

The Faith That Saves

Sunday, May 04, 1986

Romans 5:1

“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Here is my sermon for today: “THE FAITH THAT SAVES.” There is a saving faith. The Scripture says in Romans 5:1, *“Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”*

I wish that I could impress on all of my hearers the importance of faith. The Scriptures continually emphasize the fact that salvation is by the grace of God through faith. This is emphasized again, again, and again; salvation is by grace and is the gift of God through faith.

“We are kept by the power of God through faith.” It says in Hebrews 11:6, *“Without faith it is impossible to please God. He that cometh to God must believe that He is and must believe that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.”*

Paul says in Ephesians 2: 8 and 9, *“For by grace, (unmerited favor and undeserved favor) are you saved through faith, (not without faith, but through faith) and that not of yourselves, (that faith is the gift of God), not of works, lest any man should boast.”*

We are so familiar with this Scripture; maybe we are too familiar with some Scriptures, maybe we just read over them carelessly and lightly and don't pay any attention to what God is saying. Four times it is recorded in Habakkuk, Romans, Galatians, and Hebrews this is stated; *“The just shall live by faith;”* that is, the justified shall live by faith.

In Mark 16:16, when our Lord sent His disciples out to preach the Gospel, He told them; *“All power is given to me in heaven and earth; go ye therefore and preach the Gospel to every creature and he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved. He that believeth not shall be damned.”*

Peter, when he was talking to our Lord (before the Master went to the cross), said; *“Lord, I will go with you to death. I will never deny you.”* Christ said, *“You are going to deny me three times before the cock crows. Peter, I have prayed for you that your faith fail not.”*

Believers live by faith. *“By faith, Abel offered a more excellent sacrifice than Cain. By faith, Enoch was translated that he should not see death for he had this testimony that he*

pleased God.” How did he please God? He pleased God by faith. “Without faith it is impossible to please God.”

“By faith, Abraham offered Isaac. By faith, Noah prepared an ark being warned of God of things not seen. By faith, Moses refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter.”

Our Lord said this to a Centurion who had a son who was possessed of evil spirits. He said, *“If you can believe.”* Can you who are listening believe? Christ said, *“If you can believe, all things are possible to them that believe.”*

Then, there was the Philippian jailor. He asked the apostle Paul, *“What sirs, what must I do to be saved?”* Paul said, *“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved and thy house.”*

What is involved in this matter of believing God? Let me give you two Scriptural illustrations:

Over in the book of 2nd Timothy 1:12, when Paul was in prison. He was writing to young Timothy and he said to him, *“Timothy; don’t be ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, of the testimony of Christ.”*

He also said to Timothy, *“Don’t be ashamed of me, the Lord’s prisoner.”* Paul was in prison in Rome when he wrote this particular epistle. *“Timothy, don’t be ashamed to be a partaker, (you, yourself), of the sufferings that are caused by the preaching of the Gospel.”*

In verse 12, he said; *“I suffer these things myself; I have gone to prison; I have been stoned; I have been shipwrecked; I have had false witnesses bear witness against me, both in the church and out of the church.”* Paul said again; *“I am not ashamed for I know whom I have believed and I am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him against that day.”*

When Paul said these words, he gave us the best, Scriptural, definition of faith to be found in the Word of God, for faith is made up of three things and Paul deals with all three of them right here:

First of all, faith is born of knowledge. You cannot trust an unrevealed Christ. You can’t believe what you haven’t heard. You can’t call on Him in whom you haven’t believed and you can’t believe in Him of whom you haven’t heard.

Paul said, *"I know whom I have believed;"* What he is saying is this; "I know who He is, I know who the God-man is. I know who Jesus Christ is. I know what people say about Him, but I know who He is. I know He came from heaven and I know why He came to this earth."

He came down here to die on a cross to perfectly fulfill the Law and to give to us a righteousness which God requires and which we absolutely must have and in which we cannot produce. He died for our sins.

I know why He came to this earth; I know what He did and I know where He is now; *"Having purged our sins, He is seated at the right hand of the Majesty on High."* Paul says, *"I know whom I have believed."*

I want you to note this; He didn't say in this definition of faith, "I know when I believed." That is not important. He didn't say, "I know what system of doctrine or creed I believe," he said; *"I know whom I believe."* Christ is our creed.

You see; you don't arrive at Christ through doctrine, you arrive at doctrine through Christ. You have to find out who the Teacher is and then you learn what He has to say. So, *"I know whom I have believed."* That is the first thing that must be settled in this matter of faith, the object of faith, which is Christ.

Secondly: The second words are persuasion or confidence. He said, *"I am persuaded that He is able to keep,"* I am confident and He is able.

You see; if I was greatly in debt and I owed a million dollars and a man came to me and said, "Brother Mahan, I know that you owe all this money but I am going to pay off every bill you have." Whether or not I rejoice or whether or not I believe that, depends on two things. First of all: There must be a willingness to do it and secondly there must be ability for him to do it.

If some of you would come to me and say, "How much do you owe" and I would say, "I owe a half a million dollars, and you would say that you would pay it off," I would just laugh at you. You might be willing but you are not able. If a man is both willing and able then I can find some joy in that.

Christ is able; He is the only one who is *"able to do all that He promised;"* the Bible says that. *"He is able to present us faultless before His presence with exceeding joy. He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him. He is able to raise our vile bodies;"* He is able."

Christ is able because of who He is, because of what He did and where He is now. He is in the throne-room; *“He is at the right hand of the Majesty on High.”* That is what Paul is saying, “Here is his definition of faith; *“I know whom I have believed.”*”

He does not believe in a church, he believes Christ. He does not believe in himself, he believes Christ. He does not believe the preacher or the priest, he believes in Christ. He does not believe in a system, he believes in Christ; He is my Advocate. He knows him and he knows that He is able.

Thirdly: Faith is a committal, because he knows. He is confident, persuaded and knows *“that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him.”* I’m not saying that this was something that he thought about, or what he thought about giving to him. No, he is saying; *“I know that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him.”*

He committed it to Christ and cast it all upon Him. He submitted to Him and received Him as his Lord and Saviour. He cast himself, soul and body, on Jesus Christ alone. *“I know whom I have believed and I am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him against that day.”* I’m talking about that Day of Judgment, that day of restitution of all things, *“that day when God will judge the world by that man Jesus Christ,”* whom we have crucified.

Here is another definition of faith: This is found in Hebrews 11:1. This is one that just about everybody quotes but not too many folks understand. It says in Hebrews 11:1; *“Now, faith is the substance of things hoped for.”* That should get our attention!

What are we hoping for? We are hoping for justification, forgiveness of sins, and acceptance with God; that is what I am hoping for. We are hoping for eternal life. I am hoping for the resurrection and to be like Christ.

Faith is the substance. What does the word *“substance”* mean? The word *“substance”* means the ground or basis. The word *“substance”* means support. So, faith is the support and the ground of things hoped for which is the Word of God.

The Word of God is our substance, our ground, and our support for faith. David said, *“I believe; therefore, have I spoken.”* That is why I speak; I believe the Word of God. You see, the promise of God is as good as an act of God. If God promises something in His Word, it is as good as done. That is our support and that is our ground and basis.

We hope of justification, why? God said, *"We are justified by faith."* We hope for the forgiveness of sins, why? God says, *"In whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of our sin, through His blood."* What God promises He will do. Faith is the grounds or support of those things that are hoped for.

You have to have faith in the Word of God. Faith believes the Word of God. I'm not talking about believing some preacher, but the Word of God. Please listen to this and let me give you an illustration which I read not long ago.

Faith is not in a preacher, a system or feeling; it is in Christ and the Word of God, what God says in His Word. There is a couple by the name of Parker. I know their first name but I won't bother to give it to you. This couple, Mr. and Mrs. Parker, went to church to a revival meeting with their 11 year old son, Wesley.

Wesley was a diabetic and was kept alive by insulin like thousands of other people. They went to a big-time meeting that was advertised as a "holy-ghost revival meeting". At the climax of the service, the visiting evangelist invited people to come down to the front to be healed. This is a true story.

The Parkers went forward and took the 11 year old, diabetic son, Wesley, for the preacher to lay his hands on him and heal him. The visiting evangelist laid hands on Wesley and pronounced him healed. The preacher said that he was healed.

Well, Mr. and Mrs. Parker went home rejoicing. The Parkers were sincere people; they were not hypocrites; they believed the preacher. The preacher said that Wesley was healed. They didn't give Wesley any insulin any more, within three days he died.

Maybe, his parents were simple folks but they listened to the wrong voice; they listened to a preacher instead of listening to God, instead of listening to the Word of God. The Word of God does not promise that everyone that I lay hands on will be healed.

The Word of God does not promise that I will heal everybody; somebody has to die. God does heal; all healing is of God. Do you know how this pastor summed this thing up, the pastor of that church? He said, "I never meant to encourage people to gamble that much on faith."

Brethren; true faith is not a gamble! True faith in the Word of God is a sure thing. In the Word of God you have to believe what God says; let the Word of God be your testimony; it is not what some man says. If you follow men, it is a gamble and it is worse than a gamble; it is fatal, but not if you follow God's Word.

You see; faith is the substance. If you ask me to give you an “*answer for the reason of the hope that is in me,*” that reason is in God’s Word. God said that mercy, grace, love and forgiveness are in Christ. I believe that and I believe God’s Word.

Whatever my lot, whatever my circumstances, whatever my environment, whatever God calls me to endure, go through or to do, is alright; it is in His good pleasure, His good purpose and will; I submit to Him.

I don’t have to be rich; it would be better if I wasn’t. I don’t have to be the strongest or the best dressed. I need Christ whether I am working in a field or whether I am working in an office building. I need Christ whether I am an educated person or not educated. To know Christ is the greatest knowledge and is the greatest wisdom.

Let us learn to accept our lot and be content with what we have. Let us be content with what God has given us with thanksgiving. “*Don’t be anxious for tomorrow what you shall eat, drink or what you shall wear. God knows that you have need of these things. Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and God will add these things to you as you need them.*” I wish we were as concerned about our souls as we are about these bodies.

Faith is not only the “*substance of things hoped for,*” it is the evidence. What does the word evidence mean? The word evidence means proof. You have heard the phrase, “Present your evidence;” that is the proof. “*Faith is the evidence (or proof) of things not seen.*”

I have never seen the Holy Spirit. I have never seen God with these natural eyes. I have never seen a vision and I don’t want to. God is revealed in His Word.

Suppose that you walk up to Noah as he is building that ark and you say, “What are you doing Noah?” And he says; “I am building an ark.” You may be wondering why he is building an ark. The reason he is building an ark is because Noah believed God. That is evidence; “*Faith is the evidence of things not seen. Noah being warned of things not seen, moved with fear and built an ark.*”

Why was Abraham leaving his father’s house? He did it because he believed God; that is evidence. Why did Moses put blood on the door? He believed God; God said at midnight, “*He would pass over.*” Moses believed God!

“Faith is the evidence of things not seen.” I have never seen God pass through in judgment at midnight upon a whole nation. Moses had not seen it either but he believed Him. I have never seen the world melt with fervent heat or the skies melt with fervent heat either. I’ve never seen the wrath of God fall upon a rebellious world, but I believe God. Noah believed, Abraham believed and Moses believed.

Sinner, why are you being baptized? The reason is because you believe God. You see; faith stands in the place of things not seen until those things become a reality. Noah’s flood became a reality. Moses’ judgment became a reality.

The poet wrote these words:

Faith, it’s a precious grace
Wherever it is bestowed,
It rests in Jesus Christ alone
And it is the gift of God.

Faith owns Jesus Christ to be King
Our all atoning Priest,
Faith claims no merit of its own
But it looks for all, to Christ.

To Him, faith leads the soul
When filled with deep distress,
It flies to that precious fountain of blood
And trusts His Righteousness.

That is what faith is; it is faith in a person. That faith is confident that Christ is able to do all that He said and is *“able to keep that which we commit to Him.”*

Your church is not going to last, it never has, (if at all), it will fall into shambles sooner or later. No man is going to last. No creed or nation is going to last; but Christ is. He is eternal, *“the Alpha and Omega.”* He is Emmanuel, God with us.” You can trust Him. You can commit everything to Him. He is unchanging and He is unmovable. He is exalted.

Where does faith come? Faith is not a product of human nature. Someone said, “Faith is not a flower that blooms in the garden of the human heart; all men have not faith. *“Israel could not enter in because of unbelief. When the Son of man cometh, will He find faith on the earth?”*

Where does faith come from; and “*whence cometh faith?*” Let me give you the answer briefly:

First of all: True, saving faith is the gift of God. I read that to you a moment ago; “*For by grace are you saved through faith and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works lest any man should boast.*”

In Philippians 1:29, the Scripture says; “*Unto you is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him but to suffer for Him.*” In Romans 2:4, “*The goodness of God leads us to repentance.*” In Acts 11:18; *God hath granted repentance to Israel.*”

My friends; where you find faith, you find God at work. Listen to John 6:44, “*No man can come to me except My Father which sent me draw him. It is written in the prophets, and they shall all be taught of God. He that hath learned of the Father and been taught of God, cometh to me.*”

So, this thing of faith is the gift of God; I assure you of that. Faith is not something produced out of natural wisdom; it is the gift of God.

Secondly: True saving faith is born of the Word of God. Romans 10:17 says, “*Faith cometh by hearing.*” I’m not talking about seeing miracles and signs, but hearing; “*Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.*”

There were plenty of people who saw our Lord raise Lazarus from the dead but they didn’t believe on Him. There were plenty of people who saw Him heal the man by the pool of Bethesda who was lame for 38 years; they still didn’t believe on Him. There were plenty of people who saw Him give sight to the blind man and did not believe on Him.

You see; faith does not come by sight, miracles or astounding, supernatural works; it comes by hearing the Word of God. “*Of His own will begat He us with the Word of Truth; being born again not of corruptible seed but of incorruptible seed, the Word of God, which liveth and abideth forever.*”

I want you to listen very carefully; faith is a heart work. Faith is the gift of God and is born of the Word of God and it is a heart work. Listen to me, I’m not talking about a bodily organ here; will you listen?

When they had this heart transplant not many years ago with the artificial heart, a lot of religious people got upset; they said, “We can’t put another heart in there; that is where people love.” No, no, no; that organ is no more than a kidney, lung, or any other organ in the human body.

When the Bible talks about the heart, it is not talking about this organ inside, but it is talking about the seat of affection, it is talking about the real you, the person you are, the soul. Listen to this, this thing of faith is a work in the seat of affections. This work is a work in the soul, a work where you live and where you love.

“Do you believe in one God; you do well; the devil believes that there is one God?” You see; people believe in their heads what they do not believe in their hearts. People believe in their heads and with their minds what they do not love in their affections. Are you with me? This is where most people miss the subject of faith.

There are some that say, “I have always believed the Bible; I have always believed that Jesus Christ was born, lived, died on a cross and was risen again. I have always believed in one God.” The devil believes everything that you just said, but he doesn’t love it and He doesn’t approve of it.

Listen to me; I believe some things that I do not love. I accept some things mentally that I do not accept affectionately. I know that there is a devil; I don’t love him, but I believe that he is there.

I believe that Russia is a communist state; I don’t love it and I don’t accept it or approve of it.

I believe that cancer kills people; do you believe that? I believe that; I have watched them die. I don’t love it and I don’t approve of it. Generally, I know that cancer exists in the same way that you can believe that God exists and the Bible is the Word of God and Jesus Christ lived and died on the cross, was buried and rose again.

You can believe all of this and still not be saved because you don’t love Him, approve of Him or submit to Him in the seat of affections. *“With the heart man believeth unto Righteousness.”* That is right; *“If thou shall confess with thy mouth Jesus to be Lord and believe in thine heart, for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness.”* I’m not talking about some organ in you, but your seat of affections, your soul, in the real you.

I believe that Jesus Christ is “*very God of very God.*” I love it, I approve of it and I submit to it. I believe that Jesus Christ lived on this earth and died for sinners; do you? I believe that He reigns in glory and that is where I want Him to be, reigning on the throne.

I believe that He will return. I believe that He has all preeminence and this I approve of, this I receive, and this I delight in. The apostle Paul said, “*God forbid that I should glory in anything else.*”

I am ringing your bell today; you know it and I know it, because I have been right there. I was in religion for years before I ever knew what saving faith was and who Christ is and what the Gospel is. These things I learned from a child in my head. I knew that there was a God and that the Bible was the Word of God. I believed in my heart that Jesus died on the cross.

I never did in my seat of affections and heart, love Him, embrace Him, approve of Him, and submit to Him. That is saving faith!