

A good Look at Saving Faith

Sunday, August 30th, 1987

Mark 9:23-24

“Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth. And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.”

I’m going to speak to you today on this subject: “A GOOD LOOK AT SAVING FAITH.” I’ve selected as my text a passage of Scripture from the Book of Mark. If you want to follow along in your Bible, you can open it to the book of Mark, Chapter 9. I’m going to read verses, 23 and 24.

“And Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe all things are possible to him that believeth. And straight way the father of the child cried out, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.”

Now, these are the words of a father who had brought his poor, sick, demon-possessed son to the Lord Jesus Christ and asked Him to heal him. That is what the Master said to the father; *“If you can believe, everything is possible to them that believe.”* That is when he said, *“Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.”*

I can truthfully say before our blessed Lord; I do believe. Can you say that, “I do believe?” I also have to say with this man in Mark Chapter 9, *“Lord, help mine unbelief.”* I feel so often my imperfect faith. I cry with the disciples of old, *“Lord, increase my faith.”* I must constantly examine my faith in the light of God’s Word.

Do you know what Paul said in 2 Corinthians? Paul said, *“Examine yourselves.”* This is not a once for all thing; this is a continual investigation, a continual inventory. He said, *“Examine yourselves whether you be in the faith.”*

“There is one Lord, one faith and one baptism. There is one body and Father of all.” He said, *“You examine yourselves whether you be in the faith. Know ye not your own selves how that Christ dwelleth in you except you be reprobate?”*

In 1 Corinthians Chapter 11, Paul said that when the church comes together to observe the Lord’s Table, even before eating the bread and drinking the wine, to *“Let a man examine himself.”* Examine himself for what? To discern whether or not he has saving faith, whether or not he does truly discern the Lord’s broken body and shed blood.

I will tell you this, death is just too certain. *“It is appointed unto men once to die (and judgment is too sure) and after that the judgment.”* Eternity is just too long to be presumptuous about this matter of saving faith.

I like what John Newton said. He is the author of the song “Amazing Grace” that everyone claims to love so much. John Newton said, “When I get to heaven I am sure that three things are going to amaze me.”

First of all: John Newton said, “I am going to be amazed because there are going to be some people there that I never expected to see in the presence of God.”

Second: He said, “I know that I will be amazed at the fact that there are some people who will be missing that I thought would be there.” But, he said, as he humbly spoke; “The greatest, most wonderful, amazing thing of all will be to find this old sinner standing in the presence of a Holy God.”

Do you believe and can you say; *“Lord, help thou mine unbelief?”* I want us to take a good look at this subject, this matter of saving faith today. Everything that goes by the name of “faith” is not saving faith. Throughout the Word of God, religionists have had much that looked like faith, but was not faith at all.

You see; Satan is a great imitator; he is a counterfeiter. There are a lot of things that go under the name of “faith” that is not faith at all. For example: These religious Pharisees acknowledged God to be their Father. They said to the Lord Jesus Christ in John, the 8th Chapter; *“We are not born of fornication.”*

They were saying that they were not Gentiles, pagans or heathens. They were saying that they were not born in sin. They said, *“We have one Father, even God.”* What did our Lord say to them? *“Why, you are of your father the devil. His works will you do. If you were of God, you would love Me; I came from God.”* They still insisted that God was their Father.

They not only acknowledged God to be their Father but these religionists in the New Testament spoke well of Christ. Nicodemus who served on the Sanhedrin, who was a Pharisee, a ruler of the Jews said; *“We know that You come from God; no man could do the miracles that You do, except God be with him.”* He acknowledged that Christ was some great man.

When our Lord asked the disciples, *“Whom do men say that I, the Son of Man am?”* They replied, *“Some say that You are John the Baptist, some say that You are Elijah, some say that You are one of the prophets, that You are a great teacher.”*

Pilate said, *“I find no fault in Him.”* The soldiers who came back one day having been sent to arrest Him, said this; *“No man has ever spake like this man.”* So, these people spake well of Christ but that is not saving faith.

These people reformed the outward man. The Pharisees stood in the temple and said, *“I thank you God that I’m not like other men. I fast, I tithe, I give alms to the poor, I’m not an adulterer, I’m not an extortioner, I’m not unjust and I’m not even like that Publican.”* Our Lord said, *“He went home unsaved, unjustified, not knowing God,”* though he had carefully cleaned up the outside of the cup.

Then, they got excited. These religionists get excited over a kingdom, over a Messianic kingdom. They got excited over good times and the rule of God on the earth. In fact, when our Lord rode into Jerusalem on the donkey, the people laid palm branches before Him. Do you remember when He rode into Jerusalem? They took off their coats and laid them on the ground in front of Him and bowed to Him. They waved the palm branches and said; *“Hosanna, blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord.”*

They thought He was going to set up a kingdom, a Jewish kingdom in Jerusalem and reign. There are people today that insist that this is the thing that they are interested in. They are interested in the second coming, the Millennium, the Jewish kingdom, the Messianic kingdom in Jerusalem.

These folks got excited about that too! A few days later they were crying, *“Crucify Him; we will not have this man reign over us. We will have “good-time Charlie,”* but He is not going to reign over us. He is not going to be our Lord.”

You see, this was not saving faith. There is a lot that goes by the name of “faith” that is not saving faith. These people experienced sorrow over sin. They experienced a form of repentance.

The Scripture says, *“Esau sought repentance with tears.”* He did a lot of crying. Judas, who betrayed the Lord and sold Him for 18 pieces of silver, came back and cast it on the floor. He said, *“I’ve done wrong; I’ve betrayed innocent blood.”* But, then he went out and hanged himself.

These people with this faith that is not saving faith also give large gifts to the church. They write big checks. They give large sums of money. Ananias and Sapphira did; they went down and sold their property and came and laid part of it at the disciple's feet.

Peter said, *"You are a liar before God; you lied before the Holy Ghost"* and God killed them both. They carried them out of the church feet first, though they gave large gifts to the church. You can't buy God's favor.

Sometimes, they are baptized and join the church; Simon Magus did; he was baptized. After he was baptized he tried to buy what they call the *"Gift of the Holy Ghost,"* restoring power upon men as God had given to the disciples. Peter said, *"Your heart is not right with God; you are in the gall of bitterness."* This was so of him, though he had been baptized and joined the church.

These people can also walk with preachers. Demas was the companion of the apostle Paul but he left him, *"Having loved the present world."* They reformed; not only reformed but performed great works in the name of Christ.

At the very judgment of God they stood there and said; *"Lord, we've done many wonderful works in Your name. In Your name we have cast out devils; in Your name we have prophesied."* He said, *"I never knew you; depart from Me ye that work, (not great works), ye that work iniquity."*

You see; all of this was a sham and hypocrisy. God said of them, *"You are they that justify yourselves before men."* He said, *"God knows your heart and that which is highly esteemed among men."* This sort of thing is highly esteemed among men.

I'm talking about the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. I'm talking about what a great prophet Jesus Christ was and how important it is to reform the outward man and how important it is to have a great Messianic kingdom. But this is not saving faith.

Also, there is this thing of giving and sending money to the television programs, sending money to the church, giving large gifts and being baptized. There is the baptism of the Holy Ghost and some people will say, *"I'm a friend of the preacher and I'm a life-time partner. I'm performing all of these things, building these mighty buildings. I'm doing great things in the name of God."*

Well, I will tell you this; this thing of saving faith is not doing; faith is believing with the heart. I do know that saving faith does involve the mind; there is no question about that. Faith does not bypass the mind by any means. Saving faith involves the understanding.

There are some facts that I have heard and there are some facts that I believe. *“How can they believe on Him who they have not heard; how shall they hear without a preacher?”* So, there are some things that I know and there are some things that I believe mentally.

I have an understanding of these things as I read them in the Word as some of you do. I believe God’s Word. I believe that this is God’s Word; *“Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.”* I do believe God’s Word.

Second: I believe that *“God is, and that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.”* God is and God is merciful and *“God is plenteous in redemption.”*

I believe that in *“Adam all die.”* That is what the Scripture says; *“By one man sin entered this world and death by sin, so death passed upon all men.”* I am a sinner and you are a sinner. *“All have sinned and come short of the glory of God. There is none that doeth good, no not one. There is none that seeketh after God, there is none that understandeth, all we like sheep have gone astray.”* I don’t have any problem with that and you shouldn’t have.

We are sinners by birth, by practice, by nature, by choice and imagination, word, thought and deed. I could go on and on. I believe that God, the Eternal, Almighty, and Living God in mercy and grace from all eternity in a Covenant of Grace has purposed to save a people.

He said, *“Out of every tribe, kindred, nation and tongue under heaven, He has a people.”* He has not left Himself without a people. Heaven is going to be populated, the new heaven and the new earth. God is going to have a people like Christ.

I do believe that redemption, this thing of salvation and redemption is pictured and patterned in the Old Testament in type, in sacrifice, in promise and in prophecy from Genesis 3:15 to Malachi. You have all of the types, patterns and pictures, sacrifices, feast days and Sabbath Days which foreshadow Christ and reveal Christ and preaches Christ.

In the New Testament, all of those promises, pictures and patterns are fulfilled in the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ into this world. I believe that and I know that to be true! *“God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son.”* God sent His Son into this world. Christ came and is fulfilled in His coming, His obedience and death in all the Old Testament Scriptures. *“He died for our sins according to the Scriptures.”*

I do believe and I know this in my head and with my understanding that Christ was born of woman and He lived a perfect life and He wrought out and accomplished a perfect holiness and perfect obedience for all whom He represented.

He went to the cross of Calvary and there He died under the wrath of God to bring us to God, to put away our sins. *“It is the blood of Christ that maketh atonement for the soul. He was buried and rose again and ascended up to the right hand of the majesty in heaven.”* I believe those things.

These things must be preached. These are facts that must be heard. God does not bypass the mind. You can't call on Him to whom you haven't believed. You can't believe in Him of whom you haven't heard and you can't hear with the heart until you hear with the ear. That is just so!

Saving faith not only involves the mind and the understanding, but saving faith is a heart work. It is deeper than the mind and is deeper than the understanding. It reaches to the heart of hearts. It reaches to the soul and the affection, the primary affection.

The Scripture says, *“If thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus to be Lord.”* I can confess what I have heard and what I mentally understand. *“But, believe in thine heart God raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness.”* It is a heart faith.

Saving faith involves the mind and the understanding. Saving faith involves the laying hold mentally of the facts that God has given in the record concerning His Son. Saving faith goes deeper than that; it believes God; it lays hold of God; it seeks the Lord with the inner self.

He said, *“My son, give Me your heart.”* He doesn't want your gifts, your time and talents; He wants your heart. When He has you He has all of those things. *“The love of God is shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost. The Lord saveth such as be of a contrite heart and a broken heart. Keep thy heart, out of it are the issues of life.”*

The people that are on this earth when our Lord came down to the world, said to all of those religious folks; *“They call Me Lord with their lips but their hearts are far from Me.”* That is what I am talking about. It is not lip worship, it is not bodily exercise; it is a saving, living, personal, intimate, vital union with the Living God in the heart and soul. That is saving faith!

You see, it is heart faith that brings a man into a living union with Christ. It is heart faith that makes a person a new creature in Christ Jesus. It is heart faith that causes a person to forsake all and follow Christ. It is a heart faith that makes a person love God and love others more than himself. It is a heart faith that produces the fruit of the Holy Spirit, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness and humility. That is a heart faith that produces that.

That is the reason that you have so many ornery, religious folks. That is the reason that you have so much trouble in religious homes, trouble in religious organizations and trouble in churches. You have troubles in these schools and all other places. It is because it takes a heart faith to produce the fruit of the Spirit.

Mental agreement with facts will never do it. It is a heart faith that makes a submissive wife, a loving husband, an obedient child, a good workman and a generous boss. It takes heart faith. It is heart faith that rejoices in Christ Jesus and has, "*No confidence in this flesh.*" It is this heart faith that makes a person a giving person, a forgiving person, a generous, merciful, person. That is heart faith.

It is heart faith that says, "*Not my will but Thy will be done.*" It is a heart faith that continues in the faith in spite of the heaviest trial, trouble, affliction and difficulty. Head faith quits. Do you have any folks quitting down at your church? They are always quitting, always getting mad, always resigning.

Heart faith never quits. "*It believeth all things, beareth all things, hopeth all things and doeth all things.*" That is heart faith. Heart faith worships God faithfully and identifies with His people. It is heart faith that looks on the things of others more than on the things of your own welfare. It is a heart faith that "*counts all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.*"

It is a heart faith that says, "*O that I may win Christ and be found in Him.*" It is a heart faith that cries, "*O that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection.*" It is a heart faith that says, "*For me to live is Christ and to die is gain.*" It is a heart faith that says, "*I am in a straight betwixt the two, having a desire to depart and to be with Christ which is far better.*" It is a heart faith that lives, speaks, prays, walks and works for the glory of God in all things. That is heart faith!

That is the reason that the Scriptures insist that saving faith is a work in the heart. God doesn't bypass the mind. I insisted on that a moment ago. A man cannot believe what he hasn't heard, a man can't believe what he doesn't know, and a man can't rest in what he hasn't received.

You can't tell what you don't know. I know that God reveals. He gives the record concerning His Son to the ear and the Holy Ghost makes it real to the heart. When that Divine miracle of grace and that operation of the Spirit of God takes place you have on your hands a, *"New creature in Christ Jesus."*

He has conflicts, battles, toils and troubles and trials. *"He set His face, like a flint, and I shall not be moved by the grace of God."*

I can tell you this, and I want to impress it upon you before I leave you; a religionist can produce outward experiences, feelings and even works. They can produce some amazing things. Our Lord said, *"In the last days, false Christ's shall arise and deceive many."* They will say, "Here is Christ and there is Christ, and will deceive many. *"If it were possible, they would deceive the very elect."*

So, Satan is the great imitator and counterfeiter. There are four things that he cannot imitate. There are four things that the false religionist cannot experience or produce. This is involved in saving faith. I will give you the four of them:

First of all: A false religionist cannot produce a genuinely broken heart toward God over his own sin. Listen to David in Psalm 51; this is a man after God's own heart, *"Have mercy upon me O God, according to Thy loving kindness, according to the multitude of Thy tender mercies, blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly; cleanse me from my sin."*

Oh, men may talk about sin in general. They will say, "Everybody is a sinner, preacher." Wait a minute now! I'm not talking about everybody I am talking about you. We are not talking about everybody; we are talking about you and me. David said, *"I acknowledge my transgressions. my sin is ever before me."*

Men may make knowledge of their faults but not their sins. They may acknowledge their faults before men but not before God. David said, *"Lord; I have sinned against Thee and Thee only."* David said, *"Lord; you are just when you condemned me."*

Listen to this in Psalm 51:4; *"Thou are just when Thou speakest and clear when you condemn me."* Have you ever been there? Only the Spirit of God can bring a man to that place. A false religionist will run around and talk about his works, deeds and duties but he never talks about his sin. He never pleads for mercy.

Second: The religionist will never acknowledge that he has no goodness of his own. He thinks that he has goodness. He thinks that he has righteousness. He goes about to establish righteousness in the face of the fact that God said, *“Man at his best state is altogether vanity.”*

Isaiah said, *“We all do fade as the leaf. Our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.”* Paul said, *“In the flesh dwelleth no good thing. In the flesh no man can please God.”*

The very best work that any human being has ever performed apart from the cleansing blood of Christ is an abomination in the sight of God, even the plowing of the wicked.

We haven't repented until we have repented of that sinful principle of nature of which we were born, of our sins that we have done, and even of our own righteousness. There is enough sin in the best deed that you have ever done to damn you. There is enough self in it, sin in it, and pride in it to damn your soul. *“To offend in one point of the Law is to be guilty of all of it.”*

Oh yes! Our righteousnesses are no good. They must be cleansed too. Even my tears need to be bathed in the blood of Christ. Even my repentance needs to be repented of.

Third: The false religionist will never bow to God's absolute Sovereignty in salvation; he won't do it. He believes that God has something to do with salvation, but not everything. The Bible says, *“Salvation is of the Lord.”* The Word of God says, *“The Son quickeneth and maketh alive whom He will.”* The Bible says, *“It is not of him that willeth nor of him that runneth but of God that showeth mercy.”* The Bible says, *“I will be merciful to whom I will be merciful. Lord, if you will; you can make me clean.”*

Fourth: The false religionist will never receive Jesus Christ alone as his total, complete, acceptance before God Almighty:

In my hands no price I bring
Simply to the Christ of the cross I cling.

Christ is all and *“We are complete in Him.”*