

The Sum of Saving Knowledge - Warrants and Motives to Believe.

by David Dickson

This sermon emphasizes four warrants and special motives to believe in Christ, including God's heartfelt invitation, earnest request, and command to believe in him.

Scripture: Isaiah 55:1, John 3:36, 2 Corinthians 5:14, 1 John 3:23

Topics: "Saving Faith", "Divine Invitation"

Description

David Dickson preaches about the four Warrants and special Motives to believe in Christ, emphasizing God's hearty invitation to all sinners, the open offer of Christ's grace, the solid satisfaction found in Christ, and the assurance of life given to those who believe. He also highlights the earnest request for reconciliation with God, the strait and awful command to believe in Christ, and the certification of destruction for those who disobey. Dickson encourages believers to strengthen their faith by reasoning from the grounds of God's love, the promise of everlasting life, and the consequences of rejecting Christ.

Transcript

Warrants to believe

For building our confidence upon this solid ground,

these four Warrants and special Motives to believe in Christ may serve.

The first whereof is God's hearty invitation, holden forth, Isa. lv. 1, 2, 3,4,5.

Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money: come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price. Verse 2. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread ? and your labour for that which satisfieth not ? Hearken diligently unto me and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Verse 3. Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David. Verse 4. Behold, I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people, &c.

Here (after setting down the precious ransom of our redemption by the sufferings of Christ, and the rich blessings purchased to us thereby, in the two former chapters) the Lord, in this chapter, 1. Maketh open

offer of Christ and his grace, by proclamation of a free and gracious market of righteousness and salvation, to be had through Christ to every soul, without exception, that truly desires to be saved from sin and wrath: Ho, every one that thirsteth, saith he. 2. He inviteth all sinners, that for any reason stand at a distance from God, to come and take from him riches of grace, running in Christ as a river, to wash away sin, and to slocken wrath: Come ye to the waters, saith he. 3.

Lest any should stand aback in the sense of his own sinfulness or unworthiness, and inability to do any good, the Lord calleth upon such persons in special, saying, He that hath no money, come. 4. He craveth no more of his merchant, but that he be pleased with the wares offered, which are grace and more grace; and that he heartily consent unto, and embrace this offer of grace, that so he may close a bargain, and a formal covenant with God; Come, buy without money, (saith he,) come, eat: that is, consent to have, and take unto you, all saving graces; make the wares your own, possess them, and make use of all blessings in Christ; whatsoever maketh for your spiritual life and comfort, use and enjoy it freely, without paying any thing for it: Come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price, saith he. 5.

Because the Lord knoweth bow much we are inclined to seek righteousness and life by our own performances and satisfaction, to have righteousness and life as it were by the way of works, and how loath we are to embrace Christ Jesus, and to take life by way of free grace through Jesus Christ, upon the terms whereupon it is offered to us; therefore the Lord lovingly calls us off this our crooked and unhappy way with a gentle and timeous admonition, giving us to understand, that we shall but lose our labour in this our way: Wherefore do ye spend your money (saith he) for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? 6.

The Lord promiseth to us solid satisfaction in the way of betaking ourselves unto the grace of Christ, even true contentment, and fulness of spiritual pleasure, saying, Harken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. 7. Because faith cometh by hearing, he calleth for audience unto the explication of the offer, and calleth for believing of, and listening unto the truth, which is able to beget the application of saving faith, and to draw the soul to trust in God: Incline your ear, and come unto me, saith he.

To which end, the Lord promises, that this offer, being received, shall quicken the dead sinner; and that, upon the welcoming of this offer, he will close the covenant of grace with the man that shall consent unto it, even an indissolvable covenant of perpetual reconciliation and peace: Harken, and your soul shall live: and I will make an everlasting covenant with you. Which covenant, he declareth, shall be in substance the assignation, and the making over of all the saving graces, which David (who is Jesus Christ, Acts xiii. 34.) hath bought for us in the covenant of redemption: I will make a covenant with you, (saith he,) even the sure mercies of David.

By sure mercies, he means saving graces, such as are righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, adoption, sanctification, and glorification, and whatsoever belongs to godliness and life eternal. 8. To confirm and assure us of the real grant of these saving mercies, and to persuade us of the reality of the covenant betwixt God and the believer of this word, the Father hath made a fourfold gift of his eternal and only begotten Son: First, To be incarnate and born for our sake, of the seed of David his type; for which cause he is called here, and Acts xiii. 34.

DAVID, the true and everlasting King of Israel. This is the great gift of God to man, John iv. 10. And here, I have given him to be David or born of David, to the people. Secondly, He hath made a gift of Christ to be a

witness to the people, both of the sure and saving mercies granted to the redeemed in the covenant of redemption; and also of the Father's willingness and purpose to apply them, and to make them fast in the covenant of reconciliation made with such as embrace the offer: I have given him (saith the Lord here) to be a witness to the people.

And truly he is a sufficient witness in this matter in many respects: 1st, Because he is one of the Persons of the blessed Trinity, and party-contractor for us, in the covenant of redemption, before the world was. 2dly, He is by office, as Mediator, the Messenger of the covenant, and hath gotten commission to reveal it. 3dly, He began actually to reveal it in paradise, where he promised, that the seed of the woman should bruise the head of the serpent. 4thly, He set forth his own death and sufferings, and the great benefits that should come thereby to us, in the types and figures of sacrifices and ceremonies before his coming. 5thly, He gave more and more light about this covenant, speaking by his Spirit, from age to age, in the holy prophets. 6thly, He came himself, in the fulness of time, and did bear witness of all things belonging to this covenant, and of God's willing mind to take believers into it; partly, by uniting our nature in one person with the divine nature; partly, by preaching the good tidings of the covenant with his own mouth; partly, by paying the price of redemption on the cross; and partly, by dealing still with the people, from the beginning to this day, to draw in, and to hold in the redeemed in this covenant.

Thirdly, God hath made a gift of Christ, as a leader to the people, to bring us through all difficulties, all afflictions and temptations, unto life, by this covenant: and he it is, and no other, who doth indeed lead his own unto the covenant; and, in the covenant, all the way on unto salvation: 1. By the direction of his word and Spirit. 2. By the example of his own life, in faith and obedience, even to the death of the cross. 3. By his powerful working, bearing his redeemed ones in his arms, and causing them to lean on him, while they go up through the wilderness.

Fourthly, God hath made a gift of Christ unto his people, as a commander - which office he faithfully exerciseth, by giving to his kirk and people, laws and ordinances, pastors and governors, and all necessary officers; by keeping courts and assemblies among them, to see that his laws be obeyed; subduing, by his word, Spirit, and discipline, his people's corruptions; and; by his Wisdom and power, guarding them against all their enemies whatsoever.

Hence he who hath closed bargain with God may strengthen his faith, by reasoning after this manner:

"Whosoever doth heartily receive the offer of free grace, made here to sinners, thirsting for righteousness and salvation: unto him, by an everlasting covenant, belongeth Christ, the true David, with all his sure and saving mercies:

"But I (may the weak believer say) do heartily receive the offer of free grace made here to sinners, thirsting for righteousness and salvation:

"Therefore unto me, by an everlasting covenant, belongeth Christ Jesus, with all his sure and saving mercies."

The second Warrant and special Motive to embrace Christ, and believe in him, is the earnest request that God maketh to us to be reconciled to him in Christ; holden forth, 2 Cor. v. 14, 19, 20, 21.

God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Verse 20. Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as

though God did beseech you, by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. Verse 21. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

Wherein the apostle teacheth us these nine doctrines: First, That the elect world, or world of redeemed souls, are by nature in the estate of enmity against God: this is presupposed in the word reconciliation; for reconciliation, or renewing of friendship, cannot be, except betwixt those that have been at enmity. Second, That in all the time bypast, since the fall of Adam, Christ Jesus, the eternal Son of God, as Mediator, and the Father in him, hath been about the making friendship (by his word and Spirit) betwixt himself and the elect world: God (saith he) was in Christ reconciling the world to himself.

Third, That the way of reconciliation was in all ages one and the same in substance, viz. by forgiving the sins of them who do acknowledge their sins and their enmity against God, and do seek reconciliation and remission of sins in Christ: For God (saith he) was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, by way of not imputing their trespasses unto them. Fourth, That the end and scope of the gospel, and whole Word of God, is threefold: (1.) It serveth to make people sensible of their sins, and of their enmity against God, and of their danger, if they should stand out, and not fear God's displeasure. (2.)

The Word of God serveth to make men acquainted with the course which God hath prepared for making friendship with them through Christ, viz. That if men shall acknowledge the enmity, and shall be content to enter into a covenant of friendship with God through Christ, then God will be content to be reconciled with them freely. (3.) The Word of God serveth to teach men how to carry themselves towards God, as friends, after they are reconciled to him, viz. to be loth to sin against him, and to strive heartily to obey his commandments: and therefore the Word of God here is called the word of reconciliation, because it teacheth us what need we have of reconciliation, and how to make it, and how to keep the reconciliation of friendship, being made with God through Christ.

Fifth, That albeit the hearing, believing, and obeying of this word, doth belong to all those to whom this gospel doth come; yet the office of preaching of it with authority belongeth to none, but to such only as God doth call to his ministry, and sendeth out with commission for this work. This the apostle holdeth forth, Ver. 19. in these words, He hath committed to us the word of reconciliation. Sixth, That the ministers of the gospel should behave themselves as Christ's messengers, and should closely follow their commission set down in the word, Matt. xxviii. 19, 20; and when they do so, they should be received by the people as ambassadors from God; for here the apostle, in all their names, saith, We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech id you by us.

Seventh, That ministers, in all earnestness of affections, should deal with people to acknowledge their sins, and their natural enmity against God, more and more seriously; and to consent to the covenant of grace and embassage of Christ more and more heartily; and to evidence more and more clearly their reconciliation, by a holy carriage before God. This he holdeth forth, when he saith, We pray you, be ye reconciled to God. Eighth, That in the ministers' affectionate dealing with the people, the people should consider that they have to do with God and Christ, requesting them, by the ministers, to be reconciled.

Now, there cannot be greater inducement to break a sinner's hard heart, than God's making request to him for friendship; for when it became us, who have done so many wrongs to God, to seek friendship of God, he preventeth us: and (O wonder of wonders!) he requesteth us to be content to be reconciled to him; and therefore most fearful wrath must abide them who do set light by this request, and do not yield

when they hear ministers with commission, saying, We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.

Ninth, To make it appear how it cometh to pass that the covenant of reconciliation should be so easily made up betwixt God and a humble sinner fleeing to Christ, the apostle leads us unto the cause of it, holden forth in the covenant of redemption, the sum whereof is this: "It is agreed be twixt God and the Mediator Jesus Christ the Son of God, surety for the redeemed, as parties contractors, that the sins of the redeemed should be imputed to innocent Christ, and he both condemned and put to death for them, upon this very condition, that whosoever heartily consents unto the covenant of reconciliation offered through Christ, shall, by the imputation of his obedience unto them, be justified and holden righteous before God; for God hath made Christ, who knew no sin to be sin for us, saith the apostle, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

Hence may a weak believer strengthen his faith, by reasoning from this ground after this manner: "He that, upon the loving request of God and Christ, made to him by the mouth of ministers, (having commission to that effect,) hath embraced the offer of perpetual reconciliation through Christ, and doth purpose, by God's grace, as a reconciled person, to strive against sin, and to serve God to his power constantly, may be as sure to have righteousness and eternal life given to him, for the obedience of Christ imputed to him, as it is sure that Christ was condemned and put to death for the sins of the redeemed imputed to him: "But I (may the weak believer say) upon the loving request of God and Christ, made to me by the mouth of his ministers, have embraced the offer of perpetual reconciliation through Christ, and do purpose, by God's grace, as a reconciled person, to strive against sin, and to serve God to my power constantly: "Therefore I may be as sure to have righteousness and eternal life given to me, for the obedience of Christ imputed to me, as it is sure that Christ was condemned and put to death for the sins of the redeemed imputed to him."

The third Warrant and special Motive to believe in Christ, is the strait and awful command of God, charging all the hearers of the gospel to approach to Christ in the order set down by him, and to believe in him; holden forth, 1 John iii. 23.

This is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment.

Wherein the apostle giveth us to understand these five doctrines: 1. That if any man shall not be taken with the sweet invitation of God, nor with the humble and loving request of God, made to him to be reconciled he shall find he hath to do with the sovereign authority of the highest Majesty; for this is his commandment, that we believe in him, saith he. 2. That if any man look upon this commandment as he hath looked heretofore upon the neglected commandments of the law, he must consider that this is a command of the gospel, posterior to the law, given for making use of the remedy of all sins; which, if it be disobeyed, there is no other command to follow but this, Go, ye cursed, into the everlasting fire of hell; for this is his commandment; the obedience of which is most pleasant in his sight, v. 22. and without which it is impossible to please him, Heb. xi. 6. 3.

That every one who heareth the gospel, must make conscience of the duty of lively faith in Christ; the weak believer must not think it presumption to do what is commanded; the person inclined to desperation must take up himself, and think upon obedience unto this sweet and saving command; the strong believer must dip yet more in the sense of his need he hath of Jesus Christ, and more and more grow in the obedience of this command; yea, the most impenitent, profane, and wicked person must not thrust out

himself, or be thrust out by others, from orderly aiming at this duty, how desperate soever his condition seems to be; for he that commands all men to believe in Christ, doth thereby command all men to believe that they are damned and lost without Christ: he thereby commands all men to acknowledge their sins, and their need of Christ, and in effect commands all men to repent, that they may believe in him.

And whosoever do refuse to repent of their bygone sins, are guilty of disobedience to this command given to all hearers, but especially to those that are within the visible church: For this is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, saith he. 4. That he who obeyeth this commandment hath built his salvation on a solid ground: for, First, He hath found the promised Messiah, completely furnished with all perfections unto the perfect execution of the offices of Prophet, Priest, and King; for he is that Christ in whom the man doth believe. 2.

He hath embraced a Saviour, who is able to save to the uttermost, yea, and who doth effectually save every one that cometh to God through him; for he is Jesus, the true Saviour of his people from their sins. 3. He that obeyeth this command hath built his salvation on the Rock, that is, on the Son of God, to whom it is no robbery to be called equal to the Father, and who is worthy to be the object of saving faith, and of spiritual worship: for this is his command, (saith he) that it we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ. 5.

That he who hath believed on Jesus Christ, though he be freed from the curse of the law, is not freed from the command and obedience of the law, but tied thereunto by a new obligation, and a new command from Christ; which new command from Christ importeth help to obey the command: unto which command from Christ, the Father addeth his authority and command also; for this is his commandment, (saith John,) that we believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he hath commanded us.

The first part of which command, enjoining belief in him, necessarily implieth love to God, and so obedience to the first table; for believing in God, and loving God, are inseparable; and the second part of the command enjoineth love to our neighbour, (especially to the household of faith,) and so obedience to the second table of the law.

Hence may a weak believer strengthen himself, by reasoning from this ground after this manner:

"Whosoever, in the sense of his own sinfulness, and fear of God's wrath, at the command of God, is fled to Jesus Christ, the only remedy of sin and misery, and hath engaged his heart to the obedience of the law of love, his faith is not presumptuous or dead, but true and saving faith:

"But I, (may the weak believer say,) in the sense of my own sinfulness, "and fear of God's wrath, am fled to Jesus Christ, the only remedy of sin and misery, and have engaged my heart to the obedience of the law of love:

"Therefore my faith is not a presumptuous and dead faith, but true and saving faith."

The fourth Warrant and special Motive to believe in Christ, is much assurance of life given, in case men shall obey the command of believing; and a fearful certification of destruction, in case they obey not; holden forth, John iii. 35.

The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand. Ver. 36. He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.

Wherein are holden forth to us these five following doctrines: 1. That the Father is well satisfied with the undertakings of the Son, entred Redeemer and Surety, to pay the ransom of believers and to perfect them in holiness and salvation: The Father loveth the Son, saith he; viz. as he standeth Mediator in our name, undertaking to perfect our redemption in all points: The Father loveth him, that is, doth heartily accept his offer to do the work, and is well pleased with him: his soul delighteth in him, and resteth upon him, and maketh him, in this his office, the receptacle of love, and grace, and good will, to be conveyed by him to believers in him. 2.

That, for fulfilling of the covenant of redemption, the Father hath given to the Son (as he standeth in the capacity of the Mediator, or as he is God incarnate, the Word made flesh) all authority in heaven and earth, all furniture of the riches of grace, and of spirit and life, with all power and ability, which the union of the divine nature with the human, or which the fulness of the Godhead, dwelling substantially in his human nature, or which the indivisible all-sufficiency and omnipotency of the inseparable, every where present Trinity doth import, or the work of redemption can require: The Father (saith he) hath given all things into the Son's hand, to wit, for accomplishing his work. 3.

Great assurance of life is holden forth to all who shall heartily receive Christ, and the offer of the covenant of grace and reconciliation through him: He that believeth on the Son (saith he) hath everlasting life; for it is made fast unto him, 1. In Gods purpose, and irrevocable decree, as the believer is a man elected to life. 2. By effectual calling of him unto life by God, who, as he is faithful, so will he do it. 3. By promise and everlasting covenant, sworn by God, to give the believer strong consolation in life and death, upon immutable grounds. 4.

By a pawn and infestment under the great seal of the sacrament of the Lord's supper, so oft as the believer shall come to receive the symbols and pledges of life. 5. In Christ the fountain and head of life, who is entered in possession, as attorney for believers; in whom our life is so laid up, that it cannot be taken away. 6. By begun possession of spiritual life and regeneration, and a kingdom consisting in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, erected within the believer, as earnest of the full possession of everlasting life. 4.

A fearful certification is given, if a man receive not the doctrine concerning righteousness and eternal life to be had by Jesus Christ: He that believeth not the Son shall not see life, that is, not so much as understand what it meaneth. 5. He further certifieth, that if a man receive not the doctrine of the Son of God, he shall be burdened twice with the wrath of God; once, as a born rebel by nature, he shall bear the curse of the law, or the covenant of works; and next, he shall endure a greater condemnation, in respect that light being come into the world, and offered to him, he hath rejected it, and loveth darkness rather than light: and this double wrath shall be fastened and fixed immovably upon him, so long as he remaineth in the condition of misbelief: The wrath of God abideth on him saith he.

Hence may the weak believer strengthen his faith, by reasoning from this ground after this manner:

"Whosoever believeth the doctrine delivered by the Son of God, and findeth himself partly drawn powerfully to believe in him, by the sight of life in him, and partly driven, by the fear of God's wrath, to adhere unto him, may be sure of right and interest to life eternal through him:

"But sinful and unworthy I (may the weak believer say) do believe the doctrine delivered by the Son of God, and do feel myself partly drawn powerfully to believe in him, by the sight of life in him, and partly driven, by the fear of God's wrath, to adhere unto him:

"Therefore I may be sure of my right and interest unto eternal life through him."

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