

WHAT IS SAVING FAITH?

(HOW DO I KNOW IF MY FAITH IS THE REAL THING?)

By

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What is "Saving" faith? Have you ever heard a preacher use this terminology before, and wondered if the faith that you have is "Saving" faith? Perhaps you have heard someone say before that the only difference between a person going to Heaven or Hell is the difference between that person having a "Head" knowledge rather than having a "Heart" knowledge of Christ; and you were left to wonder if your knowledge of Christ was in your *head* or in your *heart*. Some preachers quote (2Co 13:5) **Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?**

Those preachers will then explain that we all need to examine ourselves to see if we are "in the faith" and thus prove to ourselves that we are saved. Now, while I certainly believe that every person should soberly consider his relationship with God, I do not believe in this type of fearful and fruitless introspection. Paul did encourage the Corinthians to examine themselves, but it was only because the Corinthians had begun to question Paul's authority over them. Paul responded, therefore, by saying, "**Since you seek a proof of Christ speaking in me...examine yourselves...**" In other words, since you were saved under *my* ministry, you are the biggest proof that God is speaking through me.

Whether it is due to something that we have heard at church or perhaps even a scripture that we misunderstand, there are many things that can confuse us about the matter of faith, and leave us afraid that our faith may not be the "real thing". But I have good news for you friend - you CAN know that *your* faith is "*saving*" faith. And, by God's grace, I would like to show you how you can know in this message.

But before we can understand what *saving* faith is, we must first understand what it means to be *saved*; so let's touch on that just a moment: *Salvation* means that God, 2000 years ago, *saved* you from the

awful and eternal consequences of your sin – the breaking of His commandments. God accomplished this salvation by sending His son Jesus to perfectly keep those commandments on your behalf, and then to endure your death-penalty for the commandments that you would break, by dying as a substitute in your place. So, when Christ died on the Cross, he took full responsibility for each sin that you would ever commit and *saved* you from the condemnation of that sin by being condemned in your place. Now listen friend, this means that your *salvation* is already finished. The Bible says in [Rom 5:6](#) **For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.**

Since Christ died for us, therefore, we must understand that our salvation was accomplished in him 2000 years ago, long before you and I were ever born, and thus it was accomplished completely apart from us and completely apart from our *faith*, we being not yet alive for our faith to exist. So reader, make no mistake about this; it is not your *faith* that saves; it is Jesus [who saves]! In fact, when people seek assurance of salvation by examining their faith, they will often find themselves rather sinking into a quagmire of doubt. Why? Because, like a ship in a storm, the sailor will not feel secure when he considers his anchor, but when he considers the rock upon which his anchor rests. Therefore, our assurance does not come by examining our *faith*, but by examining *Jesus*, upon whom our faith rests.

"But [you may say], "I thought that the Bible says that we are saved by *faith*!" Well, that's true, but only in the sense that faith simply lays hold upon the *salvation* that God has already provided us in Jesus. This way, once I place my faith in *Jesus*, it is no longer a question of whether my *faith* is sufficient enough for me to go to Heaven, but if *Jesus* is sufficient enough for me to go to Heaven! Listen to what the Lord says in [Isa 45:22](#) **Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.** Listen to what Jesus says in [Joh 6:40](#) **And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one who sees the *Son*, and believes on him, should have everlasting life.**... Reader, you will only find peace, when you look for it in Jesus. Mark this down: if you ever let the Devil trick you into looking at your faith, you will never be satisfied with it. You will always find some fault with your faith. This is because you are an imperfect person, therefore you have an imperfect faith; so what you need to do is just take that imperfect faith and place it in the perfect Son of God.

Jesus said, **And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one who sees the Son, and believes on him, should have everlasting life...** He said, **Look unto me, and be ye saved.** Friend, don't *look* at your *look*. Look at Jesus!

"But [you may say] I am not sure that my faith yet understands enough for me to be saved!"

ILLUSTRATION: When I was small boy, I remember going to a friend's house to enjoy a swim party that his parents were hosting that day. Now, the only problem was, I didn't know how to swim. So, when I went into my friend's back yard, I was directed to the shallow end of the pool, which was clearly marked by a rope. Unfortunately, however, I didn't know what the rope meant, so I eventually crossed under it to venture toward the deep end of the pool. To this day, I still get a sick feeling in my stomach when I think back to what I felt like as I helplessly sank down into the deep water. The only thing I knew to do was to hold my breath. I remember opening my eyes [while under the water] and seeing my friend entering into the middle of the pool with a splash. I then remember seeing my friend, who had no idea of the danger that I was in, swim to the side of the pool where the ladder was. Fortunately for me, as my friend began climbing up the ladder to get out of the pool, one of his feet, for a brief moment, passed within my reach and (to his surprise) I took hold of his ankle and was pulled to safety before I drowned. As an adult, I have often thought back on how close I came to death that day and have thanked God for loving me enough to send that boy my way to keep me from dying. You see, if my hands could have saved me, they would have swam for me, but they didn't know how. So instead, they did something else - they took hold of someone who could - someone whom God, in His love, had ordained to send my way.

Now friend, when I took hold of that foot, I didn't know my remaining oxygen level or the depth of the water that I was in; neither did I know the water's temperature nor understand the principals of buoyancy. The only thing I knew was that God had provided that foot as a way to escape, and that I would die in that water if I did not take hold of it. You see, faith is not so much *comprehension*, as it is *apprehension*. And it does not belong to a man who understands the depth of scripture, but to a man who understands that God has provided him a way to escape, and that he will die in his sin if he does not take hold of it. So saving faith is not so much an *educated mind* as it is a *motivated hand* - a hand that sees the Cross within its reach and lays hold of a nail pierced foot before it dies.

But, perhaps your fear is not that your faith does not *know* enough, but that your faith is not *strong* enough. Perhaps you know a great deal about the Gospel. Perhaps you remember a time once when you stood at the Cross and your faith held a bleeding and dying Jesus in full assurance that by his stripes you were healed. But you have had awful temptations since then. Your mind has been severely assaulted by the Devil and you have been shaken from the steady ground upon which you once rested, and now you fear that your faith does not hold on to Christ tight enough. Or, perhaps you are a new believer. Perhaps indeed you have placed your faith in Jesus alone for your salvation, but the faith that attaches you to him seems to you to be as weak and thin as a spider's silk; and you feel that if only your faith was like iron, locked and chained to Jesus, then you would be safe. Oh friend, please remember, it is not your *faith* that saves you, it is *Jesus* who saves you. And, though your faith be as weak as a bruised reed or a smoldering fire, which seems to you to be so vulnerable and capable of dying out, if it be but placed in Jesus alone, it might as well have the strength of a steel rod or the heat of the sun itself. The Bible says in [Mat 12:20-21](#) **A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory. (21) And in his name shall the Gentiles trust.** The Bible says in [Rom 5:6](#) that it was **when we were yet without strength** that Christ died for us. Jesus said in John 6:37, **...the one who comes to Me I will in no way cast out.**

The fact is, it doesn't matter to God whether you come leaping to Jesus, walking to Jesus, crawling to Jesus, or even if you're so weak that you must, like the lame man, be carried to Jesus; it only matters that you come to Jesus. The reason for this lies in the nature of what faith is. You see, faith is NOT substance; faith is merely someone's hope [trust] in one substance or another. By its very nature, therefore, faith, having no substance in itself, can only be measured - can only be judged by the substance on which its hope rests. That's why the Bible says in [Heb 11:1](#), **Now faith is the substance of things hoped for...** Listen to what the word of God says in [Lev 1:1-4](#) **And the LORD called unto Moses, and spake unto him out of the tabernacle of the congregation, saying, (2) Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, If any man of you bring an offering unto the LORD, ye shall**

bring your offering of the cattle, *even* of the herd, and of the flock. (3) If his offering *be* a burnt sacrifice of the herd, let him offer a male without blemish: he shall offer it of his own voluntary will at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation before the LORD. (4) **And he shall put his hand upon the head of the burnt offering; and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him.** In this passage, God told Moses that, whenever an Israelite brought an offering unto the LORD, then that man was to put his hand upon the head of the sacrificed animal. And, when he did, it would be accepted to make atonement for him. Listen again to verse (4) **And he shall put his hand upon the head of the burnt offering; and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him.**

Now, why did God credit this sacrifice to the man when he placed his hand upon it? It was because, when the man placed his hand on the animal, he was *identifying* himself with it. Now, this is a very common principal. Think about it: what do we usually do when we want to have our photograph taken with somebody special to us? We get close to that person and put our hand somewhere on that person's shoulder or back. And what does that signify? It signifies our acceptance of that person and our willingness to identify ourselves with him. So, in the Old Testament, whenever someone offered a sacrifice to God, he would lay his hand on the sacrificial animal to signify his acceptance of it and to identify himself with it. Seeing that the man had thus linked himself with the offering, therefore, God would credit the sacrifice to the man's account and his sin would be forgiven. So you see, God was not so much concerned with the *strength* of the man's hand, as he was with the *placement* of the man's hand. Whether he was a strong man who gripped the sacrifice or a feeble man who could merely lay his trembling hand upon it, the promise was still the same: **...he shall put his hand upon the head of the burnt offering; and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him.**

Now we know that those Old Testament sacrifices were only a symbol of Jesus' sacrifice in the New Testament. But Jesus is not on the Cross anymore, so that we can go lay our hand on him. Rather, in the New Testament, our faith becomes to us a hand, which is laid upon Christ when we rely on him as the sacrifice for our sin. And God, knowing that

we have thus identified ourselves with Christ, credits his death to our account and our sin is forgiven. So, in the Old Testament they *laid their hand* on the sacrifice; but in the New Testament we *believe on* the sacrifice.

What is saving faith? The Bible says in [Joh 3:18](#) **He that believeth on him is not condemned...** That's because faith that's placed on the One who saves, is saving faith indeed. Jesus said in [Mat 17:20](#) ...**I f ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.** So you see friend, you don't need to be afraid; you just need to take your feeble, weak and ignorant faith and place it where God placed your sin...on Jesus.

Whether you come leaping or lame, just come to Jesus, and he shall be accepted to make atonement for you. So believe His word, and, like the old hymn, say to Jesus...

*Just as I am
tho' tossed about
with many a conflict
many a doubt
fightings within
and fears without
oh Lamb of God
I come!
I come!*

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