. Returning to John 5:24: the one who has passed from death unto life, says Christ, is 'he that heareth My word.' Let us turn then to other passages where this term is found: 'they are turned back to the iniquities of their forefathers, which refused to hear my words' (Jeremiah 11:10); 'because ye have not heard my words, behold, I will send and take all the families of the north,' etc. (Jeremiah 25:8, 9); and see 35:17; Zechariah 1:4; Matthew 7:24; John 10:27. In all of these verses, and in many others which might be given, to 'hear' means to heed what God says, to act upon it, to obey Him. So he who 'hears' the voice of Christ heeds His command to turn away from all that is opposed to God and become in subjection to Him."

Mr. Carnal Confidence: "Well, let us turn to Acts 16:31, that is simple enough. There is no room allowed there for any quibbling. God says 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved': God says that to me; I have believed on Christ, and so I must be saved."

Writer: "Not so fast, dear friend. How can you prove God says that to you? Those words were spoken under unusual circumstances, and to a particular individual. That individual had been brought to the end of himself; he was deeply convicted of his sins; he was in terrible anguish of soul; he had taken his place in the dust, for we are told that he 'came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas' (Acts 16:29). Now is it fair to take the words of the apostles to such a man and apply them indiscriminately to anybody? Are we justified in ignoring the whole setting of that verse, wrenching it from its context, and giving it to those who have not any of the characteristics which marked the Philippian jailor?"

Mr. Carnal Confidence: "I refuse to allow you to browbeat me, and move me from the simplicity of the Gospel. John 3:16 says, 'For God so loved the world, that he

gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.' Now I have believed on the Son, and therefore am fully assured that I possess eternal life."

Writer: "Are you aware of the fact that in this same Gospel of John we are told 'Many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did. But Jesus did not commit himself unto them' (John 2:23, 24)? There were many who 'believed' in Christ who were not saved by Him: see John 8:30 and note verse 59! John 12:42, 43! There is a believing in Christ which saves, and there is a believing in Him which does not save; and therefore it behooves every sincere and earnest soul to diligently examine his 'faith' by Scripture and ascertain which kind it is. There is too much at stake to take anything for granted. Where eternal destiny is involved surely no trouble can be too great for us to make sure."

Mr. Carnal Confidence: "I am sure, and no man can make me doubt."

Writer: "Is your faith purifying your heart (Acts 15:9)? Is it evidenced by those works which God requires (James 2:17)? Is it causing you to overcome the world (1 John 5:4)?"

Mr. Carnal Confidence: "O I don't claim to be perfect, but I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day."

Writer: "We did not ask if you were perfect; but have you been made a new creature in Christ, have old things passed away, and all things become new (2 Corinthians 5:17)? Are you treading the path of obedience? For God's Word says, 'He that saith I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him' (1 John 2:4)."

Mr. Carnal Confidence: "I am not occupied with myself, but with Christ; I am not concerned about my walk, but with what He did for poor sinners."

Writer: "To be 'occupied with Christ' is rather a vague expression. Are you occupied with His authority, have you surrendered to His Lordship, have you taken His yoke upon you, are you following the example which He has left His people? Christ cannot be divided: He is not only Priest to be trusted, but is also Prophet to be heeded, and King to be subject unto. Before He can be truly 'received,' the heart must be emptied of all those idols which stand in competition with Him. It is not the adulation of our lips, but the affection of our souls, which He requires; it is not an intellectual assent, but the heart's surrender to Him which saves."

Mr. Carnal Confidence: "You are departing from the simplicity of the Gospel; you are making additions unto its one and only stipulation. There is nothing that God requires from the sinner except that he believe on the Lord Jesus Christ."

Writer: "You are mistaken. The Lord Jesus said, 'Repent ye, and believe the Gospel' (Mark 1:15)."

Mr. Carnal Confidence: "That was before the Cross, but in this dispensation repentance is not demanded."

Writer: "Then according to your ideas God has changed the plan of salvation. But you err. After the Cross, Christ charged His disciples, 'That repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations' (Luke 24:47). If we turn to the book of Acts we find that the apostles preached repentance in this dispensation. On the day of Pentecost, Peter bade the convicted Jews to 'repent' (Acts 2:38). Reviewing his 142 ministry at Ephesus Paul declared that he had testified both to the Jews and also to the Greeks 'repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ' (Acts 20:21); while in 17:30 we are told that God 'now commandeth all men every where to repent.'"

Mr. Carnal Confidence: "Then do you insist that if a person has not repented, he is still unsaved?"

Writer: "Christ Himself says so: 'Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish' (Luke 13:5). So too if a man has not been converted, he is yet unsaved: 'Repent ye therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out' (Acts 3:19). There must be a right-about-face: there must be a turning from Satan unto God, from the world unto Christ, from sin unto holiness. Where that has not taken place, all the believing in the world will not save one. Christ saves none who is still in love with sin; but He is ready to save those who are sick of sin, who long to be cleansed from its loathsome foulness, who yearn to be delivered from its tyrannizing power. Christ came here to save His people from their sins."

Mr. Carnal Confidence: "You talk to me as though I were the helpless slave of strong drink or some other appetite, but I want you to know I was never the victim of any such thing."

Writer: "There are other lusts in fallen man besides those which break forth in gross outward sins: such as pride, covetousness, selfishness, self-righteousness; and unless they be mortified, they will take a man to Hell as surely as will profanity, immorality, or murder. Nor is it enough to mortify these inordinate affections: the fruit of the Spirit, the graces of godliness, must also be brought forth in the heart and life; for it is written, 'follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord' (Hebrews 12:14). And therefore it is a pressing duty for each of us to heed the Divine exhortation 'Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?' (2 Corinthians 13:5).

"Notice very carefully, dear friend, that the one point pressed upon the Corinthians was 'that Jesus Christ is in you,' and not their trusting that He died for them. Just as the Christian can only discover that his name was written in the Book of Life before the foundation of the world, by discerning that God has written His laws in his heart (Hebrews 10:16), so I can ascertain that Christ died for me only by making sure that He now lives in me. And it is obvious that if the Holy One indwells me that His presence must have wrought a radical change both in character and in conduct. This, above everything else, is what we sought to make clear and emphasized in our articles on 'Assurance,' namely the imperative necessity of our making sure that the Lord Jesus occupies the throne of our hearts, has the supreme place in our affections, and regulates the details of our lives. Unless this be the case with us, then our profession is vain, and all our talk of trusting in Christ's finished work is but idle words."

Mr. Carnal Confidence: "I consider all you have said to be but the language of a Pharisee. You are occupied with your own fancied goodness and delighting in your own worthless righteousness."

Writer: "Pardon me, but I rather rejoice in what Christ's Spirit has wrought in me, and pray that He will carry forward that work of grace to the glory of His name. But we must bring our discussion to a close. I would respectfully urge you to attend unto that exhortation addressed to all professing Christians, 'Give diligence to make your calling and election sure' (2 Peter 1:10).

Mr. Carnal Confidence: "I shall do nothing of the sort: I hate the very word 'election.' I know that I am saved, though I do not measure up to the impossible standard you want to erect."

Writer: "Fare thee well; may it please the Lord to open your blind eyes, reveal to you His holiness, and bring you to His feet in godly fear and trembling."

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