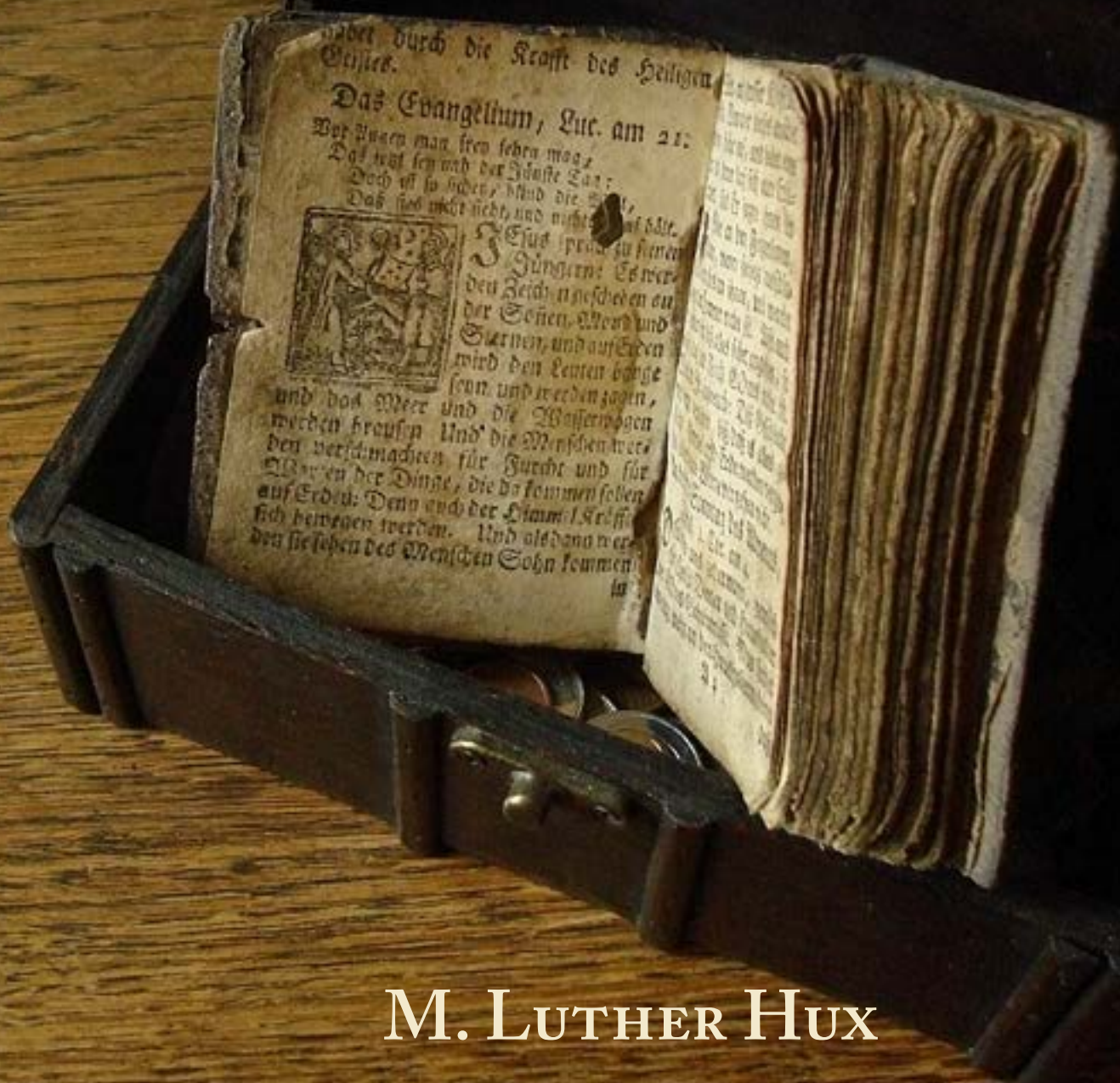


Precious Things



M. LUTHER HUX

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Precious Things

“Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.”
—2 Peter 1:1

The people to whom the apostle Peter addressed his second letter are clearly described in this first verse. They are those who “have obtained like precious faith.” The word *precious* is used a number of times in the Bible to denote some striking things, and it is my desire here to direct your attention to these interesting objects which are deserving of that name. Whatever is precious is of great value, as a jewel, or a costly stone.

1. Precious Faith

We have before us in our text, first of all, a precious thing called “faith.” This is something of very great value and is considered so by everyone who has been made a subject of the Holy Spirit’s teaching. “Like precious faith” is not something that all men have in general, nor must we think that any man in particular is in possession of it by any human effort or personal worthiness.

As you look out over the world today, how much faith can you find? Our Lord said, “When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?” (Luk 18:8), evidently indicating that though he should find faith on the earth at His return, yet there would be very little of it. It may shock us to pause and reflect upon just how many people [there are] whom we meet in a given week, in whom we can detect any of this faith. I think that all of us would have to reach the conclusion that faith in our Lord Jesus Christ in our day is a rare thing. But this has always been true. It was true in the apostle’s time. It was true before his time and since his time, and it is true today. This may strike one as being very strange in view of the many churches we have today, the many Bibles, many preachers, many professing Christians, and the many religious services that are always going on. But when you look at the whole situation and test it by the Word of God, how much genuine faith do you really find?

This “*precious faith*” is obtained from the Lord Jesus Christ; it is a *gift* from Him Who is the “author and finisher of our faith” (Heb 12:2). It cannot be gotten from any other; and while everyone must have it in order to be justified in God’s sight, no one is able to manufacture it for himself. Faith is precious because you cannot be saved without it. You cannot get to heaven without it, you cannot please God without it, and without it you cannot have the peace of God. Unless you have this “*precious faith*” you must die in your sins. Our Lord declared, “If ye believe not that I am he, ye

shall die in your sins” (Joh 8:24). Hebrews 11:6 puts it this way: “But without faith it is *impossible* to please him.” Paul lovingly reminds us that we are saved by grace *through faith*, and then quickly explains in the same verse that justifying faith is none of our doing, but rather “the gift of God” (Eph 2:8).

Beddome exulted in this precious gift of faith in his magnificent hymn based on our text:

*Faith!—’tis a precious grace
Where’er it is bestowed!
It boasts of a celestial birth
And is the gift of God!*

*It hears the Prophet’s voice,
The teacher sent from heaven,
And says, “No lessons half so sweet
As those which He has given.”*

*Jesus it owns a King—
An all-atoning Priest.
It claims no merit of its own
But looks for all in Christ.*

*To Him it leads the soul
When filled with deep distress—
Flies to the fountain of His blood
And trusts His righteousness.*

*Since ‘tis Thy work alone—
And that divinely free—
Lord, send the Spirit of Thy Son
To work this faith in me!*

2. The Precious Blood

Let me bring before you another precious thing of God’s Word for your delightful consideration. Consider next “*the precious blood*.” The Bible states that we are redeemed “with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot” (1Pe 1:19). All the elect are bought with the precious blood of Christ (1Pe 1:2). Nothing less than that (regardless of what any preacher may tell you) can redeem a sinner from hell and secure for him a place among that multitude which no man can number of the grace-favored ones of all ages and of all nations.

The blood of men is precious. We count even the blood of animals precious. But when you think of the blood of Christ, you are reflecting upon something that is precious beyond human language to describe. The late Dr. T. T. Shields of Canada

spoke of it as “*the wealth of the universe in solution*,” but I think that even that falls far short of being an adequate description of the preciousness of the blood of our Redeemer.

His blood is of *infinite value*. Because He is the eternal God as well as sinless man, the value of the sum total of the blood of the whole human race in comparison would be worth less than a plug nickel. Yet it is that blood which was given for the redemption of worthless sinners such as you and I. Oh, the marvel of it and the glory of it!

*What mighty sum paid all my debt
When I a bondman stood,
And has my soul at freedom set?
‘Tis Jesus’ precious blood.*

Before the Lord revealed His grace in me, I used to wonder why Christians were always singing about the blood. What was so wonderful about the blood? I couldn’t figure it out. Looking back now, I recall how puzzled at times I was at those who spoke with joy of the blood of the Lamb and my mother weeping about it as she read God’s Word to me. I even occasionally took the cup and the bread in those days without having the slightest idea of what it was all about. The meaning was completely hidden to me as it is now to all who are still in their sins. “But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost” (2Co 4:3).

But how different things are now! What a change grace has made! How precious is that blood by which this unworthy sinner has been redeemed! Redeemed by the blood—the precious blood of Christ—is our theme now on earth and shall be in heaven forever. In this I am right where my old friend was, who, when I inquired if he were saved, replied in the words of the fourth stanza of a familiar hymn. He said:

*E’er since by faith, I saw the stream
Thy flowing wounds supply,
Redeeming love has been my theme,
And shall be till I die.*

Let us who know the preciousness of that blood never undervalue it or be ashamed of it. Nothing else can wash away sin and redeem ruined sinners.

3. The Precious Christ

The next precious thing of God’s Word which we want to consider is the *precious person of Christ*. We have this expression in 1 Peter 2:7—“Unto you therefore which believe he is precious.” We have considered the “*precious faith*” which all Christians have, and “*the precious blood*” by which we are all redeemed. Now the inspired writer

records the heart-feelings of all believers toward the person of the Lord Jesus Christ—"he is precious." "Unto you...which *believe* he is precious." That is how all who believe feel about Him. Here is a test by which you may know if you have been born again, if you are a true believer—is the Lord Jesus Christ *precious* to you?

How may we know if Christ is precious to us? Well, when anything is precious to you, that thing holds your interest; it is of great value to you and you want to talk about it. You want others to share your delight in your precious object. You may object though that while Christ is precious to you, you cannot find words to talk of Him to others. Well, then, just say He is precious to you, and be not ashamed to own Him before men. You show whether He is precious to you by your obedience to Him as your Lord, by your worship of Him, by your attendance upon His ordinances and your loyalty to His service.

A life of love and loyalty to Him who redeemed you will speak far more effectively of what He means to you than any words you may ever utter. A common complaint registered by many genuine lovers of Christ in these days is that it is difficult to find anyone who wants to talk about the Lord Jesus Christ. I think all of us know something of this experience. What are we to do about it?

We must realize, first of all, that we live in a world that is not interested in its Creator, and that though the Creator in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ came into it, it did not know Him (Joh 1:10), did not want to know Him, but rather spit in His face and crucified Him. Now, obviously, it is not going to be easy to keep up a conversation about our Lord with people in a world that feel in their hearts that way about Him. It is our duty, nevertheless, to give a faithful and fearless witness to the world and let them know whose we are and whom we serve. At the same time, however, we should also realize that there is today in the world, as there has always been, a remnant, a faithful few, according to the election of grace who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and truth (Rom 11:5; Eph 6:24). These feel the difficulty and loneliness in the world as well as you. They are the Lord's people, and we ought to seek them out and establish fellowship with them and do what we can to help them and comfort them remembering that all that is done for one of these the Lord counts as being done unto Him.

Christ is precious to you if He has saved you from your sins, revealed to you His glory, and made you a true believer in Him.

4. The Precious Trial

The "precious faith" which we considered first must now be *tried*. Because there are many counterfeits of the genuine faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, our faith must go through the fires of testing that we may know whether it is true or false, and that also in the fiery trial it may be freed from the impurities by reason of the corruption of the flesh and strengthened.

The Scripture calls this trial of the believer's faith "precious."¹ "That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ" (1Pe 1:7). From this verse observe what the apostle intends we should know about the many and painful trials which a Christian is to face all during his earthly pilgrimage.

It is a trial. It is a trial which every believer must face. It is a trial of the believer's faith. It is a precious trial. It is a trial of more value than perishing gold. It is a fiery trial. It is a trial which will last until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is a trial of your faith whose outcome will be glorious—providing you are found to be a true believer in Him and not merely a dead professor.

It is a wonderful consolation to know that while passing through the manifold trials of this life that they are all appointed of Him out of love and for a good end. They are a help and not a hindrance. They cut off pride and bring us to His feet and keep us there. They sweeten the promises and enliven the prayer. They have a tendency to lift our affections from the temporal to the eternal and make us sensitive of the sanctifying power of Christ in every cross we are called to bear. If we possess the faith which is from above, we shall say with William Cowper:

*Did I meet no trials here—
No chastisement by the way—
Might I not with reason fear
I should prove a castaway?

Bastards may escape the rod,
Sunk in earthly, vain delight;
But the true-born child of God
Must not—would not—if he might.*

You may have wondered why you have had so many trials since you first trusted the Lord. Well, there is an answer for that. You have these troubles come to you to try your faith. How would you know you were a Christian except that you have been tried? Surrounded on every hand as you are by that which is false and hearing the empty claims of deceived church-members, how can you be sure you are a true believer in the Lord Jesus Christ?

That faith—if it is a true saving faith, if it is a heavenly and not just a temporary, a stony ground faith—that is the faith that overcomes the world (1Jo 5:4), and that faith is going to stand whatever fiery trial the Lord has appointed, or Satan or the world may bring upon you. And when you come through that, you are going to be a

¹ The word *precious* refers to faith in this passage, not to the trial of faith. While we may disagree with the author's interpretation of this passage, his point is true—God intends trials for the good of His saints.

better Christian. That trial, dear friend, while certainly not pleasant to the flesh, will prove more valuable to you than the gold of the world that must pass away. What can be more valuable than to have the blessed assurance that God is your heavenly Father, Christ is your Lord, the Holy Spirit is your Comforter, and heaven is your home? The reproach of Christ was reckoned by Moses to be greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt (Heb 11:26). Why? Because he had true faith. His faith stood the test when it was tried as all true faith will.

May the Lord grant us grace that we may welcome the *precious trial* when it comes, realizing that it will reveal to us whether or not we have the faith that endures all things for His sake to the end—that faith which will not be ashamed to praise Him before a menacing world, that faith which will be found to the honor and glory of Him when He appears the second time.

5. The Precious Promises

For still another precious thing of God's Word, let us turn to 2 Peter 1:4, where the apostle announces, "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious *promises*: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature." Here we have an inspired encouragement to our faith to take hold of the promises of our Father which He calls "great" as well as "precious." These by sovereign and free grace have come, obtained by the faith of God's elect (v. 1) who have been effectually called by the Holy Spirit to glory and virtue (v. 3). Those who receive these promises are thereby made "*partakers of the divine nature.*"

We have been "born again," we are told, "not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, *by the word of God*, which liveth and abideth forever" (1Pe 1:23). In another place it is said, "Of his own will begat he us with the *word of truth*" (Jam 1:18). It was through the gospel that we were regenerated and made new creations in Christ (2Co 5:17). Paul tells the Christian believers that "in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel" (1Co 4:15).

The gospel promise being preached to us and blessed to our hearts in sovereign mercy, we were brought to receive the divine nature in the new birth. But that divine nature is continually communicated to us as we are enabled to lay hold of these "*exceeding great and precious promises.*" That Word of promise through which we were originally begotten is the same Word by which, from day to day, we are sanctified and renewed after the image of Christ in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness (Eph 4:24; Col 3:10). I think this is what Paul meant when he said, "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass [a mirror, the word of God] the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2Co 3:18). This being true, how we should labor to grasp the precious promises and grow more like Him who loved us and gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from all iniquity (Tit 2:14).

6. The Precious Fruit

Once more we have a precious thing of God's Word in James 5:7—"Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain." The faithful shall not labor in vain. Fruit, *precious fruit*, is promised to those who wait for it. The Christian, like the farmer, is tried in the matter of patience. The long wait for the harvest, though requiring fortitude and backbone, is at last rewarded with the precious increase. It is so easy to rush out, to try to make a show, to stir up something, to get something going. But to faithfully do one's work, plodding along, in season and out of season, sowing the good seed, then quietly waiting for "the early and latter rain" to bring in the full crop is not for restless, feverish fretting souls who, destitute of the grace of patience, think they know more about how to bring in the blessed harvest than the all-wise Creator Himself. In connection with this, we may receive some help from David, who spoke of—

7. The Precious Seed

David assures the seed-sower of the precious reaping: "He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him" (Psa 126:6). Viewing the seed as the Word of God, this verse becomes a heartening stimulus to the faithful laborers in the Master's work, who go about bearing the *precious seed* often under trying conditions. They shall not labor in vain. In the Lord's own good time the precious sown seed shall fruit into a bountiful crop of golden sheaves. "We shall reap, if we faint not" (Gal 6:9).

8. The Precious Death

And, finally, let us consider the precious thing called "*death*." This may sound strange to some of my readers; but we have it in God's Word, and it will surely be to our advantage to try to understand it. All are appointed to die (Heb 9:27), but not all are appointed to the same kind of death. There is a precious death. "Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints" (Psa 116:15). How can the last enemy, which is considered by nearly everybody to be the very worst thing, be called precious? Had the Lord said, Precious in His sight is the life, the love, the service, the faithfulness, the achievements, the victories, and the successes of His saints, we might understand that. But when He says their *death* in His sight is precious, that is something to think about.

Consider one or two reasons. It is precious in the Lord's sight when a Christian dies, because every time it occurs the prayer of Christ is fulfilled. "Father, I will," He prayed, "that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am" (Joh 17:24). It is a great moment when one of His is brought safely home. The believer is

immediately “absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord” (2Co 5:8). Therefore, for a Christian—“to die is gain” for himself as well for his Redeemer (Phi 1:21). It is precious, too, because there are no terrors in death for the Christian. Our Lord by His death has conquered death and the tomb, and has taken the sting out of it (1Co 15:55). Death will but release the Christian from a cruel world, deliver him from the trials of this life, and usher him into his everlasting home.

*If sin be pardoned, I'm secure;
Death hath no sting beside.
The law gives sin its damning power,
But Christ my Ransom died.*

May the Lord give us all an understanding of these wonderful things—the precious faith, precious blood, precious Christ, precious trial, precious promises, precious fruit, precious seed, and precious death—that we may be better servants of His. ✎