

I've got straight up 10 o'clock, so OK, good. All right, let's pray. Oh, dear Lord God, we come before you today and we call you father because of your mercies to us in the Lord Jesus Christ. God, thank you for saving faith. Oh, God, we thank you that you give that to us, that we can't work it up within ourselves. And it is your mercy, oh, Lord God, that saves us. And yet, Lord God, we have our faith. It's real. And Lord, we praise your name for that.

We pray that you would increase our faith. We, like the apostles, cry out to you, increase our faith that we would love you more, obey you more precisely and love the brethren more completely. We ask this in Jesus name. Amen. We are on chapter 14 this morning. It's of saving faith.

Those of you who have been going along with Williamson's book, as you know, after Affectual Calling, which was chapter 10, by the way, that's on page 856 in your hymn books, if you would like to look at that. If you're going along with Williamson, he goes from Affectual Calling and then he skips justification, adoption, sanctification, and does of saving faith and of repentance unto life, 14 and 15, right after 10. because of the direct ordo salutis connection between effectual calling and conversion. We have chosen to stick with the outline of the actual confession. I probably should have warned you before that, but nonetheless, those questions came up.

So this is where we are. Last week, we did sanctification of sanctification. And some of these things, I know it's going to always sound a lot similar because we're in the middle of redemption right now. So it's hard to leave one. There is no like this flows from this and this. That's the way it works. That's the way God works.

There is, you know, effectual calling and then there's regeneration that happens encompassed in that. And then there's conversion in that. And then there's God stamping you justified, adopting you into His family, and beginning the work to sanctification to which you will end up with glorification. All of that happens, and it usually happens a lot because of the same reasons, but the Holy Spirit, after we talked about God the Father electing us unto salvation, and His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, who accomplished redemption, But if you'll look at what we've been talking about, for the most part, this has been the work of the Holy Spirit. Factual calling, regeneration, conversion, we'll talk about today. But those things have been the work of the Holy Spirit. And it takes the triune God chooses to save you, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And that is what an incredible blessing. So I am not going to go back to sanctification.

I think we covered a lot of it last week. I think any other loose ends, you can probably tie up yourselves, read it and see it. They're all there. I want to move into chapter 14, which is of saving faith. We'll get to this in a minute, but as you'll notice, Williamson includes 14 and 15 in one chapter. I'm not doing that. I think if the divines thought it was worthy of a standalone chapter, we can think it's worthy of a standalone chapter, okay?

Not that I disagree with the way he did that, because it's conversion. They're joined at the hip. Understand what he's doing. Particularly when you realize that book is written to like 14 year old, 12 year olds, for seventh graders. So he wants to combine the concepts so they stick together.

Repentance and faith. They don't ever, they're never separate by the way. We'll get to that in a minute. But repentance and faith are always together. Okay, let's talk about what is faith? What is faith? First let me just read it. Let me just read, I'm gonna read all three paragraphs at once.

The grace of faith, wow, that's a statement, you know, that's packed right there. The grace of faith whereby the elect are enabled to believe to the saving of their souls is the work of the Spirit of Christ in their hearts and is ordinarily wrought by the ministry of the word by which also and by the administration of the sacraments and prayer it is increased and strengthened.

Paragraph 2, "...by this faith a Christian believeth to be true whatsoever is revealed in the word, for the authority of God Himself speaking therein, and acteth differently upon that which each particular passage thereof containeth, yielding obedience to the commands, trembling at the threatenings, embracing the promises of God for this life and that which is to come." but the principal acts of saving faith are accepting, receiving, and resting upon Christ alone for justification, sanctification, and eternal life by virtue of the covenant of grace. Thirdly, this faith is different in degrees, weak or strong, may be often and in many ways assailed and weakened, but gets the victory. growing up in many to the attainment of a full assurance through Christ, who is both the author and finisher of our faith."

It's a beautiful chapter, but you've got to say, what is faith? What is faith? We're going to talk about catechetical definitions in a minute, but last week's sanctifying was so good in Webster's, I decided to go back there again this week just to see faith. What is faith?

It starts out to draw towards. I didn't thought of it that way. To believe. To obey. Faith is to obey. To bind and hold fast. from the Greek sense of the verb from which rope or binding is derived. That's interesting. Think about that. The word faith is derived from a Greek word that means a rope or a binding that holds things together. It fastens things to things. It secures things. It's like a rope that secures you and holds you fast.

Belief is the ascent of the mind to the truth of what is declared. The truth of what is declared, listen, resting on its authority and veracity without other evidences. Faith. In theology, the ascent of the mind, so that belief that we just had there, or understanding to the truth of what God has revealed. And then he has, here's a quote here. In Webster's, evangelical or justifying faith is the ascent of the mind to the truth of divine revelation on the authority of God's testimony. accompanied with a cordial assent of the will or approbation of the heart. In other words, not only do you say what God says is true, I agree with it, I am there, but I love it.

There is a movement of the heart in this, this evangelical justifying faith. It's a cordial assent. It's from the heart. OK, because guess what? You have a new heart because of effectual calling. So that heart all of a sudden loves what it hears in God's word. That's not normal. But this new heart loves what it hears on the declaration of God's word.

And there's an assent to that. And then lastly, an entire, that means your whole being, mind, will, heart, confidence or trust in God's character and declarations and in the character and doctrines of Christ with an unreserved surrender of the will to his guidance and dependence on the merits of his merits for salvation, of his merits. which influences the will and leads to an entire reliance on Christ for salvation. So faith is a binding oneself to Christ.

And it's not out of duty. It's out of affection. It's drawing. It's believing. God says, I'm a sinner. He's right. It's believing. God says, there's no hope for you outside of Christ. He's right. It's here's Christ in my word. Take him. Go

get him. He's yours. And all of a sudden, for the first time in your life, you want him and you embrace him and you hold him.

That's faith. That's believing what God's words declares on the authority of God and then embracing both his truth about yourself and his solution provided in the Lord Jesus Christ. It's a running and throwing oneself on. And remember, this is saving faith. So here's the question to us. What are we relying on to get to heaven? What are you relying on heaven? I'm going to tell you, don't rely on your faith. Don't rely on your faith.

We'll get to that in a minute. Rely on Jesus Christ. OK, on him. The relying on him is the saving faith, and it's God's ordained means of securing us for salvation. Now, if you look over at page 875 in your handbook. You have. In the larger catechism, they do these two under the justification. What is justification? They split it in there. In this shorter catechism, it comes after the law because what it's doing is confronting you with the whole Word of God and dealing with who you are.

And then you have 84, what does every sin deserve? Every sin deserves God's wrath and curse, both in this life and that which is to come. 85, what does God require of us? that we may escape his wrath and curse due to us for sin. To escape the wrath and curse of God due to us for sin, God requires of us faith in Jesus Christ, repentance unto life with the diligent use of all the outward means whereby he communicateth to us the benefits of redemption.

And then the next question, which is what we'll deal with, what is faith in Christ, Jesus Christ? Faith in Jesus Christ is a saving grace. Can't get to heaven without it, guys. This is life or death stuff. Once again, we are in the middle of the application of redemption. Every component of it is absolutely necessary to get to heaven. And faith in Jesus Christ is do not pass go step one. What are the Philippian jailer? What must I do to be saved? Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved. This is step one to get to heaven.

Faith in Jesus Christ is a saving grace, whereby we receive, which is that belief in all the things said, and rest upon him alone for salvation as he's offered to us in the gospel. Okay, in the Ordo Salutis, which is, we talked about facial calling, which encompassed regeneration and conversion, then you have justification, adoption, sanctification, and then glorification. Conversion is the result of effectual calling and new birth. Conversion is that two-sided coin of faith in Christ and repentance unto life.

They're always together. They're never separate, but they are two distinct things. They're two distinct actions, okay? Calling becomes effectual when conversion ensues. How do you know you've been effectually called? Do you have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and have you repented of your sins? That's an effectual call, okay?

Only converted sinners are justified, adopted, sanctified, glorified. By conversion, I want y'all to know, when we say conversion, I'm talking about faith and repentance. It's a two-sided, one coin, two-sided. So when I use the term conversion, I'm throwing both together here.

Regeneration is inseparable from its effects. When you have a new heart, it automatically acts. The effects of regeneration are faith and repentance. That happens. If you've been born again, you believe and you repent. God regenerates the sinner, repents and believes.

The confession of faith, as we talked about before, follows the order of the acts of God in salvation, effectual call, justification, adoption, and then it comes back with man's response, faith and repentance. That's how the divines laid out, they could have done it the way that Williamson does it, but bottom line is, that's the way they chose to do it. They wanted the emphasis on God's glory, rightly so, in salvation.

So, 14.1, that first paragraph, I won't read it again, but at this point in the confession, Readers, if you've been reading along, just reading the bare thing, remember that was one of our goals. You need to read the confession, and number two, you need to read it devotionally.

I hope it's been devotional for you. It has been for me. And I know the teacher gets more than anybody here out of it, but it's been overwhelming to be even reminded about things I knew and have known for a long, long time. But just the reality of it and going back through them has been a true blessing.

But at this point in the confession, chapter 14, You have had faith mentioned over a dozen times in different chapters. Faith has been mentioned. Okay? And this chapter, though, wants to remind you it's focused on a type of faith. Saving faith. This is faith by which you grab hold of heaven. In other words, the faith that enables the elect to believe to the saving of your soul eternally. That's the faith it's particularly focusing on right now.

And to distinguish this and to make sure that you understand exactly what is being talked about, I used some other helps here, but Voss in his commentary on the larger catechism, which would be questions 72 and 73, if you want to go back and look that up, and Williamson both discuss faiths that Christians may have, and probably do have, that will not save, but other men who are not Christians have, that will not save you. And they term these historical and temporal. So what are we talking about? Here are two faiths that will not save you. They will not save you.

Historical faith. It's an assent to the facts, okay, of the gospel. Facts about Jesus, you believe they're true. There really was a man named Jesus. He really was born of a virgin. I even believe, you know, you assent to the fact that there's some miraculous happening. You were sent that he lived a perfect life. You were sent that he rose from the, you was crucified. That's a historical fact. You were sent that he was raised from the grave. You were sent and believed that he ascended into heaven.

That's orthodox. You should believe all those things. And you stop right there. It has no, there's no affection that remember we talked about. There's nothing has changed in your heart. You know those things are true and you have not changed. That is not a saving faith. There is no, you must know those things. It's great. That's orthodoxy.

But if you know the facts and you're not resting your whole existence on them, if you hadn't thrown away everything else, you've abandoned ship. You know, I think about, uh, Those poor sailors, when Jonah was on the boat, and

they were fixing to go down, and they started unloading everything. They didn't care. What did they want? They wanted salvation. Those sailors wanted to be saved from that storm. You were in the same storm.

And if you're trying to hold on to, I know this, and I know that, throw it all away. This is an abandonment to God, okay? It's an abandonment and a resting on those facts. But if you're not doing that, if all you have is that historical, I believe that's true.

I believe the Bible's true. Man, the church is full of that. That's not necessarily saving faith. Secondly, temporary faith. And y'all had parables in vacation Bible school this week. And the parable of the sower is really a good example of what we call temporary faith. The rocky ground here.

Okay? He's sitting in church with you. He gets all excited. That preacher is good. He's gotten me going. Williamson calls it tent revival meeting faith. It's that you get excited. Everybody around you is really liking this. Yeah, it really is good. And there's even a sense of, man, you know, I am a sinner. I am a sinner. And Jesus really is incredible. And for a while, he said, I'm gonna start going to church. I'm gonna start doing that. And we've all had it. We had it here. We had people join the church. And you wonder where they are today.

Saving faith endures. Saving faith endures. The only time will tell on that, okay? But temporary faith. And we're gonna talk about preaching in just one minute. But here, we love preaching. We do. And it's good, because we're gonna talk about how good it is. It's a non-negotiable in saving faith, to be honest with you, according to God's Word. Good preaching is.

And there are gifted preachers, in spite of the fact that there are a number of gifted preachers on the planet. Okay, maybe not as many as we want, but they are. And people love to hear them preach. People love to hear, like I said, George Whitville preach. People love to hear Spurgeon preach. But do they love the Christ that's being preached about by those men? Do they love that Christ?

It's not about, I really enjoy the way he's so eloquent. He's so articulate. He even pricks my conscience a little bit, you know? He points me out. Temporary faith is not saving faith. If your emotional excitement is the main driver of your faith, beware. Beware. Beware. Saving faith is spirit raw. The Bible is clear here.

Saving faith is God's gift, Ephesians 2.8, it's the gift of God. And it's our own, it's personal. So it's your saving faith, individually, in Christ. It's yours, it's personal. The Holy Spirit works, this is still part of paragraph one. The Holy Spirit works faith in us, All that he does, you can go to Ephesians 1, 19. If you turn to 2 Corinthians, and I'm gonna read this passage, 4.13, but having the same spirit of faith according to what is written, I believe, therefore I spoke, we also believe, therefore we also speak.

Knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and will present us with you. Van Dixon makes a case, and in my Bible it's the spirit of faith like it's an attitude of faith, that that should be capitalized. And he says the divines made that argument in the confession, that that should be a capital S there. That the spirit who

brings faith to a people who tend not to believe what they ought to believe. It's because of the Holy Spirit we rest on Christ as he is and as he is offered in the gospel. Saving faith is a work of the Spirit in you. Another portion, the second portion that I want to deal with here, and this is where we get back to preaching, is means.

It deals with this. He says here, is the work of the Spirit in their hearts ordinarily wrought? In other words, The typical way God creates faith in you. He uses means. Okay. It says their ministry of the word. God is free to work outside of ordinary means. We talked about that in the salvation of elect infants. God's free to do that. But the reason to mention temporary faith induced by a fervency and even the grandeur of preaching of the Word is because the primary means that God, by His Holy Spirit, uses to work saving faith in believers is the preaching of the Word of God.

That's the primary means. And as he says, make no doubt, no mistake, or have no doubt about it. When it says the ministry of the Word, it's talking about preaching. That's what they mean. It's primary in worship because it is the ordained by God as the means to produce saving faith. He's ordained the foolishness of preaching. It is the reason why this pulpit's central. It's the reason why most Protestant churches, that's the case. It's also the reason why the pulpit is elevated. It's above all things. The architecture's telling you things. It's not random, okay? And we believe it's the word. I'm gonna read, I'm gonna do a little bit more reading than I wanted to here, but he says some great things.

Anthony Burgess, who was a member of the assembly, states that the faithful ministry of the Word is the sure and ordinary way for the conversion of men from their evil ways. He states even more strongly in an exposition of 1 Corinthians 3, quote, the ministry is the only ordinary way that God hath appointed either for the beginnings or the increase of grace. Faith is said to come by hearing, and Paul's own text informed the Corinthians that Paul and Apollos were ministers by whom ye believed. In 1649, another member, William Greenhill, agreed in his judgment, where the Word of God is not expounded, preached, and applied, the people perish. what I said there, where the Word of God is not expounded, preached, and applied, the people perish.

This focus on preaching on preaching the word, expanding the meaning, and then actually applying it pointedly to the pew sitters, not to the world, not to those out there, not to Donald Trump, not to Democrats, not to anybody else, but the people sitting in this room, doing that.

And Charlie Chase always said, you're not preaching until you use the word you. Not us, not we, you. Preachers should have already dealt with himself before he got up there. deal with the people in front of you. That's preaching. It wasn't popular then in the 1640s when these men said that. It's not popular today. Real preaching. Today you get self-help, you get recovery from brokenness, which really means some kind of psychological disorder, not sin, or you get some sort of personal evangelism, which is true, but not powerful preaching of the word.

And to that end, the question comes back to Westminster Confession of Faith chapter one, which focuses on the word of God. That's what God uses. If it's that powerful, why not just read it? Why not sit under a tree and study it yourself? God does use that means, by the way. But that's not His ordained means, that's not His ordinary means. Ordinary being the operative word here. His ordinary means is the preaching of the word.

But I'll tell you what, Jeremiah Burroughs, another member of the assembly, who wrote Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment, he viciously opposed that idea. Quote, you will say, cannot we sit at home and read a sermon? Or today, this is Dan Dixon we're gonna add, today we might ask if we stay at home and get something edifying off a website. No, Jeremiah Burroughs, quote, the great ordinance is the preaching of the word.

Faith comes by hearing and never by reading. He was pretty focused on that. Burroughs softens this somewhat when he admits that his readers may think that this or the other means may do the deed as well, but expects that because God hath appointed this to be his ordinance, therefore in obedience to him, they would attend upon this means rather than upon any other means.

Don't be like Naaman when he could not see the point of God's command to go in the Jordan. Don't they have enough good rivers around Damascus to dump in? What he's saying is, Naaman did that. You remember when the little servant girl from Israel told him, go to see, it's Elisha. And he tells him, oh, you got leprosy? Go dip yourself in the Jordan X times. And he's like, that's it? He's not gonna do some kind of magic wand over me and do something like that? He's like, we got rivers back home. I can jump in a river there that are better than the Jordan. And that was a direct command from God. And what Burroughs is saying is, God ordained the means of salvation to be the preaching of the word.

Better be careful if you neglect it. Better be careful if you neglect it. So like I told you, there's temporary faith. People just enjoy being sermon tasters, checking, moving from one sermon, I don't like that preacher, blah, blah, blah. And we've all done, if you're in this room, most of us in this room love sermon, we know what we like. Okay? That is a real temptation for us. Okay? But God has ordained the preaching of the Word to be the primary means of producing saving faith. That's why we're studying this today. I'll go further.

Thomas Goodwin, another member of the Assembly, suggests that good books and conversations are helpful, particularly in times of spiritual drought. But a steady use of these in the absence of preaching is akin to relying on a water pot instead of rain to produce a plant. They'll get you through a drought, but what you need is to be fed the Word preached." So his primary means, primary means, is the Word of God being preached from a pulpit.

I'll add to some of this one in a second. There are a variety of responses that have been and can be given to those who doubt that the ministry of the word is useful. And naturally in those responses, we should make allowances for those who are unable to be where the word is preached. Nevertheless, in normal situations, Romans 10 should always weigh heavily in your discussion.

Faith cometh by hearing, hearing by the word of God. We're not only told that faith comes by hearing, but also that hearing comes from preaching, verse 17. If the apostle Paul announced that faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God, then we need to think twice about elevating any other means of communication above preaching. The ministry of the word is used by the spirit to work saving faith in us. It should be added that the word of God can increase and strengthen your faith as well.

So if you are in Christ, when you come here and you've been hungry all week, that point you to the glories of Christ, the benefits of Christ. A few weeks ago, Chad talked about Ephesians 1 and those benefits. John Owen says we're not holy because we're not acquainted, we're not gotten up to and close enough to and affectionate with the benefits we receive from Christ that are already yours today. They're yours today. If you really thought about that, you would be more holy. Your affection towards Christ would increase, because that's the essence of holiness, loving Christ, okay?

Okay, next part of this is growth. Saving faith begins and it is a state in which we live. We live in saving faith. It grows and it strengthens by all means of grace, which is what he refers to there in the last part of that paragraph where he says, by which also by and by the administration of sacraments and prayer, it is increased and strengthened. So it grows. Faith can grow. It can increase. You know, you can get deeper in faith and all of that.

And God uses the means of grace, the ordinary means of grace, the word preached, prayer and sacraments. When you hear they're an ordinary means of grace church, which is typically what we would call ourselves and what we support, we try to support, we want to see planted. They're not gonna be the ones with all the big programs. They're the ones that focus on preaching the word, proper administration of the sacraments, and prayer. That's what we're saying. That's how you grow in faith, the word, sacraments, and prayer.

And that prayer, we're talking about prayer in your family, personally, and in private, but also with groups. You know, we have a men's prayer group, we have a church prayer group, That prayer, and then of course corporate prayer. Today the big thing is everybody wants to be a participant in worship.

Well if you're out here and we're worshipping, number one, are you singing? That's a participation. Number two, when the preacher prays, are you engaged? Are you praying with him? It says pastoral prayer, but it really is congregational prayer. The preacher's leading the congregation in lifting up requests to God so that the people of God engage in prayer as a one voice of one mind. You are participating in worship.

Hearing, ask my wife. I don't always hear what she says. Hearing requires engagement to hear. And Hank said he couldn't hear that. But hearing requires engagement and participation. You have to engage in what the other person's saying. When somebody's preaching the word or reading the word, that's participation. What we really mean is we want to talk and we want to participate.

And our prayer should be what the apostles prayed in Luke 17 5. Lord, increase our faith. If that's what Peter, Paul, I mean, Peter, James, John, all of them were asking, they were sitting there looking at him. And it was a cry, it was a prayer. Lord, increase our faith. This is a prayer that Christ is pleased to answer. It is according to his will. Prayer and sacraments increase the faith.

So prepare and participate. Prepare and participate. Next Lord's Day, we're celebrating the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. You need to prepare and participate to increase your own faith. Yes, there's the selfish motive I just gave you. But God has ordained that it be a means to increase your faith. Prepare and participate.

Second paragraph, what's encompassed in this belief system? If you look at paragraph two, whatever is revealed in the word of God, the whole word of God. So here's the deal, to truly have saving faith, and look, you can ask me about the thief on the cross, okay? But what he had of God's Word, whatever residue he had there, he had enough sense to know that's the answer. Remember me? Remember me?

He tells Jesus, and Jesus says, today you'll be with me in paradise. He had already confessed his sin to the other thief. We deserve to be here. He acknowledged that. He took what God, through his word, is basically saying, you're a sinner, and I deserve to be hanging on this cross. He doesn't. So he already acknowledged that Jesus Christ did not deserve to be where he was, hanging on the other tree. And then he says, you'll be with me together in paradise. And he accepts that as true. He receives God's word. That's the word that he had. That's all the word he had. You and I don't have that excuse.

We have Bibles. One of the glories of the Protestant Reformation and one of the reasons we celebrate it every October is the people of God get the Word of God and the salvation comes through the Word of God. All of us sitting in this room have a Bible, probably multiple Bibles. Saving faith produces faith in the scriptures from creation to the fall to the state of man and Genesis 6 5 where it says The the intent of their thoughts was only evil continually That's how bad we are you accept. That's true. And that's true of me not just of everybody but of me to our own lost condition to the provision of redemption in the Lord Jesus Christ and to a future glory to look forward to that he's returning, and we will all go to the marriage supper of the Lamb. A Christian believes to be true whatsoever is revealed in the word. At a bare minimum, Christians should be like Samaritan villagers in John 4, 42, who told the woman, well, we did believe it because you told us. We had borrowed faith.

Remember when she said, he told me everything about me? You know, you answered truly, you don't have a husband, but the one you're with now is not your husband. And she believed. She went back so excited, she went to tell the men in the town. And the men in town came out and they heard him. And they first said they went out there because of what he did for her. And then they went, it's not like that anymore. We believe what you say. We believe what you say. He said, at a bare minimum, a Christian ought to do that. Jesus, you said it, I believe it. At a bare minimum.

But it trusts more than just the words that Jesus spoke while he was here. Because Jesus wasn't here on earth walking around when the letter to the Ephesians was written. He wasn't here on earth walking around when Genesis was written. He wasn't here on earth when the book of Psalms was written.

So Christians ought to believe the whole Bible. The saving faith produces that. True saving faith. It receives the Word. It trusts in the Word of God ought to be a defining mark of a Christian believer. Saving faith accepts the whole Word of God and seeks to act as God requires and trust what He promises for this life and that which is to come. Saving faith has a special focus in the Word, though. It really does. And that special focus is to receive Christ.

It's to believe in Christ, to rest on Christ, to understand Christ, to know Jesus Christ. Saving faith does not simply look to promises. or even to the blessings that Christians receive, such as forgiveness of sins, imputed righteousness. Saving faith looks to Jesus Christ himself. Remember, the Lord our righteousness, Jesus Christ, is your salvation. It looks to Christ. Saving faith has one interest, a peculiar interest, and that is the Lord Jesus Christ.

And in the word, that's where they're going. Only through Christ are justification, adoption, sanctification, eternal life given to sinners.

Section three. We'll go to the last paragraph. There are a lot more to be said on all these points, but I'm skipping a lot. Confidence in Christ or a firm faith in the whole Word of God ought to characterize every Christian, but it doesn't. It doesn't. We have doubts. Paragraph three addresses that when it talks about their degrees of faith.

Some Christians are babes needing milk. You know, the Apostle Paul rebuked some people who should not be babes anymore. He didn't say they weren't Christians, but they should be further along in their faith than they were. But all Christians start out as babes. They need the pure milk of the word. But you want to grow to become a meat eater of the word. That should be a goal. So this faith is in varying degrees in all Christians. True saving faith. Truly saved people sometimes believe some really bizarre stuff because they have not had the whole meat of the word digested.

They've only had the milk. Was it Priscilla and Aquila that took Apollos aside? And you just talked about this, or we read it in Acts, where he didn't really understand the whole gamut of what he needed. He was a fine Christian, already a gifted preacher, but he wasn't there yet. And they took him aside and explained more clearly the way.

We're like that. We're all growing. We're on some road here. Some of us are here, some of us here, some of us here. The other thing Remember here, the Bible reflects that some are weak in faith. You know, it tells us in the epistles to be careful, particularly elders, of those weak in faith. We're to care for them. They're like little lambs in a flock.

And we see Jesus delighted in faith. Remember the Roman? And he says, I hadn't seen such great faith in all of Israel. Oh, just say the word, Jesus, and my daughter will be healed. What did Jesus delight in? He said, I hadn't seen that great a faith in Israel. He delighted in great faith. That's what Jesus loves. varies not only from Christian to Christian, but also in your own life, from experience to experience.

A loved one dies. And I mean somebody you really love. Sometimes relatives are not people we love, but somebody really close to you dies. And it was wretched, horrible way. Or you go and you see poverty, stories of missionaries losing their faith, going to Africa and seeing the devastation that goes on over there among people getting killed. You have varying degrees, but it also, in the course of your life, your faith does things. It's admitting that here, okay? Sin, suffering, and the devil assault your faith. At times, it's weakened.

Remember Elijah? He just crawled up under a bush and said, I'm ready to die. Elijah had just executed the prophets of Baal, called down fire from heaven, and Jezebel says, I'm gonna kill you, and he takes off running, and he just totally abandons all faith, and crawls up under a bush and wants to die.

Peter, you wanna see the vicissitudes of faith? Peter walked on water. Jesus was not the only person to walk on water. Peter walked on water. That's an amazing thought. He's just a man like me and you. As long as he was looking at Christ and not looking at the waves, he could walk on that water. He started walking, and then he started

thinking about the waves and looking down. And what happened? He started sinking, and he cried, Jesus, save me. But for a moment, his faith resulted in his ability to walk on water. But it changed, didn't it?

Just like ours does. Quickly changes. We are urged to take up the shield of faith in Ephesians 6, 16. Why? Because that's what we need. We are getting assaulted. We need to remember from the word an assurance of victory for Christians. You will overcome, 1 John 5, 4, because we are weak. And then the last paragraph does this. It tells you the way to solve all those vicissitudes of faith. Hebrews 12, 2.

FIX YOUR EYES ON JESUS, THE AUTHOR AND PERFECTOR OF OUR FAITH. JESUS IS THE ONE WHO STARTED THE FAITH IN YOU. HE WILL FINISH IT. HE IS THE PIONEER, THE LEADER, THE INITIATOR OF OUR FAITH. AND IT SAYS THERE HE'S THE AUTHOR AND FINISHER. HE DOESN'T JUST START SOMETHING IN YOU AND WALK AWAY. HE'S GOING TO CARRY YOU TO THE END.

SO FAITH LOOKS TO CHRIST. LASTLY, I'LL READ THE QUOTE FROM JOHN MURRAY THAT WILLIAMSON HAD. quote, faith is not something that merits the favor of God. Your faith is never going to be good enough. So don't say it's my faith that gets me to heaven. It's Christ that gets you to heaven. That's what he's saying.

All the efficacy unto salvation resides in the Savior. As one has aptly and truly stated the case, it is not faith that saves, but faith in Jesus Christ. Strictly speaking, it is not even faith in Christ that saves, but Christ that saves through faith. The specific character of faith is that it looks away from itself and finds its whole interest and object in Christ.

He is the absorbing preoccupation of faith. This chapter, and the reason I want to do it solely is it's a question for you and I who've been here a long time. What's the absorbing preoccupation of your heart? Saving faith wants to know what's the absorbing preoccupation of your heart.

Where are our eyes fixed? We have troubles in this world. He tells us to fix our eyes on Jesus Christ, the author and finisher of our faith. Let's pray. Dear God, thank you for your word. Increase our faith. Oh, Lord, increase our faith. We pray just like the apostles. As we come to worship you now, Lord, meet with us, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.