

What is Saving Faith?

Sermon delivered on August 31st, 2014

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Text: *Acts 16:25-34*

What must I do to be saved?

We read here a very important question. There is no more important question than this. I am glad that the Bible gives us the answer to this very important question.

The Bible's answer to the question ...

*30: ... **Sirs, what must I do to be saved?***

is...

*31: ... **Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.***

The Bible is clear that salvation is through faith and faith alone.

*Ephesians 2:8 For by grace are ye saved **through faith**; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: 9: Not of works, lest any man should boast.*

It is not in us, not in our good works. It is all of grace. It is a gift of God.

Now I am aware that saving faith is not divorced from repentance...

The Gospel that our John the Baptist preached

*Matthew 3:1 In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, 2: And saying, **Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.***

The Gospel that our Lord preached

*Mark 1:14 Now after that John was put in prison, **Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, 15: And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.***

The Gospel that Apostle Paul preached

*Acts 20:20 And how **I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publickly, and from house to house, 21: Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, **repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.*****

So I am aware that the Bible teaches that we are saved through faith and true saving faith is always coupled with true repentance. Repentance is a genuine sorrow for sin, genuine determination to forsake sin, and a willingness to turn from sin.

Repentance is the hand with which we throw away our sins and faith is the hand with which we lay hold of the Saviour.

We are not saved by throwing away our sins but by taking the Saviour, but we cannot take the Saviour unless at the same time we are throwing away our sins. - A. N. Martin

But today's message is not about repentance. I will talk about repentance in the Sundays to come. But today I want to talk about faith.

Those who truly trusted Jesus Christ will go to Heaven when they die. **However, the same Bible also teaches that not all professed belief in Jesus Christ is truly saving belief in Jesus Christ.** The Bible teaches that there are kinds of faith that are not true and therefore cannot save. The Bible speaks of people who are saved by faith, but the same Bible also speaks of those who have "faith," yet are not saved.

Hebrews 10:38 Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. 39: But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.

But we are not like those who turn away from God to their own destruction, but **we have believed and are saved.**

*1 Corinthians 15:1 Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; 2: By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, **unless ye have believed in vain.***

... unless, of course, your faith is not real and worthless.

There is a faith that saves but there are also kinds of faith that do not save.

Let me say this, someone may be saved without understanding the full truth of faith and repentance, without grasping the reality of the Lordship of Christ, without fully understanding the call to obedience. Their knowledge maybe limited but their conversion and salvation is real.

What am I trying to accomplish in this message?

I want each and every one here this morning to be fully settled in their salvation. Because **unless your settled in this matter of salvation you will be unsettled in many things** - sanctification, service, connection with the church, etc.

What is saving faith?

Let's start by looking on five different spurious faiths.

I - What it is not

1. Demonic faith (faith of the demons)

James 2:19 Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.

The demons, for example, strongly believe in the existence of God and the Lordship of Christ.

In the Gospels, you will see that the demons confess the power, justice, and glory of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Mark 3:7 But Jesus withdrew himself with his disciples to the sea: and a great multitude from Galilee followed him, and from Judaea, 8: And from Jerusalem, and from Idumaea, and from beyond Jordan; and they about Tyre and Sidon, a great multitude, when they had heard what great things he did, came unto him. 9: And he spake to his disciples, that a small ship should

*wait on him because of the multitude, lest they should throng him. 10: For he had healed many; insomuch that they pressed upon him for to touch him, as many as had plagues. 11: **And unclean spirits, when they saw him, fell down before him, and cried, saying, Thou art the Son of God.***

*Matthew 8:28 And when he was come to the other side into the country of the Gergesenes, there met him two possessed with devils, coming out of the tombs, exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way. 29: And, behold, they cried out, saying, **What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? art thou come hither to torment us before the time?** 30: And there was a good way off from them an herd of many swine feeding. 31: **So the devils besought him, saying, If thou cast us out, suffer us to go away into the herd of swine.***

Yet, though the demons believe and tremble at the Lord, their "faith" is not "saving".

2. Dead faith

*James 2:14 What doth it profit, my brethren, **though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?** 15: If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, 16: And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? 17: **Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.** 18: Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works. 19: Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. 18: But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?*

Verses 21-24

Abraham proved his faith by his action - when he offered Isaac upon the altar.

Verse 25

Rahab the harlot proved her faith by her action - when she received the messengers and sent them another way.

*26: **For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.***

The whole burden of these passages is to show that faith that does not produce good works is dead faith.

We are saved by faith alone but the faith that saves is not alone.

When true faith exists, good works will necessarily follow. The good works are not part of faith. It does not make our salvation complete. **We do not do good works in order to be saved, we necessarily do good works because we are already saved.** We do not good works to make our salvation complete. Good works are the outcome of faith. They are the fruit not the root of salvation. They flow from faith. It is faith alone that receives God's gift of justification, but the faith that justifies will never be alone; it will always manifest itself in good works.

3. Historical faith

This is the kind of faith that believes the facts about Christ and His works. He believes in Christ, but only as an article of faith. Mental assent or mental acknowledgment of the existence of Christ. There are millions upon millions of people who acknowledge that there was a man named Jesus who walked on earth more than 2000 years ago. They have mental assent but they do not go beyond head belief.

4. Temporary faith

Luke 8:13 They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away.

In the parable of the sower, the Lord tells us that when the farmer sow the seeds, some fell on the wayside, others on a rocky good, still others on a thorny ground, and still others on a good ground. The seeds represent the Word of God and the ground represents the heart. The Lord continues to tell us that some men "receive the word with joy"—but only for a while. They give up the Lord Jesus either because of persecution or because they are too busy with other things. Again, their enthusiasm for religious things is real, but because it wears off, it's not a saving faith. They turned away because their faith is spurious. It had no root. This does not mean they lost their salvation. No, the Bible is clear that once a person is saved he or she will never lose that salvation. They turned away because their faith was not real in the first place.

1 John 2:18 Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time. 19: They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.

Saving faith is not a temporary faith, that lasts for a time, and then vanishes.

5. Miraculous faith

Faith based on signs and wonders.

John 2:23 Now when he was in Jerusalem at the passover, in the feast day, many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did. 24: But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men, 25: And needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man.

Acts 8:9-18

Acts 8:19 Saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost. 20: But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. 21: Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. 22: Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee.

These are examples of what Paul called "*believed in vain.*" They believed in vain, that is, their faith was not real in the first place.

II - What it is

Two things I want us to understand and remember as we think of true saving faith ...

1. Jesus Christ is the object of true saving faith

30: And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? 31: And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.

The object of true saving faith is the Lord Jesus Christ.

John 3:16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

John 3:36 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.

*Acts 20:21 Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and **faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.***

*John 1:29 The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, **Behold the Lamb of God,** which taketh away the sin of the world.*

Salvation is in a Person. The object of faith is Jesus Christ not simply His teachings or doctrines. Strictly speaking, it is not simply acknowledging or even believing the fact that He died and rose again. Before I got saved, I believed all those facts about Christ and yet I was still lost.

Again, it is the person who is the object of saving faith. To be more accurate the object of saving faith is not, the atonement, but **the Lord Jesus Christ, Who made atonement.** It is the Lord Jesus Christ who died and rose from the dead.

*Romans 10:9 That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. 10: For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. 11: For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. 12: For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. 13: **For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.***

Trust His Person. Believe, not simply upon His saving death, but upon Him, the living Saviour.

There must be a trustful attachment to Christ not just His teachings and doctrines and even His work.

*John 1:12 But as many as **received him**, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:*

*Matthew 11:28 **Come unto me**, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29: Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. 30: For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.*

Acts 4:10 Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole. 11: This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. 12: Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

2. Jesus Christ is the Saviour not Faith

Faith is just the means or the channel. Faith is not the Saviour. The Lord Jesus Christ is the Saviour.

It is not faith itself that saves but through faith. Faith is simply the means by which we become connected to the grace of God. Faith is the instrument that God uses to bring individuals into a saving relationship with Himself.

2 Timothy 3:14 But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; 15: And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

The wisdom of the Holy Scriptures with regard to salvation is that salvation is in Christ Jesus through the means of faith

The saving power of faith resides thus not in itself, but in the Almighty Saviour on whom it rests... It is not, strictly speaking, even faith in Christ that saves, but that Christ saves through faith. - B.B. Warfield

How much faith do I need in order for me to be saved?

The question is not in the strength of your faith but it is the strength of the One you are trusting in. You may take a sleeping pill for your stomach with strong faith. But no matter how strong your faith may be in that sleeping pill, your stomach ache will not go away. You must take the right medicine if you are to be healed.

The question is not, *how much faith does a person need to be saved?* But the question is, *what kind of faith does a person need to be saved?* And the answer is rather simple: Biblical faith.

What must I do to be saved?

We come full circle. Let me ask the question again? **What must a man, a woman, a boy a girl do to be saved?** The answer is not in ourselves – in what we do; not in our church – in what the church can do; not in a fellow sinner – priest, pastor, rabbi can do for us. It is wholeheartedly trusting the Christ who died and rose again from the dead!

30: And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? 31: And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.

If I ever to be forgiven, I must look to the source completely outside myself and I must completely and exclusively and solely in the Person and Work of the Lord Jesus Christ, who lived a perfect life, who died the sinner's death, rose from the dead on the third day and who sits at the right hand of God Almighty.

Have you believed? Do you believe? Have you placed your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ and Him alone? Do you have that saving attachment to Jesus Christ through faith?

2 Timothy 1:12 For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.

Come to Jesus! He is waiting. He will save you. Come to Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith!