

HENRIC SCHARTAU  
AND  
THE ORDER OF GRACE

Biography by Henrik Hägglund and  
Fifteen Sermons by Henric Schartau

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# First Sunday After Epiphany.

## Introduction.

*These things have I written unto you, that ye may know that ye have eternal life, even unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God.*

Thus the apostle John speaks of faith to them that believe. 1 John 5. 13.

It is remarkable that God has been pleased to select faith as the way by means of which a man shall receive his share in redemption. God has not chosen any work, deed, or enterprise of man for this purpose; He has reserved that honor for Himself. God has not provided that the fear of His wrath shall determine any man's salvation, for He does not wish to force any one. Neither has He ordained that thankfulness and love shall be determining factors, for love presupposes confidence, but rather this very confidence in His mercy, shown in the suffering and death of the Son of God, and reliance on the atonement by means of which His mercy has become available and efficient.

It is this faith by means of which a man obtains the forgiveness of sins and becomes justified and saved. The apostle calls it to believe on the name of the Son of God, or to trust in God by virtue of what Jesus has wrought. Indeed, it is only by virtue of this that a man

can trust in the God whom he has offended. The salvation contained in the name of the Saviour is by God declared sufficient, but though a person might understand this and become mightily convinced of it, still no real confidence in God arises, unless God Himself, by means of the supernatural power of His Word, which is not dependent on the meditations of human reason, freely puts into man's heart to believe.

Faith is essential. Its development was the object of the words of God which the apostle wrote, and a result thereof, according to our introductory text. He had written that his friends might believe on the name of the Son of God, and he expected this very result of the word which he had written.

The apostle describes the growth or different measures of faith as having three degrees. First, to believe on the name of the Son of God, as has just been shown, and to trust in the mercy of God in Christ. Secondly, to know that one has eternal life, or to believe that one believes, and to be sure of one's inheritance of eternal life. Thirdly, the apostle again speaks of believing on the name of the Son of God,\* thereby conveying something else than that in the first clause, a special degree of faith, to be attained by the converted, after he has gained assurance of his salvation. It is a lesser degree of faith to believe so long as one has assurance of eternal life, and it is a greater degree of faith when a regenerated person retains his trust in the mercy of God in Christ, even though he lacks such assurance of eternal salvation.

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\* See the Authorized Version, which agrees with the old Swedish version here referred to.

## Proposition.

### THE MEASURE OF FAITH GRANTED BY GOD, AS A CRITERION OF ONE'S SPIRITUAL CONDITION

- I. The measure of faith granted by God.
- II. How a person must thereby judge of his spiritual condition.

## First Part.

### *The Measure of Faith Granted by God.*

The first and least measure of faith embraces the whole Christ and appropriates all His merits, bringing with it complete justification, which cannot be increased, and an entire renewal of the heart. Just as a spark is as real fire as a large flame, so the first spark of hope in Christ, arising in a contrite heart, is as real faith as the most confident reliance on the victorious Lord and Saviour. Though ever so weak, a true faith embraces Jesus, "who was made unto us *wisdom from God*," and it expects to learn of Him to know His word and ways of life. It accepts Him "*unto righteousness*," expecting forgiveness, not by virtue of any contrition or repentance of its own, but by virtue of the suffering and obedience of Jesus. It accepts Him "*unto sanctification*," expecting to receive from Him a changed heart and strength to follow Him in newness of life. It also accepts Him "*unto redemption*," hoping by Him to be delivered from the misfortunes of life and to be saved from the torments of hell.

Whereas even the first feeble faith fully embraces Christ, it brings with it complete justification, so that

such a believer is considered quite as justified before God as the greatest heroes of faith, and, indeed, quite as pure from sin as "the spirits of just men made perfect," for he is considered quite as righteous as his Saviour. The merits of Jesus, by which the believer has been justified, cannot be increased, nor enlarged by any growth of our faith; so neither can the justification of a true believer be increased. It is quite as complete with the first beginning of faith as it can ever become.

The first measure of faith is that when a person begins to inquire about faith, though he cannot then perceive that it is faith at all. The beginning takes place when a person who has been frightened by the law begins to ask for salvation in Jesus Christ. Though the unclothed and wounded Redeemer is altogether too insignificant for a proud reason, He nevertheless is the first fountain of comfort to a grieved soul. Hungering and thirsting after righteousness, such a person begins to search in the Scriptures for the things concerning the Saviour. He then finds that it is by faith alone that one enters into fellowship with the Saviour, for he finds that God's promises everywhere have no other qualifications than this, "Unto every one that believeth." This inquiry about faith implies a vital concernment and an earnest seeking, which find expression in prayer that the Lord might grant a true faith. Every desire of such a soul is, "Alas, if I could only believe!" When he hears the Word, he listens carefully to hear if the preacher has anything to say about faith, and when he reads the Word of God, it is as though his heart addressed the authors of the Scriptures in this wise, "Ye dear apostles of the Lord, ye beloved prophets, teach me to know my

Saviour. Alas! bring me to Him. Show me how I shall acquire a true faith in Him." That this already is true faith is evident from the word of promise in Jeremiah, "Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if there be any that doeth justly, that seeketh truth;\* and I will pardon it." God promises pardoning grace to every one that "seeketh truth." An honest seeking after faith must be faith, for "without faith it is impossible to be well-pleasing unto God." It is quite as impossible that one who is well-pleasing unto God should be without faith as it is impossible to be well-pleasing to God without faith. The mystery of faith is hidden from the reason of the natural man. No one concerned about his salvation inquires about faith, until there is faith in his heart, for the concern of an awakened sinner is fixed on the hardship and wretchedness of sin, to the extent that there is no room for such inquiry, unless God Himself directs him to seek this only means of attaining righteousness and eternal salvation. And why is an awakened soul so deeply concerned about obtaining faith? He longs for a part in the merits of His Saviour. He is concerned about entering into fellowship with Jesus. He yearns for true righteousness. But what is such concern, such longing, if not faith? Jesus Himself pronounces such a person blessed, "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness." It is then certain that he is on the way, coming to Jesus. It is also evident that he has come to Jesus, for Jesus Himself is the way. Yes, a person who is on the way coming to Jesus, has

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\* "Seeketh faith," according to the author's version.

already come to Him, for Jesus has assured such a soul that he shall in no wise be cast out. But there can be no question of any casting out, except from a room where one already is and has his dwelling.

We find another measure of faith, where a person has grown in enlightenment to perceive that he has faith, to which belongs a deep sense of joy, though this is not the real measure of his faith. When a person diligently beholds Christ in the Scriptures, he begins to reflect "the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ," and he is thus enlightened to know himself as well as Jesus. When one enters aright into the Word, one finds shooting forth from all of God's promises beams of light, which, as it were, find their focal point in one's heart, so that one is enabled to see clearly how the Word in its entirety acquits one of guilt. Thus enlightened, one finds that his faith is such as the Word of God describes and that he has become converted in the manner prescribed by the Word of God.

Upon such enlightenment follows deep joy, for how should a person become aware that he is covered with the robe of righteousness, and yet not rejoice in his Saviour? How should he be able to find that he has been clothed with the garments of salvation, without being joyful in God? Spiritual gladness follows the assurance of grace, as the shadow follows the body, but we must not imagine that the shadow is the body itself. When the sun shines or a candle has been lit, the shadow appears, but in darkness and gloom it does not appear. It would be foolish to doubt the existence of the body, merely because one cannot see its shadow, for when the sun begins to shine, the shadow immediately appears.

As long as the Sun of Righteousness appears to them that fear the name of the Lord, He brings the perception of "healing in His wings," but when He appears to set and shine no more, even they that fear the Lord may walk in darkness, without joy or any clearly discernible peace. We must not then conclude that faith has been lost, merely because we do not experience the joy of faith. After the storm has passed, God again lets the sun of grace shine, and then

"Light is sown for the righteous  
And gladness for the upright in heart."

A greater measure of faith is this, that a person is able to believe in spite of everything his heart feels or his reason sees. The beginning of such faith takes place when the Holy Spirit trains and teaches a person to believe without any heartfelt emotions. On the one hand, God removes the emotions before a person has time to rely on them, and, on the other hand, He leads the soul to the gospel and to a hearty reliance on the promises of grace. In this way a person becomes trained in faith and enabled to believe the Scriptures, even though he finds no corresponding feelings in his heart. By such means he eventually obtains so great a stability of faith that he is able to believe the Word, although he finds the opposite in his heart; that he is sure of the promises in the Word, although his heart speaks to the contrary; and that he has perfect assurance of forgiveness, grace, and salvation through Jesus Christ, although in his heart he finds condemnation, wrath, and un blessedness. If our heart condemns us, we still know that we are of the truth, and are able to assure our heart before

Him with the confidence that "God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things." By this training in faith a man attains such an increase of faith that he can believe quite the contrary of that which his reason sees; that he is able to believe that God will provide for his temporal wants, though there be no visible means for his support; that he may feel sure of help, though he sees before him only want and distress, and expect great good-will of men, being enabled to live with them in peace, while it appears as though he were hated by all.

## Second Part.

*How a Person Must Judge of His Spiritual Condition by the Measure of Faith Granted by God.*

The apostle says in our epistle text, "Let no one think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but rather soberly, according as God hath dealt to each man a measure of faith."

If you have not now, nor ever had, the first measure of faith, you cannot have attained to any of the other measures. You then have full reason to consider yourself unconverted, not having any faith at all. An unconverted man is very strangely minded. Occasionally he speaks of his faith as though it were very weak, and then, again, as though he had arrived at the highest measure of certainty and courage. In spite of all this, let it be remembered that you have not as yet prayerfully and diligently searched the Scriptures and inquired for faith. Nor is this strange, for you have never been seeking for Jesus, nor realized that you are without Him. If you really felt, as you say, that your faith is weak, you would be grieved, and again if, as you

sometimes pretend, you had a strong faith in the Lord, you would have experienced the lack of both faith and grace. But when you say that you have always had a good faith, it immediately becomes apparent that your faith cannot be of the right kind, for you have not grown to such stability of faith in the manner that other children of God do. Furthermore, when your faith is compared with your manner of life, it becomes evident that your faith is a monstrosity. When one organ of a newborn babe is as large as it should be in an adult, while other members of the body are like those of a normal child, this child is deformed. So, too, when faith, which is the chief part of a newborn convert, at once is as large as that of the fathers in grace, while other characteristics and gifts of grace are as small as those of the weakest beginner in Christian life, then this "new man" is without due proportion, a monstrosity. When your knowledge is so slight that you need to learn "the rudiments of the first principles of the oracles of God"; when the light that is in you is so faint that there scarcely is twilight or dawn of enlightenment; when love is so lukewarm as to give place to carnal jealousy and strife; when conditions are such, and you nevertheless boast of a good and strong faith in the Lord, then your whole religion is a monstrosity, and your faith is deformed. It is not a work of the Holy Spirit. Satan has given it to you, or you have taken it yourself. It is not the work of God, nor a true faith — the faith that embraces Christ. It is not the faith that appropriates the forgiveness of sins. It is not the faith by which Jesus dwells in the heart. It is not the faith that brings with it the Holy Spirit. It is not the faith

the possession of which in time is followed by unspeakable blessedness in eternity. No, it is a false, imaginary faith. With this faith you have no part in Jesus; you are far from Him. If you get no other faith than this, you will never get rid of your sins. If you keep this faith to the end, this very faith will become the cord, the chain, by which the evil spirit will bring you into eternal destruction.

If, on the other hand, you notice in you some of the things pertaining to the first measure of faith, then you may consider yourself on the way to Jesus, and if you have received the comforting insight into the Word that you have come to Him, you must not cast it away. When you realize that you have received the first measure of faith, God thereby grants you the greater measure, namely the assurance and certainty of a true faith. When a person has been truly converted by the Holy Spirit, he will also be brought forward on the way of life. Though you have unconsciously come to faith in Jesus, God will enlighten you to know that you have the true faith. The Spirit of God will thereby strengthen your soul against approaching temptations and confirm your resolution to belong to Jesus forever. If you have not resisted the beginnings of God's work of grace, you must not resist the perfecting thereof. If, by the Word of God, you find that you have the first measure of faith, a sincere longing for faith, an inquiry about faith, and a seeking after faith, then this very insight is an enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, quite as much so as that of your awakening, when you saw that you had no faith. This light cannot deceive you nor lead you astray. Hence, if in this way you become kindly

persuaded and comfortingly convinced that you have the true faith, God grants you the second, greater measure of faith by assuring you that you have the first measure. "Cast not away your boldness," for you shall in this way receive an increased measure of faith, just as surely as faith has been begun in you.

If you have the assurance of a true faith, you must not become proud, imagining that you have come to the greatest measure of faith, nor demand that you shall always have this assurance and become impatient when you lack it, for you ought to know that it is God's purpose to thus bring you to a greater measure of faith, enabling you to believe without feelings and in spite of feelings. If you have found that your faith is real and true, then you may thank and praise the Lord for this gracious refreshing. Let your heart be strengthened thereby, but be not puffed up. You have indeed received an increased faith, but not the greatest measure. Jesus blesses those who "have not seen, and yet have believed." It is to guard you from pride and to train you in faith that the Lord soon deprives you of that assurance. Remember that God's ways are such with His faithful ones, and be content therewith. Do not rush wilfully along, endeavoring to regain the certainty of mind, for you cannot find it in the recesses of your heart. Go rather to the Word of God and look for insight into its promises, and ask the Holy Spirit to teach you to rely on these. Behold, you have a greater faith, when you are able to believe without consulting the feelings of your heart; for God is greater than your heart. Your faith thus gains stability and certainty, for the words of promise are irrevocable and unailing,

while your feelings are changeable and unreliable. You thus eventually obtain a durable peace, and you are being prepared for the future beholding of God's face in heaven, while God frequently hides His face from you during your earthly pilgrimage.

Finally, you must also take warning and remember that it is quite as possible to recede as to advance in the measure of faith. By neglecting the means of grace and growing sluggish in prayer and careless in his manner of life, it may happen that one who had attained the stability of the fathers can be set back to the weakness of spiritual children, so that, while before he could believe in spite of the condemnations of his heart, he now finds it increasingly difficult to feel at ease without the conscious enjoyment of the sweetness of grace. It may likewise happen that one who had attained certainty, can, by the neglect of grace, fall into protracted wavering and lose the assurance of his state in grace, to the extent that there remains only a seeking after grace, like that at the first awakening. A person in this state considers himself without any part in Jesus, just as he did at his first awakening, but he is still remaining in the state of grace, though near falling away from it.

In conclusion, let me instruct the upright in heart that the great measure of faith cannot always be perceived, but only now and then, between the spiritual battles. When the devil cannot prevent your growth in faith, he tries to deprive you of the joy which you should have when you become aware of your spiritual growth. The Lord permits this. The evil one is allowed to cover you with darkness and to obscure from

your vision the measure of faith attained; for it is one of the great wonders along the way that a lack of assurance increases faith, and that faith becomes greater by seeming less. If you find yourself unexpectedly set back in your faith, without any previous neglect on your part of the Word and of prayer, this is no evidence of a diminishing faith, but rather of a new spiritual battle, which thus almost imperceptibly begins. You have the less reason to fear that you have erred from the faith, if you notice that your conception of the Redeemer is retained, working on your mind, sustaining your hope, and urging you to obedience. This is an evidence that you are grasped by your Redeemer. Be content with this very slight measure of faith. The Lord who has helped you to the lesser faith will also help you to the greater. Only continue to press on, that you may apprehend that which you have not yet apprehended, and you shall not forever miss the goal, though you have not yet attained it, but you shall reach the goal which God has set before you and to which you are aspiring, since you are able to say with Paul, "I press on, if so be that I may apprehend that for which also I was apprehended by Christ Jesus." Amen.